

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LENGTH OF SENTENCE AND LEVELS OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AMONG INMATES AT THE RUTAN KELAS IIB TRENGGALEK

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ABSTRAK

Gangguan kesehatan mental, khususnya kecemasan dan depresi, merupakan permasalahan yang berpotensi dialami oleh narapidana selama menjalani masa pidana. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara lama masa pidana dengan tingkat kecemasan dan depresi pada narapidana di Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek. Penelitian kuantitatif ini menggunakan desain korelasional analitik dengan pendekatan *cross-sectional*. Populasi penelitian mencakup seluruh narapidana di Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek, dengan jumlah sampel sebanyak 73 responden yang dipilih menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling* berdasarkan kriteria inklusi. Tingkat kecemasan dan depresi diukur menggunakan kuesioner *Patient Health Questionnaire-4* (PHQ-4) sebagai instrumen skrining, sedangkan data lama masa pidana diperoleh dari catatan administrasi rutan. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan uji korelasi *Spearman* dengan tingkat kemaknaan $p < 0,05$. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar narapidana tidak melaporkan gejala kecemasan maupun depresi. Tidak ditemukan hubungan yang bermakna antara lama masa pidana dengan tingkat kecemasan maupun depresi. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa lama masa pidana tidak berasosiasi secara signifikan dengan kondisi psikologis narapidana. Pelaksanaan skrining kesehatan mental secara rutin dan berkelanjutan tetap diperlukan sebagai upaya deteksi dini gejala psikologis di lingkungan rumah tahanan.

ABSTRACT

The Relationship Between Length of Sentence And Levels of Anxiety and Depression Among Inmates at The Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek. Mental health disorders, particularly anxiety and depression, are common concerns among inmates during incarceration. This study aimed to examine the association between sentence length and levels of anxiety and depression among inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek. This quantitative study employed an analytic correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. The population included all inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek, with a total sample of 73 respondents selected through purposive sampling based on predefined inclusion criteria. Anxiety and depression were assessed using the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4), while sentence length data were obtained from institutional administrative records. Data were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation test with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. The results showed that the majority of inmates screened negative for anxiety and depression symptoms. No significant association was found between sentence length and levels of anxiety or depression. These findings suggest that sentence length is not significantly related to anxiety or depression among inmates. Nevertheless, routine and continuous mental health screening remains necessary for early detection of psychological symptoms in the detention center setting.

INTRODUCTION

Inmates represent a population group that is particularly vulnerable to mental health disorders, especially anxiety and depression, during their period of incarceration.¹ The loss of personal freedom, separation from family, restrictions on social interaction, and the need to adapt to a closed institutional environment may generate significant psychological stress. These stressors can affect emotional well-being, quality of life, attitude, and the overall success of rehabilitation and social reintegration processes.²

Globally, depression remains one of the most prevalent mental health disorders.³ Evidence suggests that mental health problems are more common among incarcerated populations compared to the general population. Previous studies report that approximately 10–14% of male inmates and up to 20% of female inmates experience major depressive disorder, while anxiety disorders are also frequently observed in correctional settings. In addition to depression and anxiety, other mental health problems commonly identified among inmates include substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and psychotic disorders. In Indonesia, national health survey data also indicate a considerable burden of mental health problems.⁴ However, empirical evidence specifically addressing mental health conditions among inmates in Indonesian correctional institutions remains limited. Detention facilities also frequently face structural challenges such as overcrowding and limited mental health resources, which may increase inmates' psychological vulnerability and contribute to the development of mental health problems.⁵

Detention centers, as part of the correctional system, are responsible for implementing rehabilitation programs and ensuring inmates' right to health services.^{6,7} In the Indonesian legal context, imprisonment, as regulated by Law Number 1 of 2023 concerning the Criminal Code, emphasizes that punishment aims not only to deter but also to promote rehabilitation, reintegration, and respect for human dignity.⁸ Therefore, addressing psychological well-being including anxiety and depression during incarceration is an essential component of correctional services.

From a theoretical perspective, stress and adaptation frameworks provide relevant insight into inmates' psychological responses. Stuart's stress and adaptation theory explains that individual responses to stressors are influenced by stressor characteristics, perception, and available coping mechanisms.⁹ Similarly, Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping theory emphasizes that psychological stress arises from the interaction between individuals and their environment, mediated by cognitive appraisal and coping strategies.¹⁰ These perspectives suggest that exposure to incarceration-related stressors does not automatically result in anxiety or depression, as adaptive processes and psychosocial support play crucial roles.

