



Personal Growth Initiatives Among Perpetrators of Sexual Violence in Correctional Institutes

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ABSTRACT

Victims, rather than perpetrators, have been commonly the focus of sexual violence research and intervention. The ability of perpetrators to initiate the personal growth initiative (PGI) process on their own is the topic of this research. Six sexual violence perpetrators who are now wards of penal institutions in Indonesia and have exhibited high PGI Scale-II scores, are the participants of the study. The convenience sample method was used to recruit six persons for a focus group discussion on PGI. Findings reveal that these wards have time to reflect on their actions and emotional blunders, prepare themselves for a better life, and plan what they will do after being freed from penal institutions. We suggest that violators explore various personal development activities that can aid in self-improvement.

Keywords: sexual violence, perpetrators, personal growth initiative, correctional institutes

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence research and intervention have frequently focused on victims rather than perpetrators (Linder et al., 2020). As a result, there is a significant gap in eradicating sexual violence. While the punishment imposed by the law can instil fear of reoffending, intervention is still required to change the psychological dynamics of the perpetrators. This paper focuses on one of these dynamics: the perpetrator's ability to self-initiate precise mental and behavioural change plans. PGI, which stands for personal growth initiative, refers to the intention and initiative to involve oneself in personal growth for the better (Weigold et al., 2018).

According to Pandu (2021), data on sexual violence against women and children (1178 case reports) in Indonesia show an increase in 2020 compared to the previous year (794 case reports). According to the data, such cases of sexual violence are just the tip of the iceberg. What is visible on the surface belies the number of unreported cases.

1.1 Personal Growth Initiative (PGI)

Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) entails the development of skills that are aligned with each individual's strengths to empower that individual to grow and change positively (Robitschek, 1998; Weigold & Robitschek, 2011; Robitschek et al., 2012). Individuals must personally, purposefully, and actively engage in changing their ways of thinking and behaving to achieve PGI (Robitschek, 1998; Robitschek et al., 2012).

The four components of initiative that lead to personal growth are:

- i. Readiness for change. Readiness for change represents the ability to recognise one's own readiness to be involved in a particular process of change;
- ii. Comprehensive planning. Comprehensive planning is the strategising the individual needs to arrange steps of changes that they need to do to achieve that personal change;
- iii. Ability to use resources. Using resources is an individual's ability to identify and use resources to achieve their goals. These resources either come from within oneself or beyond oneself;
- iv. Doing activities (including skill-building) with full awareness and purpose to achieve change, optimise one's potential, gain the perspective that certain events and life experiences are opportunities to optimise the potential within oneself, and benefit from said opportunities. Intentional behaviour represents the involvement of one's behaviour to enact change.

1.2 Sexual Violence

The definition of sexual violence within this paper is based on the definition being developed in the Bill for the Eradication of Sexual Violence (*Rancangan Undang-undang Penghapusan Kekerasan Seksual*) created by the National Commission Against Violence Towards Women (*Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan*, shortened to *Komnas Perempuan*) and *Forum Pengada Layanan* (FPL) (2017). Sexual violence is defined in that bill as any act that disrespects, degrades, or harms another person's body with sexual intent and/or reproductive

purposes with force against that person's will, in the context where that victim cannot give consent with her or his full agency due to power or gendered relation imbalances, and which results or has the potential to result in physical, psychological, sexual, economic, social, cultural, and/or political harm.

PGI is relevant in discussions about perpetrators of sexual violence, particularly those who have already been incarcerated. Correctional institutions serve two purposes: punishment and rehabilitation (Ministry of Justice & Gauke, 2018). When a criminal is released, rehabilitation refers to activities that help him or her become a law-abiding citizen. Rehabilitation allows perpetrators to reflect on and accept responsibility for their crimes. It also includes the provision of education while incarcerated, the development of employable skills, and the provision of counselling services through social workers or psychologists.

Unfortunately, inhabitants of correctional institutes tend to live in psychologically uncomfortable conditions. The psychological consequences of getting punishment from the correctional institute include the loss of constructs like personality traits, sense of security, independence, personal communication, sense of being taken care of, opposite-sex connections, self-worth, beliefs, and creativity (Ula, 2014). That is why it is common for some inmates to feel hopeless about what they should do in the future, especially after they are not in a correctional institute. Therefore, it is essential to study the inmates who still have the initiative to change for the better, as case examples that can be explored and emulated.

