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SPIRITUALITY IN THE LANGUAGE OF BUREAUCRACY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE COUNSELING SCRIPT IN REGULATIONS ON ISLAMIC SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE FOR CORRECTIONAL INMATES IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

Occupancy in Indonesian correctional facilities exceeds capacity by more than 130 percent, making correctional inmates (*warga binaan pemasyarakatan*) a vulnerable group whose psychospiritual needs are easily reduced to a matter of order. This study aims to uncover the counseling script hidden behind the official regulations and curriculum of *Islamic spiritual guidance* for inmates, namely the assumptions about goals, the guide-client relationship, and methods embedded in these documents, and to compare it with the principles of Islamic guidance and counseling as an academic and professional discipline. This qualitative study uses a document analysis design and *directed content analysis* of a corpus of official state documents, namely Law Number 22 of 2022 on Corrections, Government Regulation Number 31 of 1999, and the Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development for Prison and Detention Center Officers, cross-read against official news reports and empirical literature on religious extension practice in correctional facilities. The results show three main findings: first, the regulations position spiritual guidance within an administrative-disciplinary paradigm of correctional development rather than a therapeutic-developmental counseling paradigm; second, the operational curriculum is dominated by one-way transmissive methods that treat inmates as objects of da'wah rather than subjects of counseling; third, in field practice, religious extension workers often make informal adaptations toward more dialogical relationships. This study contributes by proposing a Reflective-Participatory Spiritual Guidance Model as a conceptual bridge between the regulatory mandate and the principles of professional Islamic counseling.

Keywords: Counseling, Islamic Counseling, Vulnerable Groups, Islamic Spiritual Guidance, Correctional Inmates.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian correctional facilities face serious structural pressure from overcrowding. In 2022, the Directorate General of Corrections of the Ministry of Law and Human Rights projected that national overcrowding would reach 136 percent by 2025 if no progressive measures were taken (Antara News, 2022). This projection is consistent with a statement

by the Head of the National Narcotics Agency in early 2026 that the national population of correctional inmates (warga binaan pemasyarakatan) had reached 278,376 people against an actual capacity of only 146,260, an excess of about 90 percent, and that 54 percent of them were narcotics cases (Detik News, 2026), as summarized in Table 1. These figures matter because overcrowding is associated with psychological stress, conflict among inmates, and a decline in the quality of correctional development services, including religious services (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2023), a pattern that the World Health Organization has also identified across countries as a common consequence of overcrowding for the physical and psychosocial health of prisoners (Enggist et al., 2014). Under these conditions, inmates are structurally vulnerable, not only because they have lost their liberty under the law but also because their access to adequate psychosocial services is limited amid steadily increasing overcrowding. This vulnerability is also reflected in Indonesia's social welfare policy framework, in which former inmates of correctional facilities are officially classified as one of the groups of Persons with Social Welfare Problems requiring special attention (Kementerian Sosial Republik Indonesia, 2019). This formal recognition implicitly affirms that the vulnerability of inmates does not end when their sentence ends; it may continue after release if correctional development during imprisonment, including spiritual development, is not carried out adequately.

Table 1. Overcrowding in Indonesian Correctional Facilities

Indicator	Data Year	Value	Source
Projected national overcrowding	2025 (projected in 2022)	136%	Antara News (2022)
Projected national number of inmates	2025 (projected in 2022)	311,534 people	Antara News (2022)
Actual number of prison and detention center occupants	2025/2026	278,376 people	Detik News (2026)
Actual occupancy capacity	2025/2026	146,260 people	Detik News (2026)
Actual overcrowding	2025/2026	≈ 90% (132,116 people)	Detik News (2026)
Proportion of inmates in narcotics cases	2025/2026	54%	Detik News (2026)

Source: compiled from Antara News (2022) and Detik News (2026).

Academic literature on Islamic guidance and counseling has long held that an effective counseling relationship requires an approach that is individual, dialogical, and oriented toward the client's personal development, not merely one-way transmission of doctrine (Faqih, 2001; Amin, 2010). Adz-Dzaky (2002) emphasizes that Islamic counseling ideally positions the counselor as a facilitator who helps clients rediscover their fitrah, not as an authority who dictates behavior. In line with this, studies of religiosity in correctional facilities show that religious programs designed in a participatory and contextual way are more effective in relieving inmates' psychological stress than uniform, instructional programs (Hasina & Sari, 2023). However, the extent to which the official state regulations and curriculum governing the practice of *Islamic spiritual guidance* in correctional facilities actually adopt these counseling principles remains largely unexamined at the textual level.

Most previous studies have focused on program effectiveness in particular technical implementation units (Hasina & Sari, 2023; Budiyono, 2016), while analysis of the policy texts themselves as objects of counseling research has rarely been undertaken.

Building on this gap, this study aims to uncover and map the counseling script implicitly contained in the regulations and official curriculum documents governing Islamic spiritual guidance for inmates in Indonesia, including assumptions about the goals of correctional development, the construction of the relationship between guide and inmate, and the mandated methods, and then to compare this script with the principles of Islamic guidance and counseling as an academic and professional discipline. More specifically, the study seeks to answer three questions: what paradigm underlies the regulation of Islamic spiritual guidance in correctional law; how this paradigm is operationalized in the technical curriculum guidelines; and how the gap between the regulatory mandate and the principles of professional Islamic counseling manifests itself when read together with documented evidence of field practice. The study uses a qualitative approach with a document analysis and directed content analysis design, because its main object is the policy text itself rather than the subjective experience of individual inmates. A document-based, non-field design is therefore considered the most appropriate and methodologically defensible option, as it does not require direct access to correctional facilities, which are closed and restricted.

