

The Effectiveness of Limited Family Visitation Services in Supporting Inmate Rehabilitation (A Study at the Langkat Youth Correctional Institution)

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of limited family visitation services for inmates in supporting rehabilitation programs at the Youth Correctional Institution of Langkat. Law Number 22 of 2022 concerning Corrections affirms that inmates retain the right to receive family visits as part of the rehabilitation process. However, in practice, visitation is often restricted due to considerations of security and order. This research employs a normative juridical method with statutory, conceptual, and evaluative approaches. The findings indicate that limited visitation services have a valid legal basis and are implemented in accordance with formal provisions; however, their effectiveness in supporting rehabilitation remains suboptimal due to the absence of measurable indicators related to the quality of interaction, psychological impact, and readiness for social reintegration. This study recommends strengthening technical guidelines based on outcome-based correctional policy so that limited visitation policies are not solely oriented toward security, but also substantively support inmate rehabilitation.

Keywords: Legal Effectiveness, Limited Visitation, Inmate Rehabilitation, Corrections, Social Reintegration

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2nd International Conference on Islamic Community Studies (ICICS)
Theme: History of Malay Civilisation and Islamic Human Capacity and Halal Hub in the Globalization Era
<https://proceeding.pancabudi.ac.id/index.php/ICIE/index>

Introduction

The Indonesian correctional system has undergone a significant conceptual transformation following the enactment of Law Number 22 of 2022 on Corrections, which emphasizes a rehabilitative and reintegrative paradigm. This regulation positions inmates as subjects of development who retain their fundamental rights, despite restrictions on physical liberty as a consequence of criminal sanctions. The deprivation of liberty is defined as the only permissible form of suffering imposed by the state, while other rights, including the right to communicate and receive family visits, remain guaranteed as part of a correctional process oriented toward behavioral change and social reintegration. This approach aligns with contemporary correctional theories that emphasize reintegration as a key indicator of the success of penal systems [1].

Within the framework of modern corrections, family relationships are not merely viewed as personal ties but as strategic instruments in the rehabilitation process. Emotional, moral, and social support from family members plays a crucial role in maintaining the psychological stability of inmates during incarceration. Recent studies indicate that inmates who actively maintain family connections tend to exhibit lower rates of institutional misconduct and better adaptive behavior during imprisonment [2]. Furthermore, contemporary empirical research confirms that both the intensity and quality of family visitation are significantly associated with reduced recidivism following release [3].

More recent studies further reinforce these findings. Longitudinal research demonstrates that the quality of family support during incarceration contributes significantly to successful social reintegration and post-release behavioral stability [4]. Other findings highlight that sustained family relationships during imprisonment serve as a strong predictor of successful reentry into society [5]. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of correctional systems is not solely determined by security measures, but also by the quality of social interactions maintained throughout the period of incarceration.

Nevertheless, in the practical implementation of correctional services in Indonesia, the right to visitation is often restricted through limited visitation policies due to concerns over security, order, and infrastructural constraints. These restrictions may include reduced visitation duration, limitations on the number of visitors, and strict supervision during visits. Normatively, such restrictions are permissible as long as they adhere to the principle of proportionality and do not eliminate the substance of the right itself. However, an excessive focus on security risks creating a gap between the rehabilitative objectives mandated by law and their practical implementation, particularly when such policies are not accompanied by measurable outcome-based evaluations [2].

The urgency of evaluating the effectiveness of limited visitation policies becomes even more critical in the context of the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility. Young inmates are in a dynamic psychosocial developmental phase and are particularly vulnerable to identity disorientation. At this stage, family support plays a more significant role in shaping behavioral change motivation and readiness for reintegration. Empirical evidence suggests that social support among younger populations significantly contributes to the development of prosocial identity and the reduction of deviant behavior tendencies [4]. If visitation restriction policies are not complemented by an outcome-based approach, there is a risk that such policies will remain merely administrative in nature and fail to substantively support the rehabilitation process.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study focuses on two research questions. First, what are the parameters for evaluating the effectiveness of limited family visitation services within the framework of rehabilitation and social reintegration? Second, to what extent has the implementation of limited visitation services at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility been effective in supporting the rehabilitation of young inmates in accordance with the objectives of Law Number 22 of 2022 on Corrections?

