

The Process of Self-Acceptance among Juvenile Correctional Residents: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Proses Penerimaan Diri pada Anak Didik Pemasyarakatan: Analisis Fenomenologis Interpretatif

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Abstract

Adolescents involved in the juvenile justice system often experience psychological challenges related to shame, stigma, disrupted identity development, and uncertainty about their future, making self-acceptance an important component of rehabilitation. This study aimed to understand the process of self-acceptance among Anak Didik Pemasyarakatan (Andikpas), adolescents residing at LPKA Class II Yogyakarta, an Indonesian juvenile correctional institution. This qualitative study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Three male Andikpas aged 16–18 years who were actively receiving correctional guidance and able to reflect on and communicate their lived experiences of self-acceptance were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, interview observations, and field notes, while interviews with three correctional officers were used for contextual triangulation. The analysis identified five interconnected themes: shame and guilt, negotiation of wrongdoing and responsibility, relational acceptance as a safe space, reflective reinterpretation of life experiences, and the construction of a more worthy future self. The findings indicate that self-acceptance develops as a gradual, relational, reflective, and future-oriented process shaped by emotional struggle, supportive relationships, meaning-making, and hope for reintegration. This study was limited to three male participants from a single juvenile correctional institution; therefore, the findings should be interpreted as context-specific and are not intended to be generalized to all juvenile correctional populations.

Keywords : Andikpas; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; Juvenile Correctional Institution; Self-Acceptance

Abstrak

Remaja yang berhadapan dengan sistem peradilan anak sering menghadapi tantangan psikologis berupa rasa malu, stigma, gangguan perkembangan identitas, dan ketidakpastian masa depan, sehingga penerimaan diri menjadi aspek penting dalam proses rehabilitasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami proses penerimaan diri pada Anak Didik Pemasyarakatan (Andikpas) di LPKA Kelas II Yogyakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Tiga Andikpas laki-laki berusia 16–18 tahun yang sedang aktif menjalani pembinaan serta mampu merefleksikan dan mengomunikasikan pengalaman hidup yang berkaitan dengan penerimaan diri dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi selama wawancara, dan catatan lapangan, sedangkan wawancara dengan tiga petugas LPKA digunakan sebagai triangulasi kontekstual. Analisis menghasilkan lima tema yang saling berkaitan, yaitu rasa malu dan rasa bersalah, negosiasi kesalahan dan tanggung jawab, penerimaan relasional sebagai ruang aman, pemaknaan ulang pengalaman hidup secara reflektif, serta pembentukan diri yang lebih bermakna di masa depan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa penerimaan diri berkembang sebagai proses yang bertahap, relasional, reflektif, dan berorientasi masa depan yang dibentuk oleh pergulatan emosi, hubungan yang mendukung, pemaknaan pengalaman, serta harapan untuk reintegrasi. Penelitian ini terbatas pada tiga Andikpas laki-laki di satu lembaga pembinaan sehingga temuan perlu dipahami sebagai gambaran yang bersifat kontekstual dan tidak dimaksudkan untuk digeneralisasikan pada seluruh populasi Andikpas.

Kata Kunci : Andikpas; Analisis Fenomenologis Interpretatif; Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak; Penerimaan Diri

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a critical developmental period characterized by rapid biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes that shape identity formation, psychological well-being, and future life trajectories. During this stage, young people are particularly sensitive to environmental influences and interpersonal experiences, making supportive developmental contexts essential for healthy psychosocial adjustment. When adolescents become involved in the juvenile justice system, these developmental tasks are often disrupted by legal processes, institutional placement, and social stigma, potentially influencing their psychological development beyond the period of detention. Longitudinal evidence indicates that contact with the justice system may have enduring developmental consequences that extend into adulthood, highlighting the importance of rehabilitation approaches that support psychological recovery alongside positive youth development (Cauffman et al., 2023). Likewise, contemporary youth justice services increasingly emphasize rehabilitation that addresses developmental needs while recognizing adolescents as individuals who are still constructing their identities and future life directions (Moore et al., 2025).

The consequences of juvenile detention extend beyond legal sanctions and frequently affect multiple aspects of adolescents' psychological and social functioning. Evidence from a recent systematic review demonstrates that juvenile incarceration is associated with adverse outcomes in mental health, physical health, educational attainment, employment opportunities, and subsequent involvement with the justice system (Ackerman et al., 2024). Similarly, a meta-analysis found that adolescents in juvenile detention experience substantially higher rates of mental disorders than their peers in the general population, indicating the need for comprehensive psychological intervention during correctional guidance (Beaudry et al., 2021). Recent evidence also shows that justice-involved youth continue to have unmet mental health needs within juvenile justice systems, reinforcing the importance of rehabilitation models that integrate psychological support with correctional guidance (Dardas et al., 2025). Beyond psychiatric symptoms, detention may intensify feelings of shame, guilt, stigma, and social exclusion unless rehabilitation programs provide meaningful psychological support and opportunities for personal growth (Borschmann et al., 2020). Accordingly, psychological rehabilitation should not only promote behavioral compliance but also facilitate emotional recovery, identity development, and successful social reintegration (Duchschere et al., 2023).

Globally, an estimated 259,000 children aged 5–17 years were deprived of liberty in the administration of justice in 2024, underscoring the continuing need for juvenile justice systems to address not only legal accountability but also children's developmental and psychosocial needs (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2025). In Indonesia, the Public Correctional Database of the Directorate General of Corrections recorded 1,545 juvenile correctional residents nationwide in 2025, including 23 adolescents in the Special

Region of Yogyakarta (Directorate General of Corrections, 2025). Institutional administrative records from LPKA Class II Yogyakarta further indicated that, as of December 2025, the institution accommodated 23 male juvenile correctional residents, most of whom were in late adolescence. This local profile highlights the importance of examining how Anak Didik Pemasyarakatan (Andikpas) understand and reconstruct their sense of self as they undergo correctional guidance and confront past wrongdoing, family disappointment, social stigma, and uncertainty about their future.

Previous Indonesian studies have demonstrated that psychological rehabilitation among Andikpas has primarily been examined through intervention-based and correlational approaches. Existing evidence suggests that positive thinking interventions, social support, and correctional guidance contribute to improving self-acceptance and self-esteem among adolescents in juvenile correctional settings (Bilicha et al., 2022; Fakhrah & Purnamaningsih, 2020). Other studies have reported that adolescents who have experienced legal conflict continue to encounter challenges related to social adaptation, emotional regulation, and psychological adjustment throughout the rehabilitation process (Dewi et al., 2022; Ramdani et al., 2022). Furthermore, family relationships and supportive interpersonal interactions have been shown to facilitate adolescents' psychological adjustment and self-esteem (Amalia & Aprianty, 2023; Anisyah et al., 2025). Although these studies have substantially contributed to understanding the psychological conditions of justice-involved adolescents in Indonesia, they predominantly focus on intervention outcomes or relationships between psychological variables. Consequently, little is known about how self-acceptance is subjectively experienced, negotiated, and reconstructed throughout the correctional process from the perspective of Andikpas themselves.