The main argument of this study is that the terms "spiritual guidance" and "counseling" are often used interchangeably in correctional development discourse, even though they rest on different epistemological assumptions: the former tends to be rooted in the logic of administering order, while the latter is rooted in a therapeutic-developmental logic. The study limits its scope to national regulatory and official curriculum documents governing the development of religious awareness for adult inmates in general correctional facilities, issued between 1999 and 2022, while supporting contextual data from statistics and news reports extend to 2026. This limitation means that the study does not cover derivative regulations at the regional office level, internal standard operating procedures of particular technical implementation units, or the development of juvenile inmates and correctional clients outside general correctional facilities. Its findings should therefore be read as a picture of national policy rather than a comprehensive generalization about all variations in field practice. The contribution of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it enriches the study of Islamic guidance and counseling by treating state policy as a unit of analysis, an area that has received relatively little attention compared with studies at the level of individuals or educational institutions. Practically, it offers a conceptual framework, the Reflective-Participatory Spiritual Guidance Model, which the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Directorate General of Corrections, and religious extension workers in the field can use to revise the orientation of spiritual development so that it is more consistent with the principles of Islamic counseling and more responsive to the status of inmates as a vulnerable group entitled to dignified psychospiritual services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on spiritual guidance in correctional facilities lies at the intersection of three fields: Islamic guidance and counseling, correctional studies or criminology, and the psychology of religion. Together they provide complementary lenses for understanding how religion is institutionally present in an inherently coercive space such as a correctional facility. This review maps how each field understands the relationship between religion, correctional development, and recovery, and then identifies the points of convergence and tension among them as the basis for the analytical framework of this study. Such mapping matters because, without conceptual clarity, terms such as "guidance", "extension", and "counseling" are easily used loosely and interchangeably, both in policy documents and in academic research itself. Research on Islamic guidance and counseling in Indonesia has grown rapidly, but this growth has been concentrated largely in formal education, the family, and health services, while the correctional domain, which houses one of the largest vulnerable groups, lags behind in both volume and depth. This imbalance in academic attention is one reason this review deliberately links the three fields rather than discussing them separately, as earlier studies have usually done.

In the tradition of Islamic guidance and counseling, counseling is defined as a helping process provided by a counselor to a client so that the client can live in harmony with the provisions of Allah and thereby attain happiness in this world and the hereafter (Faqih, 2001). Amin (2010) adds that this process must rest on the principles of *al-hikmah* (wisdom), *mau'idzah hasanah* (good counsel), and *mujadalah* (dialogue), as stated in the Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl verse 125, which explicitly rejects coercive or one-way approaches. Adz-Dzaky (2002) reinforces this view by asserting that Islamic counseling is oriented toward restoring human fitrah through an empathic relationship, not through indoctrination. Lubis likewise emphasizes that, from an Islamic perspective, mental health is achieved through a counseling process that attends to the unique psychological condition of each individual, so that a single method for all clients runs counter to the basic spirit of Islamic counseling itself. These three sources consistently place the dialogical relationship and individualization at the core of what can properly be called "counseling", as distinct from the classroom-style delivery of religious material.

In correctional studies and criminology, religion is seen as one of the instruments of personality development explicitly regulated within the legal framework. The Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development for Prison and Detention Center Officers issued by the Directorate General of Corrections place the development of religious awareness as one of four pillars of personality development, together with the development of national and civic awareness, intellectual ability, and physical fitness (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2013). The document describes religious development methods in the form of sermons, tadarus (collective Qur'an recitation), and commemorations of Islamic holidays held on a

fixed schedule in a classroom format, without further explanation of any mechanism for assessing the individual psychological or spiritual needs of inmates. On the other hand, field research by Hasina and Sari (2023) at the Class IIB Banjarnegara Correctional Facility found that religious extension workers in practice adapt the content of spiritual guidance to the psychological condition of each inmate, an adaptive practice not explicitly regulated in the formal guidelines. Hasina and Sari's findings indicate a gap between what the policy documents mandate and what actually happens in the field, a gap that is one of the main concerns of this study.

The psychology of religion provides a theoretical framework for understanding why this gap has significant consequences for inmates as individuals. Pargament (1997) developed the concept of *religious coping*, the use of religious resources by individuals to make sense of and cope with life stress, and emphasized that the effectiveness of *religious coping* depends heavily on the extent to which the process is personal and meaningful to the individual concerned, not merely ritual compliance imposed from outside. In criminology, Maruna (2001), through the concept of the *redemption script*, showed that prisoners who manage to leave the cycle of recidivism generally go through a personal narrative process in which they reconstruct the meaning of their lives, often through spiritual resources, but that this process is internal and reflective, not the result of one-way transmission from an external authority. Giordano, Cernkovich, and Rudolph (2002) complement this with a theory of cognitive transformation, which holds that long-term behavioral change requires the active involvement of individuals in constructing a new identity, rather than their being passive objects of a development program. These three theories converge in showing that an administrative-instructional approach risks failing to achieve the recovery it is actually expected to bring about.

