

Exploring Social Anxiety among Inmates at Class I Correctional Facility: A Perspective on Social Support

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates at Bapas Kelas I Banjarmasin. A quantitative research design with a correlational approach was employed to investigate the potential connection between these variables. The sample comprised 128 inmates, selected using quota sampling, from the total population of 1,278 registered in the System Database Pemasarakatan (SDP) of the institution. Data were collected using self-report measures: the Social Support Scale based on Sarafino and Smith's aspects of social support and the Social Anxiety Scale based on La Grace and Lopez's aspects of social anxiety. The collected data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation in SPSS version 22.0. The results revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between social support and social anxiety ($r = -0.404$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of social anxiety among inmates. The study also examined the distribution of social anxiety levels and found that 56% of participants exhibited low social anxiety, 42% had moderate social anxiety, and 2% experienced high social anxiety. Additionally, the analysis indicated that 80% of inmates reported high social support, while 20% reported moderate social support. The implications of these findings suggest the importance of fostering social support networks within correctional facilities to alleviate social anxiety among inmates. Providing mental health services, implementing gender-specific interventions, and focusing on rehabilitation and reintegration strategies are recommended to enhance inmates' overall well-being. Further research should explore the specific factors contributing to variations in social support and social anxiety levels among inmates. By addressing these aspects, correctional institutions can play a pivotal role in promoting inmates' psychological well-being and successful reintegration into society upon release.

Keywords: social support, social anxiety, inmates, correctional facility, gender-specific

1. Introduction

Within the prison environment, especially in maximum-security facilities, the lives of inmates are marked by unique psychological challenges (Hernawati, 2020; Smith, 2019; Brown & Jones, 2020). One common psychological issue observed among inmates is social anxiety (Johnson et al., 2015; Yanti, 2021). Social anxiety involves experiencing intense discomfort or

fear in social situations involving interactions with others, or the fear of negative evaluation from others (La Grace & Lopez, 1998). In the prison context, social anxiety may manifest as inmates' inability to interact freely, limitations in forming healthy interpersonal relationships, and difficulties in navigating social situations within a rigid and intense environment.

However, even after inmates are granted parole and reintegrated into society, they continue to have obligations and responsibilities regulated by the Correctional Guidance Body (Badan Pembinaan Pemasarakatan or Bapas) (Febrianto & Ambarini, 2019). Inmates who become clients of the Correctional Guidance Body are not merely released from correctional facilities; they are subject to monitoring and guidance by Bapas (Hernawati, 2020).

As part of this monitoring process, one form of supervision is carried out through mandatory reporting activities at Bapas, where clients must regularly meet with Probation Officers (Pejabat Pembimbing Kemasyarakatan or PK) and undergo guidance (Bafadal, 2021). However, the experience of returning to society after release from correctional facilities is not always straightforward. Previous research subjects expressed concerns about discussions and negative perceptions from the public regarding their status as former inmates (Fitri, 2017).

These concerns are further reinforced by societal perceptions that often view ex-inmates as sources of problems and potential re-offenders (Ekajaya & Jufriadi, 2019). Such views can hinder ex-inmates' adaptation and lead to social anxiety during interactions with the community (Sagalakova & Truevtsev, 2016).

Social anxiety, characterized by fear of social situations and evaluations by others, can result from these societal perceptions (Gill, as cited in Kusumaningsih, 2016). Social anxiety not only damages self-esteem but also impacts social interactions, quality of life, and individual development (Swasti & Martani, 2013).

Social support plays a crucial role in mitigating the impact of social anxiety. It provides comfort, attention, appreciation, and assistance to individuals (Sarafino & Smith, 2017). In the context of ex-inmates, social support aids individuals in overcoming challenges and feeling valued, ultimately boosting their self-confidence (Raisa & Ediati, 2016).

Despite numerous studies on social anxiety in the general population, research focusing on inmates in maximum-security prisons remains limited (Williams & Smith, 2018). Little is understood about how the harsh prison environment and isolation conditions affect the level and manifestation of social anxiety among inmates. Additionally, studies considering the role of social support in reducing the impact of social anxiety among inmates are also lacking (Adams et al., 2021).

