



Factors Influencing the Acceptance of Spiritual Rehabilitation Among Young Offenders: A Study in Malaysian Correctional Centers

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Abstract

Spiritual rehabilitation has emerged as an essential approach in the recovery process of young offenders. This study explores the factors influencing the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation among young offenders in Malaysia. Utilizing a qualitative approach, the study involved semi-structured interviews with young offenders. The findings reveal five key factors influencing the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation: religious and spiritual practices, psychosocial development, social support, attitude changes, and emotional factors. The implications contribute to qualitative methodology through the development of in-depth interview protocols. Practically, the findings enhance the components of spiritual modules for better implementation in correctional centers.

Keywords: Spiritual; Rehabilitation; Young Offenders; Correctional Center

1.0 Background of the study

Correctional centers in Malaysia now play a vital role as a platform in implementing rehabilitation programs to form a positive attitude and not focus solely on punishment. This aligns with the goal of the rehabilitation process and intervention for residents to provide them with positive experiences and perspectives that help development from spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and moral aspects (Mansor & Mohamad Jodi, 2020). The fact is that young offenders are an age group that needs to be helped since teenagers are a large group and play a role in implementing national development (Jasmi et al., 2017). Therefore, the spiritual aspect must be examined as one of the ways of intervention for clients in correctional centers.

Note that acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation is very significant in shaping the rehabilitation of young offenders as it involves spiritual elements that can improve individuals' psychological and social well-being. Mokhtar and Mohd Noor (2021) asserted that the practice of zikr and meditation can deal with social and psychological problems through Islamic psychotherapy. In addition, the spiritual elements applied in the rehabilitation program, as stated in the study by Mohd Haridi et al. (2019), demonstrated the effectiveness in shaping the identity and resilience of at-risk teenagers. Thus, accepting spiritual rehabilitation is crucial in rehabilitating the individual and building a strong spiritual foundation to face the challenges of life when released later.

There is an issue that leads to the need for this study when various methods involving existing recovery methods are introduced. However, the spiritual aspect approach is less effective due to a lack of religious knowledge (Hashim et al., 2018). This makes the lack of appreciation of religious values among young offenders cause them to be less prepared to undergo spiritual rehabilitation better. In addition, the lack of a rehabilitative institutional environment also encourages the occurrence of repeat crimes (Tharshini et al., 2018). This situation requires the researcher to discuss the factors that influence the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation to ensure that they can be resilient, especially in the spiritual aspect, after leaving the correctional center.

This research contributes to theory, methodology, and practice in spiritual rehabilitation. From a theoretical point of view, it enriches the literature, while the qualitative methodology enables an in-depth analysis of acceptance factors. Practically speaking, the study suggests an increase in spiritual rehabilitation programs that align with SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) 3 and SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) 4 to ensure good health and quality education. These findings guide policymakers and practitioners in planning effective rehabilitation programs. This article is organized with an introduction that discusses receiving spiritual rehabilitation. Next, the



researcher explains the methodology used in this study. Other than that, the study's results are also detailed, followed by a critical discussion. Finally, this article concludes with conclusions and recommendations for future research.

2.0 Methodology

This section discusses the methodology in detail, namely the research instrument and the instrument construction procedure.

2.1 Instrument

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the acceptance factors of spiritual rehabilitation for young offenders in correctional centers in Malaysia. This approach helps researchers obtain more comprehensive information on the experiences, views, and perceptions of participants, especially in relation to spiritual rehabilitation programs. The study sample consisted of 27 randomly selected participants based on certain criteria, as in Table 1. The two categories involved were young offenders, who underwent spiritual rehabilitation as the main unit of analysis.

