


# Problem-Focused Coping Training to Reduce Stress in Drug-Involved Prisoners

Sri Aryanti Kristianingsih\*, Heru Astikasari Setya Murti, Krismi Diah Ambarwati

Satya Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

 [sri.kristianingsih@uksw.edu](mailto:sri.kristianingsih@uksw.edu)\*

<p><b>Submitted:</b> 2024-07-03</p> <p><b>Published:</b> 2024-08-18</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Drug Case Inmates, Problem Focused Coping Training, Stress</p> <p><b>Copyright holder:</b> © Author/s (2024)</p> <p><b>This article is under:</b> </p> <p><b>How to cite:</b> Kristianingsih, S. A., Murti, H. A. S., &amp; Ambarwati, K. D. (2024). Problem-Focused Coping Training to Reduce Stress in Drug-Involved Prisoners. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 6(2). <a href="https://doi.org/10.51214/002024061012000">https://doi.org/10.51214/002024061012000</a></p> <p><b>Published by:</b> Kuras Institute</p> <p><b>E-ISSN:</b> 2656-1050</p>	<p><b>ABSTRACT:</b> This study aims to determine the effectiveness of problem-focused coping training to reduce stress in drug case inmates. The hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a difference in stress levels in drug case inmates before and after problem-focused coping training. Based on the results of the study, the calculation results are (<math>z = -1.062^b</math>; <math>p = 0.288</math>), which means that there is no difference in stress levels between the pre-test and post-test results. Thus, <math>H_0</math> is accepted and <math>H_1</math> is rejected. The problem-focused coping training provided did not reduce the stress experienced by drug case inmates in Salatiga Prison. These results indicate that problem-focused coping is not enough to reduce stress, so a combination of problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping is likely needed. The training program created needs to be more holistic and comprehensive so that it will be more effective in reducing stress. In addition, an evaluation and monitoring system is also needed to measure the effectiveness of training on coping with stress. The absence of an effect of problem-focused coping training on stress in the results of this study encourages further research with more adequate samples and more comprehensive coping strategy training.</p>
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## INTRODUCTION

Compared to the general population, inmates are at risk of having a variety of complex health needs (Hewson et al., 2020). Kothari et al. (2020) stated that people who are incarcerated have a higher likelihood of experiencing mental health disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, and substance abuse compared to those outside of prison. Meilani (2013) also noted that prisoners serving their sentences in correctional institutions can experience psychological impacts, including loss of self-identity, freedom, individual independence, freedom of communication, sexual freedom, self-esteem, self-confidence, and ideals. Inmates are also vulnerable to stress due to the situations they face in detention. They must adapt to a new environment and endure negative aspects of detention such as lack of privacy, loss of freedom, isolation, and limited contact with family and friends (Grave, 2001). This aligns with Kartono's opinion (2013) that the consequences of long-term isolation in prison can include lack of social participation, mental pressures, development of homosexuality, suspicion, irritability, hatred, sensitivity, and irresponsibility. Imprisonment conditions can cause various psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and stress, with stress being one of the main issues in prison (Majekodunmi et al., 2017). Social isolation in prison, an uncondusive environment, incompatibility between inmates, and limited communication with people outside the detention center or prison, such as family and friends, can cause stress among inmates (Febrianti & Masnina, 2019).

Stress is a negative emotional experience accompanied by biochemical, physiological, cognitive, and behavioral changes that are directed at changing the stressful event or accommodating its impact (Taylor, 2015). Sarafino (2022) further explains that stress is the result of an individual's interaction with the surrounding environment which causes an imbalance between situational demands and biopsychosocial resources. Taylor (2015) also states that stress can alter an individual's biological function, with direct physiological effects including processes such as increased blood pressure and decreased ability of the immune system to fight infection, thus making individuals who experience prolonged stress at risk of developing illness or physical health disorders.

When individuals experience stress, they tend to look for ways to overcome or manage it. Strategies to cope with stress are called coping strategies. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping is a process where individuals attempt to manage the gap between demands (both individual and environmental) and the resources they use to deal with stressful situations. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identify two forms of coping strategies which are problem-focused coping (PFC) and emotion-focused coping (EFC). PFC involves strategies aimed at reducing stressful situations by developing abilities or learning new skills to change and manage the circumstances or issues. This strategy is typically used when individuals feel they can control the problem. Conversely, EFC involves strategies aimed at modifying emotional responses without attempting to change the stressor directly. EFC is often employed when individuals feel unable or are indeed unable to change the stressful conditions.

Coping strategies allow for more targeted and effective psychological interventions that improve inmates' ability to cope with stress (Leszko, Iwański, & Jarzębińska, 2020). Choosing the right coping strategy can increase individual resilience, while maladaptive coping can further increase vulnerability and lead to negative mental health outcomes (Diehl, Hay, & Chui, 2012).

