







## How can we resocialize adolescents in rehabilitation schools in Malaysia? Islamic education and programs as an alternative approach

 Noor Insyiraah Abu Bakar<sup>1\*</sup>

 Mohd Muslim Md Zalli<sup>2</sup>

 Zahari Suppian<sup>3</sup>

 Azlina Abu Bakar@Mohd<sup>4</sup>

 Faridah Hanim Yahya<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup>Faculty of Human Development, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia.

<sup>1</sup>Email: [insyirah@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:insyirah@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

<sup>2</sup>Email: [muslim@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:muslim@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

<sup>3</sup>Email: [zahari.suppian@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:zahari.suppian@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

<sup>4</sup>Email: [azlina.ab@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:azlina.ab@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

<sup>5</sup>Email: [faridahhanim@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:faridahhanim@fpm.upsi.edu.my)



(+ Corresponding author)

### ABSTRACT

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#### Keywords

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Resocialization.

Resocialization is an important process for a juvenile, and it can be achieved through various means, one of which is religion. This article solely focuses on the resocialization of juveniles through the implementation of a religious approach. A case study design was used involving two rehabilitation schools housing male and female juveniles who have broken the law and whose ages range from 10 to 18. Two schools, each housing a different gender, were chosen to provide a more detailed understanding of the resocialization process. A total of 10 teachers and 15 juveniles were selected as respondents through the purposive sampling technique. This technique allows the selection of appropriate individuals based on the scope of the study. Data was gathered through in-depth interviews with all respondents. To support the interview data, observations at the research sites were also carried out. The findings revealed that the implementation of Islamic education and programs helps the resocialization process of juveniles in rehabilitation schools. On this basis, more attention should be paid to improving the quality of Islamic education and programs so that juvenile resocialization efforts continue to yield positive results. The resocialization process takes a long time, but it is worthwhile for it to continue to be implemented in an effort to change delinquent behavior.

**Contribution/Originality:** This paper's primary contribution is to reveal how resocialization can be achieved through Islamic education and programs. In the process of resocialization, a variety of approaches can be used, but this is pioneering research that focuses on the implementation of Islamic education and programs.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are becoming increasingly involved in criminal activity nationwide (Dash, Padhi, & Das, 2021; Hamidi & Nurdin, 2020; Khan, Raheed, & Hussain, 2021). This behavior is indicative of delinquency, which is defined as any act that is in violation of the laws of the nation carried out by anyone under the age of 18 (Child Act, 2001).

Many reasons have been put forward regarding why adolescents tend to become involved in delinquency. For example, negative peer pressure (Carol, Peez, & Wagner, 2020; Walters, 2020) parental neglect (Abdullah, Manful,

Cudjoe, & Boateng, 2021; Biswal, 2020; Mwangangi, 2019; Susilo, 2020) the impact of social media (Aljehani, 2019), poverty (Cho, Haight, Choi, Hong, & Piescher, 2019; Patoari & Hossain, 2020) and dropping out of school (Ashtiani, 2021; Bilige & Gan, 2020; Panezai, Panezai, Wassan, & Saqib, 2019) are all things that frequently encourage adolescents to carry out acts of delinquency.

The lack of religious education is another reason that causes juveniles to engage in delinquency (Murfid, Kosasih, & Budiayanti, 2021). Due to the lack of religion, Islamic education and Islamic religious programs are emphasized in rehabilitation schools in Malaysia as they are expected to be able to change the behavior of adolescents. However, the extent of their effect in changing bad behavior remains unknown, therefore this research aims to fill this knowledge gap.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Rehabilitation School in Malaysia

As a result of their involvement in delinquency, adolescents are sent to rehabilitation schools for a certain length of time. Due to age factors, these adolescents are not labelled as prisoners but are referred to as juveniles.

Rehabilitation schools or institutions for juveniles in Malaysia were introduced after the second world war and their establishment took into account the government's ordinance, Islamic teachings and the Malaysian population at the time (Teh, 2002). However, there is a need for juvenile institutions to transform in line with the changing times and the needs of juveniles (Dash et al., 2021).

Currently in Malaysia there are both governmental and privately operated rehabilitation institutions. The Welfare Department, or Jabatan Kebajikan Malaysia (JKM), and the Prison Department, or Jabatan Penjara Malaysia (JPM), are the government agencies overseeing these institutions. JPM oversees Sekolah Integriti (SI) and Sekolah Henry Gurney (SHG), while Sekolah Tunas Bakti (STB), Asrama Akhlak (AA) and Taman Seri Puteri (TSP) are institutions under JKM. The decision regarding which institution any underage individual will be sent to depends on the court order and the type of misconduct (Azhar, Wahab, Yusuff, & Arshad, 2018; Hassan & Rosly, 2021).