A critical evaluation of these three bodies of literature reveals a conceptual tension that has rarely been examined directly. The Islamic guidance and counseling literature provides normative standards for how a counseling relationship should be built, but these standards are rarely tested against the state policy texts that form the operational framework for field practice. The correctional literature describes how religious development is regulated and carried out, but rarely places its findings in explicit dialogue with the principles of Islamic counseling as an evaluative benchmark. The psychology of religion and criminology literature provides theoretical arguments for why personalization matters for recovery, but has generally been developed in secular Western contexts and has seldom been adapted to read religious policy documents in the Indonesian correctional context. A weakness common to all three is the tendency to treat "regulation", "curriculum", and "field practice" as three separate things, even though together they form a single chain of discourse whose links influence one another and need to be read as one analytical whole. Despite this weakness, the three bodies of literature have complementary strengths and form an indispensable foundation for this study: the Islamic counseling literature

contributes a clear normative framework, the correctional literature contributes contextual understanding of Indonesia's distinctive institutional governance, and the psychology of religion literature contributes a causal argument for why personalization affects recovery outcomes. It is the combination of all three, not any one of them alone, that is most appropriate as the evaluative framework for this study.

Building on this evaluation, this study positions itself at the meeting point of the three bodies of literature by filling the methodological gap identified, namely the absence of studies that systematically read the regulations and curriculum of Islamic spiritual guidance for inmates as texts containing an implicit counseling script, test them against the principles of Islamic counseling as an evaluative framework, and cross-check them against documented evidence of field practice from earlier studies. Accordingly, this study does not seek to repeat the field research conducted by Hasina and Sari (2023) or Budiyono (2016). Instead, it takes a different and complementary position: it reads the policy text itself as the main object of study, while using the findings of earlier field research as calibration points to examine how far the textual script is reflected, or corrected, in actual practice in correctional facilities. To keep the terminology consistent throughout, this study uses four dimensions of Islamic counseling, namely goals, the guide-client relationship, methods, and evaluation, as analytical categories applied consistently from the methods section to the discussion, so that readers can follow how the four dimensions are applied to the different documents in the corpus without losing the thread of the main argument.

METHODS

The unit of analysis in this study is the text unit, in the form of articles, clauses, and paragraphs in official state documents that explicitly regulate the development of religious awareness or Islamic spiritual guidance for correctional inmates. These text units include formulations of the goals of correctional development, descriptions of the role of officers or religious extension workers, descriptions of the role of inmates as service recipients, and descriptions of the mandated methods and activities. Text units, rather than individual inmates or officers, were chosen as the unit of analysis because the study seeks to examine the assumptions embedded in the policy itself, an object that is public, stable, and verifiable by other researchers, unlike data on individual behavior or attitudes, which are situational and require direct field access to correctional facilities that are by nature closed to outsiders. Each text unit was given a unique identification code stating the source document, the article or section number, and the relevant counseling dimension, so that readers or other researchers can retrace the analysis transparently without reopening the entire source document. This coding procedure is important because the three documents in the corpus use different numbering structures; without a consistent identification system, systematic comparison across documents in the later stage of analysis would be difficult. In total, the extraction process yielded 20 text units relevant to spiritual guidance or the

development of religious awareness from the three corpus documents: 7 text units from Law Number 22 of 2022, 5 text units from Government Regulation Number 31 of 1999, and 8 text units from the Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development. In addition, 2 field triangulation data units from earlier studies were used, not as part of the coded corpus but as contextual comparators, as explained further in the description of data sources.

This study uses a qualitative design with a *document analysis* approach combined with *directed content analysis*. Bowen (2009) describes document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting documents, both printed and electronic, in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge about the phenomenon under study. This approach was chosen because it fits the aim of the study, which centers on textual reading rather than measuring variables or exploring subjective experience through interviews. Directed content analysis, as explained by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Krippendorff (2018), allows researchers to derive coding categories deductively from an established theoretical framework, in this case the theory of Islamic guidance and counseling, and then use them to examine the extent to which empirical documents reflect or depart from those theoretical categories. Combining the two approaches allows the study to move from describing documents to a critical interpretation grounded in an explicit theoretical framework. A qualitative rather than quantitative approach was chosen because the aim of the study is to understand in depth the meanings and assumptions embedded in policy texts, not merely to measure word frequencies statistically. This design allows the researchers to capture nuances and context that might be missed by counting keyword frequencies without regard to the full context of each sentence.

The data sources of this study consist entirely of secondary data drawn from publicly accessible documents, without primary data from interviews or surveys of inmates or officers, given the closed nature of correctional facilities and the ethical consideration of not involving a vulnerable group as research respondents without an adequate research ethics review procedure. The main corpus consists of three official documents: Law Number 22 of 2022 on Corrections, Government Regulation Number 31 of 1999 on the Development and Guidance of Correctional Inmates, and the Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development for Prison and Detention Center Officers issued by the Directorate General of Corrections (2013), as summarized in Table 2. These three documents were chosen because they hierarchically represent three levels of regulation, namely a statute, an implementing regulation, and an operational technical guideline, making it possible to trace the consistency of the counseling script from the normative to the technical level. Supporting secondary data, consisting of official news from state institutions and earlier research articles on spiritual guidance practice in the field, were used as material for contextual triangulation, not as part of the coded corpus.