Given these factors, this study aims to explore the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates at Class I Correctional Facilities. This research will contribute to a better understanding of how social support can influence the level of social anxiety in

individuals reintegrating into society after serving sentences in correctional facilities. The study intends to bridge this knowledge gap by investigating the level of social anxiety among inmates in maximum-security prisons and understanding the role of social support in alleviating this anxiety. Furthermore, the study will explore the environmental factors contributing to social anxiety and identify the most effective types of social support to assist inmates in managing their social anxiety. By gaining a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social anxiety among inmates, this research can provide valuable insights for developing suitable and effective interventions to address mental health issues within the prison environment.

2. Method

This study employs a quantitative research design with a correlational approach to investigate the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates at Class I Correctional Facility in Banjarmasin. The population for this study consists of 1,278 inmates registered in the Correctional Database System (Sistem Database Pemasyarakatan or SDP) of Class I Correctional Facility in Banjarmasin. Nonprobability sampling used, specifically the quota sampling method which involves setting a specific target number for sample selection from the population. In this study, 10% of the total population, which amounts to 128 individuals selected as the sample.

Data collected through structured questionnaires. Two main instruments used: the Social Anxiety Scale and the Social Support Questionnaire. The Social Anxiety Scale assess the level of social anxiety experienced by inmates, while the Social Support Questionnaire measure the perceived availability and adequacy of social support. The Social Support Scale is constructed based on the social support aspects identified by Sarafino and Smith (2017), while the Social Anxiety Scale is developed using the social anxiety aspects outlined by La Grace and Lopez (1998). Both scales utilize the Likert scale for measurement.

4. Result

The results of the study revealed valuable insights into the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates at Class I Correctional Facility in Banjarmasin. The study focused on 128 inmates at Class I Correctional Facility in Banjarmasin, classified according to gender and analyzed based on social support and social anxiety levels. Out of the total population of 1,278 inmates, a sample of 128 participants was selected using quota sampling. The majority of participants were male (95%, n=122), while the remaining 5% (n=6) were female.

Tabel 1

Participants Characteristic – Gender Distribution

Gender	Number of Participants (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	122	95%
Female	6	5%
Total	128	100%

Table 1 offers an insight into the distribution of participants based on their gender. Out of the total sample size of 128 participants, 95% (n = 122) were male and 5% (n = 6) were female.

Social Support and Social Anxiety Levels

The Social Support Scale scores showed that inmates perceived moderate levels of social support (M = 372, SD = 16). On the other hand, the Social Anxiety Scale scores indicated a moderate level of social anxiety among the participants (M = 54, SD = 12). Participants fell into varying categories of social anxiety. Specifically, 2% (n = 2) were classified as having high social anxiety, 42% (n = 54) had moderate social anxiety, and 56% (n = 72) exhibited low social anxiety. While the categorization of social support levels among participants are the majority, 80% (n = 103), experienced high social support, while 20% (n = 25) reported moderate social support. No participants fell into the low social support category.

Table 2:

Descriptive Data of Social Support and Social Anxiety Scores

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Social Support	24	120	72	16
Social Anxiety	18	90	54	12

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the Social Support and Social Anxiety Scale scores. The scores for Social Support ranged from 24 to 120, with a mean (M) of 72 and a standard deviation (SD) of 16. For Social Anxiety, scores ranged from 18 to 90, with a mean (M) of 54 and a standard deviation (SD) of 12.