The establishment of rehabilitation schools proves that the Malaysian government is committed to rehabilitating adolescents involved in delinquency. In rehabilitation school, groups of juveniles follow various programs aimed at helping them change themselves, especially their behavior. In order to change their behavior, they need to undergo a lengthy process called resocialization.

### 2.2. Resocialization Process and Religious Approach

Resocialization refers to a process of learning new norms, values and behaviors, and the result is a transformation in the individual (Ferrante, 2014; Kendall, 2017). When juveniles go through a resocialization process when they are sent to a rehabilitation school, changes in their behavior can be observed. This process is important, and various methods can be used as long as positive changes can be obtained, particularly in behavioral aspects (Badasa, Gameda, Gaduda, & Wondimu, 2019). One of these methods is an emphasis on religion (Carol et al., 2020), so only religious approaches, such as Islamic education and Islamic programs, are discussed in this paper.

Religion is a belief that calls for good behavior among its followers (Situmorang & Aslam, 2020). If followers practice religious teachings, there shouldn't be any issues regarding negative behavior, including delinquencies and crime (Ab Rahman et al., 2018; Idris, Jailani, Mahyuddin, & Othman, 2021; Mahdavi & Modarres, 2020). As religion is important in shaping an individual, it is an oft used approach in shaping behaviors (Kadri, Zulkefley, & Baharudin, 2019; Sokip, Akhyak, Soim, Tanzeh, & Kojin, 2019). In Malaysia, most juvenile rehabilitation schools emphasize religious components in effecting juvenile behavioral change. Religious components are found in the form of Islamic education, religious teachings, Fardhu Ain classes, Quranic classes, religious talks, congregational praying, and various other programs.

Nazneen, Nurzatil, Sahlawati, Zanariah, and Nurul (2016) focus on the religious components of creed, worship and morality and their effect on juveniles' behavior through religious teachings in rehabilitation school. Noor (2016) studied eight Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat rehabilitation schools that use the Islamic Teaching Module program. It was found that the Islamic Teaching Module is effective in altering behavior while strengthening religious faith. A study by Nurzatil, Nazneen, Sahlawati, Zanariah, and Nurul (2016) focuses on Islamic programs through Quranic teachings to treat juveniles at the Majlis Agama Islam Selangor (MAIS) sanctioned private rehabilitation institution. Purposive sampling was used to select two female juveniles, and data collection was carried out only through interviews.

It was found that Quranic teachings greatly helped them improve their negative behavior and helped them build strength toward changing for the better.

Sahlawati, Nurzatil Ismah, Nazneen, and Zanariah (2017) specifically studied the extent of the effectiveness of Quranic teachings in shaping juveniles' behavior in two private rehabilitation institutions. The findings from interviews with a rehabilitation institution superintendent, one teacher and eight juveniles showed that using Quranic teachings, creed, emphasizing congregational praying and *zikir* all help juveniles to change their behavior. Studies by Zakaria and Zulkifli (2017) and Noor, Fakhrol, and Norsaleha (2017) also provide important information regarding Islamic religious programs and their effect on juveniles in JKM rehabilitation school. Both studies involve JKM's sanctioned rehabilitation school practicing religious-centric activities (fasting, praying, and Quranic recitals) that were proven to be effective in juveniles' positive behavioral changes. A study by Kadri et al. (2019) also demonstrates the importance of religious programs in reducing aggressive and negative behavior. Therefore, Malaysian rehabilitation institutions or schools emphasize the use of religious programs for juvenile behavioral changes due to their positive outcomes.

Observations of overseas situations also saw religious approaches being used in efforts to change juvenile behavior. The only difference between Malaysia and western countries is that, in the west, religious programs are based on religious beliefs. An example is the study by Swanson (2009) that focuses on beliefs and moral improvements on delinquents under church religious programs. The findings show that these programs help strengthen religious beliefs and moral improvement, nurture good values and therefore foster good behavior. Gardner (2011) also focuses on religious-centric programs.

This narrative study found that when juveniles are exposed to religiously inclined programs, it helps them reflect on past mistakes, practice religious values, and finally, positive behavior will prevail. According to Dodson, Cabage, and Klenowski (2011) and Denney (2018) in American justice history, bringing change to the convicted does not solely depend on harsh punishment; religion is the basis. The west also emphasizes religious aspects for juveniles during rehabilitation so that they behave while in detention and continue to behave upon release.

The importance of religion in changing negative behavior is also clearly stated by Allen and Lo (2010) and Chui, Cheng, and Wong (2013). Gbadamosi and Ajayi (2018) and Jang (2019) show the undeniable role of religion in preventing criminal acts.

Most scholars believe that a person's deep religious faith helps them to refrain from committing wrongdoings, including crime (Adamczyk, Freilich, & Kim, 2017; Corcoran, Pettinicchio, & Robbins, 2018; Hoskin, Hartley, Lee, & McMurray, 2017; Schroeder, Broadus, & Bradley, 2018; Ulmer & Harris, 2013). Hence, emphasizing religious faith in the effort to reduce negative behavior has become the focus to rejuvenate offenders, including juveniles.

