

Research Article

The Effect of the Appreciative Inquiry Method on Improving a Sense of Community Among 2021 IFoP Members

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Abstract. A sense of community is very important for the management of an organization. It can help maintain the continuity of the organization and the proactive attitude of its members. Based on the results of a pretest conducted on 21 IFoP administrators for the 2021 period, it was found that four administrators had a very low sense of community and three administrators had a low sense of community. These seven administrators received an intervention in the form of an appreciative inquiry method to increase their sense of community. The research design used in this method was a quasi experiment with one-group pretest-posttest design. The pretest and posttest used a modified measuring instrument called Sense of Community Index-2 from McMillan & Chavis. Meanwhile, the appreciative inquiry method used the stages proposed by Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros. The results showed that there was a difference in the level of sense of community after the intervention compared to before. The Wilcoxon test that was carried out on the pretest and posttest scores of the research subjects showed a significant result with a p-value of 0.018 (< 0.05). Based on these results, it can be concluded that the appreciative inquiry method can be used to increase the sense of community.

Keywords: appreciative inquiry, sense of community, IFoP

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1. Introduction

Being part of an organization is important for students. In order to be comfortable in an organization, of course, a good organizational climate is needed so that it can support student development. The climate of an environment can have a positive influence or become an obstacle to the people in it [1]. When the climate in the environment has a positive influence, people will feel comfortable being part of it. This feeling is known as a sense of community. A sense of community or feeling connected to a group can develop the group for better outcomes by providing innovation, acceptance, and change [2].

Islamic Family of Psychology or abbreviated IFoP is one of the organizational units under the auspices of the Student Executive Board of the Faculty of Psychology, State University of Malang. Based on the results of a survey of 21 IFoP administrators for the 2021 period conducted by researchers, it is known that the sense of community among the IFoP administrators for the 2021 period is considered very important by 10 people

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(47.62%) and is considered important by 9 people (42.86%). The sense of community in the IFoP management for the 2021 period is important, because this will increase the attachment between the members of the management. High attachment between the members of management will encourage the formation of good cooperation and coordination in running the organization. Thus, it can optimize the performance of the management to achieve organizational goals. However, the survey results also showed that 17 out of the 21 IFoP administrators for the period of 2021 assessed that the sense of community among IFoP administrators is still low and needs to be improved.

The low sense of community among IFOP management is due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been running for a year, causing all activities and work programs to be administered online. This creates estrangement in the relationships and interactions of members. Another reason for the sense of community in IFoP management needs to be improved is because there are still many IFoP administrators who are passive and rarely contribute to the organization. Based on the researchers' observations when they were IFoP administrators for two periods, another factor causing the low sense of community of the IFoP management is the lack of knowledge and understanding of the management regarding the organizational flow of IFoP. Meanwhile, the sense of community can increase if there are more intimate interactions such as understanding and helping the work programs of one division and another.

In a group, a sense of community can be formed through positive interaction or involvement among its members [3]. One method to increase the sense of community through involvement is the appreciative inquiry method. The appreciative inquiry method is a structured approach to evaluate the current situation, identify positive things that already exist, and utilize the positive present to build the desired future [2]. The appreciative inquiry method emphasizes the need for deep understanding and change that helps organizations discover what can be developed [4]. The appreciative inquiry method has been implemented in various contexts, one of which is in organizational development. However, more evidence is needed on its application and results in the development of organizations that may benefit society [5].

The explanation described above showed the importance of a sense of community to improve the quality of the organization. However, research on the appreciative inquiry method in an organizational context is still very limited in Indonesia. Therefore, the researchers wanted to know the effect of the appreciative inquiry method to increase the sense of community on the administrators of Islamic Family of Psychology for the 2021 period.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sense of Community

The term sense of community was first used by Seymour Sarason in 1974 in [6]. According to Sarason, a sense of community is a feeling where individuals feel as the part of a great togetherness, a feeling that all conflicts can be resolved and do not reduce the sense of community, and a feeling of a close relationship so they are far from the feelings of loneliness that can create gaps. Sense of community is a feeling of which members have a sense of belonging, a feeling of which members are important to each other and to the group, and a shared belief of which members' needs will be met through their commitment of being together [7]. Based on this definition, it can be concluded that a sense of community is a strong sense of togetherness between people or individuals with groups that encourage the emergence of the belief that needs and conflicts can be overcome together.

