

## Beyond Normative Frameworks: The *Pesantren* Model as a Practical Blueprint for Taxonomy of Rehabilitation in Prisons

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study addresses a critical gap in the literature by systematically assessing the practical implementation of Islamic education for inmates, moving beyond the conventional focus on merely documenting Islam in prisons. Drawing on Fousberg and Douglas's rehabilitation taxonomy, which conceptualises the progressive steps of inmate rehabilitation, this research explicitly examines the transition from theoretical classification to concrete implementation. The study shows how the Pesantren model actively operationalises this normative framework into practical moral and social rehabilitation. This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design conducted in Class II prisons across Kediri, Jombang, Blitar, and Nganjuk, East Java, Indonesia. Using purposive sampling, researchers selected 45 participants, including inmates, prison officers, and Islamic educators. Researchers collected data through semistructured interviews, direct observations, and documentation. Methodological and source triangulation were applied to ensure the trustworthiness of the data, while thematic analysis was utilised to identify and categorise implementation patterns of Islamic education in inmate rehabilitation. The originality of this study lies in offering a novel, replicable framework that transforms abstract rehabilitation concepts into actionable, real-world educational interventions. By doing so, this model contributes to the broader objective of Sustainable Development Goal 4, with the Pesantren model promoting inclusive and equitable quality education within prisons. The study's limitations prominently include its focus on moderate-security prisons and the specific context of Muslim-majority countries. Therefore, researchers need to conduct further studies to evaluate how these findings*

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*can apply to high-risk facilities and nations with different religious demographics.*

Studi ini mengatasi kesenjangan kritis dalam literatur dengan secara sistematis menilai implementasi praktis pendidikan Islam bagi narapidana, melampaui fokus konvensional yang hanya mendokumentasikan Islam di penjara. Dengan mengacu pada taksonomi rehabilitasi Fousberg dan Douglas, yang mengkonseptualisasikan langkah-langkah progresif rehabilitasi narapidana, penelitian ini secara eksplisit mengkaji transisi dari klasifikasi teoretis ke implementasi konkret. Studi ini menunjukkan bagaimana model *Pesantren* secara aktif mengoperasionalkan kerangka normatif ini ke dalam rehabilitasi moral dan sosial yang praktis. Studi ini menggunakan desain studi kasus ganda kualitatif yang dilakukan di penjara Kelas II di Kediri, Jombang, Blitar, dan Nganjuk, Jawa Timur, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan pengambilan sampel bertujuan, peneliti memilih 45 partisipan, termasuk narapidana, petugas penjara, dan pendidik Islam. Peneliti mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi langsung, dan dokumentasi. Triangulasi metodologis dan sumber diterapkan untuk memastikan keandalan data, sementara analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi dan mengkategorikan pola implementasi pendidikan Islam dalam rehabilitasi narapidana. Keunikan studi ini terletak pada penawaran kerangka kerja baru yang dapat direplikasi, yang mengubah konsep rehabilitasi abstrak menjadi intervensi pendidikan yang dapat ditindaklanjuti dan diterapkan di dunia nyata. Dengan demikian, model ini berkontribusi pada tujuan yang lebih luas dari Tujuan Pembangunan Berkelanjutan 4, dengan model *Pesantren* yang mempromosikan pendidikan berkualitas yang inklusif dan adil di dalam penjara. Keterbatasan studi ini terutama mencakup fokusnya pada penjara dengan keamanan sedang dan konteks khusus negara-negara mayoritas Muslim. Oleh karena itu, para peneliti perlu melakukan studi lebih lanjut untuk mengevaluasi bagaimana temuan ini dapat diterapkan pada fasilitas berisiko tinggi dan negara-negara dengan demografi keagamaan yang berbeda.

**Keywords:** *Islamic Education, Islamic Rehabilitation, Pesantren in Prison, Rehabilitation Taxonomy.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The growing worldwide jailed population necessitates a review of SDG 4 in prisons, where inclusive and equitable education is often neglected (Berglund et al., 2025; Díaz-Sánchez, 2024). Insufficient educational attainment is often associated with an increased propensity for criminal activity (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025; Vacca, 2004), thereby making education in prisons an effective means of reducing recidivism rates (Kakupa & Mulenga, 2021; Wang et al., 2025). Religious background, especially Islam, fosters positive attitudes and serves as a moral shield against criminal activity (Beller et al., 2019; Bhutta et al., 2019; Jang et al., 2021). General prison educational programmes can help inmates develop positive mindsets—46% of inmates seek solace in religion to

aid their recovery (Solomontos-Kountouri & Hatzitofi, 2016)—but these programmes often lack structure. Consequently, to operationalise this need as a concrete, systemic rehabilitative framework, prisons in certain Muslim-majority contexts have begun to adopt the *Pesantren* model (Zafar & Abu-Hussin, 2025). This immersion approach turns the *Pesantren* model into a systematic tool for primary moral and social change.

Criminal justice studies have neglected religion's impact on inmates, while criminology has overlooked religion as a rehabilitation tool (Ammar et al., 2004; Woodbridge et al., 2025). Islamic education can help rehabilitate inmates by instilling moral and spiritual values that may reduce crime (Beller et al., 2019; Bhutta et al., 2019). Islamic principles in prison teaching may improve inmates' ethics, discipline, and accountability (Gacek & Asfari, 2024; Joon Jang et al., 2023; Woodbridge et al., 2025). Thus, Islamic education research in inmate rehabilitation is becoming more important due to its relevance to recidivism prevention and inmate rehabilitation (Anaraki, 2022; Putri et al., 2023).