Undeniably, a behavioral change for juveniles has its own obstacles and needs multiple approaches to achieve it (Abu Bakar, Dawi, Hashim, & Abd Wahab, 2020). However, this article contextually discusses the practice of a religious approach in an effort to change the behavior of adolescents in rehabilitation schools. Based on the discussion above, a religious approach has had a positive effect on changing the behavior of juveniles thus far. But, at this point, is it still effective in changing the behavior of juveniles?

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design

Merriam (1998) asserts that a case study is typically employed when a researcher wants to analyze a single unit holistically and explicitly. Additionally, a case study is appropriate since it involves data collection for a problem that is handled naturally and is based on complex descriptive criteria (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). Thus, a case study design was chosen in this particular research setting, which is appropriate since it enables us to investigate whether or not resocialization takes place. Furthermore, as Lebar (2017) suggested, using case studies allows researchers to understand and investigate the resocialization process from the perspectives of those involved directly in this phenomenon.

#### 3.2. Location of Study

This study involves two juvenile detention centers, also known as Sekolah Tunas Bakti (STB). These STBs house sentenced individuals below the age of 18 who have broken the law. Each of these rehabilitation schools house a different gender. The reason that two schools of different genders were chosen was because they could provide a wider understanding of the resocialization process. For ethical purposes of confidentiality, the names of both schools are kept confidential (as stated in Table 1).

Table 1. Study schools.

| Institution name        | Gender |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Rehabilitation school A | Female |
| Rehabilitation school B | Male   |

STB is one of the rehabilitation facilities overseen by Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM). Despite it being named a school, it is more than just a normal school. Setting it apart from a normal school is its location within a closed gated area, closely guarded and inaccessible to the public without the authority's consent.

#### 3.3. Selection of Respondents

The respondents were selected through a selection process called purposive sampling. There are two sampling methods used, which are random sampling and non-random or purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling Merriam (1998) was employed as a non-random sampling technique for qualitative research because, according to Creswell (2013) this method selects respondents who are best suited to respond to the study's questions in depth. In this study, purposive sampling was used due to its ability to select the appropriate individuals based on the study's scope. In total, 10 teachers and 15 juveniles make up the respondents. The selection of the teachers as respondents for this study was due to their involvement in juvenile resocialization programs. The juveniles, on the other hand, can share their own resocialization experiences and perspectives. By involving teachers and juveniles as research respondents, it enables a clearer picture of the resocialization process.

#### 3.4. Data Collection

Interviews were used because they are a primary strategy for gathering information for qualitative studies (Bailey, 2017). In this study, one-on-one interviews were conducted with 10 teachers, but focus group interviews were conducted with the juveniles. Four focus groups were formed for the juveniles (FG1, FG2, FG3, FG4), with two to six people in each. The limited number of juveniles means that each person had an opportunity to express their viewpoint throughout the interview.

There are three types of interviews—closed structure interviews, semi-structured interviews, and open-structured interviews. Due to its open and flexible structure (Lebar, 2017) semi-structured interviews were selected as the data collection strategy for this study. Using semi-structured interviews gave the researcher the opportunity

to ask probing questions to thoroughly explore the scope of research in depth (Bailey, 2017). Thus, the overall process of resocialization using Islamic education and Islamic programs can be well understood.

Next, as suggested by Bailey (2017) observations were made to support the interview data in the study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) also recommended making observations in order for the researcher to understand the respondents' behavior, because doing so enables a thorough exploration of juveniles' behavioral changes. Thus, all observations related to juvenile behavior and important aspects of this study were recorded in field notes. Furthermore, all observations pertaining to the scope of the research are detailed in the field notes, and the writings should not be biased, as recommended by Marshall and Rossman (2016).

### 3.5. Data Analyses and Research Validity

The data analysis involves transcribed interviews. The transcription process of the interview data is particularly important in the early stages of data analysis. This was then followed by a coding procedure and resultant themes to address the research objectives. The validity of the study is obtained when the researcher carries out triangulation on the research data, which entails data collection from various respondents (teachers and juveniles). According to Hays and Singh (2012) involving many respondents can increase the validity of a study.

## 4. FINDINGS

The behavioral changes among juveniles were observed and shared by teachers during the interview session. Additionally, juveniles' own statements can be used to demonstrate how their behavior has changed. These changes are also supported by field observations. The following are excerpts from interviews with respondents and data from field notes.

Religious-centric programs are carried out in rehabilitation under this study as it can help shape juveniles' behavior.

G2: Aaa...in this school, various religious activities are held to help juveniles change their attitude and behavior. Here we have Fardhu Ain classes, Al-Quran recital classes, group prayers, religious talks, zikir, and other religious-centric classes.