There are four indicators of sense of community, namely membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection [7]. Membership is a feeling of belonging or sharing a sense of personal connection. The feeling that one has invested a part of oneself in becoming a member and feeling a sense of attachment to other members. Influence is a two-way concept. On one hand, there is the notion that in order for a member to be attracted to a group, he or she must have influence over the group. On the other hand, cohesiveness among members and groups depends on the ability of the group to influence its members. Integration and fulfillment of needs is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. The fulfillment of these needs is achieved through reinforcement. Meanwhile, shared emotional connection is a commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, place or environment, shared time, and experiences.

The sense of community factors can be grouped into two, namely physical factors and psychological factors [8]. Physical factors are divided into two, namely pedestrianism and community identity. The pedestrianism factor explains that the sense of community for members of a community will increase if: (1) the community has a great opportunity to make its members meet and interact physically, and 2) the community provides good and easy services to facilitate its members to meet and interact physically. Meanwhile, the community identity factor states that a good sense of community refers to personal and public identification with a community that is physically bound to its own character.

This factor explains that physical identity in the community will affect personal and public identity. Physical identity can be in the form of clothes, logos, ways of speaking, and so on.

Psychological factor is divided into two, namely community attachment and social interaction. The community attachment factor refers to the emotional bond between members and the community. This factor explains that a good sense of community is characterized by: (1) members feeling satisfied with their community, (2) members feeling attached to the community because of the experiences and moments they have shared together, (3) members feeling they have influence in the community, and (4) members have a desire to survive in the long term. Meanwhile, the social interaction factor explains that the level of sense of community can be seen from the quality of the relationship between members and their community. Social interaction can be illustrated through: (1) interaction among members, (2) interaction with members who are less known or close, (3) members' activeness in community activities, and (4) the existence of social support among members.

2.2. Appreciative Inquiry Method

The appreciative inquiry method was developed in 1985 by David Cooperrider & Srivesh Srivastva in a performance evaluation-based study in a health facility setting. The appreciative inquiry method is a social constructionist approach to organizational change and development [9]. The appreciative inquiry method provides a structured approach to evaluating the current state, identifying positive things that already exist, and utilizing the positive present to build a desired [2]. The appreciative inquiry method consists of four stages, also known as the 4-D cycle. The community or organization needs to determine the affirmative topic before entering the four stages. An affirmative topic is something that an organization or community wants to develop, learn or improve [9]. The following is an explanation of the 4-D Cycle:

1. Discovery is the search stage to understand the "best of what is and what has been" [10]. The output of this stage is a description or mapping of the positive potential of the organization, stories about the best experiences during the organization's journey, increasing organizational and collective knowledge, and any unplanned changes even before the implementation of the next stages [10].
2. The dream stage is an energy exploration of "what might be". The purpose of this stage is to dream or imagine how the ideal organization is in the future. The

outcome of this dream stage is a picture of positive organizational opportunities, innovative organizational vision, and higher organizational goals [10].

3. Design is a statement that describes the ideal organization or "what should be". The purpose of this stage is to create or design organizational structures, processes, and relationships that support the dream as articulated in the dream stage. In the design phase, the emphasis shifts from dreaming about what is possible to building together what should be. That is, start planning about the realization of the dream.
4. The destiny stage is a series of actions that support learning and innovation that have been designed in the previous stage. This stage is described as "what will be". The purpose of this last stage is to maintain the development and innovation of the results of the previous stages, as well as to maintain the collective feeling of the members of the organization. The output of this stage is a broad series of changes in various aspects of the organization by implementing the programs that have been designed at the design stage.

The Effect of Appreciative Inquiry Method on Sense of Community

The appreciative inquiry method offers a more public-centered community engagement technique. The appreciative inquiry method allows members to be actively involved in the decision-making process [11]. In line with the constructionist approach, conversations and storytelling during the discussion process in the appreciative inquiry method have empowered the group to understand the best things they have. This will motivate the group to imagine their future, and consciously develop designs and approaches to achieve their desired expectations. This technique allows the community or members to understand, feel, and act on the development process in their own community or organization. Communities that receive the appreciative inquiry method will generate unique ideas and visions for the future and community development [12]. Moreover, the appreciative inquiry method is a potential change agent for professional learning in a student-age community [13].