Self-acceptance in the present study is conceptualized as a dynamic psychological process through which adolescents acknowledge past experiences, recognize personal limitations, and gradually develop a more balanced and compassionate understanding of themselves. Within the framework of psychological well-being, self-acceptance reflects an individual's ability to accept both positive and negative aspects of the self while maintaining openness to personal growth (Ryff, 1989). From a humanistic perspective, (Rogers, 1957) argued that psychological growth occurs when individuals experience empathic understanding, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard, enabling them to reinterpret difficult life experiences without fear of rejection. Complementing this perspective, (Erikson, 1968) described adolescence as a critical developmental period characterized by identity exploration, during which young people strive to integrate past experiences, present roles, and future aspirations into a coherent sense of self. More recent developmental research further suggests that identity formation is not a fixed developmental achievement but an ongoing process shaped by interpersonal relationships, reflective meaning-making, and changing life experiences (Branje et al., 2021). Contemporary evidence also suggests that

self-acceptance remains important for adolescent mental health because difficulties in accepting oneself may interact with maladaptive social comparison and depressive symptoms (Ruan et al., 2025). Collectively, these perspectives indicate that self-acceptance among justice-involved adolescents should be understood as a developmental process emerging through emotional experiences, supportive relationships, reflective interpretation, and future-oriented identity reconstruction.

Recent international literature has increasingly emphasized that effective rehabilitation for justice-involved adolescents extends beyond behavioral management toward facilitating psychological recovery, identity development, and successful community reintegration. (Papalia et al., 2022) demonstrated that strong therapeutic alliances improve adolescents' engagement in rehabilitation by fostering trust, emotional safety, and collaborative relationships with helping professionals. Evidence from child and adolescent mental health services similarly highlights that therapeutic relationships are shaped by trust, collaboration, and agreement between young people and professionals (Hartley et al., 2022; Roest et al., 2023). Studies on young people's therapeutic experiences also show that rehabilitation becomes more meaningful when adolescents feel respected, accepted, and able to express difficult emotions within supportive relationships (Cooper et al., 2025; Dimic et al., 2023). Beyond relational support, family-centeredness and rights-based rehabilitation are increasingly recognized as important elements in supporting adolescents' adjustment after secure residential or correctional care (Broekhoven et al., 2025; Chau et al., 2025). Future-oriented narratives are also important because adolescents' ability to imagine a different future can support identity reconstruction and psychological recovery (Basilici et al., 2025; Bucklin et al., 2026). Collectively, these studies suggest that rehabilitation is most effective when adolescents are supported in reconstructing both their identities and their understanding of themselves rather than merely complying with institutional regulations.

Despite the expanding body of evidence, several important gaps remain. In Indonesia, research involving Anak Didik Pemasarakatan (Andikpas) has primarily examined self-acceptance, self-esteem, social support, and psychological adjustment through quantitative, correlational, or intervention-based designs that focus predominantly on psychological outcomes (Bilicha et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2022). Although these studies have contributed valuable knowledge regarding factors associated with adolescents' rehabilitation, they provide limited insight into how self-acceptance develops through adolescents' lived experiences while they remain within juvenile correctional institutions. International research has similarly concentrated on mental health, therapeutic alliance, rehabilitation, stigma, identity development, and desistance among justice-involved youth (Moore et al., 2025; Papalia et al., 2022). However, relatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how adolescents themselves

negotiate shame and guilt, reinterpret past experiences, develop supportive relationships, and reconstruct future identities as interconnected dimensions of self-acceptance throughout the rehabilitation process. Consequently, the lived experience through which Andikpas gradually construct self-acceptance within the sociocultural and institutional context of Indonesian juvenile correctional institutions remains insufficiently understood.

To address these gaps, this study aims to explore the process of self-acceptance among Andikpas at LPKA Class II Yogyakarta using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Unlike previous studies that conceptualize self-acceptance primarily as a psychological outcome, this study examines self-acceptance as a dynamic developmental process that evolves through emotional struggles, relational acceptance, reflective reinterpretation of life experiences, and the reconstruction of a more meaningful future identity. The novelty of this study lies in offering an integrative understanding of self-acceptance as a relational, reflective, and future-oriented developmental process grounded in the lived experiences of justice-involved adolescents within an Indonesian juvenile correctional institution. By illuminating how adolescents gradually reconstruct their understanding of themselves during rehabilitation, this study contributes to the theoretical development of self-acceptance, adolescent identity formation, and rehabilitation within juvenile justice settings. Furthermore, the findings provide practical insights for designing rehabilitation programs that strengthen emotional recovery, supportive relationships, reflective meaning-making, and successful social reintegration.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a qualitative design with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA was chosen because the study aimed to understand how Andikpas made meaning of self-acceptance during correctional guidance. This approach is appropriate for exploring lived experience, personal meaning, reflection, and interpretation, particularly when the focus is on depth rather than statistical generalization (Darley et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2009). Data analysis involved repeated reading, exploratory noting, development of emergent themes, grouping related themes into superordinate themes, and cross-case analysis. Trustworthiness was strengthened through source triangulation, method triangulation, audit trail, and researcher reflexivity. These strategies support credibility, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

The study was conducted at LPKA Class II Yogyakarta, Indonesia, a juvenile correctional institution that provides guidance, education, supervision, and rehabilitation for adolescents who are in conflict with the law. Institutional administrative records showed that, as of December 2025, the institution accommodated 23 male juvenile correctional residents, most of whom were in late adolescence.

Table 1. Characteristics of participants

Participant Code	Age	Gender	Role/Status	Guidance Period/ Work Experience
Main Participants				
P1	18 years	Male	Andikpas	3 years
P2	17 years	Male	Andikpas	2 years
P3	16 years	Male	Andikpas	3 years 6 months
Supporting Participants				
PL1	49 Years	Male	Officer	14 Years
PL2	34 Years	Male	Officer	8 Years
PL3	41 Years	Male	Officer	11 Years

The main participants were three male juvenile correctional residents, purposively selected, aged 16–18 years. The inclusion criteria were being an active resident at LPKA Class II Yogyakarta, having undergone correctional guidance for a sufficient period to reflect on institutional life, being able to communicate their experiences, and being willing to discuss their self-view, past wrongdoing, relationships, and future aspirations. The exclusion criteria were acute psychological distress during recruitment, inability to participate in an interview, or unwillingness to provide assent or consent. Three correctional officers were also involved as supplementary contextual informants. Their accounts were used only to contextualise the institutional environment and were not treated as primary phenomenological data or as validation of participants' subjective experiences.

Because the study involved adolescents in a juvenile correctional institution, safeguards were applied to protect participants' autonomy, confidentiality, privacy, and psychological well-being. The study was conducted after obtaining institutional research permission from the Directorate General of Corrections, Regional Office of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, under letter number WP.14-HK.01.04-942, dated 15 December 2025. Operational approval for data collection was also obtained from LPKA Class II Yogyakarta under letter number WP.14.PAS.PAS.6.UM.01.01-280, dated 15 January 2026.