Faith-based programs improve inmates' subjective well-being and reduce crime in jails (Bhutta et al., 2019; Gacek & Asfari, 2024; Husain et al., 2025). Religion can help transgressors change their morals by discouraging the repetition of mistakes and teaching virtues (Jang & Johnson, 2024). Research demonstrates that faith aids the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals by fostering moral change (Irawati et al., 2023; Jang et al., 2018; Rashid et al., 2014). The influence of religion has been observed to enhance emotional well-being and cultivate virtue among inmates, thereby potentially aiding restorative rehabilitation (Abdekhoda & Ranjbaran, 2022; Jang et al., 2021).

Studies suggest that engaging in religious activities not only provides spiritual benefits but also significantly reduces recidivism by fostering supportive social networks for inmates and aiding their successful reintegration after release (Gacek & Asfari, 2024; Jang & Johnson, 2024; Stansfield et al., 2017). Islamic education in prisons combines spiritual practice with social intervention, promoting emotional and psychological well-being while enhancing rehabilitation prospects. Understanding moral values and justice in Islamic teachings helps inmates develop positive attitudes necessary for effective social reintegration.

Most major religions support rehabilitation, offer methods for reintegrating into society, and encourage the abandonment of criminal and antisocial behaviour (Bhutta et al., 2019; Husain et al., 2025; Stansfield et al., 2017). Islamic education in prisons has gained attention for its potential to influence inmates' attitudes and behaviour through spiritual and moral approaches. Several studies show a strong link between religious education in prisons and reduced recidivism rates, emphasising its reformative potential (Joon Jang et al., 2023; Stansfield & Mowen, 2019). Bhutta et al. (2019) argue that religious practices, moral values, and beliefs are inversely related to criminal behaviour. Conversely, Beller et al. (2019) found that social religious practices were not substantially correlated with delinquency, whereas individual religious practices were associated with lower levels of delinquency. These conflicting findings highlight that religiosity can have either a protective or criminogenic effect, depending on the dominant aspect. Therefore, a deeper understanding of its role in preventing crime among Muslim inmates is needed.

Chloupis & Kontompasi (2025) suggested that a comprehensive punishment plan implemented on the first day of an inmate's admission can significantly improve rehabilitation. This strategy may encompass psychological assistance, career

counselling, behavioural oversight, and access to occupational education and training programs. This aligns with the findings of Joon Jang et al. (2023) and Cahyani & Nashori (2024), which indicate that inmates frequently encounter substantial emotional, mental, and social challenges while incarcerated. These obstacles may worsen their mental health, with some inmates recovering and others still struggling. This pressure hinders rehabilitation and reintegration (Jang et al., 2021).

Despite psychological support, spiritual advice can aid rehabilitation. Cahyani & Nashori (2024) assert that spiritual instruction can foster self-improvement, transform inmates into responsible citizens, and enhance societal development. Gacek & Asfari (2024) argue that inmate rehabilitation should include education, risk-factor management, character development, and the cultivation of virtues to improve well-being. This study supports the idea that the transcendent function of religiosity reduces aggression. Religious practices among prisoners increase accountability to God and peers, fostering empathy and self-discipline, and reducing negative emotions and aggression (Jang & Johnson, 2024).

Woodbridge et al. (2025) elucidate that religious rituals among inmates, including prayer, Qur'an recitation, Friday prayers, and Eid celebrations, serve as coping mechanisms to address challenges and stress. Anaraki (2022) reported similar findings, indicating that activities such as Qur'an memorisation, habitual prayer for forgiveness, and worship during Muharram and Ramadan can effectively contribute to inmates' rehabilitation. Furthermore, Gacek & Asfari (2024) investigate religious practices within prisons in the United States and Canada, highlighting analogous activities, particularly the designation of priests as spiritual leaders who play a pivotal role in offering spiritual guidance, mediating conflicts, and alleviating stress and the risk of radicalisation. Mulia et al. (2017) also investigate a spiritual methodology in inmate therapy through *dhikr*, which seeks to reduce anxiety and foster feelings of tranquillity and relaxation. Amitay et al. (2021) introduce the Sufi method of recovery, a non-doing rehabilitation approach. This method is employed by sufis in prison by establishing a *zawiya* (a sacred atmosphere), fostering a serene and exemplary environment, and promoting *jihad al-nafs* (inner battle) through the utilisation of the sacred environment, true role models, and profoundly inclusive principles.

To operationalise the mandate of SDG 4 regarding inclusive and lifelong learning within prisons, this study utilises the rehabilitation taxonomy established by Forsberg & Douglas (2022), which categorises rehabilitation into five primary conceptions based on its objectives: (1) anti-recidivism, (2) harm reduction, (3) therapy, (4) moral enhancement, and (5) restoration. By distinguishing rehabilitative measures by their specific 'aims' and 'means,' this framework provides a structured pathway to transition prison education from a peripheral activity to a systemic educational intervention aligned with SDG 4. While the correlation between education and recidivism rates is significant, as a primary objective of rehabilitation, further research is necessary to understand these dynamics better, given the complexity of the criminal phenomenon and the need for a multidisciplinary approach (Chloupis & Kontompasi, 2025). Within this normative framework, this study posits that Islamic education—particularly when structured as a holistic model—provides a robust foundation for transforming inmates' behaviour. Thus, integrating the educational dimension of Islam into the rehabilitation taxonomy not only facilitates individual reform but also ensures that the most marginalised learners are included in the global pursuit of equitable quality education.