3. Method

The research design used was a quasi-experimental research design with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The criteria for research subjects were: (1) Islamic Family of Psychology administrators for the 2021 period, (2) have a sense of community which is

TABLE 1: Categorization of Research Subject Pretest Score

Score Range	Category	Number of Subjects
95 – 115	Very High	3
87 – 94	High	4
71 – 86	Moderate	7
63 – 70	Low	3
54 – 62	Very Low	4

included in the low to very low classification, and (3) are willing to be involved in the process of implementing the appreciative inquiry method.

The instruments used in this research were: (1) a guide to the implementation of the appreciative inquiry method which is based on the theory of Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros [14] and has been tested by experts. The stages of the appreciative inquiry method used the 4D principle (Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny), (2) the sense of community scale is modified from the Sense of Community Index-2 (SCI-2) developed by McMillan and Chavis [7]. The results of this scale modification consist of 39 items which were divided into four indicators, namely membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. Each item has four ranges of answers, namely not at all, a little, mostly, and completely. The score of each item moves in the range of 0 to 3. The validity of the item ranges from 0.434 to 0.805 and the coefficient of reliability is 0.951.

From the results of the categorization, it is known that 4 people are in the very low category and 3 people are in the low category. Thus, the research subjects who received the appreciative inquiry method are 7 people. Data collection is conducted online. The pretest and posttest are carried out by distributing the scale in the form of a google form. Meanwhile, the implementation of the appreciative inquiry method is carried out through video conference media, Google Meetings and Zoom meetings. The implementation is carried out based on the agreement of the researcher with 7 research subjects.

Hypothesis testing used the Wilcoxon Test to determine the effect of the appreciative inquiry method to increase the sense of community in IFoP administrators for the 2021 period. The Wilcoxon test was calculated using the help of the SPSS 26.0 for Windows program.

4. Results and Discussion

The implementation of the appreciative inquiry method was carried out based on the 4D principle (Destiny, Dream, Design, Destiny) [14].

a. Pra-Intervention

In the pre-intervention stage, the researchers and 7 research subjects discussed together to determine the topic of the problem to be discussed. This topic later became a reference for the program prepared at the design stage. Based on the results of the discussion, the topic of the problem that was agreed to be resolved was the lack of communication and attachment between IFoP management.

b. Discovery

Based on the results of the discussion, the positive potential possessed by IFoP is the sense of responsibility possessed by the management. It is this sense of responsibility that makes 7 subjects still survive in IFoP to this day even though there are many shortcomings in it.

c. Dream

At this stage, each research subject was asked to convey his/her expectations for IFoP. Research subjects were also asked to convey what programs could be implemented to achieve these expectations and resolve the problems that had been determined at the pre-intervention stage. At the end of the discussion, it was agreed that the programs to be implemented were Division Internal Evaluation and Central Management Evaluation which involved all IFoP management for the 2021 period.

d. Design

At this stage, the research subjects discussed the steps to implement the program that had been made, namely Internal Evaluation and Central Management Evaluation Division, from the implementation schedule to the schedule of events. Based on the results of the discussion, during the implementation of the Division's Internal Evaluation program, what must be discussed are the progress, obstacles, and future plans for each work program of each division. The results of the Internal Evaluation Division will be presented during the Central Management Evaluation in front of all management. So, every management will understand the entire work program of IFoP for the 2021 period.

e. Destiny

This stage is the implementation of the program that has been designed, including

TABLE 2: Wilcoxon Test Signification

	Posttest-Pretest
Z	-2.375
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.018

TABLE 3: Wilcoxon Test Calculation Results

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest-Pretest	Negative Ranks	0	0.00	0.00
	Positive Ranks	7	4.00	28.00
	Total	7		

Internal Evaluation of the Key Management, Internal Evaluation of Division A, Internal Evaluation of Division B, Evaluation of Division C, Internal Evaluation of Division D, and Evaluation of the Middle Management. The program took place from 24 to 27 June 2021.

After all stages of the appreciative inquiry method were completed, the researchers gave a posttest in the form of the same scale as the pretest, namely the modified SCI-2 scale.

Based on the calculation results of the Wilcoxon test, a Z score of -2.375 was obtained where the critical limit of the Z score with a significance of 0.05 was $Z < -1.96$ or $Z > 1.96$. Then, the significance obtained was 0.018 where p value (0.018) < 0.05, then the hypothesis in this study is accepted.