Before data collection, participants received an explanation of the study aims, interview procedures, voluntary participation, potential risks, confidentiality, and their right to decline or withdraw. They were informed that participation, refusal, or withdrawal would not affect their correctional status, privileges, guidance process, or relationship with institutional staff. For participants below 18 years old, assent was obtained from the participants, and participation was conducted in accordance with the authorised institutional procedures of LPKA Class II Yogyakarta. The 18-year-old participant provided informed consent independently. To reduce coercion, participation was explained as voluntary and unrelated to institutional evaluation. Interviews were conducted in a private setting, and identifying information was removed from transcripts and quotations.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, interview observations, field notes, and supplementary contextual accounts from correctional officers. The interview guide explored participants' experiences of

living in LPKA, their views of themselves before and during correctional guidance, their feelings about past wrongdoing, their experiences of acceptance or rejection from others, their reflections on personal change, and their hopes for the future.

Each participant took part in an in-depth interview lasting approximately two to two and a half hours, including rest intervals of approximately 30 to 40 minutes when needed to reduce fatigue. Open-ended questions and follow-up prompts were used to encourage detailed personal accounts. Interview observations and field notes were recorded to capture nonverbal expressions, emotional tone, pauses, and contextual information. Supplementary interviews with correctional officers focused on institutional routines, correctional guidance activities, and general observations regarding residents' adjustment.

Data analysis followed the principles of IPA. Each transcript was read repeatedly to develop familiarity with the participant's account. Initial notes were made at descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual levels, focusing on what participants said, how they expressed their experiences, and what meanings could be interpreted from their accounts. Emergent themes were then developed for each participant and checked against the full transcript to ensure that they remained grounded in the data.

After each case had been analysed idiographically, cross-case analysis was conducted to identify shared patterns and distinctive variations across participants. The final superordinate themes were developed through an iterative process of moving between transcripts, field notes, emergent themes, and interpretative memos. Five superordinate themes were identified: a shaken self, negotiated responsibility, relational acceptance as a safe space, reflective reinterpretation, and building a more worthy future self. These themes were not treated as fixed sequential stages, but as interconnected dimensions of how participants made sense of self-acceptance during correctional guidance.

The interviews were conducted primarily in Indonesian, with some expressions reflecting participants' everyday language and local speech. Data analysis was conducted in the original language to preserve participants' meanings and contextual nuances. Selected quotations were subsequently translated into English for publication using a meaning-based translation approach rather than a strictly literal translation. The English translations were carefully checked against the original transcripts to ensure semantic equivalence, contextual

accuracy, and consistency with participants' intended meanings.

Reflexivity was maintained throughout data collection and analysis because IPA recognizes the researcher's active role in interpreting participants' meaning-making. The researcher kept reflective notes to record assumptions, emotional responses, interpretative decisions, and potential influences of the correctional setting on the research encounter. Interpretations were repeatedly checked against transcripts and discussed with the research team to refine theme development and reduce unsupported interpretation.

Trustworthiness was strengthened through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was supported by repeated engagement with transcripts, use of participant quotations, interview observations, and field notes. Dependability and confirmability were supported through systematic documentation of recruitment, interview procedures, analytic notes, reflexive memos, and theme development (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was maintained from raw data to initial notes, emergent themes, case-specific themes, and final superordinate themes. Thick description was used to provide sufficient contextual information to enable readers to assess the transferability of the findings to similar juvenile correctional contexts (Nowell et al., 2017).

RESEARCH RESULT

The Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis revealed five interrelated superordinate themes that together illustrate the process through which self-acceptance developed among

the Andikpas participants. These themes were not experienced as isolated psychological events, but as interconnected movements in which emotional disruption, negotiation of wrongdoing, supportive relationships, reflective meaning-making, and future-oriented identity reconstruction gradually shaped the participants' understanding of themselves. The five themes were: (1) a shaken self: shame, guilt, and feeling problematic; (2) negotiating wrongdoing and personal responsibility; (3) relational acceptance as a safe space; (4) reflection and reinterpretation of life experiences; and (5) building a more worthy future self. Although the participants shared this broad pattern, each theme emerged through different personal histories, family relationships, emotional conflicts, and expectations for life after release. The findings therefore suggest that self-acceptance among Andikpas is best understood as a dynamic, contextually embedded process rather than a fixed psychological state.

Table 2 presents the five superordinate themes and their corresponding subordinate themes identified through the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Rather than representing discrete categories, these themes collectively illustrate participants' experiences of developing self-acceptance within the context of juvenile correctional guidance. Each superordinate theme reflects a distinct psychological dimension while remaining conceptually interconnected with the others. Together, they demonstrate how emotional experiences, supportive relationships, reflective meaning-making, and future aspirations contributed to participants' understanding and acceptance of themselves.

Table 2. Superordinate and subordinate themes illustrating the process of self-acceptance among Andikpas

No.	Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Themes	Representative Verbatim Excerpts	Interpretative Meaning
1	A shaken self: shame, guilt, and feeling problematic	Shame and guilt; family-related remorse; negative self-perception	P1: "I felt terrible... broken and dirty." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 28) P2: "I felt like I had disappointed my father in Kulon Progo..." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 28) P3: "I felt like I was just a troubled person..." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 14)	Participants initially evaluated themselves in terms of shame, guilt, and perceived personal failure. Wrongdoing was experienced not only as an unacceptable action but also as a threat to personal worth.
2	Negotiating wrongdoing and personal responsibility	Acknowledging wrongdoing; emotional ambivalence; contextualizing responsibility	P1: "I'm not saying I was right, but I don't think it was entirely my fault either." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 40) P2: "It's true that I made a mistake, but I don't think it was entirely my fault." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 32) P3: "I let my emotions take over... I should have been able to hold myself back." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 20)	Participants gradually acknowledged their involvement while attempting to understand wrongdoing within emotional, relational, and situational contexts. Responsibility was therefore negotiated rather than accepted instantaneously.

3	Relational acceptance as a safe space	Nonjudgmental acceptance; supportive correctional relationships; religious mentor support; peer sharing	P1: "I'm not being judged here." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 38) P2: "They always support me and never look down on me." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 36) P3: "It turns out I'm not the only one whose life is a mess." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 28)	Supportive and nonjudgmental relationships provided interpersonal safety that enabled participants to view themselves more humanely and reduced feelings of isolation and rejection.
4	Reflection and reinterpretation of life experiences	Identity questioning; spiritual reflection; awareness of consequences; reinterpretation of past experiences	P1: "I'm actually not a bad person... but I become confused about what kind of person I really am." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 34) P2: "After that, I felt as though I had come to a realization..." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 34) P3: "The decisions I made in the past had a major impact on my life and on other people as well." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 46)	Reflection enabled participants to reconsider the meanings of wrongdoing, family relationships, emotional reactions, and consequences. This process helped them distinguish past actions from a fixed negative identity.
5	Building a more worthy future self	Desire for change; emotional maturity; work orientation; religiosity; family contribution; hope for social acceptance	P1: "I want to become a more mature person... I want to have an honest job and help my mother." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 62) P2: "I've always wanted to become a Qur'an teacher... and now that aspiration has become even stronger." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 60) P3: "I just hope that when I get out of here, there will still be people who are willing to accept me again." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 48)	Participants increasingly imagined themselves as capable of change, responsibility, usefulness, and social belonging. Future aspirations provided a positive direction for reconstructing personal worth beyond past wrongdoing.