Table 2. Corpus of Official Documents Analyzed

No	Document	Type/Level	Issuing Institution	Year	n Text Units	Key Sections Related to Spiritual Guidance
1	Law No. 22 of 2022 on Corrections	Statute	House of Representatives & Government of the Republic of Indonesia	2022	7	Articles 7, 9, 12, 15 (right to worship); Articles 2, 38 (goals & personality development)
2	Government Regulation No. 31 of 1999 on the Development and Guidance of Correctional Inmates	Government Regulation	President of the Republic of Indonesia	1999	5	Articles 2–4 (scope of personality development, including piety)
3	Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development for Prison and Detention Center Officers	Technical Guideline/Curriculum	Directorate General of Corrections, Ministry of Law and Human Rights	2013	8	Section on Developing Religious Awareness (goals, methods, officer roles, reporting)
	Total				**20**	

Source: compiled by the researchers (2026) from the document corpus and the study's coding dataset.

Data were collected through purposive sampling of documents. The inclusion criteria were that a document was issued by an authorized state institution, was in force and binding at the time of the study, was openly available through official portals such as the Legal Documentation and Information Network (JDIH), the official website of the Directorate General of Corrections, or a verifiable online legal database, and explicitly contained provisions on religious development or spiritual guidance. Exclusion criteria were applied to remove draft regulations that had not been enacted, regulations that had been revoked or declared no longer in force, and internal documents that were confidential or not officially published, because the authenticity of such documents cannot be openly verified by readers or other researchers. The authenticity of each document obtained was checked by comparing copies from more than one official portal to ensure that no wrong version or revoked document was used. After verification, the documents were downloaded in their official format and stored as raw data; the sections relevant to spiritual guidance or the development of religious awareness were then extracted and organized into a structured database to facilitate coding in the next stage of analysis.

Data analysis followed the stages of directed content analysis developed by Elo and Kyngäs (2008), as illustrated in Figure 1. It began with the construction of deductive coding categories based on four dimensions of Islamic counseling adapted from Faqih (2001) and

Amin (2010), namely the goal of development, the guide-client relationship, method, and evaluation, with the indicators for each dimension summarized in Table 3. Each text unit in the corpus was then coded into one of two poles on each dimension, either the administrative-disciplinary paradigm or the therapeutic-developmental counseling paradigm, with an intermediate category for text units showing mixed characteristics. Coding was carried out independently by two coders, and the results were then compared and discussed until full agreement was reached on every difference in interpretation, a procedure commonly known as *investigator triangulation* that enhances the credibility of qualitative interpretation. The final coding results were synthesized narratively and set against the findings of earlier field research to see how far the textual script identified is consistent with, or differs from, actual practice, as presented in the results section below.

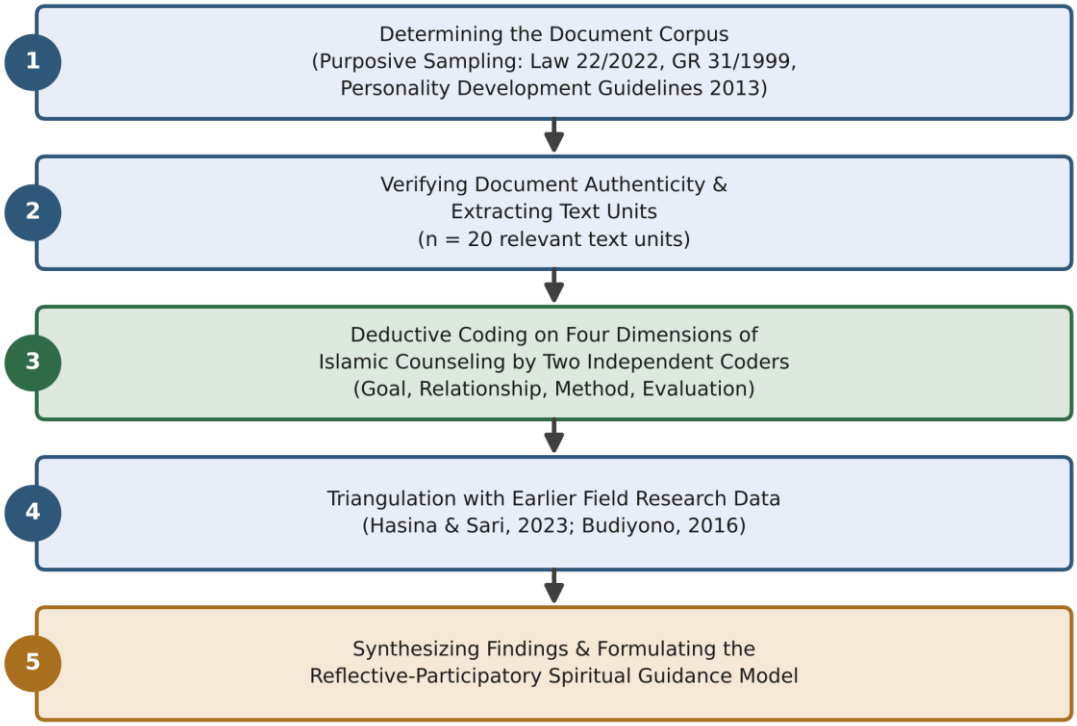

Figure 1. Flow of the Document Analysis and Directed Content Analysis Design
Source: compiled by the researchers (2026), adapted from Bowen (2009) and Elo & Kyngäs (2008).

