

Epistemology Of Religious Guidance in Correctional Institutions: A Library Study of Religious Guidance Programs in Indonesian Correctional Settings

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ABSTRACT

Religious guidance is a fundamental program in the correctional system aimed at reshaping the personality and character of inmates so that they possess religious awareness, noble morals, and readiness to reintegrate into society. This study examines the epistemology of religious guidance for inmates in Indonesian correctional institutions, focusing on sources of religious knowledge, learning methods applied, and the process of forming religious consciousness among fostered students. The study employs a qualitative approach with a library research design. Data were obtained from various literary sources relating to Islamic epistemology, religious guidance, Islamic education, and the correctional system, with contextual reference to programs documented at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques. The findings indicate that religious guidance in Indonesian correctional institutions is built upon the integration of revelation, reason, and spiritual experience as primary sources of knowledge, analyzed through the bayani, burhani, and irfani epistemological frameworks. The learning methods applied include lectures, discussions, habituation, role modeling, worship practice, and personal approaches. This study concludes that an integrated epistemological approach in religious guidance significantly contributes to the formation of religious awareness, moral improvement, and behavioral transformation among inmates.

1. INTRODUCTION

Correctional institutions do not function solely as places for inmates to serve their sentences, but also as developmental institutions aimed at reshaping the personalities of inmates so that they are able to reintegrate into society as better individuals. Within Indonesia's correctional system, rehabilitation does not merely focus on discipline and vocational skills, but also encompasses mental, moral, and spiritual development. One form of guidance considered particularly important is religious guidance, as religion is seen as playing a strategic role in fostering self-awareness, improving character (akhlak), and cultivating religious attitudes among inmates. Among previously relevant studies on religious guidance in correctional institutions is the research conducted by Fahrurrizi (2013) entitled "The Implementation of Religious Guidance for Inmates at Class IIA Correctional Institution Teluk Dalam Banjarmasin." The results showed that religious guidance was carried out through religious lectures, Quranic recitation sessions, Al-Qur'an learning, and congregational worship. Such guidance had a positive influence on the development of religious awareness and behavioral change among inmates. However, its implementation still faced constraints, including limited guidance personnel and learning facilities. Another relevant study is that of Suratmini (2018), entitled "Analysis of the Religious Guidance Program at Class II Curup Correctional Institution," which found that religious guidance plays an important role in increasing worship awareness, improving morals, and fostering more positive attitudes among inmates. Based on the prior studies reviewed above, it can be noted that most research has focused on the implementation of religious guidance programs, guidance strategies, supporting and hindering factors, program effectiveness, and the impact of guidance on behavioral change among inmates. No

research has been found that specifically examines religious guidance from the perspective of Islamic epistemology, particularly in terms of how religious knowledge is acquired, understood, and internalized by fostered students in correctional institutions. Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in its systematic epistemological analysis of religious guidance through the bayani (scriptural text), burhani (rationality), and irfani (spiritual experience) approaches in the process of forming religious consciousness among fostered students in Indonesian correctional institutions, drawing on documented programs at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution as a reference context. Unlike prior studies that focus primarily on program implementation, outcomes, and administrative factors, this study constructs a theoretical framework revealing how religious knowledge is built, internalized, and transformed into changes in attitudes, behavior, and religious consciousness among inmates from an Islamic epistemological perspective. Religious guidance has become one of the relevant approaches in assisting the rehabilitation process of inmates. Various activities such as Quranic recitation, moral guidance, tahsin and tahfiz Al-Qur'an, religious lectures, congregational prayers, and prison pesantren activities serve as means of forming the religious character of inmates. Through these activities, it is hoped that awareness to improve oneself and not repeat the same mistakes upon returning to society will be cultivated. In the context of Islamic education, religious guidance is not understood merely as ritual activity, but also as a process of forming religious knowledge, understanding, and consciousness. Therefore, an epistemological study becomes important in understanding how religious values are taught, comprehended, and internalized by inmates.