However, prisoners have limitations in choosing coping methods because they are in detention centers/prisons, where the situations differ from general circumstances. This is evident from previous studies. Cognitive and behavioral coping strategies in detention centers/prisons are more widely used but do not directly solve problems due to the limited choices and control prisoners have over their lives while incarcerated (Sholichatun, 2011). Female prisoners who committed unplanned murder often use emotion-focused coping more than problem-focused coping. This is because resources are very limited, and the condition of the punishment demands in prison prevent them from directly addressing the existing stress (Salean & Rahayu, 2023). When the stressor faced is uncontrollable by the individual, they tend to choose emotion-focused coping, such as Distancing, Escape, and Avoidance (Kristianingsih et al., 2020). The results of the study by Kristianingsih et al. showed that low coping ability is one of the main factors causing someone to use drugs and become a drug recidivist. Improving this coping strategy can be done through training, so that coping training that focuses on problems to reduce stress in drug case prisoners is carried out.

## **Research Objectives and Research Hypothesis**

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of problem-focused coping training to reduce stress in drug case inmates. The hypothesis proposed in this study is that there is a difference in stress levels in drug case inmates before and after problem-focused coping training.

## **METHODS**

### **Design**

This study employed a One-Group Pretest-Posttest experimental design. The treatment provided was problem-focused coping training, based on the theory of Lazarus and Folkman (1984). Stress levels in inmates were measured before the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test) using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21).

## Participants

The population of prisoners in Salatiga Detention Center is 175, with 70 inmates incarcerated for drug-related offenses. The sampling method used was incidental sampling, with inclusion criteria focused on prisoners with drug cases, as these represent the largest category of offenses in the Salatiga Detention Center. Participants in this study totaled 30, aligning with the standard sample size for a quantitative study, which has a minimum limit of 30 participants (Sugiyono, 2020). All research participants were involved based on informed consent forms that were completed voluntarily, without any coercion related to the research procedures.

## Instrument

Stress in inmates was measured using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21), developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (as cited in Anthony et al., 1998) and adapted into Indonesian by the researcher. The DASS-21 measures stress levels in individuals across three subscales: depression, anxiety, and stress, with a total of 21 items. Of the 21 statement items, 17 have item discrimination power scores ranging from 0.282 to 0.762 and a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.846.

## Procedures

Thirty inmates at the Salatiga Detention Center for drug cases who met the inclusion criteria were given a pre-test using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21). Following this, they received a problem-focused coping training intervention. The training included material on the definition of stress and its causes, particularly in the context of inmates, the impact of stress on self-performance, and the manifestations of stress in physical, mind, emotional, and behavioral aspects. It also covered responses to stress and coping strategies that focus on problems or emotions, with an emphasis on problem-focused coping. The methods used were lectures and discussions in both large and small groups. The training lasted 2 hours, structured as follows: a 15-minute pre-test using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21), ice-breaking sessions conducted before, in the middle, and at the end of the material presentation (totalling 15 minutes), a 90-minute material presentation, 45 minutes of large and small group discussions, and a 15-minute post-test also using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS 21).

## Data Analysis

Hypothesis testing in this study uses a t-test with a criterion of  $p < 0.05$ , so that it can be concluded that it is significant. Before testing the hypothesis, a normality and homogeneity assumption test was first carried out. Testing of research data was carried out with the help of IBM SPSS Statistic 25 for Windows software.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The descriptive statistical results in Table 1 involve 30 participants, in the stress variable the pre-test results have a minimum score of 0, a maximum score of 51, an average score of 14, and a standard deviation of 13.31. While the post-test results have a minimum score of 1, a maximum score of 61, an average score of 13.53, and a standard deviation of 14.45.

Table 1. Descriptive Stress Test on Pre-test and Post-test

Stress	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	30	0	51	14	13.31
Post-test	30	1	61	13.53	14.45

Categorization of pre-test and post-test stress levels in inmates (WBP) can be seen in tables 2 and 3.

Table 2. Stress Categorization in Pre-test

Category	Range	Frequency
Low	0 - 17	20
Medium	18 - 34	6
High	35 - 51	4

Tabel 3. Stress Categorization in Post ttest

Category	Range	Frequency
Low	1 - 21	23
Medium	21 - 41	6
High	42 - 61	1

According to data from tables 2 and 3, it appears that the stress of inmates in the pre-test and post-test, both were mostly in the low category.

### Assumption Test

The assumption tests conducted in this study are normality tests and homogeneity tests. The normality test shows that the level of inmates' stress from the pre-test and post-test results is not normally distributed, this can be seen from table 4.