While prisons have been studied for implementing Islamic ideals, there is little research on effective and relevant Islamic educational resources for inmates. This study will examine how the rehabilitation taxonomy integrates Islamic education through relevant Islamic resources and activities. This study will examine the role of Islamic education in inmate rehabilitation using an Islamic-based approach, which may offer a new perspective on prison rehabilitation programs.

## II. METHOD

The implementation of Islamic religious education in prisons and rehabilitation was examined using a qualitative multiple-case study design. Given the differences among prisons, this approach was chosen to study their dynamics and contexts. This multi-case approach helps researchers identify reliable implementation patterns and contextual variations in the use of the *Pesantren* model. It tests whether the rehabilitation framework's taxonomy works across these diverse settings. By using multiple prisons to gather diverse, objective data, the study provides a comprehensive picture of religious education in inmate rehabilitation.

This study took place in the prisons of East Java: Kediri, Jombang, Blitar, and Nganjuk. Class IIA and IIB prisons with religious programmes, such as *Pesantren* dormitory instruction, were selected to meet the research objectives. Their accommodative, "rehabilitation-driven" attitude and moderate criminality, including narcotics and general offences, earned them selection. High-risk prisons are security-driven and emphasise confinement, segregation, and threat neutralisation, making pedagogical interventions nearly impossible. To avoid high-risk environments that could undermine rehabilitation, this study uses Class II prisons as social laboratories. These settings enable structured, collective social interaction, essential for social rehabilitation. Thus, selected institutions that use Islamic education as the primary reform tool produce more credible, objective, and applicable data on inmate behaviour.

Participants who met the criteria and could provide comprehensive insights relevant to the research objectives were selected using purposive sampling. The researcher selected five inmates, prison officers, and Islamic educators from each prison, for a total of over 500 people. These inmates were chosen for their long-term participation in the *Pesantren*, or Islamic guidance programme, which explains their rehabilitation process. Several tutors treated new inmates as peers. Their extensive firsthand experience and active leadership within the system provided rich, in-depth data on the practical impact of the educational interventions. This study had 45 participants. Each prison visit lasted one month in this four-month study. Semistructured interviews allow for deeper discussion in 45 minutes per participant. Classifying data by debate topic reveals new insights.

The research team immersed itself in prison operations to accurately capture the dynamics of educational programmes. One researcher observed each prison for a month. After this, the team rotated between locations to analyse and evaluate the findings. The ongoing exchange and cross-validation of viewpoints reduced biases, ensuring that the final interpretations were sound, equitable, and grounded in prison realities.

Methodological and source triangulation were used in this study to ensure a complete understanding. The data collection included in-depth interviews with inmates, prison officers, and Islamic educators, as well as analysis of prison archives and pedagogical

materials. Direct observations confirmed the alignment between participant narratives, documented records, and real-world implementation. Finally, prison officers and Islamic educators collaborated to cross-reference inmates' lived experiences with their professional perspectives, confirming the data.

Thematic analysis was used to identify, organise, and systematically explain patterns of meaning in the triangulated dataset after data collection. There were three main analytical steps. The extensive data from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents were first deconstructed. Concepts related to Islamic education in prisons were categorised and described. The next phase involved juxtaposing the codes, identifying their relationships, and categorising them into emerging themes in line with the study's theoretical framework. The research team reevaluated all codes and themes through comparative readings to provide relevant, transferable, and comprehensive insights into the research issue.

### III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### Result

##### *Implementation of Islamic Education*

According to observations at all prisons in this study, Islamic education is implemented in two main kinds: *Pesantren*-based and non-*Pesantren*. These two models differ in how each prison provides guidance and Islamic education, as shown in the following findings:

This study found that *Pesantren*-based Islamic education is used in Classes II B Nganjuk, II A Kediri, and II B Blitar. Islamic guidance is provided in Class II B Jombang without adopting a *Pesantren* model. The main difference between these methods is depth and pedagogical comprehensiveness. The *Pesantren*-based model emphasises structured, intensive, and comprehensive learning, while the non-*Pesantren* approach in Jombang emphasises basic religious instruction and moral guidance without the in-depth study pattern.

This observational finding was further strengthened through interview data. At Nganjuk Prison, the warden, B, elucidated:

“Kediri Prison has operated on a *Pesantren* model since its authorisation by the Mayor in 2017, requiring all inmates to engage in this activity to qualify for remission and integration rights.” (B, 2024).

This approach highlights the significance of Islamic education in rehabilitation initiatives, encouraging inmates to engage in programmes that enhance their lives and secure specific rights, including remission. However, observations and institutional records from Jombang Prison revealed a major structural constraint: an imbalance between the number of inmates and the number of available prison officers. Archival data showed that the prison housed 800 inmates, whilst only 35 officers were assigned to this prison. This imbalance was further confirmed through interview data. Sutopo, head of Islamic programmes of Jombang prison, explained:

“The limited number of prison personnel made it difficult to provide religious guidance solely through prison officers. Consequently, we enlist an Islamic

educator residing in the Jombang region, including *ustadz* and *muballigh*.” (Su, 2024).

Furthermore, to address analogous constraints, other prisons also engage with external entities. One such prison is Nganjuk, as elucidated by a member of the personality development department:

“We engage with the Mar'atin Foundation to develop the *Pesantren* curriculum. This process includes discussions on the selection of *ustadz*, facilities and infrastructure, and the learning system to be applied.” (C, 2024).