Table 1: Selection Criteria for Study Participants

Study Participants	Criteria
Young Offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Aged 18 to 22 years old -Held on conviction and remand -Malaysian citizens - Can communicate in Malay -Willing to participate to be interviewed -Good level of knowledge -Able to provide accurate information

The main research instrument was a semi-structured interview protocol constructed to guide the conversation and ensure that the data collected was relevant to the study's objectives. According to Patton (2015), researchers interview people or individuals to discover their thoughts. In qualitative research, this type of protocol is preferred since the nature of the investigation is usually more open, less structured, and rigid (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This protocol contains the main questions related to the factors that lead to the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation and space for further questions based on the participants' answers. Notably, the instrument is designed to encourage in-depth discussion and reflection from participants.

2.2 Instrument Construction Procedure

The interview protocol instrument construction procedure involves four (4) main steps. First, questions in the interview protocol will be constructed by gathering research information through an in-depth literature review. The literature review used as a reference includes previous studies from Abdul Razak (2014) and Mohamad Shahbani (2021). Therefore, this information is used to form the interview protocol.

As summarized in Table 2, interview questions are formed according to the interview protocol with a division based on the study's objective. The interview questions have been categorized into three (3) parts, which are happy A, B, and C. Part A consists of the participant's profile. At the same time, Part B covers the level of acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders. Meanwhile, Part C comprises the acceptance factor of spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders. Therefore, an interview protocol was built on study participants who are young offenders.

Table 2: Distribution of Interview Protocols

Division	Total Questions
Part A: Participant Profiles	2 questions
Part B: Level of acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders	4 questions
Part C: Acceptance factors for spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders	5 questions

Second, the draft interview protocol is prepared to be refined and reviewed by experts in the field, including religious experts, psychologists, and correctional experts, to assess its validity in terms of content and the appropriateness of the language used. Note



that appointed experts consist of academics and practitioners. The confirmed interview protocol aims to increase the validity and reliability of the interview content to meet the needs of the research question. Among the feedback on the interview protocol is the need to separate the interview protocol questions since it considers various components based on different research objectives, as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Feedback and Recommendations of the Expert Panel in the Interview Protocol

Expert Panel	Feedback
Dr. (University Lecturer)	Experts say that there are instructions or sentences that are difficult to understand. Overall, the interview questions were agreed upon.
Dr. (University Lecturer)	Experts state that the construction of items to form questions should cover the requirements of the question and the objectives of the study. Sort the interview questions based on the order of objectives and research questions.
Prof. Associate Dr. (University Lecturer)	The technical structure of the interview protocol needs to be changed to ensure appropriate distance.
Teacher (Henry Gurney School Practitioner)	Overall, the interview protocol was relevant and agreed upon.
Crime Scene Dr. (Academy Practitioner Correctional Malaysia)	The expert stated that there is a spelling mistake in the sentence that needs to be improved. Overall, the items and content of the interview protocol were agreed upon.

Finally, the protocol was assessed in a pilot study with several participants to ensure the understanding of the questions and the reliability of the data obtained. As a result of the interview protocol, the researcher discovered that some words and questions were unclear and not understood by the respondents. This helps the researcher analyze the respondents' answers and review the interview protocol from time to time to ensure that the objective framework of the study is achieved. Subsequently, the researcher examined the research instrument and discussed it with the supervisor to ensure that the instrument could be prepared better. The results of improvements with corrections in the study instrument led to the implementation of a pilot study.

Finally, the interview protocol is complete and ready for the field study. After the validity of the instrument by a panel of experts, the actual study was conducted through data collection for young offenders involved in rehabilitation programs. This data was analyzed using thematic analysis to obtain information related to the acceptance factors of spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders.

3.0 Findings

This section discusses the results of the two findings, namely the profile of the study participants and the acceptance factors for spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders.

3.1 Study Participant Profiles

This study involved 27 study participants consisting of young offenders. The composition of the study participants consists of four (4) zones, as indicated in Table 4. Based on the study participant data by zone, a total of 27 participants were involved in this study, with the East Zone and South Zone each having six (6) participants, the West Zone with five (5) participants, and the North Zone recording the highest number with ten (10) participants. A balanced profile of participants from several zones suggests a diverse representation from a geographical aspect.