Epistemology addresses the nature of knowledge, the sources of knowledge, the methods of acquiring knowledge, and the validity of that knowledge. Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution is one correctional facility in Riau Province that has systematically developed a comprehensive religious guidance program, including prison pesantren (Pesantren Lapas) activities, Quranic learning, congregational worship, and structured moral guidance sessions. The presence of such programs demonstrates a deliberate institutional effort to integrate the correctional rehabilitation system with Islamic educational values in shaping the character of inmates. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the epistemology of religious guidance for fostered students as documented in reference to Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution, encompassing the sources of knowledge, learning methods, and the factors that influence the success of the guidance. The selection of Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution as the primary reference context for this study is justified on several grounds. First, this institution has documented a structured prison pesantren program that has been identified in prior research as producing positive outcomes in inmate religious behavior and social rehabilitation (Saleh & Arifin, 2015), making it a well-evidenced reference case for epistemological analysis. Second, its location in Riau Province a region with a predominantly Muslim population supports the institutional integration of Islamic religious guidance as the main modality of moral rehabilitation, providing a contextually coherent environment for studying knowledge formation within a correctional setting. Third, the documented challenges encountered at this institution, including variation in the religious literacy of inmates, limited guidance personnel, and the complex internal social dynamics of the correctional environment, are broadly representative of Class IIA-level correctional facilities across Indonesia, lending the analysis broader applicability. It is important to clarify that this study approaches the institution as a documented reference case within a library research framework; all analytical discussions are grounded in published literature, institutional documentation, and prior empirical studies

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a library research (bibliographic research) design. This methodological choice is grounded in the nature of the research question, which seeks to construct a conceptual and epistemological understanding of religious guidance in Indonesian correctional institutions by synthesizing and analyzing existing scholarly literature, rather than generating new primary field data. The library research approach is methodologically appropriate when the primary objective is to analyze, synthesize, and interpret published sources in order to develop theoretical frameworks or to describe phenomena that have already been documented across prior empirical studies (Zed, 2014). It should be noted that this study does not involve direct fieldwork, interviews, or observations at correctional institutions. Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution functions in this study as a documented reference context its programs and conditions are referenced through existing published studies, regional reports, and institutional documentation rather than through newly collected field data. Research data were obtained from various literary sources, including books, scientific journals, research articles, and documents relating to Islamic epistemology, religious guidance, Islamic education, and the correctional system. Data collection was carried out through document study by identifying, reviewing, and categorizing relevant literature. Data analysis employed content analysis techniques conducted through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, source triangulation was applied by comparing various references that are relevant to the research focus.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of the Epistemology of Religious Guidance

The Concept of Epistemology

Etymologically, epistemology derives from the Greek words *episteme*, meaning knowledge or science, and *logos*, which also means knowledge. Epistemology seeks to answer the question "what can we know, and how do we know it." Some scholars also state that *episteme* means knowledge or science, while *logos* means "the theory of the nature of knowing and the means by which we know" (Jihad & Ummah, 2023). According to Jujun S. Suriasumantri, epistemology is a way of human thinking in determining and acquiring knowledge by utilizing various innate capacities within oneself, such as the capacity of the senses, intuition, and reason (Suriasumantri, 2007). From this definition, it is practically understood that epistemology is essentially very useful to study and is even indispensable, because a mind that has reached the level of reflection cannot be satisfied by returning to various guarantees of common assumptions, but rather is compelled to advance to a new level.

The Benefits of Epistemology

Among the benefits of epistemology in human life in general, according to Francis Bacon, are as follows: It constitutes knowledge that is strategically important for human life, as knowledge is fundamentally a form of power or force. Cultural considerations: epistemology provides a fundamental explanation of the reality that knowledge is one of the basic elements of culture, encompassing social systems, religious systems, language, art, economic, and symbolic systems. Educational considerations: education as a conscious effort to assist students in developing their worldview, life attitudes, and life skills cannot be separated from the mastery of knowledge (Sari & Rohman, 2020).

The Concept of Religious Guidance

Religious guidance is a conscious, directed, and planned effort to guide, shape, and improve a person's understanding and practice of religious teachings. Its goal is to enhance piety (taqwa), to form a noble personality (akhlak), and to achieve happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Based on the definitions of epistemology and religious guidance above, it can be concluded that the epistemology of religious guidance constitutes a study of the nature, sources, methods, and process of acquiring religious knowledge within religious guidance activities. The epistemology of religious guidance does not merely discuss how religious teachings are conveyed, but also how that knowledge is understood, believed, and internalized so as to form attitudes, behavior, and character in accordance with religious values.