Literature Review

1. Rehabilitation Theory in Modern Criminal Justice Systems

Rehabilitation theory represents one of the dominant paradigms in modern criminal law. Unlike retributive theories that emphasize punishment as retaliation, rehabilitation theory conceptualizes punishment as a mechanism for behavioral transformation. The primary goal of sentencing is not merely to impose suffering, but to reform offenders' attitudes, mindset, and behavior so that they can reintegrate into society as productive and responsible individuals. Contemporary criminological studies emphasize that rehabilitation-oriented correctional systems are more effective in achieving long-term crime reduction and social reintegration outcomes [6].

Within the Indonesian correctional system, this theory is reflected in the principle that deprivation of liberty constitutes the only legitimate form of punishment. Consequently, all correctional policies and institutional services must be directed toward rehabilitation, including family visitation services. The maintenance of social relationships is considered an integral part of moral and social correction processes. Empirical research confirms that correctional environments emphasizing human interaction and social support significantly improve inmate rehabilitation outcomes [7].

Rehabilitation theory further asserts that behavioral change cannot occur in isolation. Inmates remain part of a broader social system, and external support particularly from family plays a crucial role in facilitating this transformation. Therefore, policies restricting family interaction must carefully consider their potential impact on rehabilitation objectives, ensuring consistency with the fundamental goals of modern penal systems [6].

2. Social Bonding Theory and the Role of Family Relationships

Social bonding theory, introduced by Travis Hirschi, posits that individuals are less likely to engage in deviant behavior when they maintain strong social bonds. These bonds include attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief in social norms. In correctional settings, family represents the most immediate and influential form of such bonding.

Family visitation plays a critical role in maintaining emotional attachment between inmates and their social environment. When these bonds are preserved, the likelihood of institutional misconduct and recidivism decreases. Recent empirical findings demonstrate that consistent and meaningful family contact significantly contributes to behavioral stability and institutional compliance among inmates [8].

Moreover, contemporary studies indicate that the impact of family visitation extends beyond emotional support, influencing measurable criminological outcomes. The strength and continuity of social bonds during incarceration are closely associated with reduced reoffending rates and improved reintegration prospects. Consequently, restrictive visitation policies that undermine the quality of social bonding may weaken the rehabilitative function of correctional institutions [8].

3. Social Support Theory and Psychological Stability of Inmates

Social support theory emphasizes that individuals with strong support networks tend to have better mental health and greater resilience in coping with stress. In correctional contexts, inmates face significant psychological pressures due to loss of liberty, social stigma, and separation from family. Recent studies highlight that maintaining family relationships during incarceration is essential for preserving inmates' psychological well-being. Positive family interactions reduce anxiety, depression, and social isolation, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs [9]. In contrast, limited or poor-quality social support increases the risk of psychological distress, which may hinder behavioral transformation.

Furthermore, research shows that the quality of family interaction plays a more significant role than the frequency of visits. Meaningful communication and emotional engagement are key determinants of inmate behavioral stability and institutional adjustment [9]. This finding is

particularly relevant in the context of restricted visitation policies, where excessive limitations may reduce the effectiveness of social support mechanisms and negatively affect rehabilitation outcomes.

4. Social Reintegration Theory and Recidivism Prevention

Social reintegration theory emphasizes that the success of correctional systems is measured by the ability of former inmates to return to society without reoffending. Reintegration is not merely an administrative process but a complex social transition involving community acceptance and sustained family support.

Recent longitudinal studies demonstrate that family support functions as critical social capital, facilitating access to employment, housing, and social networks after release [10]. Strong family relationships during incarceration significantly increase the likelihood of successful reintegration and reduce the probability of recidivism.

Additionally, empirical evidence shows that individuals who maintain stable family ties during imprisonment are more capable of adapting socially and economically upon release. These findings indicate that family visitation services have long-term implications for correctional effectiveness. Therefore, policies restricting visitation should be evaluated not only from a short-term security perspective but also in terms of their long-term impact on reintegration outcomes and recidivism prevention [10].