Table 3. Coding Scheme for Qualitative Content Analysis on Four Dimensions of Islamic Counseling

Dimension	Indicators of the Administrative-Disciplinary Paradigm	Indicators of the Therapeutic-Developmental Counseling Paradigm
Goal	Order, compliance, and piety listed as formal obligations on a par with other obligations	Personal development, restoration of fitrah, and meaning in life as goals in their own right
Guide-Client Relationship	Inmates positioned as objects of development ("developed"); officers as the sole authority	Inmates positioned as subjects/clients; a dialogical, equal relationship based on rapport
Method	Classroom-style sermons, scheduled tadarus, mass commemorations of religious holidays	Individual counseling, reflective dialogue, assessment of personal needs

Evaluation	Participation/attendance indicators and quantitative administrative reports	Indicators of individual psychological-spiritual change of a qualitative nature

Source: adapted by the researchers (2026) from Faqih (2001) and Amin (2010).

RESULTS

The Administrative-Disciplinary Paradigm Dominates the Formulation of Goals at the Regulatory Level

Analysis of Law Number 22 of 2022 and Government Regulation Number 31 of 1999 shows that the development of religious awareness is consistently formulated as part of the function of personality development, which aims to bring about order and inmates' compliance with norms, rather than as a psychosocial service oriented toward individual developmental needs. The formulation of goals in both documents textually places religion as one of several instruments of personality development, on a par with the development of national and civic awareness and intellectual ability, without further elaboration of psychological or individual spiritual indicators of success. The absence of such indicators suggests that, within the regulatory framework, the success of religious development is more readily measured through inmates' participation and attendance in religious activities than through meaningful change in their inner condition. For example, Article 9(a) of Law Number 22 of 2022 formulates the right of prisoners "to practice worship in accordance with their religion or belief" as one of about twelve rights listed side by side, ranging from the rights to health services, education, and legal aid to the right to maintain contact with family, without any separate explanation of how the fulfillment of the right to worship should be evaluated qualitatively. Similarly, Article 38 states that, on the basis of the results of a community research assessment, prisoners are provided with development in the form of personality development and independence development. This very general formulation is only elaborated in more detail in Article 3 of Government Regulation Number 31 of 1999, which places "piety toward God Almighty" as the first of nine areas of personality and independence development, alongside eight other items such as national and civic awareness, intellect, attitudes and behavior, physical and spiritual health, legal awareness, healthy reintegration into society, work skills, and work and production training. Placing "piety" as a single administrative item among nine items that are mostly technical and functional, such as work skills and production training, textually reinforces the indication that the spiritual dimension is treated on a par with legal compliance or work readiness, rather than as a dimension requiring its own methodological approach, as Islamic counseling requires.

A similar pattern appears in the allocation of authority: the regulations consistently position correctional officers and religious extension workers as the active party who

"develops", while inmates are positioned as the passive party who "is developed". The choice of verbs in both documents, such as "providing guidance", "organizing development", and "carrying out extension", linguistically positions inmates as the objects of action rather than as subjects who help determine the direction and form of the services they receive. This grammatical pattern is not merely a matter of the formal drafting style typical of legislation, because similar choices also appear consistently in provisions on independence development and intellectual development. It can therefore be concluded that the construction of inmates as passive objects is a pervasive pattern in the way the regulations view all inmates, not one limited to the religious domain. This one-way pattern of relationship contrasts with the principle of Islamic counseling, which emphasizes a dialogical relationship between counselor and client, as affirmed by Amin (2010) and Faqih (2001). The contrast becomes clearer when compared with Table 2, which summarizes the document corpus and its regulatory levels: all three documents show the same pattern even though they were issued at different times, in 1999, 2013, and 2022, indicating that the administrative-disciplinary pattern is structural rather than an editorial coincidence in a single document. Overall, of the 20 text units coded on the four counseling dimensions, 17 text units (85%) were coded into the administrative-disciplinary pole, 3 text units (15%) were coded into the mixed category, and not a single text unit in the policy corpus was explicitly coded entirely into the therapeutic-developmental counseling pole, as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Coding Results for the Policy Document Corpus by Paradigm

Document	Administrative-Disciplinary n (%)	Mixed n (%)	Therapeutic-Developmental Counseling n (%)	Total
Law No. 22 of 2022	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	7
Government Regulation No. 31 of 1999	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	5
Guidelines for Personality Development (2013)	7 (88%)	1 (12%)	0 (0%)	8
Total Policy Corpus	**17 (85%)**	**3 (15%)**	**0 (0%)**	**20**
Field Triangulation Data*	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (100%)	2

**Field triangulation data (Hasina & Sari, 2023; Budiyono, 2016) are not part of the coded policy corpus; they are presented as contextual comparison data.*
Source: the study's coding dataset (2026).

This consistency across documents and over time deserves emphasis because it shows that the administrative paradigm is not the product of any particular policy regime but has been rooted in the way the state views the function of religion in correctional facilities for more than two decades. The revision of the Corrections Law in 2022, which the Directorate General of Corrections described as carrying "a spirit of change and progress in corrections" (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2022), did not in fact significantly change the basic formulation of how religious development is defined and positioned

compared with the previous regulation. This continuity of paradigm is consistent with the observation that government legal reform often focuses on procedural and institutional aspects, such as restructuring correctional governance and strengthening social reintegration mechanisms, while the philosophical assumptions about the nature of developing religious awareness are rarely subjected to explicit review in the legislative process. The first finding thus confirms that the counseling script embedded at the highest regulatory level leans toward a logic of compliance and order, a paradigm that is epistemologically distant from the therapeutic-developmental counseling paradigm that serves as the normative reference of the discipline of Islamic guidance and counseling.