Table 4. Normality Test

	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	Information
Pre-test	0.001	Abnormal ( $p < 0.05$ )
Post-test	0.000	Abnormal ( $p < 0.05$ )

The next assumption test is the homogeneity test, the test results show that the pre-test and post-test data are homogeneous, this can be seen from table 5.

Table 5. Homogeneity Test

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Significance
0.190	1	58	0.664

### Hypothesis testing

Table 6. Wilcoxon test

	z	Significance (2-tailed)
Pre-test-Post test	-1.062 <sup>b</sup>	0.288

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon test shown in table 6, it was found that the significance score for the difference in stress levels in the pre-test and post-test was 0.288 ( $p > 0.05$ ), thus the research hypothesis was rejected. This result can be interpreted that there is no difference in stress levels in drug case inmates at Salatiga Prison, before or after receiving problem-focused coping training.

### Discussion

Based on the research results, the calculation results are ( $z = -1.062^b$ ;  $p = 0.288$ ), which means that there is no difference in stress between the pre-test and post-test results. Thus,  $H_0$  is accepted and  $H_1$  is rejected. The problem-focused coping training provided does not reduce the stress experienced by drug case inmates at Salatiga Detention Center. Basically, the problem-focused coping training provided aims to help overcome stress by focusing on the source of the problem and finding concrete solutions. However, the research results obtained differ from the theoretical study.

The problem-focused coping training provided may not be effective in reducing stress, which is possible due to the following reasons.

First, inmates have complex problems, so the stress experienced cannot be resolved quickly. Narcotics cases are the most significant cases in Indonesia, and long-term drug abuse can cause psychological, physical, and social dysfunction, as well as stress (Hairina & Komalasari, 2017). This shows that the problems experienced by inmates in drug cases are not simple. Therefore, when facing complex problems without a clear solution, stress can persist.

Second, problem-focused coping requires social support. Research conducted by Mousavi et al. (2015) shows that social support plays a crucial role in the success of problem-focused coping in overcoming problems. In the case of prisoners, the social support available is very limited or even lacking, making it difficult for prisoners to implement the problem-focused coping strategies they have learned. As a result, the stress experienced by prisoners does not decrease.

Third, the problem-focused coping training is given only once, which is inadequate to equip prisoners to deal with the stress they face. The short duration of the training likely has a less significant impact. It takes time to learn coping skills and apply them to everyday life. Research shows that longer and more continuous training is more effective in achieving the desired results (Ferrari, 2023). The inadequate training duration means prisoners have less opportunity to master the material and apply it.

Fourth, inmates have complex problems so that a more comprehensive strategy is needed. The training provided only includes problem-focused coping strategies so that it is still considered inadequate in equipping WBP. Inadequate coping skills or those that are not relevant to the problems faced have an impact on the individual's inability to cope with the stress experienced. Research conducted by Bakhtiar and Asriani (2015) shows that problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping strategies are effective in improving stress management. Therefore, training is needed that can involve emotion-focused coping so that the stress experienced by WBP can be reduced. Overall, the ineffectiveness of the problem-focused coping training may be influenced by these factors. It is important to evaluate and adjust the training approach to improve the desired results.

## **Implications**

This study shows that problem-focused coping training has no effect on the stress experienced by drug case inmates in Salatiga prison. These results indicate that problem-focused coping alone is insufficient to reduce stress, suggesting that a combination of problem-focused and emotion-focused coping strategies is likely needed. The training program needs to be more holistic and comprehensive to be more effective in reducing stress. Additionally, an evaluation and monitoring system is necessary to measure the effectiveness of the training on coping with stress. The absence of an effect of problem-focused coping training on stress in this study encourages further research with more adequate samples and more comprehensive coping strategy training.

## **Limitations and Further Research**

The research conducted has several shortcomings that may affect the results. First, the number of participants is limited. The study included only 30 participants, which might not be sufficient to detect significant differences between before and after the treatment. Future researchers should increase the number of participants to obtain more accurate results. Second, the research did not include a manipulation check to verify whether the problem-focused coping training was functioning as intended. Future studies should include a manipulation check to ensure the training provided is appropriate and aligned with its objectives. Third, researchers could not control for participants' involvement in various activities that might interfere with the research results. The training was given to drug case inmates with diverse backgrounds and levels of interest, which may have differed from the researchers' expectations. Consequently, some participants showed less concentration,

potentially affecting the study's results. Future researchers should organize the research process to ensure all participants can maintain focused attention, thereby yielding more accurate results.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the research indicate that problem-focused coping training did not have any effect on reducing stress in drug case inmates. This means that the training provided did not alleviate the stress experienced by these inmates. Therefore, further research is needed with more adequate samples and more comprehensive coping training.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors contributed to this research, either involved in the data collection process and/or writing the article.

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