The respondents of this research are the perpetrators of sexual violence held in correctional institutes in Indonesia. They have all presented a high score on the PGI Scale. Such a high score on that scale indicates that the owner of that score has shown the individual initiative to do behavioural change for the better. Henceforth, these responding perpetrators of sexual violence will be shortened to only perpetrators in this paper.

2 METHODS

Personal growth initiative (PGI) is the presence of intention and initiative to involve oneself in personal growth, which will be studied with guidance from an interview script and the questionnaire of the PGI Scale.

This research uses a qualitative research design. This research obtains data through a focus group discussion (FGD). This research uses convenience sampling to get six respondents to participate in an FGD about the PGI. The instruments used in this research are the Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II (PGIS-II; Robitschek et al., 2012) and the interview manual. The PGIS-II questionnaire has been adapted into the Indonesian language through back-translation. This instrument consists of 16 items in four subscales that reflect the cognitive and behavioural components related to PGI. The four subscales are Readiness for Change (RC; 4 items), Planfulness (PL; 5 items), Using Resources (UR; 3 items), and Intentional Behavior (IB; 4 items), which represent the involvement of one's behaviour to enact change. The scale consists of all positive statements such as "I ask for help when I am trying to change myself" and "I am able to state specifically when I am ready to do a specific change on myself." The PGIS-II is a Likert scale that consists of five points with a

score ranging from 0 to 80. The response options for each item range from 0 (Heavily Disagree) to 5 (Heavily Agree) (Robitschek et al., 2012).

The participants are six perpetrators of sexual violence now held in correctional institutes as wards and have presented high scores on the PGI Scale. The six participants are selected from a pool of around 50 potential participants based on whether they get the highest or lowest scores on the PGI Scale-II. A high score on the PGI Scale indicates that the participants' initiative to change their behaviour is already present.

Data analysis is done using the qualitative approach of treating each individual as a unit of analysis. The instrument in this research is a specific FGD interview guide that has achieved ethical clearance. Before research was done, all research team members attended and passed a course on research ethics and were trained to be FGD facilitators for vulnerable groups. These researchers also got permission from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia to research a class 1 correctional institution.

3 RESULTS

Six male participants range in age from 19 to 60 years old; four are unmarried, two are married, and one is divorced. Prior to sentencing, they worked as an entrepreneur (2 people), a coolie (1 person), a private employee (2 people), and a chef (1 person). Two people have sentences of less than three years, and four have sentences of more than six years. Three people have been sentenced for sexual violence against a child, and three have been sentenced for sexual abuse of a child.

Readiness for change is the ability to recognise what parts of oneself can change and when one should enact that change. Several participants understand what missteps they have made or what parts of themselves can be positively changed for the better. Those participants already plan to enact those changes once they get released.

With one's crisis experiences, any individual can become more proficient at differentiating between personal strengths before and after experiencing the crisis event (Ramos & Leal, 2013).

The earliest stage to readiness for change is to recognise one's missteps. A participant claimed that his experiences in the correctional institute have made him feel that he does not need to seek attention from women, as he can channel his attention toward his family.

"Now I have no need to seek attention from girls. I just give my attention to my family." (FGD 1, participant 5).

"Because I am already here, [I] have to admit my mistakes so as to repent. In the past I was distant from my religion. Here I feel gratitude more often, in praying. [I am} Near a mosque, [I] can pray, [I] can learn a lot. Besides, who else to blame? [It is] From within myself." (FGD 1, participant 1).

There is a participant who had an apathetic attitude. However, his experiences in the correctional institute have made him learn to be more attentive.

"Changing myself. Before, [I was] apathetic, now [I am] more attentive" (FGD 1m participant 5).

The experience of being held in the correctional had also made the participants learn to think first before they act when before, they tended to only think about themselves.

"If [I] want to act I think first. In the past [I] can't. That is a change. In the past, at the littlest slights [I] only thought about myself. Now [I] think more." (FGD 1, participant 4).

"Back then I drank. Now I no longer drink. Since I was 18 years old I was like that." (FGD 1, participant 3).

Some participants nursed grudges, felt emotional, and could not accept the reality that they had to be held in a correctional institute. However, over time, participants learn to face various issues in the institute that help them be more forgiving and accepting of their conditions and the people around them.