The Concept of Correctional Institutions

A Correctional Institution (Lapas) is a technical implementing unit under the Ministry of Immigration and Corrections that functions as a place for the rehabilitation of inmates and juvenile correctional students. Correctional institutions aim to guide inmates to become aware of their wrongdoings, improve themselves, and be ready to reintegrate into society as productive citizens (Saleh & Arifin, 2015). Key features of correctional institutions include: Primary Function: To carry out guidance, care, and the promotion of independence and spiritual development for inmates. Inmates: A place for those who have received final legal verdicts (convictions) and are serving their sentences. Difference from Prisons: Unlike the old concept of prisons that focused solely on punishment, correctional institutions emphasize rehabilitation and social reintegration. Classification: Based on capacity and jurisdiction, correctional institutions are divided into four classes: Class 1, Class 2A, Class 2B, and Class 3.

Epistemology of Religious Guidance for Fostered Students at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution

Before discussing this point, it should be clarified that the term "fostered students" (santri binaan) in this discussion refers to correctional inmates who participate in the Islamic religious guidance program at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution. The term santri binaan is used to refer to inmates who are actively involved in religious learning activities, moral guidance, Al-Qur'an recitation, congregational worship, Quranic study circles, and various other religious activities organized by the correctional institution. Religious guidance at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution represents a form of mental and spiritual development aimed at reshaping the personalities of inmates so that they possess religious consciousness, good morals, and readiness to return to life in society. From an epistemological perspective, religious guidance is not merely understood as the normative transmission of religious teachings, but also as a process of forming religious knowledge, understanding, and consciousness among the fostered students. Epistemologically, religious guidance at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution is built upon the premise that religious knowledge is acquired through several primary sources: revelation (the Qur'an and Hadith), reason, lived experience, and the guidance of religious instructors. As clarified by Sudrajat & Sufiyana (2023), "as a book of guidance, the Qur'an provides clear direction on how a Muslim should conduct themselves, interact, and act, both in personal and social contexts," establishing the foundational standards of values and ethics that must be upheld. In addition to revelation, the guidance process also employs a rational approach. Fostered students are not merely directed to accept religious teachings dogmatically, but are also invited to understand the meaning of every teaching given. Instructors endeavor to explain the relationship between deviant behavior, criminal acts, and the importance of religious values in human life. In this way, fostered students can understand that religion is not merely a set of ritual practices, but a guide to life that is capable of shaping morality and regulating human behavior. The lived experiences of inmates also form an

important part of the epistemological process of religious guidance. Most fostered students come from complex life backgrounds, whether in terms of economics, education, social environment, or criminal history. This condition renders religious guidance not only theoretical in nature, but also reflective. Through a spiritual approach, inmates are guided to engage in self-introspection, to acknowledge past mistakes, and to build awareness of the need to become better individuals. In its implementation, the methods of religious guidance are carried out through several approaches: an educative approach, providing religious knowledge incrementally in accordance with the capacity of each inmate; a persuasive and humanistic approach, in which instructors build good relationships with inmates to ensure the guidance process runs effectively; and a habituation approach, such as congregational prayers, Al-Qur'an recitation, and regular participation in prison pesantren activities.

From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, the process of religious guidance at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution can be viewed through three scholarly approaches: *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani*. The word *bayani* comes from the Arabic *al-bayani*, which literally means "something that is open" or "something that is clear." In Islamic epistemology, *bayani* is a distinctly Arabic mode of thought that emphasizes the authority of the text (*nas*), whether directly or indirectly, and is justified by linguistic reasoning derived through inference (*istidlal*) (Khudori Soleh, 2010). The integration of the *bayani* approach in the religious guidance of fostered students is evident in the use of the Qur'an and Hadith as the primary foundations of religious learning. The word *burhani* literally means "to purify" or "to clarify." *Burhani* epistemology holds that the source of knowledge is reason. According to this epistemology, reason possesses the capacity to discover various forms of knowledge; even in the domain of religion, reason is capable of comprehending matters such as good and evil (*tahsin* and *taqbih*). This *burhani* epistemology in the religious domain is widely employed by rationalist schools such as the Mu'tazilah and moderate scholars (Hujair, 2009). The word *irfani* derives from the Arabic ع-ر-ف, literally meaning to know something through deep thought and contemplation. Terminologically, *irfani* is a method of seeking knowledge or truth based on spiritual experience, intuition, and inner revelation (*kashf*). This knowledge is obtained directly through divine illumination into the heart after a person has undergone spiritual exercise and purification of the soul (Sha'af, 2025). The integration of the *irfani* approach in the religious guidance of fostered students is evident in the formation of spiritual consciousness and inner experience through worship, dhikr (remembrance of God), and self-reflection during the period of guidance. The three epistemological approaches bayani, burhani, and irfani together constitute an integrated framework for religious knowledge formation in the correctional context, as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Integration of Bayani, Burhani, and Irfani Approaches in Religious Guidance