The declaration by an inmate at Madiun Prison, who requested a transfer to Nganjuk Prison, demonstrated his desire to deepen his understanding of religion. He states:

“I was first a foster resident in Mojokerto. Relocated to Nganjuk Prison in pursuit of an experience akin to that of *Pesantren*. Before this, I was unable to read the Qur'an and was unfamiliar with the prayer ritual. I am now capable of accomplishing everything.” (M, 2024).

The notion of *warga binaan* (inmates) articulated by the head of Jombang prison and its administrators, as well as by the author, signifies a more compassionate perspective towards inmates. All administrators utilise this designation, which, according to the author, does not categorise them as perpetually at fault or criminal, since they are not referred to as inmates. This categorisation seeks to acknowledge their dignity as human beings who retain the capacity for change. The term "*santri*" (students of *Pesantren*) is frequently utilised in Nganjuk prisons, which adopt an educational framework based on *Pesantren*.

Throughout the observation period in various prisons, we discovered that education was facilitated not only through lectures but also through peer instruction. This was articulated by one of the Islamic educators at Jombang Prison:

“We instruct individuals with limited proficiency in reading the Qur'an on how to read and write it. Proficient individuals assist by listening to and guiding their peers.” (MB, 2024).

Observations across several prisons, such as Kediri, indicated that habituation constituted a central strategy in the implementation of Islamic religious education, particularly for inmates who had previously shown limited engagement in religious practices before incarceration. This approach was applied in a disciplined and systematic manner, requiring inmates to participate in religious routines from the outset of their admission. In practice, congregational prayers, especially Shubuh, Zuhr and Asr, were closely supervised through attendance checks conducted in each cell block to ensure participation and to minimise noncompliance. Meanwhile, Maghrib and Isha prayers were generally performed within inmates' rooms.

Prison archival records and internal regulations from Jombang prison demonstrated that participation in Islamic educational and guidance activities was formally embedded in the institution's regulatory framework. The documents revealed that inmates were expected to attend religious programmes regularly, especially congregational activities held in the mosque. Institutional rules also linked participation to reward allocation, whereas non-attendance could lead to corrective sanctions, including cleaning duties within the prison. This documentary evidence indicates that religious habituation was

administered as a structured regulatory mechanism to reinforce discipline and support the rehabilitative function of imprisonment.

### ***Topics of Islamic Education***

The implementation of religious instruction within these prisons is highly targeted and systematically tailored to each inmate's baseline capabilities. To determine appropriate class placements and ensure a focused rehabilitation programme, prison officers delegate the initial diagnostic process to external Islamic religious educators. Below are the records of the entry test for the *Pesantren* programme at Blitar Prison:

These third-party instructors evaluate the inmates' religious aptitude using assessment instruments standardly employed in *Pesantren*. Specifically, this placement test measures foundational Islamic competencies, including proficiency in Qur'anic reading, the practical execution of daily prayers, and the recall of short Qur'anic chapters.

By systematically ascertaining these individual capabilities, the educators can assign the most suitable educational materials and peer cohorts, thereby facilitating a more structured, effective, and personalised coaching programme. At Blitar Prison, the program manager elucidated:

“Upon entering prison, the inmates underwent a religious aptitude assessment. If someone is unable to read the Qur'an, they are enrolled in an Iqro class to learn to read it. For those able, concentrate on completing, after which one may proceed to *Pesantren* programmes. Despite the targets being calibrated to sentence duration, incremental tests and assessments persist, as all aspects are scrutinised, even if they are not compulsory and will be conducted freely in accordance with their incarceration period.” (Si, 2024).

One inmate noted that while prison is frequently stressful and tough, reading the Qur'an with proper tajweed offers inner calm and closeness to Allah. For example:

“Memorising and improving my recitation has made me more disciplined and more solemn in my worship. I have come to feel that every recitation has great spiritual value. I try my best with every letter I read, because I know that Allah hears it, and I want my recitation to be correct and accepted.” (Z, 2024).

Alongside instructing in Qur'anic recitation, an educator at Darul Iman *Pesantren* in Nganjuk explained that the Islamic curriculum offered was comprehensive and not confined to specific instances. Illustration:

“Our material is unrestricted and not bound to a particular timeframe, encompassing a general spiritual and intellectual framework that includes sections on tauhid, worship, counsel, and fiqh.” (I, 2024).

The beneficial influence of studying fiqh is closely linked to inmates' moral transformation and significantly enhances their religious consciousness. As articulated by an inmate in Jombang Prison:

“I am an ordinary Muslim, yet I rarely pray at home and fast throughout Ramadan. Upon entering this prison, I was able to recite, pray, and fast during Ramadan. I am here to gain awareness and proximity to Allah. A better grasp of Islam can help us regulate our emotions. I have grown distant from Allah, which may result in inadvertent faults.” (J, 2024).

The content of tauhid significantly influences inmates, imparting a calming effect that reinforces their identity as creations of God. For example, according to an inmate at Kediri Prison:

“Acquiring knowledge about faith has significantly influenced my life. Previously, I perceived my existence as lacking purpose. Upon acquiring knowledge of tauhid, I came to understand the identity of my God, the rationale for my creation, and the true purpose of my existence. This led me to realise that all occurrences, whether positive or negative, result from human actions, prompting me to cultivate gratitude and strive for self-improvement.” (R, 2024).