"Daily trips. Every person's [sic: way of] socialising and friends are different. Here we gather with a lot of people who are like us. In the end thanks to all that I learn to accept and forgive. It is no use to hold grudges, in the end I will meet [the target of my grudge] again. There was chaos, I lost money, I lost my pants, I have lost things, but now I just accept it. After all, what can we do about it? Learn to just be resigned. Especially in hearing the news from outside that my child is having difficulties, that my brother has passed away. Hearing that, what else can I do? So in the end I can only be resigned to this." (FGD 1, participant 3).

Spiritual depth is also a crucial category observed from the narratives. They have more self-understanding through their more profound relationship with God.

"Here I pray more rarely, but once I do pray, I feel it more here. Maybe [it is because I am] more devout and focused. Because here our conditions get explored more deeply, [since we] cannot meet our families, [we] miss [our] families, friends, that way. For example, [when I am] missing [my] wife, when I pray, I get to remember her more again. Back then when I have just arrived here [in the correctional institute, my] thoughts were unclear, [I] think about it as though it is a verdict, and in the end [I] just got sick." (FGD 2, participant 3).

"More focused, more devout like that. I got to pray more, pleading to achieve the goals I want." (FGD 2, participant 5).

Individuals become more appreciative of the more minor things in their lives. Before experiencing crisis events, individuals tend not to be aware of such small experiences, but once they experience those events, then what had been their priorities before may change.

Participants had become more appreciative of more minor things because their livelihoods in the institute are limited. They could feel calmer and accept guidance in the institute and have more time to self-reflect and learn.

"About eating, appreciating food, appreciating money. We really appreciate any of the smaller things [in our lives now]. Eating out feels way different from eating inside this place. We appreciate any food from the outside now. Even just one cigarette can be smoked by many of us. Basically, we are grateful for everything now, we appreciate it. Learning to hold myself back, by not wasting food. It is because everything is limited here." (FGD 2, participant 3).

"I am grateful, maybe this truly is a lesson from Allah. Fated so that I do not waste my life away. Outside I have a lot of issues, here I have the time to learn. Everything will be better if we want to learn. Outside everything makes us busy, inside we have the time to reflect on it all." (FGD 2, participant 2).

Planfulness points to planning out the steps to achieve this change. Participants had plans to fill their lives with positive activities after leaving the correctional institute. One of the positive activities they wanted to do was make plans about their jobs and earn their own money after leaving the institute. Several wanted to help in their families' businesses or to be entrepreneurs.

"I do not intend to work [for somebody], rather, I want to be an entrepreneur. Open my own." (FGD 1, participant 6).

"In Jakarta. I have my family's business. Build a house, renovate a home like that." (FGD 1, participant 6).

"Go back to my hometown, open a small business. I will sell small groceries. That is what I have done before." (FGD 1, participant 4).

To behave more appropriately. Other positive activities that the participants had been planning to do once they left the institute were to help build mosques, start a new life by fixing things about themselves, and apologise to the people they had hurt.

"Build a mosque." (FGD 1, participant 2).

"Environmental healing. By that I mean my living space, start a new life by moving, find a job, keep trying, it is a must. Just like that, fixing myself." (FGD 1, participant 1).

"I have not thought about it, I do not know. While we are still here, after I am free I want to apologise first to the people I have wronged, so I can feel relieved. Maybe from there [I

might get] a new path [in life] too. Get a job, like that. Yesterday this one person visited us. This is in spite of how, back when we were outside [of this institute], we thought that he was ungenerous." (FGD 2, participant 3).

Using resources involves identifying and using assets beyond or within oneself to help bolster one's personal growth. Participants had various positive ways from within themselves to deal with their boredom while held in the correctional institute.

"Wandering in circles around the field in front of the mosque, sitting down, listening to music when there is music." (FGD 1, participant 3).

"For me I usually watch or play ball, every morning I exercise, on Saturdays and Sundays I play basketball. We leave at 8 [in the morning], then come back into the institute building at 5 [in the afternoon]." (FGD 2, participant 2).

The participants also did activities to make them feel they have achieved comfort in their lives.

"Sewing clothes, only for inside [the institution's] purposes. Orders that come from the outside, bags, rugs, are not made yet." (FGD 1, participant 2).

During the participants' stay in the correctional institute, they receive various external aid in social support from their families, such as financial support, bringing food and clothes from outside the institute for the participants, and attention and sympathy. Some participants felt that their families had been more attentive to them after being held in the correctional institute.

"They sent me food at the front [area of the institute]." (FGD 1, participant 2).

"My family has become more caring, they showed me more love. They also relayed news, they are the ones who have the initiative." (FGD 2, participant 5).