A Shaken Self: Shame, Guilt, and Feeling Problematic

The first theme reflects an initial disruption in participants' understanding and evaluation of themselves after entering the juvenile correctional setting. Their experiences were marked by shame, guilt, disappointment, and negative self-perception. Importantly, participants did not merely describe their past actions as wrong; they also began to question their own personal worth. In this sense, wrongdoing was experienced not only as a behavioural or legal problem but also as a threat to the way they understood themselves.

P1 expressed this experience through strong moral and emotional language:

"Back then, I felt terrible, ma'am. I felt broken and dirty. I shouldn't have acted so foolishly and caused my mom so much stress." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 28)

The terms "terrible," "broken," and "dirty" indicate that P1's shame extended beyond an evaluation of his behaviour and entered his evaluation of himself as a person. His distress was also relational, particularly in relation to the burden he believed he had placed on his mother. Thus, the early experience of self-acceptance was preceded by a destabilized self-view in which wrongdoing became closely associated with guilt and diminished personal worth.

P2 described a different but related experience. His negative self-evaluation was intertwined with guilt toward a father figure and unresolved hurt within his family:

"At that time, on one hand, I felt like I had disappointed my father in Kulon Progo, but on the other hand, I felt like my mother and her new husband were the ones who made me this

way. I felt guilty toward my father in Kulon Progo, who had taken care of me since I was a child.” (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 28)

For P2, guilt did not emerge as a simple acknowledgment of wrongdoing. It coexisted with anger, disappointment, and a perception that difficult family circumstances had contributed to his situation. His account therefore reflects a conflicted self-understanding in which personal responsibility and relational hurt remained difficult to separate. Rather than viewing himself solely as responsible or solely as a victim of circumstance, P2 moved between these positions while attempting to make sense of his experience.

P3 also described entering LPKA with a strongly negative perception of himself:

“At that time, I felt like I was just a troubled person, *ma’am*. Like I had caused such a big problem that I ended up here. I also felt that I had disappointed my sister and myself.” (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 14)

P3’s description of himself as “a troubled person” illustrates how wrongdoing had become incorporated into his self-definition. His disappointment was directed not only toward the consequences of his actions but also toward himself and his relationship with his sister. This suggests a shift from understanding the experience as “having made a mistake” toward perceiving himself as “being a troubled person.” The distinction is important because it shows how behavioural wrongdoing began to influence his broader sense of identity and personal worth.

Across the three participants, this theme therefore represents an emotionally disrupted sense of self characterized by shame, guilt, family-related remorse, and negative self-perception. Although these experiences emerged from different personal and relational contexts, all three participants described a period in which wrongdoing threatened their sense of personal worth. This destabilized self-view formed the psychological context from which they subsequently began to reconsider the meaning of their actions and negotiate personal responsibility.

Negotiating Wrongdoing and Personal Responsibility

The second theme illustrates how participants began to make sense of the wrongdoing that brought them to LPKA. Personal responsibility was not accepted in a simple, immediate, or linear manner. Instead, participants moved between acknowledging wrongdoing, explaining emotional and situational circumstances, and protecting a sense of personal worth. This negotiation suggests that self-acceptance did not develop through denial of wrongdoing, but through a gradual attempt to understand their actions without allowing those actions to define the whole self.

P1 demonstrated this ambivalence by acknowledging that his behaviour was wrong while simultaneously placing it within an emotional and situational context:

“I think it was an unexpected incident, *ma’am*. At that time, the situation somehow led me to make a mistake, and I used to get angry easily. How should I put it... I’m not saying I was

right, but I don’t think it was entirely my fault either.” (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 40)

P1’s account reflects a movement between acknowledgment and justification. He did not position himself as entirely innocent, but neither did he understand the event as a simple expression of personal wrongdoing. His reference to being easily angered indicates an emerging awareness of emotional regulation as part of his responsibility. At the same time, his insistence that he was “not entirely” at fault suggests that accepting responsibility remained psychologically difficult. For P1, responsibility therefore involved recognizing his role in the event while attempting to understand the emotional and situational conditions that contributed to it.

P2 expressed a similar negotiation, but his account was more strongly connected to family conflict and the desire for a different future:

“It’s true that I made a mistake, but I don’t think it was entirely my fault. I want to change and live with my father in Kulon Progo.” (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 32)

P2 acknowledged that he had done something wrong, yet his acceptance of responsibility remained intertwined with unresolved family pain. In the broader account, he described himself as affected by difficult family circumstances and perceived his mother as contributing to the situation that eventually brought him to LPKA. His statement therefore reflects an attempt to hold two meanings simultaneously: recognition of personal wrongdoing and a belief that his actions developed within circumstances that he experienced as harmful. His desire to change also indicates that responsibility was beginning to acquire a future-oriented meaning rather than remaining limited to guilt about the past.

P3 negotiated responsibility primarily through reflection on emotional reactivity and the need to protect himself from being underestimated:

“I feel that I let my emotions take over at the time. When someone called me cocky and arrogant, I got angry right away. I wanted to show that I couldn’t be looked down on. Sometimes I think I should have been able to hold myself back, but I didn’t think that far at the time.” (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 20)

P3’s account shows a clearer recognition of the relationship between emotional reactivity and his behaviour. His anger was connected to the perceived threat of being underestimated, suggesting that the wrongdoing was partly understood as an attempt to defend personal status and self-worth. However, his reflection that he “should have been able to hold” himself back demonstrates an emerging capacity to evaluate his own behaviour critically. Compared with his earlier need to appear strong, this reflection indicates movement toward greater recognition of personal agency and the consequences of emotional impulsivity.

Across the three participants, responsibility was therefore negotiated gradually rather than accepted instantaneously. Participants acknowledged varying degrees of personal involvement, but they also interpreted their actions within emotional, relational, and situational contexts.

This negotiation was psychologically significant because it allowed them to recognize wrongdoing without reducing their entire identity to the wrongdoing itself. In this sense, negotiating personal responsibility became an important bridge between a shaken sense of self and the possibility of developing a more humane understanding of themselves. This movement also created the foundation for relational acceptance, in which supportive and nonjudgmental relationships provided a safer context for further reflection and self-exploration.

Relational Acceptance as a Safe Space

The third theme shows that self-acceptance developed within relationships that participants experienced as supportive, respectful, and nonjudgmental. After struggling with shame, guilt, and the negotiation of personal responsibility, participants described relationships that allowed them to feel recognized as individuals who remained capable of change. Officers, religious mentors, and peers provided different forms of relational support, but each contributed to a sense that participants were not defined solely by their past wrongdoing.

