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Education on the Constitutional Rights of Prisoners

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Article	Abstract
<p><i>Received: Des 02, 2025;</i> <i>Reviewed: Jan 07, 2026;</i> <i>Accepted: Feb 09, 2026;</i> <i>Published: Feb 26, 2026</i></p>	<p>This community service program focused on providing education about the constitutional rights of inmates at the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary. The initiative arose from the need to strengthen inmates' understanding of the fundamental rights that remain with them during imprisonment, as guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution and detailed in the Correctional Law. Many inmates still hold the misconception that losing freedom means losing all civil rights, which often makes them passive and unaware of the rehabilitation facilities designed to support their recovery and social reintegration. Through an educational and dialogic approach tailored to the conditions of the penitentiary, participants received information on their rights to humane treatment, health services, worship, self-development, and communication within regulatory limits. The material delivery was combined with interactive discussions to reinforce the understanding that the protection of rights goes hand in hand with the obligation to maintain order and participate in rehabilitation. The results showed improved legal literacy, increased confidence in accessing available services, and a clearer awareness of their position as legal subjects who retain dignity and the opportunity to improve themselves within a reintegration-oriented correctional system.</p> <p>Keywords: constitutional rights; prisoners; correctional system.</p>

A. INTRODUCTION

Many inmates continue to believe that imprisonment results in the complete loss of their legal identity and personal rights. This misconception arises largely from limited access to legal

information, inconsistent rights-based education, and social experiences that reinforce feelings of marginalization. According to Asshiddiqe (2006), constitutional rights may be restricted by the state only in a proportional manner and cannot eliminate the inherent dignity of an individual. Because inmates are often unaware of this principle, they tend to internalize the belief that the state holds absolute authority over every aspect of their lives, leading to passivity and reluctance to participate in rehabilitation programs that are essential to their development.

The low level of legal literacy among inmates further contributes to the problem. Many struggle to differentiate between constitutional rights, administrative rights, and correctional obligations, which leads to confusion and misinterpretation of institutional procedures. Although Law No. 22 of 2022 on Corrections guarantees inmates' rights to health services, education, worship, rehabilitation, and communication with family, these rights are not meaningfully exercised when inmates do not fully understand them (Undang-Undang RI No. 22, 2022). Consequently, many fail to utilize available services that are intended to support their personal development and reintegration.

Internal correctional culture also shapes inmates' attitudes toward accessing their rights. Informal hierarchies, peer pressure, and norms within the prison community often discourage inmates from asserting their rights due to fear of jealousy, stigma, or perceived threats to group solidarity. Becker's (1963) labeling theory helps explain this phenomenon, suggesting that the label "prisoner" can become so deeply internalized that individuals accept constraints even when such limitations lack legal basis. Research in *Jurnal Kriminologi Indonesia* (2011) similarly notes that identity construction within prison environments significantly affects inmates' patterns of behavior and self-perception.

Challenges also arise from inconsistencies in officers' understanding of correctional principles grounded in Articles 28D and 28G of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantee the right to personal security, fair treatment, and legal protection (El-Muhtaj, 2009). When correctional staff prioritize security functions over rehabilitation, the fulfillment of constitutional rights is often compromised. This imbalance creates a structural gap between legal expectations and real-world implementation, resulting in a relationship between officers and inmates that is more authoritative than dialogic. Such conditions hinder the broader goals of correctional reform.

In addition, the psychological condition and social background of inmates play a significant role in shaping their understanding of rights. Many enter correctional institutions with limited formal education, low legal awareness, and emotional instability following arrest and sentencing. Without targeted, accessible education, they rely heavily on informal information from fellow inmates, which is often inaccurate or incomplete. As a result, misunderstandings accumulate, giving rise to unnecessary tensions, suspicion, and feelings of injustice within the facility.

Educational interventions are therefore necessary not only to convey information but also to empower inmates to understand their legal position and responsibilities. Effective rights education must help inmates recognize the boundaries of state authority and the areas in which they maintain autonomy. Such an approach aligns with Barda Nawawi Arief's (2014) assertion that criminal justice policies must emphasize human dignity and proportionality. When inmates understand their rights clearly, correctional programs become more effective, promoting responsible behavior and reducing the likelihood of conflict.

This perspective is consistent with Muladi's (1995) restorative and reintegrative model of corrections, which frames inmates as individuals with dignity who must be prepared morally, legally, and socially to return to society. Based on these considerations, two research questions arise: (1) How do inmates at the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary understand the constitutional rights they retain during imprisonment? and (2) What forms of educational intervention are needed to help inmates recognize, understand, and appropriately exercise their constitutional rights within correctional life?.

B. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This community engagement activity was conducted at the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary from 13 to 15 November 2024. The program employed a qualitative descriptive approach to identify inmates' level of understanding of their constitutional rights and to assess the types of educational interventions needed within the correctional environment. The materials used in this activity consisted of modules on constitutional rights, simplified excerpts of the 1945 Constitution, key provisions of Law No. 22 of 2022 on Corrections, and visual aids designed to support low-literacy participants. These materials were adapted to ensure clarity, accessibility, and cultural relevance for narcotics inmates with diverse educational backgrounds.

Data were collected through direct observation, structured discussions, and guided question–response sessions involving participating inmates. Interactive dialogue was used as the primary method to capture the inmates' perceptions, misconceptions, and level of awareness regarding their rights. Field notes from facilitators were used to document behavioral responses, participation levels, and recurring issues that appeared during the sessions. The program also incorporated short case simulations to evaluate how well participants could apply the information presented to real correctional scenarios.

The intervention followed an educative-dialogic method, combining presentations, participatory discussions, and reflective feedback. Each session began with an introduction to basic constitutional principles, followed by explanations of specific rights retained during imprisonment, such as the right to humane treatment, health services, religious practice, family communication, and participation in rehabilitation programs. Participants were encouraged to ask questions and share experiences to ensure deeper comprehension and to identify gaps between normative regulations and practical realities within the facility.

This activity did not involve biomedical interventions or the collection of sensitive personal data; nevertheless, ethical considerations were upheld. Approval for conducting the program was granted by the Head of the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary. All participants were informed about the purpose of the activity, ensured confidentiality, and allowed to participate voluntarily. No audio or video recordings were taken; only anonymized descriptive notes were used for analysis.

The qualitative data obtained were analyzed through thematic categorization to identify recurring problems, misconceptions, and educational needs related to inmates' constitutional rights. The results were then synthesized to evaluate the effectiveness of the educational intervention and to propose recommendations for strengthening rights-based awareness in correctional institutions. The materials used and all anonymized data generated from this activity are available upon reasonable request to support replication or further community-based studies.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Inmates' Understanding of Constitutional Rights at the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary

Understanding constitutional rights is an essential foundation in the legal system, ensuring that every individual, including those serving criminal sentences, continues to possess certain basic rights that cannot be taken away arbitrarily. Within the framework of a constitutional state, constitutional rights function as limits on the state when exercising law enforcement and punishment. Therefore, punishment is never interpreted as the removal of citizenship status, but rather as the restriction of certain freedoms regulated by law (Asshiddiqie, 2006). This principle forms the basis for the state's obligation to continue fulfilling inmates' rights even when they are placed within the correctional system.

In the Indonesian correctional system, inmates' rights are regulated through various legal instruments that ensure access to humane treatment, health services, education, religious worship, and non-discriminatory treatment. These provisions demonstrate that correctional guidance is not only oriented toward restricting liberty but also toward preserving the dignity of inmates as human beings. These rights are part of constitutional guarantees that do not disappear even when a person is serving a sentence, making it necessary for inmates to understand the rights inherent to them (Muladi, 2005; Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia No. 22 Tahun 2022).

In correctional practice, inmates' understanding of their constitutional rights is often uneven. Factors such as educational background, psychological condition, social environment, and limited access to legal information influence the extent to which they recognize the rights they possess. Many inmates understand their rights only in a limited, practical sense based on what they experience daily, without knowing the legal basis or the boundaries of their fulfillment. This lack of knowledge can lead to misconceptions about the authority of correctional officers, service mechanisms, and procedures for requesting certain rights such as health services, reintegration programs, or administrative assistance (Sudarsono, 2020).

This situation is also evident among narcotics inmates housed at the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary. This facility accommodates a large number of inmates with backgrounds of vulnerability to substance dependency, making the need for legal information more complex. Findings from the service team show that while some inmates understand their rights in general terms, they do not fully comprehend the scope of constitutional rights, the applicable limitations, or the mechanisms for exercising those rights within the correctional system. This condition reflects a gap between normative regulations and factual understanding inside the penitentiary (Rahman, 2022).

The Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary is one of the technical correctional units with distinctive characteristics because it houses inmates convicted of narcotics abuse and illicit drug trafficking. The facility is designed as a correctional environment focused on recovery, rehabilitation, and strict supervision, given the complexity of the inmates' behavior and needs. Structurally, the Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary employs a multi-layered security system supported by more

specialized rehabilitation facilities compared to regular penitentiaries, as inmates placed in this institution tend to have higher risk levels and require guidance that emphasizes self-control, health, and legal awareness (Direktorat Jenderal Pemasyarakatan, 2021).

The number of inmates in this penitentiary is relatively high compared to its ideal capacity, resulting in more intense service and rehabilitation dynamics that demand proper management strategies. The service team observed that the high inmate population often prevents information regarding correctional rights from being distributed evenly. Many inmates tend to focus more on rehabilitation programs and daily routines, causing issues related to constitutional rights to be insufficiently understood or, in some cases, never systematically communicated to certain groups of inmates (Lestari & Nugroho, 2021).

Based on these conditions, the reality of providing information on constitutional rights still requires reinforcement through educational activities that are structured, communicative, and accessible to inmates. This becomes the main reason such community service activities are necessary, as they can fill the knowledge gap and help inmates recognize the fundamental rights that remain inherent to them while serving their sentences (Rahman, 2022).

The inmates' lack of knowledge about their constitutional rights raises concerns because it can trigger various problems that disrupt the correctional guidance process. Inmates who do not understand the limits of legal protection and the services they are entitled to often feel they are being treated unfairly, even though some of the restrictions they experience are legitimate components of the penal process. Such conditions can generate suspicion, anxiety, and unnecessary tension toward both correctional officers and fellow inmates. When these misconceptions develop within a closed environment such as a prison, the potential for miscommunication and internal conflict increases (Suharyo, 2020).

Lack of understanding also has the potential to lead inmates to make decisions that harm themselves, such as ignoring formal complaint mechanisms, failing to utilize available rehabilitation programs, or becoming involved in unhealthy practices because they feel they have no alternative. Inmates who are unaware of their basic rights are more vulnerable to being exploited by others, both socially and psychologically, due to the limited mobility and restricted access to information during incarceration. This situation not only worsens the inmates' quality of life but also hinders the correctional objectives that focus on recovery and reintegration.

The situation becomes even more concerning when the information circulating among inmates is inaccurate. When legal knowledge is based solely on oral stories, assumptions, or partial experiences, inmates may fall into misleading interpretations about what they may or may not do. Misunderstanding constitutional rights—such as the right to worship, access health services, or receive humane treatment—can produce excessive dissatisfaction and trigger emotional reactions that are disproportionate to the policies implemented in the correctional facility (Wahyudi, 2019).

Lack of understanding also has the potential to hinder inmates' development of self-awareness and their ability to reconstruct their roles as citizens. Inmates who do not

realize that certain rights remain attached during their sentence may lose motivation to participate in rehabilitation programs or prepare themselves for reintegration after release. Yet, one of the fundamental goals of the correctional system is to restore the inmate's identity as an individual who still possesses rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for self-improvement (Muladi, 2010).

These circumstances indicate that lack of knowledge is not merely an issue of limited information but can develop into a structural barrier to institutional stability and the effectiveness of correctional guidance. Therefore, providing constitutional rights education becomes an essential step to ensure that inmates serve their sentences with proper understanding of their position as legal subjects who remain protected by the state.

2. The Need for Education to Recognize and Fulfill Constitutional Rights in Correctional Life

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn. Authors should discuss the results and how they can be interpreted from the perspective of previous studies and of the working hypotheses. The findings and their implications should be discussed in the broadest context possible. Future research directions may also be highlighted.

The need for education on constitutional rights for inmates arises from the reality that correctional life involves rules, boundaries, and systems that are not always easy for inmates to understand. Many individuals enter prison in a state of distress, with limited legal information, and without knowing which rights remain attached to them after the court's decision is enforced. Without adequate understanding, they tend to assume that all aspects of their lives are entirely restricted by the state, even though several rights are guaranteed by the 1945 Constitution and the Law on Corrections. Education therefore becomes an essential bridge to help inmates recognize their status as citizens who still possess dignity and legal protection.

Within correctional facilities, inmates face various situations that require the ability to understand regulations and identify the available protection mechanisms. Rights to health services, worship, family visitation under regulated procedures, humane treatment, and participation in rehabilitation programs are examples of entitlements that are often not fully understood. When inmates do not grasp the scope of these rights, they struggle to distinguish between the legitimate authority of officers and the legal protections that must be upheld. Education serves to help them realistically recognize and navigate these boundaries (Sari, 2021).