Table 4: Number of Study Participants

Zone	Number of study participants
Eastern Zone	6
Western Zone	5
South Zone	6
North Zone	10



Amount	27
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3.2 Acceptance Factors of Spiritual Rehabilitation of Young Offenders

The following discussion is about the acceptance factor of spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders. The first factor is religious and spiritual practices in Islam, including beliefs, behaviors, and rituals that aim to connect with God to achieve spiritual well-being (Baig, 2023). Religious and spiritual practices in the context of this study consist of practices by young offenders while they are in correctional centers. Hence, the application of religious practices aims to raise young offenders' awareness of the significance of maintaining prayer and reading the Quran. Moreover, religious practices such as prayer, reading *muqaddam* and al-Quran, fasting, and strengthening religious knowledge become the backbone of the spiritual rehabilitation process of young offenders (PM). The duty of prayer is to educate them to be disciplined and to read the *muqaddam*. Other than that, the Quran also provides peace of mind, with some offenders stating:

"I only know everything inside...how to pray...How do you know outside...the prayers will come..." (PMQ, 2023).

"This prayer cannot be postponed... if there is a reason like being on a plane, it can be *qada'* for tomorrow..." (PMH, 2023).

"When studying... to be calm..." (PMF, 2023).

In addition, fasting trains self-discipline with a regular schedule and activities such as reciting *Yasin*, religious talks, and studying the stories of the Prophet strengthen their understanding, as the young offender stated:

"Nearly in... can fast fully... because the meal time has been set..." (PMG, 2023).

"The lecture program... this is Israk Mikraj's lecture... an outside teacher has come..." (PMN, 2023).

The second factor that affects the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation is psychosocial development. Psychosocial development refers to the progress of personality, social skills, and attitudes throughout an individual's life (Fe-Bornstein et al., 2002). Note that psychosocial development in the context of this study is the activities and skills received by young offenders while in prison to ensure that they can be independent when released. Psychosocial development involves learning and socialization that builds the social skills of young offenders. They are allowed to continue their education at the integrity school, and coupled with a relaxed learning environment, also encourages them to achieve their goals, as stated:

"Studying here is okay... If you're near the teacher, you feel like you have to push..." (PMG, 2023).

"I used to take SPM first... Played a lot, just took it... No certificate..." (PME, 2023).

Recreational activities such as *sepak takraw* played in groups allow young offenders to socialize while exercising. This includes the opportunity for them to play the role of imam or *bilal*, which forms confidence and social responsibility, such as

"Sports... near here... unlike other prisons..." (PMH, 2023).

"There are those who become bilal imams... from shanty schools..." (PMX, 2023).

In addition, social support is also an essential factor in the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation. Social support is help and emotional support provided by social networks, including family, friends, and other community members in times of need or crisis. It comprises informational and emotional support that can increase individual self-esteem, mental health, and overall well-being (Jain & Jha, 2022). Young offenders receive social support through the environment, friends, family, and prison officials. Notably, a positive environment provides opportunities for young offenders to learn and change while having peers to vent to and provide advice, as stated:

"Close to this... we learn all kinds of things... Fix your own mistakes..." (PME, 2023).

"The early days were sad... Many friends also gave advice..." (PME, 2023).



Not only that, the presence of the family offers encouragement and a sense of calm to young offenders while undergoing rehabilitation. Additionally, prison officers also play a crucial role in the success of an activity such as the mentioned sports:

"Then I felt comfortable because, in prison, I never met my family..." (PMN, 2023).

"If on sports day I can play with the officials, it's fun..." (PMH, 2023).

Next, the fourth factor involves a change in attitude. Attitude or behavior change is a complex process that involves modifying habits or actions related to health and well-being (Manchaiah, 2012). According to Oinas-Kukkonen (2010), it includes changes in compliance, behavior, and attitudes that can be shaped, changed, or strengthened. The change in the attitude of young offenders can be observed based on the discipline that is applied and makes them learn to obey the schedule and be civilized, as stated:

"There used to be chaos... now it's order..." (PMI, 2023).