P1 described the role of correctional officers as protective and nonjudgmental:

"Of course I'm happy, ma'am. It feels like someone is protecting me, and I'm not being judged here." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 38)

P1's account suggests that being treated without judgment had a particular psychological meaning in the context of his earlier negative self-evaluation. Having previously described himself as "broken" and "dirty," the experience of not being judged offered a contrasting interpersonal message. He was still held within a correctional setting, but he did not experience every interaction as condemnation. This relational experience created space for P1 to view himself as someone who could still be supported and guided despite his past behaviour.

P2 identified both an officer and a religious mentor as important sources of support:

"Pak D and Ustadz AY, ma'am. They always support me and never look down on me." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 36)

He further described the emotional meaning of being treated in this way:

"I'm happy, ma'am. I don't feel looked down on, and I feel that there are still people who care about me." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 38)

For P2, relational support was experienced as more than advice or institutional supervision. His emphasis on not being looked down on suggests that respect and acceptance helped counter feelings of rejection and diminished worth. The perception that others still cared about him also provided evidence, from his perspective, that his wrongdoing had not entirely removed his value within relationships. Relational acceptance therefore became connected to the possibility of

seeing himself as someone who remained worthy of care and capable of change.

P3 experienced relational acceptance differently. For him, peer sharing became important because it reduced the sense that his difficulties were uniquely his own:

"But when I heard my friends sharing their stories and realized that some of them were dealing with serious problems too, I started thinking to myself... it turns out I'm not the only one whose life is a mess." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 28)

P3's account shows how listening to peers changed the way he positioned his own experience. Before this, he had described himself as a troubled person and had attempted to appear strong in front of others. Through peer sharing, however, he encountered other adolescents who also carried difficult experiences. This did not remove his responsibility or minimize his problems. Instead, it reduced the sense of isolation surrounding them. Recognizing that others also struggled allowed P3 to view his experience within a broader interpersonal context rather than as evidence that he alone was fundamentally problematic.

Across the three participants, relational acceptance functioned as an interpersonal foundation for further self-exploration. The sources of support differed. P1 emphasized nonjudgmental treatment from correctional officers, P2 highlighted support from an officer and a religious mentor, while P3 described the value of shared experience with peers. Despite these differences, the accounts converged around a common meaning: participants experienced relationships in which they were heard, respected, supported, and not reduced entirely to their wrongdoing. Such relational experiences helped weaken isolation and self-condemnation and created conditions in which participants could engage more openly with their past experiences. This relational foundation subsequently supported deeper reflection and reinterpretation of their lives.

Reflective reinterpretation of life experiences

The fourth theme shows how self-acceptance developed through reflection and reinterpretation of life experiences. As participants became more able to engage with their experiences, they revisited past actions, emotional reactions, family relationships, and the consequences of their decisions. Reflection did not immediately produce certainty or complete self-acceptance. Instead, it allowed participants to question fixed negative self-judgments and construct more nuanced meanings of themselves and their past experiences.

P1's reflection was characterized by uncertainty about the relationship between his past behaviour and his identity:

"Sometimes I think that I'm actually not a bad person. I just couldn't control my emotions at the time. But after thinking about it that way, I become confused about what kind of person I really am." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 34)

P1's account reflects an emerging distinction between what he had done and who he was as a person. Earlier, he had evaluated himself through strongly negative terms such as

“broken” and “dirty.” Here, however, he began to question whether his wrongdoing should define his entire identity. At the same time, this distinction did not immediately produce a stable or positive self-understanding. His uncertainty about “what kind of person” he really was suggests that reflection opened a space for identity questioning. Rather than simply replacing a negative identity with a positive one, P1 appeared to be reconsidering how past behaviour, emotional control, and personal identity could be understood together.

The original transcript places this reflection at line 34. P1 explicitly distinguished between not considering himself inherently “bad” and recognizing his difficulty controlling emotion, before expressing uncertainty about who he actually was.

P2’s reinterpretation took a more explicitly spiritual and relational form. He described a moment during tahajud prayer in which emotional release was followed by reflection on his relationship with his mother and the choices he had made:

“During tahajud prayer, I suddenly started crying uncontrollably. I didn’t know why it happened. Pak D calmed me down and told me that crying was okay because it was part of self-reflection. After that, I felt as though I had come to a realization. I realized that I had been too weak in dealing with my mother. I was afraid of being disobedient to her, but the path I chose eventually led me in the wrong direction.” (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 34)

For P2, reflection involved more than reconsidering the wrongdoing itself. He revisited the relational and moral meanings surrounding his decisions. His fear of being disobedient to his mother had previously shaped how he responded to the family situation. Through spiritual reflection, he began to reconsider that obedience and recognize that choices made within this relationship had also contributed to harmful consequences for his own life. The experience therefore reflects a process of meaning-making in which spirituality, family relationships, and personal responsibility became interconnected. Importantly, this realization did not erase his unresolved hurt toward his mother. Instead, it allowed him to interpret his past choices in a more complex way.

P2’s transcript identifies this episode at line 34 and records the crying during tahajud prayer, support from Pak D, the experience of feeling “awakened” to something, and his subsequent reinterpretation of his relationship with his mother.

P3’s reflection centered more strongly on recognizing the consequences of his past decisions:

“Maybe I understand better now that everything we do has consequences, ma’am. I didn’t really think about that before. But since being here, I’ve realized that the decisions I made in the past had a major impact on my life and on other people as well.” (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 46)

P3’s account indicates a shift from immediate emotional responding toward greater awareness of the broader consequences of his actions. Earlier, he described reacting to

provocation because he did not want to be underestimated. In this later reflection, however, his focus expanded beyond the emotion experienced at the time of the incident. He began to recognize that personal decisions could affect both himself and other people. This awareness allowed him to reinterpret the wrongdoing not simply as an event that resulted in placement at LPKA, but as an experience from which he could reconsider responsibility, emotional control, and the consequences of his choices.

The source transcript places this statement at line 46. P3 explicitly contrasted his earlier lack of consideration with his current awareness that his decisions had significant consequences for both himself and others.

Across the three participants, reflection and reinterpretation functioned as processes of psychological meaning-making, but they took different forms. P1 questioned whether wrongdoing should define his identity and experienced uncertainty about who he was beyond his past behaviour. P2 interpreted his experience through spirituality, family relationships, and moral responsibility. P3 increasingly understood his actions through their consequences for himself and others. These accounts suggest that reflection did not erase the past or produce immediate certainty. Instead, it enabled participants to revisit their experiences from new perspectives and gradually separate past wrongdoing from a fixed negative identity. In this way, reflective reinterpretation created an important psychological foundation for imagining a different future self.

Building a More Worthy Future Self

The fifth theme shows how self-acceptance gradually became connected to the construction of a more worthy future self. Participants did not understand self-acceptance simply as making peace with past wrongdoing. They also began to imagine who they wanted to become after leaving LPKA. These future images involved greater emotional maturity, meaningful work, religiosity, family contribution, and social acceptance. At the same time, their accounts indicate that this process remained unfinished, as regret, uncertainty, and concerns about acceptance continued to accompany their hopes for change.