We discovered a robust correlation between tauhid and akhlaq, which positively influences inmates' attitudes and behaviours. As articulated by an inmate in Nganjuk Prison:

“Akhlaq pertains not only to our interactions with others but also to our self-improvement. I overlooked minor aspects of my conduct, such as honesty, maintaining trust, and refraining from harming others. However, I now comprehend that every minor detail is significant. Akhlaq cultivates my humility, enhances my appreciation for others, and heightens my awareness of my actions. This compels me to strive for improvement in the sight of God.” (U, 2024).

The integration of tauhid and akhlaq in prison education is highly relevant to inmate rehabilitation. Through the study of tauhid, inmates understand that each action reflects their faith, thereby promoting behavioural transformation. The study of akhlaq enhances their appreciation for others and fosters a greater connection to God, hence elevating their morale and social interactions. This approach enhances character development and facilitates rehabilitation by transforming inmates' thinking and behaviours, thereby equipping them to adapt and contribute positively post-sentence.

### ***Religious Activities***

Observations at Jombang Prison reveal that Islamic religious education is implemented through a disciplined, unified approach. Every morning, inmates began their day with physical activities, including group gymnastics, followed by dhuha prayers. This technique aims to maintain physical health while promoting a regimen that cultivates both physical and spiritual balance. Thereafter, the inmates continued their day with routine recitation and Qur'an education sessions. The cultivation of character education and religious awareness within prisons commences with simple yet impactful Islamic practices, as expressed by the head of Islamic programmes:

“We engage in activities to mark Islamic holidays, such as Isra' Mi'raj, Nuzulul Qur'an, Eid prayers, Eid al-Adha, and communal iftar during Ramadhan, to foster positive engagement and alleviate monotony in daily life.” (Su, 2024).

This is further evidenced in the timetable of regular religious programmes held at Jombang Prison, as outlined below: Daily activities include mandatory congregational prayers performed five times a day. Weekly activities include reading Surah Yasin, Surah Al-Waqi'ah, and Surah Al-Mulk each Monday after the Asr prayer. Additionally, on Tuesdays following the Asr prayer, Quranic reading lessons are conducted, featuring a recitation by MB. Quranic reading activities take place on Thursdays, following a programme schedule organised into a three-month cycle.

Participation in these constructive routines fostered a significant sense of spiritual balance and effectively mitigated psychological burnout during their incarceration. At Blitar Prison, the implementation of diverse educational programmes led to significant development in the inmates' character and a notable enhancement in their religious awareness. As elucidated by a manager of the prison in Blitar:

“Our initiatives encompass Qur'an reading programmes, public lectures, and madrasah diniyah activities. Furthermore, we practise congregational prayer, adhere to a clothing code, organise sandals systematically, and consistently greet all inmates. We conduct spiritual competitions, Qur'an memorisation contests, and other religious events to enhance inmates' creativity.” (So, 2024).

During the inspection at Kediri Prison, we noted that a spiritual counselling session occurs every Saturday. To have a clearer comprehension of the programme, we enquired of the warden, who elucidated:

“Spiritual counselling, in which all inmates participate to enhance their religious understanding. Subsequently, they announced that the book will commence at midday for those who have passed the Qur'an graduation as a means of progressing to advanced programmes.” (Sy, 2024).

This statement demonstrates that religious activities in prisons extend beyond Qur'an instruction, incorporating advanced curricula that familiarise inmates with *kitab kuning* (yellow book)—an essential resource for the study of Islam. This exercise allows inmates to explore religious teachings more profoundly and enhance their spiritual attributes.

We also identified activities that embraced the local religious culture within the prison, as articulated by F, the daily supervisor:

“Joint gymnastics will take place on Saturday, and activities to dry sleeping utensils will take place on both Friday and Saturday. Tahlil activities occur biweekly on Fridays, and Qur'an recitation (*khatam*) is conducted semiannually.” (F, 2024).

Across the cases, all prisons examined show that Islamic religious guidance plays an important role in prisoners' daily lives, particularly through congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation, the mosque as the centre of activities, and the involvement of religious instructors. However, there is a clear distinction between *Pesantren*-based and non-*Pesantren* models. The *Pesantren*-based model provides a more structured and in-depth form of guidance, marked by class placement, a curriculum covering *kitab kuning*, theology, fiqh, akhlaq, and sufism, and disciplined routines typical of *Pesantren*. By contrast, the non-*Pesantren* model places greater emphasis on basic Islamic learning and the habituation of daily worship, such as Qur'anic reading, the five daily prayers, and Ramadhan fasting, but with a lower level of curricular depth. At the implementation level, each site also exhibits distinctive features, such as peer teaching in Jombang, spiritual counselling in Kediri, and *tahlilan* in Blitar. Overall, both models indicate a trend towards positive religious behavioural change. Still, the *Pesantren*-based model appears to produce bigger changes in religious understanding and discipline. In contrast, the non-*Pesantren* model is more strongly associated with the formation of routine worship practices.

## Discussion

### *Anti-Recidivism*

This concept pertains to the diminishment of the inmate's propensity to reoffend. Forsberg & Douglas (2022) elucidate that this notion does not serve a specific function; rather, its distinctiveness is in its use for that purpose. This study's findings demonstrate that the *Pesantren* model promotes spatial and temporal reorganisation in prisons through stringent scheduling regulations, rigorous guidance from Islamic educators (*ustadz*), and the establishment of an educational communal ecosystem (Gacek & Asfari, 2024; Woodbridge et al., 2025). The density of daily activities has been demonstrated to effectively mitigate the void that frequently incites conflict, the dissemination of negative influences, and aberrant behaviour. Moreover, reclassifying the term "inmate" as "*santri/warga binaan*" facilitates identity transformation, redirecting stigma from inmates to learners. The transformation of prosocial identity is essential, as it is a foundational element of the desistance phase.