(G2, teacher at rehabilitation school A: para 8).

An example of a religious-centric program is religious talks after prayer, as elaborated by a teacher.

G8: It means that they can accept religious talks. We can really see their politeness; their behavior really changes.

(G8, teacher at rehabilitation school B: para 416).

The interviews with juveniles also found that religious talks really helped them in term of eagerness to pray (perform solah). Praying on time is a good behavior, as previously they were lackadaisical when praying.

Pk: So, you think religious talks can change you?

JP8: It really makes me eager to pray. Previously, I prayed half-heartedly, but now I pray full-heartedly.

(FG1, juvenile group at rehabilitation school A: para 235-236).

Good behavior, such as reading Al-Quran, can be seen in juveniles, as shared by the G8 respondent. According to him, juveniles were seen voluntarily reading Al-Quran after they were given religion classes.

G8: Before this, they seldom reached out for Al-Quran.

Pk: Okay.

G8: But after Quran reading class, it can be seen, while waiting for peers coming for prayer, they reached out for Al-Quran, reading it by themselves, as they already knew the basics of reading.

(G8, teacher at rehabilitation B: para 120-122).

In addition to the interview data, observation data also supports this effect of religion impacting juveniles' display of positive behavior to willingly performing religious rituals.

While the juveniles were waiting for the religious teacher's arrival, some started reading Al-Quran, and others were praying. A little while later, the teacher arrived, and the class began with the teacher reviewing recitals to read in prayer.

(Prayer class observation; Surau of Rehabilitation School B).

Overall, the findings presented in this section show that Islamic education and Islamic programs, such as Fardhu Ain classes, Al-Quran recital classes, group prayers, religious talks, and zikir sessions had a positive impact on the behavior of the juveniles in this study.

## 5. DISCUSSION

Generally, various approaches can be implemented (Abu Bakar, Dawi, Hashim, Zalli, & Suppian, 2023) but this article's findings only describe research related to the application of Islamic education and Islamic programs as an approach to changing juveniles' behavior. This change in behavior is also known as "resocialization" from a sociological perspective.

As discussed earlier in this article, resocialization is a process to inculcate values, good norms and good behavior that is reflected in the individual. Religion is an important aspect in changing one's behavior. Through religion, good values are also instilled in an individual (Asmuni, 2021; Subaidi, 2020). Therefore, it is often emphasized as part of the effort of juvenile resocialization. The findings of this research, based on two schools, found that religion helps good behavioral transformation in juveniles. This is aligned with past findings by Nazneen et al. (2016); Zakaria and Zulkifli (2017); Noor et al. (2017) and Kadri et al. (2019). These studies produced results that support Islamic education and Islamic religious programs in helping shape well-behaved juveniles. Religious programs can cover various approaches, such as Fardhu Ain classes, Al-Quran recital classes, group prayer, religious talks, zikir, and other religious-centric classes.

There are also foreign studies that focus on religious-centric programs, according to their practiced religions, that drive juveniles' behavior toward the better, as found by Swanson (2009); Dodson et al. (2011) and Gardner (2011). Behavior that is against the law refers to delinquencies can be made right through religious faith (Carol et al., 2020; Gbadamosi & Ajayi, 2018; Jang, 2019). Therefore, stressing the religious aspect is appropriate. The view of Idris et al. (2021) and Mahdavi and Modarres (2020) is that juveniles with strong religious beliefs will display good behavior and will not repeat their mistakes upon release. Religion is also an essential part of juveniles' transformation process abroad (Denney, 2018).

Furthermore juveniles were usually shallow in their religious knowledge prior to admission to rehabilitation (Basirah, Mohd, & Muhamad, 2018). Therefore, stressing the religious component is justified. If individuals practice appropriate religious teachings, there shall be no issues of delinquency or negative behavior (Rahman & Mufti, 2021; Zuhaery & Santosa, 2021). They also have the right to receive a proper religious education (Nurjanah, Santoso, Fatarib, Jalil, & Murdiana, 2022), and this is what the two rehabilitation schools in this study try to practice.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Every juvenile is different; therefore, there is a pressing need for a variety of approaches for a successful resocialization process. One of the approaches is through religion, as it functions as a medium for social control in society. Juveniles sent to a rehabilitation school is part of society, so a religious approach is suitable as a means to control their behavior. Not only that, many individuals belong to a certain religion, and if the teachings are embraced, there will be no issue of breaking the law (Johnson, 2021; Soluk, Damayanti, & Benu, 2021).

As a matter of fact, all religions try to inculcate good values and always forbid their adherents from behaving negatively. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize religion in daily life for everyone, especially adolescents who attend

rehabilitation schools because they are a group that is easily affected by negative influences. In sum, Islamic education and religious programs are strongly needed in this context of study.

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