"It's like a prison... it's a bit civilized..." (PMC, 2023).

Other than that, young offenders also begin to regret past mistakes when admitted to a correctional center, which prompts changes in themselves. Their desire to change comes from self-awareness and family support, as stated:

"7 years, a long time. I don't want to... repent..." (PMB, 2023).

"I want to change because of myself..." (PMA, 2023).

"Yes, it can change... I was not very good at it... now I don't pray anymore..." (PMN, 2023).

Finally, emotions are a factor in accepting the spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders. Emotions are complex psychological states that involve thoughts, physiological changes, feelings, and expressive behavior (Barman & Dutta, 2020). Furthermore, emotion is a feeling that an individual highlights when faced with a situation and reacts to the situation experienced. This can be observed in young offenders when they are put in prison, which involves feelings of sadness from being away from family and guilt from repeating mistakes, as stated:

"At first, I felt sad... because I left my grandmother..." (PMP, 2023).

"Feeling guilty for repeating the same thing..." (PMT, 2023).

However, young offenders also expressed gratitude for having the opportunity to change and improve themselves, as stated:

"Alhamdulillah, it's a little far from what I expected... Grateful to be aware early..." (PMJ, 2023).

"Learning the meaning of gratitude... In the past, I didn't know how to be grateful..." (PMG, 2023).

4.0 Discussion

The majority of participants are teenagers aged between 16 and 22 years old, based on the profile of the study participants presented. They have varying levels of education. However, the majority only reach the UPSR or PT3 level. This indicates a relatively low educational background among them. The placement period of young offenders is mostly short, ranging from three (3) months to two (2) years, which reflects their experience in the rehabilitation system and is still in its infancy. Recorded criminal offenses varied, with a minority committing serious offenses such as rape, murder, and robbery, while some were involved in drug abuse or trafficking.

Based on the type of offense, there is a difference in frequency, where some participants are first-time offenders, while some are involved in repeated offenses. This analysis reveals that education, age, and social background play a role in criminal behavior. The profile presented provides a comprehensive view of the socio-economic challenges faced by this group as well as the risk factors that contribute to their involvement in criminal activities.



Next is the discussion about the acceptance factor of spiritual rehabilitation by young offenders. The approach of rehabilitation based on religion and spirituality clearly suggests significant potential. Despite that, accepting this spiritual rehabilitation requires a critical analysis of the factors that influence its effectiveness. For example, the effectiveness of the ISRA Module in assisting the rehabilitation of former drug addicts may be influenced by the level of individual commitment to religious practices, which is not necessarily uniform among all participants (Hafiz Goh et al., 2021). Similarly, in the context of at-risk teenagers in PERKID, the application of spiritual elements can be considered effective. However, the question arises whether social or environmental support factors also play an equally important role (Mohd Haridi et al., 2019). Therefore, the discussion about the factors of religious and spiritual practices becomes a critical yardstick in the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation to ensure that the rehabilitation that young offenders go through is more comprehensive by including individual and social dynamics.

Psychosocial factors play an essential role in the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation, especially when discussing the effectiveness of rehabilitation in the context of socially and emotionally affected individuals. A study by Md Sham and Mohd Nazim (2015) demonstrated that one of the obstacles in the recovery process is the lack of psychosocial support, such as stable family relationships, education, and employment. For example, pre-release juvenile offenders who face deficits in education and social support are more prone to recidivism (Zainol, 2017), which reflects the need for more substantial psychosocial support to complement the spiritual approach. In the case of drug rehabilitation programs, structured psychosocial guidance and education support the effectiveness of the spiritual approach in helping individuals adapt to a social context and self-acceptance (Badri, 2016). Thus, psychosocial development factors need to be integrated with the spiritual rehabilitation approach to ensure a more holistic and effective acceptance.