P1 described self-acceptance as an ongoing learning process rather than an achieved state:

“I’m still learning, ma’am. Sometimes I still wonder why I used to be that way, but what matters now is that I serve my sentence while learning to become a better person.” (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 56)

P1’s account indicates that moving toward self-acceptance did not eliminate uncertainty about his past. He continued to question why he had behaved as he did, but his attention was increasingly directed toward what he could do differently in the present. Describing himself as “still learning” suggests that change was understood as an ongoing process rather than a completed transformation. Correctional guidance was therefore beginning to acquire a different meaning for him: not only as a consequence of

wrongdoing, but also as a period in which he could learn to become a better version of himself.

The original transcript confirms that P1 described himself as still learning to accept himself and emphasized using his sentence as an opportunity to become better.

His future orientation became more concrete when he described the kind of person he wanted to become after release:

"I want to become a more mature person, ma'am, someone who doesn't get angry easily. I want to have an honest job and help my mother." (02/03/2026, P1, W-1, 62)

For P1, the future self was organized around emotional maturity, legitimate work, and responsibility toward his mother. His desire not to become easily angered directly addressed the emotional reactivity he had previously associated with his wrongdoing. At the same time, working and helping his mother offered a concrete way of imagining himself as responsible and useful. Personal worth was therefore reconstructed not merely through feeling better about himself, but through imagining ways of living differently and contributing positively to an important relationship.

P1's line 62 explicitly combines becoming more mature, controlling anger, finding proper work, and helping his mother.

P2 constructed his future self primarily through religiosity and the continuation of a long-standing aspiration:

"I've always wanted to become a Qur'an teacher like my father in Kulon Progo, and now that aspiration has become even stronger. Especially because Ustadz AY supports me and is willing to teach me." (03/03/2026, P2, W-1, 60)

Unlike P1, P2 did not describe an entirely new aspiration that emerged during correctional guidance. Instead, an existing aspiration became more meaningful and stronger. Becoming a Qur'an teacher represented a possible future identity connected to religion, a valued father figure, and support from a religious mentor. His future self was therefore not constructed independently of relationships. It was strengthened through identification with people whom he regarded as meaningful and through the possibility of living according to values that differed from the circumstances surrounding his past wrongdoing.

P2's transcript confirms that the aspiration to become a Qur'an teacher existed before LPKA but had become stronger, particularly with support from Ustadz AY.

P3 imagined his future more concretely through work and contribution to his family:

"Now, I want to change, ma'am. Once I get out of here, I want to work or help my sister. The most important thing is that my life won't be like it was before." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 44)

P3's account reflects a desire to establish distance between his past and future life. Work and helping his sister

provided concrete expressions of the kind of person he hoped to become. Earlier, he had described himself as a troubled person and as someone who needed to appear strong in front of others. In his future-oriented account, however, personal worth was increasingly associated with change, responsibility, and contribution to family life. His future self was therefore imagined less through social dominance and more through constructive participation in relationships and everyday life.

The transcript places this statement at line 44 and explicitly connects P3's wish to change with working, helping his sister, and avoiding a return to his previous way of life.

However, P3's future orientation also revealed an important vulnerability. His hope for personal change remained dependent, at least partly, on whether other people would be willing to recognize him differently after release:

"I still want to change. I just hope that when I get out of here, there will still be people who are willing to accept me again." (04/03/2026, P3, W-1, 48)

This statement shows that P3's imagined future self was not constructed solely through internal change. It also involved the possibility of being accepted again within the social world. Although he expressed a desire to change, he remained uncertain about how others would respond to him after release. His account therefore demonstrates that future-oriented self-acceptance remained vulnerable to stigma and social rejection. Becoming a different person, from P3's perspective, also required the possibility of being recognized by others as someone who could change.

P3's closing statement explicitly combines his continuing desire for change with concern about whether people will accept him after leaving LPKA.

Across the three participants, building a more worthy future self involved imagining identities that extended beyond past wrongdoing. P1 emphasized emotional maturity, work, and responsibility toward his mother. P2 imagined a religiously meaningful identity supported by significant relationships. P3 focused on work, family contribution, and the hope of social acceptance. These future images differed in content but converged around the possibility of becoming more responsible, useful, and connected to others. Importantly, the participants did not describe this reconstruction as complete. Their narratives continued to contain regret, unresolved relational difficulties, and uncertainty about life after release. Future orientation therefore functioned not as evidence of completed self-acceptance, but as a psychological direction through which participants could begin to imagine themselves as more than their past wrongdoing.

In addition to the main interviews with Andikpas, interviews with three LPKA officers were used as contextual triangulation. The officers' accounts were not treated as primary IPA data because the analysis remained centered on the lived experiences of the three Andikpas participants.

Instead, these accounts provided contextual support for understanding how the emotional, relational, reflective, and future-oriented processes identified in the participants'

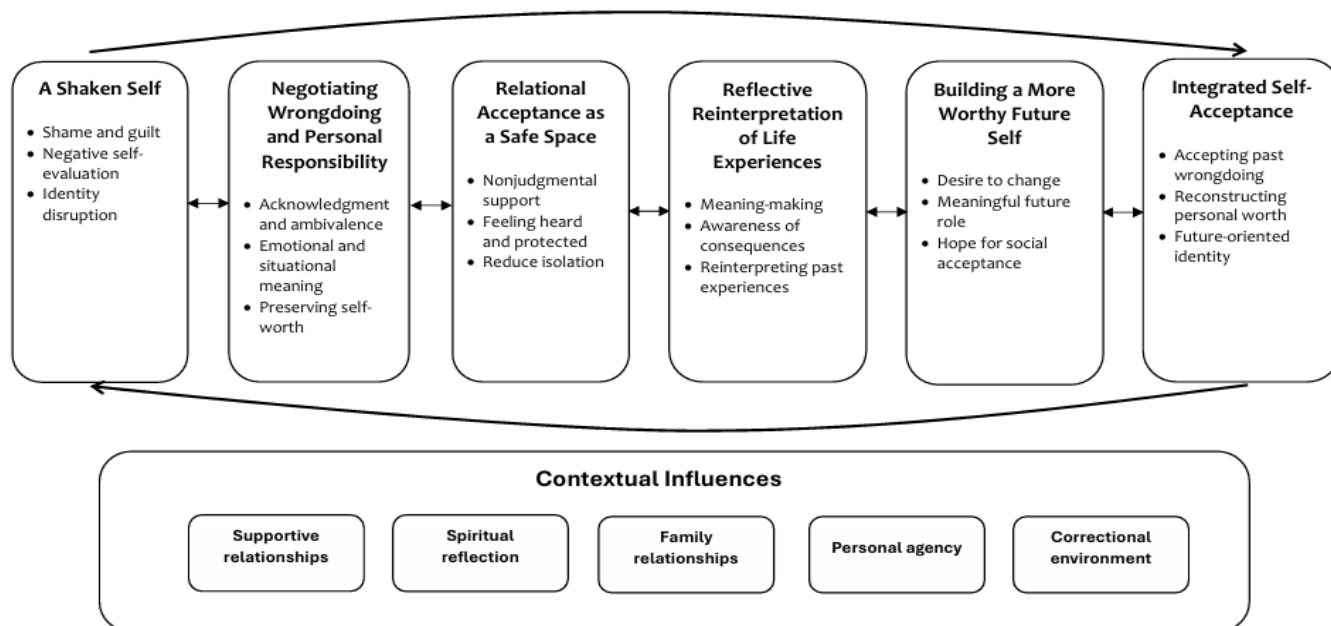
narratives were also observed within daily correctional guidance. Table 3 summarizes the triangulation evidence from LPKA officers.