In the realm of behavioural change, habituation mechanisms serve as a link between superficial compliance and genuine internal transformation (Anaraki, 2022). Our findings indicate that inmates' initial participation is often motivated by instrumental and pragmatic factors, such as calculating remissions or meeting good-behaviour criteria. Continuous exposure to structured routines can progressively diminish psychological resistance, foster discipline, and ultimately transform compliance into internalised values. This process verifies that institutional coercion in the initial phase does not remain limited to superficial compliance but instead develops into self-regulatory capability.

Conversely, peer teaching practices function as a tool for social rehabilitation. The participation of inmates in teaching Quranic reading, conducting religious rituals, or serving as informal moral guides for their peers instigates a transformation in their roles—from inmates to mentors (Jang & Johnson, 2024; Pedrosa et al., 2024). These findings expand the discussion on rehabilitation by illustrating that recovery is not solely a top-down process initiated by prison officers or educators, but is also developed bottom-up through enhanced interpersonal accountability. This mechanism enhances social capital, cultivates self-esteem, and intensifies prosocial connections, which are essential for curbing the reemergence of deviant identities.

Theologically, the study of tauhid learning plays a crucial role in moral and psychological restoration (Husain et al., 2025). This study redefines the learning of tauhid not just as a religious doctrine but as a framework for meaning. This framework enables inmates to reframe their relationship with God, perceived as an All-Forgiving Entity, address past trauma, and cultivate hope for the future. The importance of this mechanism is based on the notion that preventing recidivism depends not solely on behavioural regulation but also necessitates cognitive and emotional abilities to cope with despair, aggression, and internalised self-stigma.

### *Rehabilitation as Harm-Reduction*

This notion pertains to mitigating negative effects that inmates are prone to experience during and after confinement (Forsberg & Douglas, 2022). To operationalise Forsberg & Douglas's taxonomy, the *Pesantren* model serves as more than an educational programme; it is a mechanistic intervention for behavioural change. Firstly, it utilises intensive time structuring to regulate daily conduct, leaving no room for negative peer

influence. Secondly, it fosters internalised social control through the continuous presence of educators who model prosocial behaviour 24/7. Most importantly, the shift from 'inmate' to '*santri*' status triggers a cognitive identity shift, which is central to long-term rehabilitation. By providing a structured environment for spiritual coping, the *Pesantren* model addresses the psychological needs of inmates, making the rehabilitation process an active internal journey rather than a passive institutional requirement.

Within the scope of this study, Islamic education in prisons is regarded not merely as a vehicle for imparting religious doctrines but also as a fundamental component of the rehabilitation process. The prisons we examined facilitated access to education by adopting the *Pesantren* model, enlisting external parties, such as *ustadz* (Islamic teachers) and *muballigh* (religious preachers), to support the educational process. Prison constraints necessitate this recruitment, specifically the disproportionate ratio of correctional officers to inmates (Pedrosa et al., 2024; Vacca, 2004). This statement is implemented to address inmates' needs, as Gacek & Asfari (2024) indicated that when inmates' needs are met, they are less likely to engage in violent behaviour due to factors such as improved mental health and increased professional interactions with prison personnel.

The recruitment of volunteers to serve as teaching personnel in prisons within our environment is referred to as *ustadz*; however, other studies identify alternative titles with responsibilities analogous to those of an imam and a Muslim chaplain (Ammar et al., 2004; Gacek & Asfari, 2024). Muslim clerics significantly contribute to communal countermeasures by facilitating worship, fostering joy, alleviating emotional stress, offering guidance, and instilling confidence in individuals seeking counsel (Solomontos-Kountouri & Hatzitoffi, 2016; Talik & Skowroński, 2018; Woodbridge et al., 2025). Sundt & Cullen (2002) and Bhutta et al. (2019) asserted that muslim chaplain involvement in prisons significantly aids in the rehabilitation of inmates. The research highlights the significance of an external support system that provides positive reinforcement and motivation.

Detainees perceive the ambience of the *Pesantren* as transforming the prison into a non-prison environment. This statement indicates that the environment, once perceived as frightening or monotonous, has now transformed into a setting that occupies their time, enabling them to improve in anticipation of their release from prison. The peaceful atmosphere in Islam is referred to as *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Putri et al., 2023). In these prisons, a close relationship has developed between prison officers and inmates, who prison officers refer to as *warga binaan* (inmates) and *santri* (*Pesantren* students). This statement creates an atmosphere that makes them feel less like criminals serving a sentence and more like individuals learning and developing in an educational environment, akin to a school.

At the communal level, religious assemblies foster possibilities for camaraderie and reciprocal assistance among inmates (Pedrosa et al., 2024; Woodbridge et al., 2025). Rashid et al. (2014) research supports this assertion, investigating mosques as a viable setting for drug addiction recovery within the muslim community. This statement aligns with Zahrin et al. (2020) assertion that the teaching and learning process should prioritise parenting informed by the psychology of love. The integration of these links will stimulate idea generation and constructive thinking, enhance knowledge acquisition, and, subsequently, alter attitudes or the application of knowledge. Cahyani

& Nashori (2024) and Putri et al. (2023) affirm that external assistance significantly contributes to fostering resilience. For instance, cultivating social relationships, fostering a sense of belonging, promoting nonjudgment, and ensuring individuals feel valued and respected are essential components of logic models aligned with social reintegration in desistance theory (Murray et al., 2019; Solomontos-Kountouri & Hatzitofi, 2016). This argument fosters resilience in inmates, helping them remain motivated as they navigate life in prison.