The Technical Curriculum Operationalizes Spiritual Guidance Through One-Way Transmissive Methods

Analysis of the Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development for Prison and Detention Center Officers (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2013) shows that the methods mandated for developing religious awareness are largely classroom-based and transmissive, such as religious sermons, scheduled tadarus of the Qur'an, and commemorations of Islamic holidays. The document contains no guidance on assessing individual spiritual needs, on building rapport or mutual trust, or on procedures for evaluating success at the level of the individual inmate. This is a striking gap compared with the core components of professional counseling described by Lubis and Adz-Dzaky (2002), who stress that understanding the unique psychological condition of each client is a prerequisite for effective counseling. The document does describe in considerable detail the legal basis, the division of officers' roles and functions, implementation mechanisms, and procedures for reporting development activities, but this administrative detail is not matched by comparable detail on the methodological aspects of counseling itself. The result is a document that is fairly strong in administrative governance but relatively thin in its psychopedagogical and psychotherapeutic foundations.

The absence of guidance on individual assessment in this technical guideline has significant practical implications, because without formal guidance the degree of personalization of spiritual guidance services depends entirely on the initiative and personal capacity of each religious extension worker rather than on an institutionally guaranteed service standard. The coding results on the method dimension reported in Table 4 show that, of the 6 text units across the three documents that address methods of religious development, 5 text units (83%) were coded into the pole of one-way transmissive methods, while only 1 text unit contained an element of individual method, namely a brief mention of "individual guidance" in the Guidelines for Inmate Personality Development (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2013). Even this mention is implicit: "individual guidance" is named only briefly, without any procedural elaboration of how such guidance should be carried out methodologically. This quantitative imbalance in the coding results provides

concrete textual evidence for the argument that the technical curriculum of Islamic spiritual guidance in correctional facilities was designed on the implicit assumption that inmates' religiosity can be developed collectively and uniformly, an assumption that differs from the basic premise of Islamic counseling, which takes the unique condition of each individual as the main starting point for designing the form of help provided.

The imbalance between classroom methods, which are elaborated in detail, and individual methods, which are mentioned only in passing, indicates an implicit hierarchy in the guidelines in which mass development is regarded as the main mode while the personal approach is treated as an optional supplement. This pattern is consistent with a logic of administrative efficiency that is understandable given the highly unequal ratio of officers to inmates caused by the overcrowding described in the introduction. At the same time, it explains why personalization of spiritual guidance services, as required by the principles of Islamic counseling, is difficult to achieve systemically if it relies only on the existing guidelines without structural revision. This situation puts religious extension workers and correctional officers in a difficult position: on the one hand, they are required to carry out the mandate of official guidelines that emphasize the efficiency of mass development; on the other, they are aware, as the third finding will show, that inmates' psychospiritual needs are highly individual and cannot be fully served through a one-size-fits-all approach.

Field Practice Shows Informal Adaptation Toward More Dialogical Relationships

When the coding results of the two previous findings are read together with the findings of earlier field research, an interesting pattern emerges: there is a gap between the administrative-transmissive textual script and actual practice, which is reported to be more adaptive. Hasina and Sari (2023) report that religious extension workers at the Class IIB Banjarnegara Correctional Facility adapt the content of guidance to the psychological condition of the inmates they work with, a practice that goes well beyond what the formal guidelines explicitly mandate. Likewise, Budiyono's (2016) research at the Class IIA Purwokerto Correctional Facility found that applying Islamic cognitive counseling improved prisoners' self-regulation through a process involving reflective dialogue, not merely one-way delivery of religious sermons. Both field studies were conducted in correctional facilities in the former Banyumas Residency. Nevertheless, the similar adaptive pattern found at two different sites gives an early indication that the reinterpretation of administrative mandates into more dialogical practice is not an isolated case occurring by chance in a single correctional facility but a pattern that may be more widespread, although establishing how widespread it is will require further multi-site field research.

This gap between the textual script and field practice can be understood as a form of professional agency on the part of religious extension workers and counselors serving in correctional facilities, who informally "reinterpret" the administrative mandate into practice that is more consistent with the principles of Islamic counseling, even without the

support of explicit formal guidelines. However, because this adaptation is informal and depends heavily on individual initiative, its quality is uneven across correctional facilities and is liable to be lost when personnel change. The lack of institutionalization of such good practice in official guidelines means that the successes achieved in one correctional facility, such as those reported by Hasina and Sari (2023) and Budiyono (2016), cannot automatically be replicated systemically in other correctional facilities without changes at the level of regulation and curriculum. As a result, the quality of the Islamic spiritual guidance an inmate receives depends heavily on the luck of location and personnel, that is, on whether the inmate happens to serve the sentence in a facility with a religious extension worker who has strong initiative and adaptive capacity, rather than on a guaranteed minimum service standard that applies equally across all Indonesian correctional facilities.

This third finding complements the previous two by showing that the gap between regulation and the principles of Islamic counseling is neither absolute nor beyond improvement, because seeds of adaptation toward the therapeutic-developmental counseling paradigm have already emerged at the level of practice. The problem lies in the absence of a formal mechanism that recognizes, supports, and institutionalizes these adaptations as an official part of the service standard for Islamic spiritual guidance in correctional facilities. In other words, the distance between "what is written" and "what is done" opens argumentative space for this study to propose a conceptual model that can bridge the two in a more institutionalized way, as set out in the discussion below. Taken together, the three findings depict a movement from an administrative normative level toward a level of practice that is organically beginning to move toward counseling. The main task remaining for policymakers is therefore not to create something entirely new but to recognize, formalize, and scale up good practices that have demonstrably grown out of the field itself.