Table 3. Contextual triangulation from LPKA officers

No.	Triangulation Focus	Supporting Verbatim Quote from Officer	Related IPA Theme	Interpretative Function
1	Early emotional disruption	PL1: "From what I observed, at the beginning of the guidance period, many Andikpas showed fear and confusion, and some also cried because they felt guilty toward their families." (04/03/2026, PL1, W-1, 4)	A shaken self	Provides contextual support for the presence of fear, confusion, guilt, and negative self-view during the early guidance period.
2	Withdrawal and low confidence	PL2: "Andikpas who first enter LPKA generally appear lethargic, prefer to be alone, speak very little, and some show fearful facial expressions." (04/03/2026, PL2, W-1, 4)	A shaken self	Contextualizes the early guidance period as a psychologically difficult phase marked by withdrawal and limited verbal expression.
3	Defensive response during early adjustment	PL2: "Some Andikpas also try to show their strength through sharp stares, refusing to be directed, and resisting when officers give them instructions when they first enter LPKA." (04/03/2026, PL2, W-1, 8)	Negotiating wrongdoing and responsibility	Provides contextual support for understanding defensiveness as a possible way of protecting self-worth during early adaptation.
4	Younger adolescent response	PL3: "Andikpas under 18 generally tend to show feelings of inferiority, low self-confidence, fear, and limited verbal expression." (04/03/2026, PL3, W-1, 8)	A shaken self	Contextualizes how inferiority, fear, and low confidence may appear among younger Andikpas during correctional adjustment.
5	Guidance as a reflection space	PL2: "During guidance activities, the youths are often encouraged to talk about their life experiences so that they can reconsider and better understand the events they have experienced." (04/03/2026, PL2, W-1, 18)	Reflective reinterpretation	Provides contextual support for the role of guidance activities in facilitating reflection on life experiences.
6	Open and nonjudgmental relationships	PL3: "We try to build more open relationships with the youths so that they feel heard and do not continually feel judged." (04/03/2026, PL3, W-1, 12)	Relational acceptance	Contextualizes open and nonjudgmental relationships as an important relational condition for self-acceptance.
7	Future planning as acceptance of the situation	PL2: "When a youth begins talking about plans for life after leaving LPKA, it usually indicates that they are beginning to understand and accept the situation they are currently going through." (04/03/2026, PL2, W-1, 28)	Building a more worthy future self	Provides contextual support for interpreting future planning as part of participants' movement toward accepting their correctional situation.

Figure 1. A relational–reflective model of self–acceptance development among Andikpas

The processes are interconnected and may overlap rather than occur as fixed linear stages.



Overall, the officer accounts supported the interpretation that self-acceptance among Andikpas developed within a broader correctional context. The officers observed early fear, guilt, withdrawal, defensiveness, and low confidence among residents, which corresponded with the participants' descriptions of a shaken self and negotiated responsibility. They also described efforts to build open, nonjudgmental relationships and to encourage life-story reflection, supporting the roles of relational acceptance and reflective reinterpretation. Finally, officers viewed future planning as a sign that residents were beginning to understand and accept their correctional situation. These contextual accounts strengthened the credibility of the IPA findings while preserving the participants' lived experiences as the primary analytic focus.

Taken together, the five superordinate themes and contextual triangulation from LPKA officers indicate that self-acceptance among Andikpas developed through an interconnected psychological process. The process began with a shaken self, marked by shame, guilt, family-related remorse, and negative self-perception. From this emotional disruption, participants gradually entered a process of negotiating wrongdoing and personal responsibility, in which they acknowledged past actions while still interpreting them within emotional, relational, and situational contexts.

This process was supported by relational acceptance as a safe space. Nonjudgmental relationships with officers, religious mentors, and peers helped participants feel heard, respected, and not reduced to their wrongdoing. These supportive relationships enabled participants to reflect on and reinterpret life experiences, reconsidering past actions, family relationships, emotional reactions, and the consequences of their decisions. Reflection allowed them to distinguish wrongdoing from a fixed negative identity and to develop a more humane understanding of themselves.

The process then moved toward building a more worthy future self. Participants began to imagine themselves as more mature, responsible, religiously grounded, useful to their families, and capable of reintegration after release. However, this future-oriented self-acceptance remained unfinished and vulnerable because participants still faced uncertainty about social acceptance after leaving LPKA. Overall, the findings suggest that self-acceptance among Andikpas is best understood as a relational–reflective and future-oriented process, shaped by emotional struggle, supportive relationships, reflective meaning-making, and hope for reintegration. Figure 1 presents this integrated model of the development of self-acceptance among Andikpas.

The model illustrates how self-acceptance among Andikpas develops through interconnected processes of emotional disruption, negotiated responsibility, relational safety, reflective reinterpretation, and future-oriented identity reconstruction. The bidirectional arrows indicate that these processes are recursive and may overlap rather than occur as fixed linear stages. Contextual influences, including supportive relationships, spiritual reflection, family relationships, personal agency, and the correctional environment, shape the development of integrated self-acceptance.

DISCUSSION

This study shows that self-acceptance among Andikpas is not a single psychological outcome, but an interconnected relational–reflective process. As illustrated in Figure 1, participants' self-acceptance developed through five related processes: a shaken self, negotiating wrongdoing and personal responsibility, relational acceptance as a safe space, reflection and reinterpretation of life experiences, and

building a more worthy future self. These findings indicate that self-acceptance in juvenile correctional guidance involves more than acknowledging past wrongdoing; it also entails reconstructing personal worth, receiving nonjudgmental support, making sense of painful experiences, and envisioning a future identity beyond offending behavior. This supports the view that rehabilitation for justice-involved adolescents should not be limited to behavioral compliance, but should also facilitate prosocial identity development and psychological growth (Jian & Skeem, 2023).

The findings extend Ryff's concept of self-acceptance by showing that accepting both positive and negative aspects of the self is not merely an internal evaluation, but a process shaped by emotional, relational, and institutional experiences (Ryff, 1989). Participants did not move directly from guilt to acceptance; they first struggled with shame, family-related remorse, and fear of rejection before gradually developing a more balanced understanding of themselves. The centrality of shame and guilt in participants' narratives also aligns with evidence that self-conscious emotions play an important role in adolescents' psychological adjustment and moral development (Costa Martins et al., 2021; Hendriks et al., 2022). This process also supports Rogers' humanistic perspective, in which empathy, acceptance, and nonjudgmental relationships are central to psychological growth (Rogers, 1957). In this study, supportive relationships with officers, religious mentors, and peers helped participants feel heard, respected, and not reduced to their wrongdoing.