Research Methodology

This study employs a normative juridical method, which focuses on the analysis of written legal norms and relevant legal concepts related to the research problem. The normative legal approach is selected because this research examines the consistency between legal regulations governing limited family visitation for inmates and their implementation within correctional practices, particularly from the perspective of rehabilitation and social reintegration as mandated by Law Number 22 of 2022 on Corrections. Normative legal research remains a fundamental approach in contemporary legal scholarship, particularly in assessing the coherence between regulatory frameworks and their practical application [11].

The approaches used in this study include the statutory approach, the conceptual approach, and the policy evaluation approach. The statutory approach is applied to systematically analyze the provisions of Law Number 22 of 2022 on Corrections along with its implementing regulations, including those governing visitation services in correctional institutions. The analysis focuses on core legal principles such as proportionality, human rights protection, and the rehabilitative orientation of correctional systems. Recent legal studies emphasize that modern statutory interpretation must integrate human rights standards with empirical policy considerations to ensure regulatory effectiveness [12].

The conceptual approach is employed to examine relevant theoretical frameworks, including rehabilitation theory, social bonding theory, social support theory, and social reintegration theory. These theories function as analytical tools to evaluate whether limited visitation policies remain aligned with the broader objectives of inmate rehabilitation. This approach enables the integration of legal norms with contemporary developments in criminological and legal theory, thereby ensuring that the analysis extends beyond formalistic interpretation toward a more substantive normative evaluation [13].

Meanwhile, the policy evaluation approach is used to assess the effectiveness of the implementation of limited visitation services at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility. The evaluation is conducted by examining the alignment between normative objectives established in legal regulations and their technical implementation in practice, as well as analyzing their impact on inmate rehabilitation outcomes. An outcome-based evaluation framework is applied to determine whether the policy contributes to behavioral stability, psychological well-being, and readiness for social reintegration. Contemporary correctional research highlights that

outcome-based evaluation is essential in measuring the real impact of institutional policies on rehabilitation and recidivism reduction [14].

The legal materials used in this study consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. Primary legal materials include statutory regulations related to corrections and prisoners' rights. Secondary materials consist of academic literature, peer-reviewed national and international journal articles indexed in Scopus, and empirical studies relevant to family visitation and social reintegration. Tertiary materials include legal dictionaries, encyclopedias, and other reference sources that support conceptual clarification. The integration of these sources is essential in strengthening the validity and depth of normative legal research [11].

Data collection is conducted through library research, involving the systematic identification and review of legal materials and relevant academic literature. All collected materials are analyzed qualitatively using a descriptive-analytical method. Descriptive analysis is used to explain normative provisions and the implementation of limited visitation policies, while analytical methods are employed to connect legal norms with theoretical frameworks and empirical findings. Conclusions are drawn deductively, moving from general legal principles and theories toward specific analysis of the case at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility. This approach reflects contemporary methodological standards in legal research that emphasize theory-driven and evidence-based analysis [13].

Through this methodological framework, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the alignment between legal norms and the implementation of limited visitation policies, while also offering policy recommendations grounded in a rehabilitative and outcome-based approach to enhance the effectiveness of the Indonesian correctional system [14], [15].

Results

1. Parameters for the Effectiveness of Limited Visitation Services in the Perspective of Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration

Normatively, the regulation of family visitation rights within the Indonesian correctional system is aligned with the rehabilitative paradigm. However, the core issue does not lie in formal legality, but rather in how the effectiveness of such policies is measured. Most national regulations emphasize effectiveness in terms of administrative compliance, including procedural order, adherence to schedules, and institutional security. This approach remains predominantly input-oriented, rather than outcome-oriented.

In contrast, contemporary international correctional frameworks have shifted toward outcome-based evaluation models, which assess the impact of policies on behavioral change, psychological well-being, and recidivism reduction. Recent empirical studies demonstrate that correctional interventions emphasizing measurable outcomes are significantly more effective in achieving long-term rehabilitation goals and reducing reoffending rates [16].