Aspect	Bayani	Burhani	Irfani	Integration
Source of Knowledge	Qur'an and Hadith (revealed texts)	Reason and rational analysis	Spiritual experience, kashf, inner illumination	Holistic religious knowledge combining textual, rational, and experiential dimensions
Method Applied	Recitation, tahsin, tahfiz, tafsir, fiqh instruction	Religious lectures, moral discussion, counseling	Dhikr, congregational prayer, self-reflection, habituation	Prison pesantren, structured guidance curriculum
Focus of Knowledge	Textual authority and linguistic understanding	Rational comprehension of religious values	Spiritual awareness and inner transformation	Complete religious rehabilitation and moral character formation

Expected Outcome	Correct aqidah, ibadah literacy, and scriptural understanding	Internalized moral reasoning and ethical awareness	Spiritual growth, emotional stability, and readiness for reintegration	Behavioral change and successful social reintegration
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Source: Synthesized from Islamic epistemology literature (Khudori Soleh, 2010; Sha'af, 2025; Hujair, 2009)

The results of religious guidance show changes in some fostered students, particularly in terms of worship consciousness, social behavior, and emotional control. A number of inmates have become more actively engaged in religious activities, more disciplined in performing acts of worship, and display calmer and more respectful attitudes toward others. This indicates that religious guidance exerts a positive influence in shaping mental and spiritual transformation among inmates. Nevertheless, the implementation of religious guidance also faces various obstacles. Differences in the educational levels and religious understanding of inmates present particular challenges in the learning process. Furthermore, limited guidance facilities, insufficient guidance personnel, and the social environment within the institution also affect the effectiveness of guidance. Some inmates still participate in religious activities merely out of obligation rather than personal awareness.

Sources and Methods of Religious Learning Applied in the Guidance of Fostered Students

Religious guidance for fostered students at Class II Bangkinang Correctional Institution is carried out through various sources and methods of religious learning designed to enhance Islamic understanding, spiritual awareness, and behavioral change among inmates.

Sources of Religious Learning

The primary sources of religious learning in the guidance of fostered students are the Qur'an and Hadith, which serve as the foundational basis of Islamic teachings. These two sources are employed in various guidance activities such as Quranic recitation, lessons in creed ('aqidah), moral character (akhlak), Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), tahsin, and tahfiz Al-Qur'an. The material provided is primarily focused on character development, the enhancement of worship awareness, and the strengthening of Islamic moral values. In addition to the Qur'an and Hadith, guidance also makes use of simplified Islamic texts and Islamic religious education books adapted to the level of comprehension of the inmates. Other sources include religious instructors, ustaz (religious teachers), correctional officers, and religious organizations that collaborate with the institution. In addition to these formal sources, the lived experiences of inmates also constitute a part of the sources of religious learning. Past experiences, mistakes previously committed, and the process of serving a sentence in the institution serve as a means of self-reflection that reinforces their religious understanding.