DISCUSSION

In brief, this study found that the counseling script embedded in the regulations and curriculum of Islamic spiritual guidance for inmates leans toward an administrative-disciplinary paradigm with one-way transmissive methods, while at the level of field practice informal adaptations toward more dialogical and personal relationships have emerged. Taken together, the three findings describe a chain of gaps that begins at the highest normative level, the statute, continues at the technical-operational level, the curriculum guidelines, and is only partly corrected at the level of field practice through the individual agency of religious extension workers. Understanding this chain as a whole matters because it shows that corrective interventions targeting only one level, for example training religious extension workers without revising the guidelines, are unlikely to produce systemically sustainable change. This summary also makes clear that the three

findings are not separate matters but three pieces of the same larger picture: how the state constructs the meaning of "spiritual guidance" in tiers, from the most abstract legal text to the most concrete interaction between religious extension workers and inmates in the field. The discussion below explores the implications of this larger picture in more depth.

Placed in the current social and institutional context of Indonesian corrections, these findings become all the more relevant given the overcrowding pressures described in the introduction. When a single religious extension worker has to serve hundreds of inmates at once because of the unequal ratio, the choice of classroom-style, transmissive methods is not simply a matter of reluctance to adopt counseling principles but also of real, structural resource constraints. This context suggests that revising the guidelines alone, without increasing the number of religious extension workers or redistributing workloads, is unlikely to be enough to achieve personalized services evenly. The policy recommendations of this study should therefore be understood as one part of a larger solution, not a stand-alone remedy. The data presented in the introduction, namely overcrowding projected to reach 136 percent by 2025 (Antara News, 2022) and an inmate population of 278,376 in early 2026 against an actual capacity of only 146,260 (Detik News, 2026), show that the scale of the structural challenge facing the state goes far beyond curriculum design. Every recommendation for improving spiritual guidance thus needs to be placed realistically within the institutional resource constraints currently faced by the Directorate General of Corrections.

Interpreted further, the gap found in this study essentially reflects the meeting of two discourses with different logics: the discourse of security and order common in corrections, and the discourse of psychospiritual recovery common in counseling. The two discourses are not necessarily in absolute conflict, but when one of them, in this case the discourse of order, dominates policymaking without leaving adequate room for the discourse of recovery, the result is a policy document that formally uses the words "guidance" and "extension" but is substantively closer to a logic of behavioral control than to the empowering logic of counseling described by Adz-Dzaky (2002). This interpretation does not mean that the discourse of order and security has no legitimate place in the management of correctional facilities, since maintaining security and order remains a basic mandate of the state. Rather, it underlines that the two discourses should be able to coexist and complement each other, instead of one crowding out the other, as is precisely what the document corpus analyzed in this study portrays.

A deeper understanding of these findings can be gained by drawing on Maruna's (2001) concept of the *redemption script* and the cognitive transformation theory of Giordano et al. (2002), both of which emphasize that long-term recovery requires the active involvement of individuals in reconstructing their own meaning and identity. If spiritual guidance is offered only as uniform classroom activities, inmates lose the space to carry out

this process of personal meaning-making, and the potential of spiritual guidance as a means of psychosocial recovery is not fully realized. Pargament (1997) likewise argues that *religious coping* imposed from outside tends to be less effective than *religious coping* that grows out of personal meaning-making, an argument that reinforces the importance of dialogical and participatory elements in any redesign of spiritual guidance policy in correctional facilities. Although these three theoretical frameworks arose in different academic contexts, namely the psychology of religion and narrative criminology, they converge on the same conclusion: the success of spiritual guidance as a means of recovery cannot be measured only by how regularly activities are held, but must be traced back to a more fundamental question, namely whether inmates are genuinely given room to make personal sense of their lives again or are merely passive participants in a program designed uniformly for everyone.

Compared with the international literature on religiosity in correctional facilities, the findings of this study show both parallels and distinctive features. O'Connor and Perreyclear (2002) found that meaningful religious participation, rather than mere formal attendance, was associated with better institutional adjustment among prisoners in the United States, a finding that is consistent with this study's argument that the quality of relationships and personal meaningfulness matter more than the regularity of religious activities. What is distinctive about the Indonesian context is that Islamic spiritual guidance in Indonesian correctional facilities is delivered through cross-ministerial collaboration between the Ministry of Law and Human Rights and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, as reflected in various cooperation agreements on placing religious extension workers in prisons and detention centers across the country. Such a cross-sectoral institutional structure is relatively rare in the countries on which the international literature draws. The improvements recommended by this study therefore need to be adapted to Indonesia's distinctive cross-ministerial institutional configuration, rather than simply adopting reform models from single-ministry or single-jurisdiction contexts, as commonly found in the international literature.

Building on the discussion above, the main contribution of this study is to propose the Reflective-Participatory Spiritual Guidance Model as a conceptual framework that bridges the administrative mandate of the regulations and the principles of professional Islamic counseling. The model, as illustrated in Figure 2, proposes three adjustments at the policy level: adding an assessment of individual spiritual needs as a mandatory first step before inmates are placed in guidance groups; institutionalizing small-group reflective dialogue forums as a complement to classroom sermons; and developing qualitative-personal indicators of success, not only quantitative participation indicators. As a follow-up recommendation, this study suggests that the Directorate General of Corrections and the Ministry of Religious Affairs consider revising the technical guidelines for spiritual guidance with the direct involvement of Islamic guidance and counseling academics in the drafting

process, while also documenting and institutionalizing adaptive practices that have proven effective in various correctional facilities as official references for other facilities. The three adjustments are designed to be phased in and do not require a large budget increase, since they are essentially a change in methodological orientation and a strengthening of the capacity of existing religious extension workers rather than the construction of new infrastructure. The model can therefore realistically be piloted in a few model correctional facilities before being applied nationally, in keeping with the spirit of gradual reform also emphasized in the Directorate General of Corrections' official narrative on Law Number 22 of 2022 (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2022).