Family visitation plays a crucial role as an informal social control mechanism within correctional institutions. More importantly, recent systematic analyses confirm that sustained and meaningful family engagement contributes not only to institutional order but also to broader public safety through reduced recidivism [17]. These findings reinforce the argument that visitation policies should be evaluated based on their long-term rehabilitative impact rather than solely on short-term administrative compliance.

Furthermore, recent longitudinal research highlights that the quality of family support during incarceration functions as a protective factor against recidivism and enhances post-release adjustment [18]. These findings emphasize that qualitative aspects of interaction—such as emotional engagement and meaningful communication—are more significant than the mere frequency of visits.

Based on these findings, the parameters for evaluating the effectiveness of limited visitation services should include behavioral change during incarceration, psychological well-being of inmates, quality of family relationships, and readiness for post-release reintegration.

Without these indicators, visitation policies risk being reduced to administrative control mechanisms rather than functioning as substantive rehabilitative instruments.

Thus, in addressing the first research question, the effectiveness of limited visitation services cannot be assessed solely through regulatory compliance. Instead, it must be evaluated based on its contribution to rehabilitation and social reintegration, which constitute the core objectives of modern correctional systems.

2. Critical Evaluation of the Implementation of Limited Visitation Services at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility

Formally, the implementation of limited visitation policies at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility complies with existing legal regulations. Restrictions on the number of visitors, visitation duration, and strict supervision are applied to maintain institutional security and order. However, critical analysis reveals that the effectiveness of implementation remains predominantly security-oriented rather than outcome-based. There is no evidence of systematic evaluation instruments designed to measure the impact of visitation on inmate behavior, emotional stability, or readiness for reintegration. This indicates that the policy remains largely administrative in nature.

The characteristics of juvenile inmates further strengthen this critique. At this developmental stage, social identity and moral values are still evolving, making family support a crucial factor in shaping behavioral change. Recent criminological studies indicate that correctional policies targeting young offenders must integrate psychosocial dimensions to effectively support rehabilitation and reduce recidivism risks [19]. From a social support perspective, overly restrictive visitation durations may reduce the quality of emotional interaction between inmates and their families. Contemporary research confirms that the quality of interpersonal contact significantly influences inmate behavioral stability and institutional adjustment outcomes [20]. Without mechanisms to evaluate the quality of communication, limited visitation policies risk becoming symbolic rather than substantively effective.

Moreover, the absence of reintegration indicators within policy evaluation creates a disconnect between normative objectives and practical implementation. Correctional systems that prioritize short-term security while neglecting long-term social reintegration risk creating a policy paradox: institutional order is maintained, but recidivism risks are not effectively mitigated. Therefore, in addressing the second research question, the implementation of limited visitation services at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility is normatively compliant but substantively ineffective in supporting inmate rehabilitation. The absence of outcome-based evaluation mechanisms indicates that the policy remains at an administrative stage and has not yet evolved into a fully rehabilitative framework.

Conclusion

1. The study concludes that the effectiveness of limited family visitation services within the correctional system cannot be assessed solely based on procedural compliance or institutional security. Instead, effectiveness must be evaluated through outcome-based indicators, including behavioral change during incarceration, psychological stability, the quality of family relationships, and readiness for social reintegration. Without these measurable indicators, visitation policies risk being reduced to administrative control mechanisms rather than functioning as substantive rehabilitative instruments. Contemporary correctional research emphasizes that outcome-oriented frameworks are essential for aligning institutional practices with long-term rehabilitation and recidivism reduction goals.
2. Although the implementation of limited visitation services at the Langkat Juvenile Correctional Facility is formally consistent with existing legal regulations and effective in maintaining institutional order, it remains substantively limited in supporting inmate rehabilitation. The absence of systematic evaluation mechanisms and the dominance of a

security-oriented approach indicate a gap between normative rehabilitative objectives and practical implementation. Therefore, policy reform is required to shift from a procedural model toward an outcome-based rehabilitative approach, including the development of measurable psychosocial indicators, proportional visitation standards, and complementary communication mechanisms. Such transformation is crucial to ensure that correctional policies not only maintain short-term security but also contribute to sustainable social reintegration and public safety in the long term.

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