### ***Rehabilitation as Therapy***

This concept is an intervention by the prison towards inmates to address mental deficits, which are understood to be the cause of past offences (Forsberg & Douglas, 2022). During our therapeutic interventions in prisons, we saw the implementation of *tahlilan*, a local religious ceremony, within the prisons. This practice includes *dhikr*, *shalawat*, and excerpts from Qur'anic texts. Beller et al. (2019) assert that the impact of religion depends on the cultural setting. For instance, in research by Zafar & Abu-Hussin (2025) and Hammad (2024), elevated religiosity in cultural contexts is more pronounced at the individual level. Consequently, it can be inferred that religion was more robust in fulfilling the positive criteria of protective impact, particularly among Muslims in Islamic nations.

Our research indicates that the adoption of Islamic religious instruction in prisons positively influences inmates, enhancing their spirituality and enabling them to regulate their emotions. The findings of Cahyani & Nashori (2024) and Skowroński & Domżalska (2017) indicate that inmates' endeavours to enhance their spiritual resilience are influenced by key religious activities in prisons, including congregational prayers, Qur'an recitation, and participation in religious ceremonies. Life in prison is inextricably linked to endeavours that seek to draw nearer to God, which significantly aids in surmounting challenges and functions as a means of self-enhancement.

In Islam, the practice of using the Qur'an for healing is called *ruqyah*. Empirical research indicates that Qur'an recitation positively influences those with spiritual and psychological difficulties (Saged et al., 2020). Auditory engagement with the Quran has been employed as a therapeutic intervention for psychological disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Kulsoom, 2024). Mulia et al. (2017) employed a spiritual approach utilising *dhikr* as a method in general nursing treatments to alleviate anxiety among inmates in Narcotics Correctional Institutions. Moreover, Hapsari et al. (2024) elucidated that *dhikr* facilitates relaxation and tranquillity, hence diminishing amygdala activity, alleviating muscle tension, and stimulating the parasympathetic nervous system as a counterbalance to the sympathetic nervous system.

Moreover, prayer activities regularly conducted in prisons are seen as therapeutic, fostering a stronger relationship with God. Boy et al. (2023) examined individuals who performed 8 rak'ahs of dhuha prayers daily for 6 weeks and found reduced oxidative stress and enhanced antioxidant defences in older women. Irawati et al. (2023) reported that consistent prayer and *dhikr* practices positively influence mental and physical health. Interpersonal reconciliation, augmented by spiritual care, is a process that connects Islamic devotion to mental health and well-being. Furthermore, Anaraki (2022) concludes that individuals who engage in Islamic rituals, particularly those who memorise the Quran, are markedly less likely to engage in criminal activities and to maintain associations with inmates. The time dedicated to memorising the Quran precludes people from engaging in negative activities.

### ***Rehabilitation as Moral Improvement***

This stage maintains a shared commitment to a specific objective: enhancing the perpetrator's moral character. However, it diverges in its interpretation of what constitutes moral progress and the acceptable aims of rehabilitation (Forsberg & Douglas, 2022). Enforced habits achieve moral enhancement in prisons. The inmates' backgrounds, lacking exposure to religion, will render them uncomfortable with prison customs. This method is implemented by coercion, indicating that noncompliance will result in harsh punishments. Compliance may lead to remission for certain individuals, while others deemed active throughout the incarceration time may receive the benefit of release from prison.

The officer-imposed habituation contradicts Jang & Johnson (2024) and Pedrosa et al. (2024), who assert that religious programmes in prisons are less successful for those who are hesitant to engage, since volunteering is a crucial determinant of the beneficial effects of religion. However, our findings reveal a different reality. *Pesantren* programmes in prisons essentially operate as instruments of social control and structural coercion. Dense religious routines are used tactically to discipline inmates and drain their energy, effectively reducing the potential for conflict and ensuring institutional order. Recognising the participants' purely pragmatic initial motivation (for remission), the prisons use coercion to engineer transformation through three progressive phases: pragmatic compliance (rational calculation), habituation (the erosion of resistance through routine), and finally, internalisation (mechanical routines become spiritual needs). In this context, coercion in the initial phase is an institutional strategy to "buy time" until this intrinsic awareness is fully formed.

The learning of tauhid (theology) is imparted to inmates to establish a robust foundation of trust in a Forgiving God. Consequently, they are anticipated to be able to acclimatise to incarceration and recognise that future life has the potential for optimism. Husain et al. (2025) posits that integrating a belief-based perspective into psychotherapy might enhance therapeutic interactions, reduce resistance to treatment, and cultivate a sense of comfort and trust among clients. Woodbridge et al. (2025) investigated deep coping, based on the conviction that God predetermines fate, which facilitates individuals in deriving meaning from pain, mitigating anger, and reinforcing their faith in pursuing a virtuous path. Furthermore, Bhutta et al. (2019) demonstrate that core religious beliefs are strongly associated with rehabilitation.