In addition, based on the results of the pre-test and post-test, it also showed that there were no negative ranks and there were 7 positive ranks. Therefore, there was an increase in the sense of community scores from pretest to posttest in 7 research subjects. Thus, it can be concluded that the appreciative inquiry method has an effect on increasing the sense of community in the Islamic Family of Psychology administrators for the 2021 period.

A person's sense of community can be described through several indicators, the first indicator is membership. The way to build a good membership is to provide boundaries, so that it can be seen who are the parts of the group and who are not. Boundaries will form emotional safety in group members [7]. Emotional safety is needed so that members can express their needs and feelings to each other. Thus, intimacy or attachment between members can develop. When attachment or intimacy has been formed in a group, a sense of belonging and identification will emerge in its members. This sense of belonging and identification is a feeling where someone has a place and

is accepted by the group. This feeling will automatically encourage someone to make personal investment, namely the willingness to contribute to the group.

Based on the results of the pretest, the research subjects have not been able to adapt to IFoP and have difficulty discussing problems with other IFoP administrators. During the implementation of the pre-intervention stage, it was found that this was due to the fact that the IFOP board for the 2021 period had never spent time together, or met online through media conferences. The IFoP management during this period only communicated with regards to matters relating to the work program through the whatsapp group. Thus, the research subjects felt that they were not familiar with IFoP administrators. The research subjects also mentioned that the pandemic condition caused a lack of initiative by IFoP management to contribute to the implementation of work programs. The low emotional closeness causes a lack of personal investment in IFoP management for the 2021 period.

These results are also in line with the physical factor that affects the sense of community, namely the pedestrianism factor. This factor states that the sense of community can increase if members have great opportunities and convenience to meet and interact physically. With the pandemic and the lack of initiative of IFoP management to hold meetings both offline and online, it shows that IFoP does not have the opportunity yet as well as good and easy service to make its administrators meet and interact physically. In addition, these results are in line with the psychological factor of the sense of community, namely the social interaction factor where a good sense of community is characterized by strong interaction among its members.

The second indicator is influence. Cohesiveness in a group is determined by the conformity of its members. Integration and cohesiveness will form attachment within the group and increase the sense of community of its members [7]. Conformity itself is an interpersonal process that changes a person's thoughts, feelings, and behavior to conform to social norms in their environment [15]. Members' conformity can be formed if they can give influence in the group. Based on the results of the discussion, it was found that the two research subjects who are the Heads of the Divisions had not been able to make their members active in the discussion. This shows that there is no influence of research subjects on other IFoP administrators. This is also in line with psychological factors that affect the sense of community, namely community attachment and social interaction factors. According to the community attachment factor, one of the signs of a good sense of community is when members feel they have influence in their community or group. Meanwhile, according to social interaction factors, a good sense of community is characterized by the activeness of members in community or group activities.

The third indicator is integration and fulfillment of needs. Sense of community can develop if the members in the group feel that their needs are met and they get appropriate reinforcement [7]. The difficulty of the research subjects to find solutions to problems from other administrators showed that their needs have not been met in IFoP. In addition, two research subjects also mentioned that only a few people were running the work program. These people certainly felt exhausted in the process and needed the cooperation of other administrators. This caused the two research subjects to feel unsure about the abilities and responsibilities of other IFoP administrators. This is also in line with the psychological factor of sense of community, namely the community attachment factor. This factor states that members with a good sense of community will be satisfied with their community. Satisfaction can be in the form of fulfillment of needs. In addition, this is also in line with the social interaction factor, where the sense of community can increase if members get social support (reinforcement) from other members.

The last indicator is a shared emotional connection. Based on the results of the discussion, seven research subjects had the same opinion that the interaction between IFoP administrators was minimal. The research subjects said that for half the current period they had never made an agenda for gathering either offline or online. In addition, only a few IFoP work programs can be implemented during pandemic. This causes a lack of interaction between IFoP administrators. Thus, the research subjects did not feel close and knew other administrators. This is in line with the social interaction factor, where a good sense of community is characterized by high interaction among community members. In addition, the community attachment factor also states that the sense of community can be improved by creating shared experiences and moments.