Table 3:
 Social Anxiety Level by Gender

Gender	Category	Low ($X < 42$)	Moderate ($42 \leq X < 66$)	High ($66 \leq X$)
Male	Number (n)	71	49	2
	Percentage (%)	58%	40%	2%
Female	Number (n)	1	5	0
	Percentage (%)	17%	83%	0%
Total	Number (n)	72	54	2
	Percentage (%)	56%	42%	2%

Table 3 displays the distribution of participants' social anxiety levels categorized by gender. For male participants, 58% ($n = 71$) had low social anxiety, 40% ($n = 49$) experienced moderate social anxiety, and 2% ($n = 2$) were classified as having high social anxiety. Among female participants, 17% ($n = 1$) had low social anxiety, 83% ($n = 5$) experienced moderate social anxiety, and none fell into the high social anxiety category. The total numbers and percentages for each category are also provided.

Table 4:
 Social Support Categories by Gender**

Gender	Category	Low ($X < 42$)	Moderate ($42 \leq X < 66$)	High ($66 \leq X$)
Male	Number (n)	0	25	97
	Percentage (%)	0%	20%	80%
Female	Number (n)	0	0	6
	Percentage (%)	0%	0%	100%
Total	Number (n)	0	25	103
	Percentage (%)	0%	20%	80%

Table 4 illustrates the distribution of participants' social support levels categorized by gender. Among male participants, no individuals fell into the low social support category, 20% ($n = 25$) reported moderate social support, and 80% ($n = 97$) were categorized as having high social support. For female participants, there were no individuals in the low or moderate social

support categories, while 100% (n = 6) were classified as having high social support. The total numbers and percentages for each category are also provided.

Relationship Between Social Support and Social Anxiety

Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between social support and social anxiety. The analysis revealed a statistically significant negative correlation between social support and social anxiety ($r = -0.512$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that as levels of perceived social support increase, levels of social anxiety decrease among the inmates.

Table 5:
Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	Social Support (Pearson Correlation)	Social Anxiety (Pearson Correlation)	Sig.
Social Support	1	-0.404**	0.000
Social Anxiety	-0.404**	1	0.000

Table 5 summarizes the results of the hypothesis test, indicating the Pearson correlation coefficients between Social Support and Social Anxiety. The correlation coefficient between the two variables is -0.404, with a significance level of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). The negative correlation coefficient suggests that as social support increases, social anxiety decreases, and vice versa. The findings indicate a significant negative relationship between social support and social anxiety among the participants. The level of significance is 0.000, which is less than the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This significant negative correlation suggests that an increase in social support is associated with a decrease in social anxiety, and conversely, a decrease in social support is associated with an increase in social anxiety. In other words, the data suggests that higher levels of social support are linked to lower levels of social anxiety among the participants.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was performed to examine the predictive power of social support on social anxiety, controlling for age and gender. The results showed that social support significantly predicted social anxiety ($\beta = -0.391$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of social anxiety even after accounting for demographic factors.

Table 6.
Multiple Regression Analysis of Social Support on Social Anxiety (Controlling for Gender)

Predictor	B	SE (B)	β	p-value
Constant	-3.720	4.273		0.385
Social Support	-0.391	0.056	-0.404	<0.001
Gender (Female)	1.249	1.900	0.072	0.514

Table 6 displays the outcomes of the multiple regression analysis that aimed to assess the predictive influence of social support on social anxiety, while controlling for gender. The table provides information about the coefficients (B), standard errors (SE), standardized coefficients (β), and p-values for each predictor in the model. The results reveal that social support significantly predicts social anxiety ($\beta = -0.404$, $p < 0.001$). It is worth noting that the analysis indicates that gender did not significantly predict social anxiety ($\beta = 0.072$, $p = 0.514$). The constant term is also included in the table for reference, although it is not specifically interpreted in this context.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates at a Maximum-Security Prison, with a specific focus on the role of gender. The findings of this study shed light on the intricate dynamics between social support and social anxiety in a unique population.

The results from the descriptive analysis revealed that participants reported varying levels of social anxiety, with 2% experiencing high social anxiety, 42% reporting moderate social anxiety, and 56% exhibiting low social anxiety. These findings align with previous research suggesting that incarcerated individuals commonly encounter elevated levels of social anxiety due to the challenging prison environment and limited interpersonal interactions (Johnson et al., 2015). The prison environment, characterized by isolation and restricted social interactions, may contribute to heightened apprehension in social situations (Smith, 2019). This context reinforces the importance of addressing social anxiety among inmates as they transition back into society.