Relational acceptance emerged as a key mechanism through which participants became more able to face shame, guilt, and negative self-perception. The findings show that nonjudgmental relationships with officers, religious mentors, and peers provided a psychologically safe space where participants could be seen as persons capable of change, not merely as offenders. This strengthens the relevance of humanistic and relational approaches in juvenile correctional settings, particularly because supportive relationships can increase emotional safety, treatment engagement, and openness to self-reflection among justice-involved youth (Papalia et al., 2022). Similarly, young people tend to experience psychological support as meaningful when they feel respected, accepted, and able to express difficult emotions without fear of rejection (Cooper et al., 2025).

The findings also contribute to identity development theory by showing how Andikpas reconstructed their sense of self under the pressure of stigma, family disappointment, and uncertainty after release. Participants gradually moved from viewing themselves as "problematic" toward imagining themselves as more mature, responsible, religiously grounded, useful to their families, and capable of social reintegration. This supports the view that adolescent identity development is shaped by relationships, life experiences, and future expectations rather than by a fixed developmental outcome (Branje et al., 2021). In the juvenile justice context, identity reconstruction is particularly important because

justice-involved youth need opportunities to develop prosocial roles and future-oriented self-narratives that support desistance from offending behavior (Ahmed et al., 2026; Fox et al., 2024). The participants' future-oriented narratives also resonate with qualitative evidence indicating that detained adolescents often construct possible future selves to distance themselves from past offending and to imagine meaningful change (Bucklin et al., 2026).

The relational-reflective model also contributes to juvenile justice and rehabilitation literature by explaining self-acceptance as a psychological bridge between past wrongdoing and future reintegration. Previous studies have emphasized that justice-involved adolescents often face mental health risks, stigma, and barriers to successful rehabilitation (Beaudry et al., 2021; Martinez-Jothar et al., 2025). The present study adds that self-acceptance may help adolescents move from shame and self-condemnation toward responsibility, meaning-making, and future-oriented identity reconstruction. This process is relevant to desistance because young people are more likely to move away from offending when they can construct meaningful roles, develop prosocial identities, and imagine a life beyond crime (Jian & Skeem, 2023; McMahon & Jump, 2018). This interpretation is also consistent with the literature emphasizing desistance with children and offender rehabilitation as processes that require attention to personal meaning, strengths, and future life goals (Serie et al., 2023; Wigzell & Bateman, 2024). At the same time, shame and stigma remain important barriers to reintegration, particularly when young people continue to be defined by their offense after leaving institutional care (Hodgson, 2022).

Practically, the findings suggest that rehabilitation programs in LPKA should provide psychologically safe spaces where Andikpas can discuss shame, guilt, family disappointment, and future concerns without being reduced to their offenses. Officers, religious mentors, and peer groups can support this process by offering nonjudgmental interaction, encouraging reflection, and helping residents construct realistic post-release goals. This implication is consistent with evidence that juvenile justice services need relational, rehabilitative, and developmentally responsive practices rather than approaches focused only on control or compliance (Duchscher et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2025). Correctional guidance should therefore integrate emotional recovery, relational support, reflective meaning-making, spiritual development, family-related support, and reintegration planning as connected components of self-acceptance development.

This study has several limitations. First, the participants were three male Andikpas from one juvenile correctional institution, so the findings should be understood as context-specific and not generalized to all justice-involved adolescents. Second, the study used a cross-sectional IPA design; therefore, the relational-reflective model should be interpreted as an interpretative representation of participants' lived experiences rather than a fixed developmental sequence. Third, the study did not include

post-release follow-up, even though participants' future-oriented self-acceptance remained vulnerable to stigma, family response, and social acceptance after leaving LPKA.

Future studies may involve more diverse participants, including female Andikpas and residents from different LPKA contexts, to examine whether similar processes of self-acceptance emerge across institutional and sociocultural settings. Longitudinal research is also needed to understand how self-acceptance changes after release and how family support, community acceptance, and reintegration experiences influence adolescents' ability to sustain a more positive sense of self. Such studies would strengthen the empirical basis for developing rehabilitation programs that support emotional recovery, relational acceptance, reflective meaning-making, and future-oriented identity reconstruction among justice-involved adolescents.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth understanding of the process of self-acceptance among Andikpas through Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. The findings show that self-acceptance was not experienced as a single psychological outcome, but as an interconnected relational-reflective process involving five main processes: a shaken self, negotiating wrongdoing and personal responsibility, relational acceptance as a safe space, reflection and reinterpretation of life experiences, and building a more worthy future self. These processes indicate that self-acceptance among Andikpas develops through emotional struggle, acknowledgment of wrongdoing, supportive relationships, reflective meaning-making, and future-oriented identity reconstruction.

The main contribution of this study is the proposal of a relational-reflective model of the development of self-acceptance among justice-involved adolescents in an Indonesian juvenile correctional context. This model extends the understanding of self-acceptance by showing that adolescents do not simply accept themselves by forgetting or denying past wrongdoing, but by reconstructing personal worth through relational support, reflection, and hope for reintegration. Practically, the findings suggest that correctional guidance in LPKA should provide psychologically safe spaces that help Andikpas discuss shame, guilt, family disappointment, and future concerns without being reduced to their offenses.

This study is limited to three male Andikpas from one juvenile correctional institution; therefore, the findings should be understood as context-specific rather than broadly generalizable. Future research may involve more diverse participants, different LPKA contexts, female Andikpas, and post-release follow-up to examine how self-acceptance is sustained or challenged after reintegration into family and community life.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study did not undergo formal review by an institutional research ethics committee. The study was conducted with institutional research permission from the Directorate General of Corrections, Regional Office of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, under Letter No. WP.14-HK.01.04-942, dated 15 December 2025, and operational approval from LPKA Class II Yogyakarta under Letter No. WP.14.PAS.PAS.6.UM.01.01-280, dated 15 January 2026. Prior to participation, all participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and their right to decline or withdraw without consequences for their correctional status or participation in institutional programs. Participants under 18 years of age provided assent in accordance with the authorized institutional procedures of LPKA Class II Yogyakarta, while the 18-year-old participant provided informed consent independently.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

TRANSPARENCY OF DATA

Relevant data supporting the findings of this study are included in this article. Additional contextual information may be available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, in accordance with ethical considerations, institutional permissions, and participant confidentiality.

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Generative artificial intelligence was used during manuscript preparation to assist with English-language editing, translation refinement, and improvement of textual clarity and organization. All AI-assisted content was critically reviewed, revised, and verified by the authors. Generative AI was not used to generate or fabricate research data, conduct interviews, or replace the authors' responsibility for data interpretation and final analytic decisions.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

Austaniva contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data collection, data analysis, and preparation of the original manuscript. Fx. Wahyu Widianoro contributed to research supervision, methodological guidance, interpretation of the findings, and critical review and editing of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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