This is also in line with several principles of the shared emotional connection indicator according to McMillan and Chavis [7]. The principle of the contact hypothesis states that the more interactions among members in a group, the greater their potential to be close. In addition, the principle of quality of interaction also states that the more positive the interactions and experiences in a group, the greater the bond among its members. In other words, intense interaction will form attachment between members in a group. Another principle of shared emotional connection, namely closure to events, states that if the tasks or problems in the group are not resolved, the attachment and cohesiveness of the group will be disrupted. This principle is in accordance with what was conveyed by three other research subjects that they find it difficult to invite other administrators to discuss when there are problems at IFoP. This has resulted in many IFoP work programs being hampered.

Statistically, the results of research on the effect of the appreciative inquiry method on IFoP administrators for the 2021 period showed that there is a difference in the level of sense of community between before and after treatment. The Wilcoxon test that has been carried out on the pretest and posttest scores of research subjects showed a significance of 0.018. These results showed significant results, namely p value (0.018) < 0.05 and Z score < - 1.96, then the hypothesis is accepted. Based on the results of the Wilcoxon test, it can be seen that the appreciative inquiry method can increase the sense of community in the research subject, namely the IFoP management for the 2021 period.

Based on the results of the pretest and posttest, it was found that the indicator that showed the highest increase was the indicator of influence. According to the indicator, a sense of community can be formed when members can exert influence on other members in a community. From the results of observations during the Central Management Evaluation, the research subjects began to have an influence on IFoP which was shown by the courage to actively express opinions and problems they face. This is due to the positive response received from the other IFoP administrators.

The increase in sense of community can also be seen from the answers of the subjects, when researchers asked for feedback after the destiny stage was carried out. Requests for feedback from researchers are useful to determine the extent to which research subjects benefit from the treatment. From the feedback, it is known that the research subjects gained new insights about the importance of communication and interaction in organizations. Research subjects said that it was important to show concern, explain problems, and discuss solutions together with the other IFoP administrators.

In addition, based on the observations, the researchers also found some similarities among the research subjects. The seven administrators who were the research subjects experienced the same problem in dealing with IFoP conditions. The problems of the seven subjects stemmed from communication skills and lack of interaction. They did not yet know the importance of being open in conveying problems and feelings to other administrators. These communication problems led to a lack of attachment between them and other IFoP administrators. For example, some research subjects felt that they have contributed a lot in implementing the IFoP working programs. So, they felt their workload is more than other administrators. However, they did not convey this to the other administrators. Therefore, the feelings and problems they face were not conveyed properly.

Individuals with a high sense of community have problem-focused coping behaviors [16]. Thus, the individual will choose to resolve conflicts in the community or organization, not avoid them. Conversely, individuals with a low sense of community will tend to ignore or avoid solving problems. Being open to feelings towards members of a group is one indicator in increasing sense of community [17].

The appreciative inquiry method is a method with a discussion technique that aims to create group change that focuses on increasing positive power [18]. This method strengthens attachment by increasing the quantity and quality of interaction among group members. The appreciative inquiry method is useful in helping individuals who do not feel close to their group to understand members and the positive potential in them. In addition, it is very important to understand the function of good communication in groups. This is because the low attachment felt by one member can affect his/her relationship with the group such as decreased performance.

The effect of the appreciative inquiry method has been evaluated in several studies and shows that this method can increase active involvement in a group [3], [11]. This method uses the positive potential of the group to increase the sense of community of its members [4], [2]. This is in accordance with what was experienced by the research subjects. Before being treated, the main problems experienced by research subjects were the lack of communication and attachment among members. This makes it difficult for them to convey problems and the implementation of the working program at IFoP was not optimal. However, after being given the treatment, the interaction of the subjects increased. So that they get to know each other and are able to express their opinions and problems they face.

5. Conclusion

The results of the study indicated that there is a significant influence in giving the appreciative inquiry method to increase the sense of community in the administrators of Islamic Family of Psychology for the 2021 period. Based on the research that has been carried out, there are several suggestions that researchers would like to convey, including: (1) For IFoP administrators for the period of 2021. It is expected that they will be able to maintain and improve interaction and good communication from this point forward. Thus, the life of the IFoP organization will be warmer and support better management performance. (2) For next researchers. It is expected that they will be able to conduct researches in various organizations more broadly, by using more sophisticated research designs such as dividing research subjects into control groups

and experimental groups and conducting periodic tests to determine the development of the level of sense of community amongst their research subjects.

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