Sentence length was selected as the primary variable in this study, as it reflects the duration of exposure to psychosocial stressors within the correctional environment. Inmates serving longer sentences experience prolonged deprivation of freedom, adherence to institutional routines, and social separation, which may affect psychological adaptation and potentially contribute to anxiety and depressive symptoms.^{11,12} Previous studies suggest that psychological adaptation to incarceration commonly occurs within the first three to six months, during which inmates may experience higher levels of stress and emotional distress before gradually adjusting to the institutional environment. However, previous studies have reported inconsistent findings. Some international research suggests that longer incarceration is associated with increased psychological distress due to prolonged stress exposure and social isolation.^{13–15} Conversely, other studies indicate that inmates' mental

health conditions are more strongly influenced by coping capacity, social support, participation in rehabilitation programs, and environmental factors rather than sentence duration alone.^{12,16}

In the Indonesian context, although several studies have examined general mental health conditions or environmental factors within correctional institutions, research specifically analyzing sentence duration as an exposure variable remains scarce.¹⁷ Most national studies primarily focus on prevalence or institutional conditions without explicitly investigating whether the length of incarceration is associated with anxiety and depression. In addition, differences in correctional environments, the availability of mental health services, and sociocultural factors may influence inmates' psychological responses to incarceration. Therefore, empirical evidence from Indonesian detention facilities is still needed to better understand the relationship between sentence duration and mental health outcomes. This limited evidence highlights an important research gap in correctional-based mental health studies in Indonesia, particularly regarding the association between sentence duration and psychological outcomes.

Early identification of anxiety and depression among inmates is essential to prevent more severe psychological consequences. The use of brief, valid, and easily administered screening instruments is particularly important in detention settings with limited resources. The Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4) is a widely used screening tool for anxiety and depression across various populations and has demonstrated good psychometric properties, including satisfactory construct validity and internal reliability, with reported Cronbach's alpha values of approximately 0.80–0.85.^{18–20} Systematic mental health screening in correctional facilities may facilitate early detection and appropriate follow-up interventions.

Considering the limited empirical evidence regarding the association between sentence duration and mental health outcomes among inmates in Indonesian correctional settings, further investigation is needed to provide context-specific evidence that may inform mental health screening and intervention strategies. Based on this background, this study aimed to examine the association between sentence length and anxiety and depression among inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek. The findings are expected to contribute to strengthening evidence-based mental health screening and intervention strategies in Indonesian detention facilities.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative analytic correlational design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the association between sentence length and anxiety and depression among inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek. The study was conducted in January 2026. The study population consisted of all 270 inmates serving sentences at the detention center, with a sample of 73 respondents selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were inmates who were currently serving a criminal sentence, had undergone at least three months of incarceration to allow initial psychological adaptation, were willing to participate, able to communicate effectively, and in stable physical and mental condition to complete the questionnaire, while inmates with severe cognitive impairment, acute psychiatric conditions, or unstable medical conditions were excluded. At the time of data collection, respondents had served varying proportions of their total sentences, representing different stages of incarceration. Sociodemographic characteristics, including age, education level, marital status, and

employment history, were collected to describe the participants background and assess sample homogeneity. The independent variable was sentence length, obtained from official detention administrative records, while the dependent variables were anxiety and depression. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire containing respondent characteristics and the Patient Health Questionnaire-4 (PHQ-4), a brief screening instrument consisting of two anxiety items and two depression items scored on a 4-point Likert scale (0–3) with a total score range of 0–12; validated cut-off thresholds were applied, where a subscale score ≥ 3 indicates probable anxiety or depressive symptoms, and the instrument was used strictly as a screening tool rather than a diagnostic instrument.¹⁹ Data analysis included univariate analysis to describe respondent characteristics and variable distribution, and bivariate analysis using Spearman’s rank correlation test due to ordinal and non-normally distributed data, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$. Ethical approval was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of RSUD dr. Soedomo Trenggalek (Approval Number: 000.9/30/406.010.001/18.00/2026), and all participants provided informed consent, with confidentiality and anonymity maintained in accordance with research ethics principles.

RESULT

Table 1 presents the characteristics of inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek. The majority of respondents were aged 26–44 years (56.2%) and male (93.2%), while nearly half (46.6%) had a sentence length of 1–5 years.