The external aid that the participants had received was from their families, and the correctional institute was housing them while they were held there. Participants are given the freedom to do positive activities such as studying their religion and developing skills, such as sewing, based on their passions.

"Praying, books and teachers [guiding] the religious studies." (FGD 1, participant 4).

"It is the same here, there are no problems, [we were] given the freedom to go anywhere [in the areas we are allowed to be in], but [we should] stick to the arranged time. Do not cause issues. [We] must [do our activities only] within the time allotted." (FGD 2, participant 2).

Participants who have pre-existing skills are allowed to develop said skills even further. For example, one participant was already a tailor before being held there. Therefore, he was provided

with a sewing machine to keep sewing and fulfil his clients' orders outside the institution. The correctional officers also marketed their sewn products to earn their own money. However, there were no more orders until this paper was written. Due to the pandemic, the participant had not had any sewing tasks yet.

"[I was given the resources to do] sewing activities. The sewing has not started again though. Back then, [my sewn products] were brought out [of this institute], there were people selling them, there were orders. Because of this pandemic there is no income to get. Yesterday my friend said there were no orders, hence why here there are no tasks [for me to do]. I have only just started to make plans about that. Alhamdulillah (Praise the Allah)." (FGD 1, participant 2).

There was also a participant who had cooking skills as a chef. Thus, the participant was given to cook in the institution's kitchen. He was also trusted to teach and train other wards to cook too.

"There are [opportunities for us to hone our skills]. In training [among the wards], those who have the same professions sought out each other. Those who do not have those professions undergo training in skills like sewing. When [the wards] are in the kitchen, [they are allowed to] go ahead [and practice cooking]. Wards who have specialties sometimes help in teaching the other wards. If there are [wards] who want to follow me, I will train them in the kitchen. So that my time cooking will be more enjoyable too." (FGD 1, participant 1).

A participant who was a teacher was also allowed to keep teaching while being held in the correctional institute. He taught various materials from the middle school (*sekolah menengah pertama*, shortened to SMP) and high school (*sekolah menengah atas*, shortened to SMA) curricula. He also provided job guidance and religious studies for other wards.

"Yes, for example if you want to work, you will be guided. Every day if [you] want to there will always be some activities you can do. I teach in schools. [I teach] Packet B and Packet C for the SMA level. [I also teach at the] Community Learning Center (Pusat Kegiatan Belajar Masyarakat, shortened to PKBM). At the SMA level, there are also job guidance and religious studies. So, if you have the will then there will always tasks to be done." (FGD 2, participant 3).

The correctional institute also provided adult scout programs so that interested wards could join and participate in scout activities. They are given scout uniforms and tasked to keep watch at safety posts and deliver items from the wards' visiting family members.

"I help out in the scout program. There are lots of [the correctional institute] guards here too. For example, [scouts] help in delivering items from visiting family members to the wards. Besides that, I also help out at the safety posts." (FGD 2, participant 5).

Other than the activities above, the institute provides various fundamental needs that support the livelihoods of the participants while they stay there and lively entertainment. Participants are provided with various facilities, including health services like medical doctors and a clinic that can

be visited by the participants when they feel ill. The institute also provides comforts, food, and clean water.

"If [we] want to play here, there is chess. Besides the [chess equipment] provided by the correctional officers, there are also those provided by the people who had been held in this institute before." (FGD 1, participant 2).

The correctional officers also provide external support. There are positive activities that can be done by both the participants and the officers together. The officers also share their food with the participants and maintain order and safety. When there were problems, the officers helped the participants deal with said problems. The participants can also talk about the stories of their issues to the officers to get advice through the mechanisms of community social services or consultations.

"If it is a personal problem then I will try to solve it myself. But when this problem is dangerous, there will be officers overseeing me. Below the correctional officers, there are managers. Any problems we meet, we try to consult the managers first. If we cannot then we report to the officers. If the officers are still not available, we keep bringing [those problems] up. That is when the problems are dangerous. If not then we try to solve them by ourselves. (FGD 2, participant 2).

Friends, teachers, religious teachers (*ustadz*), and lecturers have also become external aid for the participants to be the turning point for them to realise they have to change. Participants also can tell their problems to their friends who stay in the same ward. With them so that they can stay calm and comfortable within the institute.