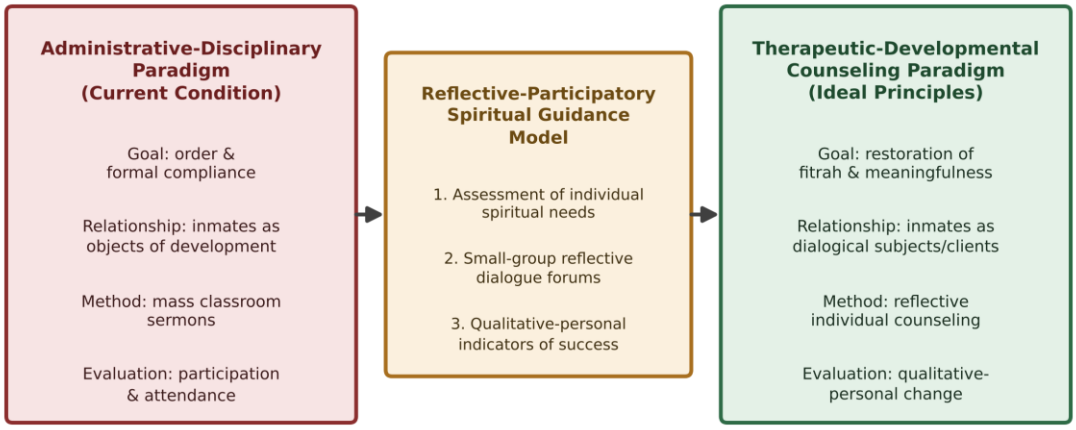

Figure 2. The Reflective-Participatory Spiritual Guidance Model as a Conceptual Bridge
Source: compiled by the researchers (2026) based on the results of this study's directed content analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that the counseling script embedded in the official regulations and curriculum of Islamic spiritual guidance for correctional inmates in Indonesia predominantly reflects an administrative-disciplinary paradigm oriented toward order and compliance, rather than the therapeutic-developmental counseling paradigm that serves as the normative reference of the discipline of Islamic guidance and counseling. This finding should be read not as an accusation of failure against the state or the religious extension workers on duty, but as the disclosure of a long-standing structural pattern that has escaped critical scrutiny: policy documents that repeatedly use the vocabulary of "guidance" and "counseling" do not necessarily contain methodological substance commensurate with the meaning of these terms in the discipline of counseling itself. Awareness of this semantic and substantive gap is the main lesson to be drawn, namely the need for care in using technical scholarly terms in public policy so as not to create the false impression that a service meets a particular professional standard when in substance it does not.

This study makes both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic guidance and counseling. Theoretically, it broadens the scope of Islamic guidance

and counseling research by establishing state policy texts as a legitimate and productive unit of analysis, complementing earlier studies that have focused mostly on individual clients or educational institutions. The directed content analysis approach, which combines the theoretical framework of Islamic counseling with a critical reading of legal and policy documents, can also be replicated to examine other areas of religious development outside corrections, for example spiritual guidance in hospitals, social care institutions, and nursing homes, which Budiyono and Abidin (2020) have examined from the perspective of residents' psychological dynamics. The policy-document approach introduced in this study can thus serve as a methodological complement to such field studies in the future. Practically, the Reflective-Participatory Spiritual Guidance Model proposed in this study offers a concrete, operational framework that the Directorate General of Corrections and the Ministry of Religious Affairs can use to revise the technical guidelines for religious development without waiting for a change in the law, since most of the recommendations sit at the technical-operational level, which is relatively easier to revise than the statutory level.

This study has limitations that should be acknowledged openly. First, the document corpus analyzed is limited to three national-level documents and does not include derivative regulations at the regional office level or the internal standard operating procedures of individual correctional facilities, which may contain different elaborations. Second, the triangulation data on field practice come from earlier research at only two correctional facilities, Banjarnegara and Purwokerto, so generalizations about informal adaptation by religious extension workers nationally should be made with caution and require broader field research. Third, this study did not involve primary data from inmates or religious extension workers directly, owing to the methodological and ethical considerations of document-based research explained in the methods section. Further research combining document analysis with in-depth interviews with religious extension workers in various correctional facilities, with appropriate research ethics approval, would therefore be highly valuable for testing the empirical validity of the proposed Reflective-Participatory Spiritual Guidance Model more comprehensively in the future.

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Declaration of Generative AI Use. During the preparation of this work, the author(s) used Gemini in order to assist with literature searching and verification, structuring the document-analysis coding matrix, drafting narrative text, and formatting the manuscript according to journal style, and used Claude (Anthropic) in order to translate the manuscript from Indonesian into English. After using these tools, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed, verified all cited sources independently, and take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the content of the published article.

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Ethical Clearance. Ethical clearance was not required for this study, as it relied entirely on publicly available secondary documents (laws, regulations, official guidelines, news reports, and published studies) and did not involve human participants or sensitive personal data.

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