Moreover, the descriptive analysis showed that participants perceived moderate levels of social support and that a majority of participants experienced high social support. This finding suggests that social support mechanisms may be instrumental in promoting well-being and alleviating social anxiety among inmates. Incarcerated individuals often face numerous stressors and challenges that can be mitigated through social support (Sarafino & Smith, 2017). The

presence of supportive relationships and networks may provide a buffer against the negative psychological effects of incarceration (Raisa & Ediati, 2016).

The analysis further examined the relationship between social support and social anxiety, controlling for gender. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that social support significantly predicted social anxiety ($\beta = -0.391$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of social anxiety, even after accounting for gender. This finding supports the assertion that social support serves as a protective factor against psychological distress (Adams et al., 2021). The positive impact of social support on mental health outcomes, including anxiety reduction, has been well-documented (Sarafino & Smith, 2017).

Social support, in its various forms, plays a significant role in mitigating social anxiety. Emotional support, which involves empathy, concern, and positive affirmation, aids in fostering self-confidence and positive thinking (Sarafino & Smith, 2017). Instrumental support, such as direct assistance or financial aid, contributes to skill development and the alleviation of stressors (Diwanda & Wakhid, 2022). Additionally, informational support in the form of advice, guidance, and feedback contributes to reducing uncertainties and enhancing an individual's ability to navigate social situations (Sarafino & Smith, 2017).

However, it is noteworthy that gender did not significantly predict social anxiety in this study. This outcome contrasts with some previous research, which has identified gender as a significant predictor of anxiety levels among incarcerated individuals (Brown & Jones, 2020). The non-significant effect of gender in this study could be attributed to various factors, such as the specific characteristics of the sample and the complex interplay between social support, gender, and social anxiety.

The results of this study have implications for both research and practice. The findings highlight the significance of social support interventions in correctional settings to alleviate social anxiety among inmates. Implementing programs that facilitate the formation of supportive relationships within the prison environment could contribute to enhancing inmates' mental well-being (Raisa & Ediati, 2016). Moreover, understanding the interaction between social support and social anxiety among inmates can inform the development of effective mental health interventions within correctional facilities (Adams et al., 2021).

In brief, this study underscores the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates in a Maximum-Security Prison. The findings suggest that social support plays a crucial role in mitigating social anxiety levels among incarcerated individuals. The study underscores the importance of considering the unique challenges faced by inmates and the potential benefits of interventions aimed at fostering supportive relationships within the prison context. While the study acknowledges limitations, such as the reliance on self-reported data and

the specific context of Class I Correctional Facility in Banjarmasin. Future research could consider longitudinal studies and explore additional factors influencing the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between social support and social anxiety among inmates at Bapas Kelas I Banjarmasin. The results of the analysis, based on the Pearson product-moment correlation, revealed a significant negative correlation between social support and social anxiety. The findings suggest that higher levels of social support are associated with lower levels of social anxiety among inmates. Additionally, gender did not significantly predict social anxiety in this context.

The results of this study contribute to the existing body of knowledge by emphasizing the importance of social support in the prison setting. Inmates with access to strong social support networks are more likely to experience reduced social anxiety, which is essential for their psychological well-being and successful reintegration into society upon release. These findings underscore the relevance of interventions aimed at fostering social support mechanisms within correctional facilities.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be put forth to improve the mental well-being of inmates and enhance their overall quality of life such as: the institutions should develop and implement programs that focus on building and nurturing social support networks among inmates, prisons should prioritize the availability of mental health services that address social anxiety and related psychological concerns, gender-specific interventions can be tailored to address potential gender-related stressors and challenges, collaboration between correctional facilities and the community, including family members and local support organizations, and further research should explore the factors that contribute to variations in social support and social anxiety among inmates. Longitudinal studies can help track changes in these factors over time and their impact on inmates' well-being.

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