Methods of Religious Learning

In the implementation of guidance for fostered students, several methods of religious learning are applied to ensure that the guidance process runs effectively and is easily understood by inmates from diverse backgrounds: Lecture Method: The most frequently used method, in which religious instructors convey Islamic material orally on topics of creed, worship, character, and religious motivation. Recitation and Discussion Method: Quranic recitation and discussion activities allow inmates to more actively engage with religious material and understand religious teachings in a more profound and contextual manner. Habituation Method: Routine activities such as congregational prayers, Al-Qur'an recitation, dhikr, communal supplication, and regular prison pesantren activities foster discipline and instill religious values into the daily lives of inmates. Role Model Method: Religious instructors and correctional officers demonstrate attitudes of patience, discipline, courtesy, and religious behavior as direct examples for inmates, as behavior demonstrated is often more readily accepted than advice alone. Worship Practice Method: Directly guiding inmates in the performance of acts of worship, such as the procedure for ablution (wudhu), prayer (shalat),

and Qur'an recitation. Personal Approach Method: Instructors give special attention to inmates who are experiencing psychological difficulties, lack motivation, or struggle to understand religious material, helping create a positive emotional relationship.

Epistemological Analysis of the Sources and Methods of Learning

From the perspective of Islamic epistemology, the sources and methods of religious learning at Class II Bangkinang Correctional Institution demonstrate the integration of *bayani*, *burhani*, and *irfani* approaches. The *bayani* approach is evident in the use of the Qur'an and Hadith as the primary sources of learning. The *burhani* approach is reflected in the use of logic, moral counsel, and rational understanding in explaining the wisdom of religious teachings. Meanwhile, the *irfani* approach is apparent in the process of spiritual guidance through worship, dhikr, and self-reflection, which encourages the transformation of inmates' inner consciousness.

4. CONCLUSION

The epistemology of religious guidance is a study of the sources, methods, and processes of acquiring religious knowledge within Islamic guidance activities, placing revelation, reason, and spiritual experience as the primary sources in forming religious understanding and consciousness. Correctional institutions do not function solely as places for serving sentences, but also as developmental institutions aimed at improving inmates' personalities so they are able to return to society as better individuals. At Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution, the guidance process is carried out through the integration of these three sources, implemented via Quranic recitation, Al-Qur'an learning, worship habituation, religious lectures, and moral guidance. The sources of religious learning used include the Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic texts, religious instructors, and the lived experiences of inmates, while the methods applied encompass lectures, discussions, habituation, role modeling, worship practice, and personal approaches. Supporting factors for religious guidance at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution include structured guidance programs, support from institutional staff and religious instructors, a religious environment, and the willingness of some inmates to change for the better. Meanwhile, hindering factors include differences in the levels of religious understanding among inmates, limited facilities and infrastructure, insufficient guidance personnel, the social environment within the institution, and the varying psychological conditions of inmates. Overall, religious guidance at this institution plays an important role in bringing about mental, spiritual, and behavioral transformation among inmates, functioning not only as a means of religious learning but also as a process of moral rehabilitation to prepare inmates to return to society as better individuals.

As a library research study, all findings and analytical conclusions presented in this study are derived from existing published literature, institutional documentation, and prior empirical studies rather than from primary field data. Accordingly, this study does not claim to present new empirical evidence about the actual experiences, attitudes, or perceptions of inmates, guidance instructors, or correctional officers at Class II A Bangkinang Correctional Institution. The analytical conclusions represent theoretical constructions grounded in the epistemological literature and prior research findings, not verified empirical outcomes from direct observation or interviews. Future research employing field-based qualitative methods including in-depth interviews with fostered students (*santri binaan*), religious guidance instructors (*ustaz pembina*), and correctional officers is needed to empirically validate, refine, and deepen the epistemological framework proposed in this study.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered. For the Directorate General of Corrections (Ditjen Pemasyarakatan), it is recommended that a national model

of integrated epistemological religious guidance incorporating bayani, burhani, and irfani approaches be developed and formally institutionalized as a standard framework for religious rehabilitation programs across correctional institutions in Indonesia. This framework should be accompanied by standardized training modules for religious guidance instructors that are adapted to the diverse literacy and religious understanding levels of the inmate population. For other correctional institutions seeking to implement or strengthen religious guidance programs, it is recommended to ensure that guidance activities are not limited to ritual habituation (a purely bayani-irfani approach) but also incorporate rational engagement and moral reasoning (the burhani dimension), so that religious transformation is both experiential and intellectually grounded. A holistic epistemological approach that balances textual authority, rational reflection, and spiritual experience is most likely to produce durable and meaningful behavioral change among inmates.

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