The need for education also arises from the diverse social backgrounds and educational levels of inmates. Many inmates enter correctional facilities without sufficient legal literacy, making it difficult for them to understand the language of statutory regulations. When they arrive in prison in an unstable psychological condition and with minimal legal knowledge, the need for systematic and easily understandable explanations becomes even more urgent. Without proper guidance, inmates often rely solely on informal stories from fellow prisoners, which are not always accurate. This

situation may create misconceptions about their rights and trigger new vulnerabilities during their incarceration (Nurhayati, 2019).

Beyond understanding rights, education is necessary to ensure that inmates are able to assess how those rights are fulfilled within the correctional environment. Inmates must understand the procedures, requirements, and mechanisms in place so they do not feel confused when dealing with issues related to health services, family visits, rehabilitation programs, or complaint mechanisms. Adequate knowledge enables them to navigate the correctional system more independently, making them less susceptible to misinformation or unhealthy practices among fellow inmates (Hapsari & Latifah, 2020).

The need for education is also related to the internalization of the principle that the fulfillment of rights always coexists with the performance of duties. Inmates must understand that certain rights are restricted by court decisions, yet such restrictions do not mean the loss of constitutional protection. Instead, these limitations operate within a legal framework that preserves their fundamental rights while ensuring compliance with correctional regulations (Gultom, 2012).

Education on constitutional rights is also essential for fostering inmates' critical awareness of the correctional environment. By understanding the rights inherent to them, inmates are better able to assess the situations they encounter daily, distinguish between lawful and unlawful treatment, and take appropriate action when facing obstacles. This awareness helps reduce internal conflict, strengthens self-confidence, and promotes more constructive interaction between inmates and correctional officers (Lestari, 2020).

In addition, educational efforts must be adapted to the characteristics of the inmate population, including their educational level, psychological condition, and prior experiences. Inmates with a background of narcotics abuse, for example, require simple, visual, and practical methods of delivery to ensure that information can be properly received and retained. Materials that are highly abstract or purely textual in legal language are often ineffective, making interactive approaches, simulations, and real-case discussions essential for the internalization of constitutional rights (Putri & Sunarto, 2021).

The need for education also includes equipping inmates with the ability to express their rights appropriately, including the right to file complaints or grievances. Without adequate education, inmates may not know the proper procedures or may hesitate to act for fear of being perceived as violating prison rules. Education must therefore provide clear guidance on formal channels for exercising rights, access to authorized officers, and mechanisms that ensure those rights are respected.

Furthermore, education on constitutional rights becomes a preventive strategy against potential legal violations within the correctional facility. Inmates who understand their rights and obligations are better able to control themselves, reduce negative behavior, and participate more actively in rehabilitation programs. They are able to identify actions that may harm themselves or others, allowing the goals of rehabilitation and social reintegration to be achieved more effectively.

Lastly, fulfilling the need for education also contributes to the development of a legal culture within the correctional environment. Inmates who acquire knowledge about

constitutional rights tend to respect the rights of others, comply with regulations, and interact based on mutual respect. This understanding enables inmates to develop cooperative and responsible attitudes, preparing them to adapt successfully once they return to society.

3. CONCLUSION

The analysis shows that the limited understanding of constitutional rights among inmates at the Class IIA Gunung Sindur Narcotics Penitentiary has created significant barriers to the effectiveness of correctional guidance. Various factors such as low legal literacy, psychological distress, misinformation, and the complex environment of the correctional system contribute to misconceptions about the rights that remain attached to inmates during their sentence. These misunderstandings often lead to passivity, feelings of injustice, internal tensions, and reduced participation in rehabilitation programs. Strengthening constitutional rights education is therefore essential to bridge the gap between normative legal guarantees and the inmates' actual awareness of their position as legal subjects who still possess dignity, protections, and opportunities for improvement.

Educational interventions designed for inmates must be systematic, accessible, and adapted to their diverse backgrounds to achieve meaningful impact. Providing clear guidance on rights, obligations, and available institutional mechanisms will help inmates navigate correctional life more confidently and responsibly. Such education not only reduces conflict and vulnerability but also fosters the development of a constructive legal culture within the correctional environment. Ultimately, empowering inmates through constitutional rights education supports the broader goals of rehabilitation and social reintegration, ensuring that they are better prepared to re-enter society as individuals who understand their rights, respect the rights of others, and are capable of contributing positively to their communities..

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