"From the journeys there are experiences. Because there have been experiences, there are the confiding of experiences among friends who understand better, there are sharing. Now, being an inmate, I get to know those experiences. Since my family has gotten into trouble, we already know how we should handle it. We have ever been people who are punished [by the law]. We also gain experience from the experiences of friends, teachers, ustadz, lecturers. Because we already learned [from our mistakes], we should not repeat those mistakes again. Do not show friends that you [are still making that same mistake again]. There will be social consequences from our families and friends." (FGD 1, participant 1).

Intentional behaviours involve one's skill in implementing past steps in PGI to intentionally bring about the changes that one wants (Robitschek et al., 2012). Intentional behaviour is a manifestation of one's involvement in the process of change. While being held in the correctional institute, participants were provided with various facilities to develop in positive directions. The participants used these opportunities cooperatively. For example, participants who had cooking skills were trusted to cook in the institute's kitchen and teach cooking skills to other institutes' wards. In the kitchen, there are also sharp objects like knives. However, the participants could be trusted, so they did not need to be supervised in the kitchen. Participants used their trust to keep developing their cooking skills, teach said skills to other wards, and use said opportunities to reduce their stress.

4 DISCUSSION

There has not been much research done on PGI. Respondents of the study are seen to be open to new experiences. In alignment with the theory presented by Robitschek (1998) and Robitschek et al., the narratives collected from these perpetrators have identified what can be changed and when to implement said changes (2012).

This research has explored that PGI identification can involve:

- i. Looking inwards towards themselves: By doing so, they had found specific competencies that they did not realise they had before.
- ii. Behaving: Before self-reflecting, they ignored certain aspects of their behaviour like their law-breaking, how they carry themselves, drinking, not thinking before acting.
- iii. Building relationships with other people: Paying attention to their behaviour starts with realising their mistakes, accepting that they made those mistakes and admitting them, and the desire to do better (which they consider a form of atonement).
- iv. Spiritual conditions: Before this, the participants did not feel their spirituality was deep. Possibly, this was because their time had always been occupied with other activities, and they could not do anything to self-reflect. On the other hand, they had time for worship in the correctional institution.

Identifying these factors started with recognising their mistakes, accepting them, admitting them, and repenting. According to Robitschek (1998) and Robitschek et al. (2012), planfulness involves strategies developed by the individual to change. Among this batch of respondents, none have fit that condition. The individuals who participated did not have any specific envisionment of the strategies they could develop. They only had plans of what they would do, not the specific steps on how they could do it. They still required concrete guidance. They had envisioned the necessity to get into jobs that could bring them income and ways to do that in halal ways and fix their lives. The ways are behaving better and building more attentive and empathetic relationships with other people (including apologising and ensuring that they consistently do their religious rites so that their positive relationships with God remain). It is possible that the simplicity and lack of specificity in their plans were caused by how limited the guidance they received was.

The usage of resources is the ability to identify and use assets beyond or within oneself for personal growth (Robitschek, 1998; Robitschek et al., 2012). In this study, resources that came from the participants include the proactivity to overcome boredom and stress and maintain their relationships with the other inhabitants of the institute, such as listening to each other and helping out when one of them had issues. Resources that came from beyond the participants selves were aid from their families like money and attention; and aid from the correctional institute (*Lembaga pemasyarakatan*), including activities to hone skills (such as working as cooks, tailors, teachers, and adult scouts), maintain spirituality (opportunities to do worship), and maintain physical fitness (by exercising).

Behaviours' can be intentionally done to enact previous plans to purposefully enact changes (Robitschek, 1998; Robitschek et al., 2012). Due to the limitations on the spaces to move around and opportunities provided in the correctional institute, participants had not been able to fully enact this facet of PGI. However, the participants still could train and develop the resources they already

had and were familiar with while being held in that institute. These behaviours in training themselves involve the continuous usage of their own spare time to improve their skills, maintain good relationships with their families and others, keep fulfilling their religious rites, and prevent themselves from getting too stressed or bored.

5 RECOMMENDATION

Religious worship allowed participants to self-reflect and become more in tune with their spiritual depths, which aided in self-healing and inspired many people. As a result, the activity of religious worship should be given more attention. Other activities for honing skills, reducing stress, and getting some exercise should be planned more methodically. It can be accomplished, for example, through routine guidance and identifying the participants' need for preventive and promotional interventions rather than curative and rehabilitative interventions.

There should be more planning in each participant's individually developed change strategies. These individuals lacked a clear understanding of any developed and specific strategies in the institution. They only had ideas for what they would do and needed more concrete direction.

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