### ***Rehabilitation as Restoration***

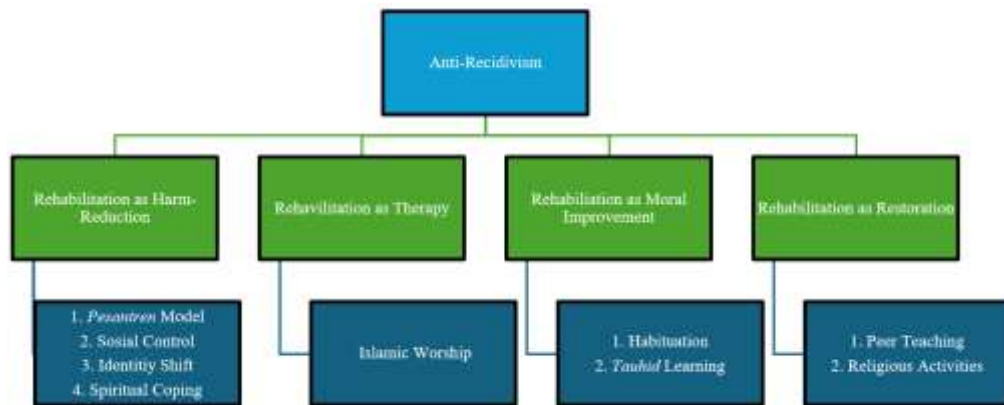
In this framework, rehabilitation seeks to reinstate the perpetrator's social or moral standing within society, enhance their social or moral interactions with others, and cultivate the requisite abilities for such restoration (Forsberg & Douglas, 2022). For most inmates, religious activities became significant in prison, even though they were less central to their lives before imprisonment. A notable aspect of this *Pesantren* system is its use of a peer-teaching methodology for Quranic reading, which has garnered a favourable response from the inmates. The prisons investigated by Gajek (2024) transcend mere confinement; in the absence of an *imam* (Muslim leader), inmates assume the role of imam, conduct services, provide counselling, and frequently serve as mediators in conflicts.

This contradicts the assertion by Kakupa & Mulenga (2021) that inmates and prison staff are deemed inept and deficient in pedagogical understanding when instructing inmates, a view attributed to the absence of qualified personnel with teaching abilities.

Our findings also contradict Murray et al. (2019) claim that implementing care farming for inmates, through the segregation of disruptive individuals and increased interaction with animals and farmers, is essential for fostering contemplation and cultivating a new, improved identity. This statement indicates that such segregation discriminates and subjects inmates labelled as harassers to exclusion.

This section is linked to previous sections on *tahlilan* and shalat. Rehabilitation also includes religious ceremonies like the Prophet's Birthday, Eid, and Muharram. Festivals include food and Islamic arts, such as *Al-Banjari*. *Hadroh* performers include inmates, involving them in the process. Increased religious activity reduces boredom with daily tasks. An increase in religious activities correlates with a reduced likelihood of boredom in engaging with daily tasks. Jang & Johnson (2024) confirm that inmates engage in this to develop a prosocial identity. Stansfield et al. (2017) say religion provides structure, emotional support, and rehabilitation. While some conclusions contradict, Beller et al. (2019) state that personal belief in a religion can be significant; this does not imply that people must worship regularly. Participants in collective religious activities may downplay their personal relationship with God or cosmic entities. Researchers focusing on incarcerated adolescents cannot apply this statement to older adults.

The Indonesian criminal justice system is evolving from a retributive colonial model of punishment to a restorative justice framework. This philosophical transformation regards inmates not as societal detritus but as individuals requiring moral reintegration (Solomontos-Kountouri & Hatzitoffi, 2016). An explicit realisation of this vision is the establishment of *Pesantren*-based prisons, which transform prisons into humane educational environments. This groundbreaking model concurrently safeguards society, ethically rehabilitates inmates, and upholds the right to inclusive education as stipulated by SDG 4. This transformation signifies a strategic social investment that redefines the prison narrative—from a mere site for punishment to a hub of human enlightenment.



**Figure 1.** *The Pesantren model as a practical blueprint for taxonomy of rehabilitation in prisons*

#### IV. CONCLUSION

This study implements Fousberg and Douglas's five-part taxonomy of rehabilitation, transforming it from a theoretical framework into a practical application. This research illustrates the practical application of their original taxonomy, which served as a conceptual framework for inmate rehabilitation, through a *Pesantren*-based guiding model in prisons. This strategy effectively addresses the five rehabilitative ideas by

integrating a structured curriculum, contextual religious learning resources, mentoring, and localised religious activities. This program efficiently fosters inmates' moral well-being, adherence to prison norms, dedication to daily worship, and readiness for successful social reintegration. The transformation of the justice system towards restorative justice establishes *Pesantren* as a pertinent educational paradigm for inmate rehabilitation. This strategy, facilitated by *Pesantren*, aligns with SDG 4 by providing quality education to marginalised individuals within prison walls, thereby transforming prisons from punitive institutions into centres of human enlightenment.

The study's shortcomings include the lack of comparison of the recidivism rate before and after the programme's introduction with that of comparable prisons (Class II A/B) that do not employ a religious/*Pesantren* approach. As a process-oriented analysis, this study emphasises the mechanisms of rehabilitation and inmate transformation rather than statistical metrics of success. The elaboration on the implementation design and operational framework directly underscores the position of the *Pesantren* as a fundamental instrument of rehabilitation. As a result, the assertion that recidivism has decreased remains indicative. Future research must be quantitative, longitudinal, multi-site, comparative, and include quantifiable indicators (such as competency attainment, programme compliance, and recidivism). To evaluate the simplicity and efficacy of using comparable models, it is also critical to investigate cross-context adaptation, especially in nations with non-Muslim majorities.

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