Table 1. Characteristics of Inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek (n = 73)

Characteristics	n	%
Age (Years)		
18-25	6	8.2
26-44	41	56.2
45-59	20	27.4
≥ 60	6	8.2
Gender		
Male	68	93.2
Female	5	6.8
Length of Sentence (Years)		
≤ 1	8	11
>1 – 5	34	46.6
>5	31	42.5

Table 2 shows that the majority of inmates (95.9%) did not report anxiety symptoms based on PHQ-4 screening results.

Table 2. Distribution of Anxiety Levels Based on PHQ-4 Scores (n=73)

Anxiety Level	n	%
Not anxious	70	95.9
Anxious	3	4.1
Total	73	100

Table 3 shows that most inmates (90.4%) did not report depressive symptoms based on PHQ-4 screening results.

Table 3. Distribution of Depression Levels Based on PHQ-4 Scores (n=73)

Depression Level	n	%
Not Depressed	66	90.4
Depressed	7	9.6
Total	73	100

Table 4 presents the results of Spearman's rank correlation analysis, which showed no statistically significant relationship between length of sentence and anxiety levels among inmates ($r = 0.143$; $p = 0.226$).

Table 4. Relationship Between Length of Sentence and Anxiety Levels (Spearman's Test)

Variable	r	p-value
Length of Sentence – Anxiety Level	0.143	0.226

Table 5 shows that there was no statistically significant relationship between length of sentence and depression levels among inmates ($r = 0.004$; $p = 0.975$).

Table 5. Relationship Between Length of Sentence and Depression Levels (Spearman's Test)

Variable	r	p-value
Length of Sentence – Depression Level	0.004	0.975

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that most inmates at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek did not report symptoms of anxiety or depression based on screening results. Although correctional environments may represent potential psychological stressors, incarceration does not inevitably lead to mental health disorders. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously, as the instrument used was a brief self-report screening tool rather than a diagnostic measure.

Bivariate analysis using Spearman's rank correlation test showed no statistically significant relationship between sentence length and anxiety or depression. Although the correlation coefficients indicated very weak relationships, the lack of statistical significance does not necessarily imply the absence of a meaningful relationship. The relatively small sample size may have limited the statistical power to detect modest relationships. Furthermore, the use of purposive sampling within a single detention center may limit the generalizability of these findings.

These findings can be understood through stress and coping theory, which posits that psychological responses to stressors are influenced not only by the duration of exposure but also by cognitive appraisal and coping strategies.¹⁰ In the context of incarceration, stressors such as loss of freedom, restricted social interaction, and uncertainty about the future may be interpreted differently by each individual, resulting in varied emotional responses. When

inmates possess adaptive coping strategies, the negative psychological impact of stress may be mitigated.

Stuart's stress and adaptation theory further explains that individuals exposed to stressors over time may undergo psychological adjustment.⁹ Inmates who have served part of their sentence may develop adaptive mechanisms, such as acceptance of institutional conditions, engagement in structured daily routines, and participation in rehabilitation activities. These adaptive processes may also be influenced by inmates' sociodemographic characteristics, including age, educational background, and previous life experiences, which can shape coping capacity and psychological adjustment during incarceration. Consequently, the interaction between duration of incarceration and individual background factors may contribute to emotional stability despite ongoing confinement.

Consistent with previous research, inmates' mental health appears to be more strongly influenced by psychosocial and environmental factors than by sentence duration alone.^{14,16} Social support from fellow inmates, correctional staff, and family members, as well as engagement in institutional programs, may function as protective factors that reduce the risk of anxiety and depression. Thus, psychological well-being in correctional settings likely results from a complex interaction between individual adaptation and institutional context.

Additionally, the relatively low prevalence of reported symptoms may partly reflect underreporting or social desirability bias. In closed institutional environments, inmates may hesitate to disclose psychological distress due to stigma or perceived consequences. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the broader social and institutional context.

Overall, the results suggest that sentence length was not a dominant determinant of anxiety or depression among inmates in this detention center. The findings indicate that psychosocial factors and individual adaptation processes may play a more substantial role in shaping mental health outcomes during incarceration. Further research with broader samples is needed to explore these factors in greater depth.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this study conducted at Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek, it can be concluded that most inmates did not report symptoms of anxiety or depression based on PHQ-4 screening results. The analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between the length of sentence and levels of anxiety or depression among inmates in this sample. These findings suggest that, within the context of Rutan Kelas IIB Trenggalek, sentence duration was not significantly associated with inmates' anxiety and depression. However, the absence of a significant association does not necessarily indicate that sentence length has no influence, as mental health conditions during incarceration are likely shaped by multifactorial factors, including individual adaptive capacity, social support, and institutional environmental conditions.

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