Next, the social support factor proved to be a critical element in ensuring the acceptance and effectiveness of spiritual rehabilitation, especially among risk groups such as prisoners, troubled youth, and juvenile offenders. Studies indicate that support from family, peers, and the community is vital in helping individuals build strong religious values, as demonstrated in rehabilitating female prisoners through the religious module (Abdul Jalil et al., 2020). Similarly, social support is identified as an effective protective factor in reducing the risk of recidivism and helping the reintegration of prisoners into society (Tharshini et al., 2018). However, there is a need to examine social support in the community to maintain progress in the lives of young offenders upon release. Therefore, coordination of social support and spiritual elements is required so that individuals not only accept change but rehabilitation is more effective and sustainable.

The study reveals the significance of attitude change factors as the main component in accepting rehabilitation, including spiritual and spiritual-based approaches. A study has reported that attitude assessment instruments in prison schools effectively increase academic motivation and independence. Nevertheless, they do not specifically assess spiritual factors (Mohamad Hashim & Taat, 2022). In addition, discussions suggest that criminal offenders have positive attitude changes, such as responsibility and discipline, after undergoing a rehabilitation program (Hashim et al., 2018). This implies that the rehabilitation module in prison emphasizes the aspect of attitude and morals, successfully forming a positive attitude change among offenders. Nonetheless, these changes need to be sustained after they return to society, especially with the challenges of social stigma and lack of support.

Emotional factors or feelings are vital in ensuring the acceptance and effectiveness of spiritual rehabilitation, especially among individuals facing psychological and social pressure. Studies suggest that emotional control through spiritual approaches, such as sincerity and self-awareness in the recovery process, helps drug addiction recovery (Rajab & Saari, 2017). In addition, a spiritual approach and rational behavior were reported to be able to help students control their emotions (Md Zahir et al., 2019). The rehabilitation program also helps strengthen the emotional and intellectual aspects as well as form spiritual values among the trainees (Mansor & Mohamad Jodi, 2020) to survive after the rehabilitation program ends.

Overall, it can be concluded that the acceptance factors for spiritual rehabilitation include five (5), namely religious and spiritual practices, psychosocial development, social support, attitude change, and emotional factors. The five factors are crucial in influencing the spiritual rehabilitation of this group in the correctional center, which in turn helps them prepare themselves to have spiritual resilience when they are released from prison.

5.0 Conclusion & Further Research

Overall, the acceptance of spiritual rehabilitation is influenced by five (5) main factors, namely religious practice, psychosocial development, social support, attitude change, and emotion. Challenges such as emotional instability, lack of social support, as well as psychosocial issues, and attitude changes among at-risk individuals can be addressed through an approach that consistently integrates spiritual elements. According to Rajab and Saari (2017), a significant positive impact on the recovery process can be envisaged when combined with holistic interventions. Therefore, the spiritual rehabilitation approach needs to be implemented comprehensively to ensure a more effective and resilient individual acceptance.



This study contributes to qualitative methodology through an in-depth interview protocol to understand participants' perceptions. The practical implications suggest increasing the competence of correctional officers in improving spiritual rehabilitation programs. Social implications need to be provided for psychosocial support after release, the reduction of social stigma by the community, the fostering of the integration of young offenders, and the contribution to social stability. Hence, future research recommendations include exploring the effectiveness of spiritual rehabilitation programs by applying five factors in the spiritual module to assess long-term changes in the behavior of young offenders. In addition, research can also be extended to female offenders and other age groups to understand the diversity of acceptance in a wider context.

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Paper Contribution to Related Field of Study

This paper contributes to the field of social work and counseling, especially in understanding the spiritual rehabilitation of young offenders. The acceptance factor of spiritual rehabilitation is presented to help improve spiritual rehabilitation programs in correctional centers in Malaysia. It will help correctional officers become more competent in planning and implementing interventions.

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