

Empowerment Communication and the Dynamics of Inmate Self-Transformation at the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary

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ABSTRACT: The high rate of recidivism, particularly among drug-related inmates, remains one of the major challenges within the Indonesian correctional system. Narkotika Class IIB Prison in Purwokerto has shown a significant increase in recidivist inmates from 2021 to 2024, reaching 55.4% in 2024. This situation indicates the need to reassess the effectiveness of rehabilitation and empowerment programs, especially regarding the quality of communication established between correctional officers and inmates. This study aims to analyze the process of empowerment communication and its contribution to inmates' self-transformation at Narkotika Class IIB Prison in Purwokerto. A qualitative approach was employed with purposive sampling to select informants, and data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The findings reveal that empowerment communication plays a crucial role in fostering internal motivation, enhancing self-awareness, and encouraging behavioral change among inmates. Interpersonal communication conducted by officers through empathetic approaches, open dialogue, and intensive guidance was found to be effective in shaping personality development, improving skills, and strengthening inmates' readiness for social reintegration. However, challenges arise as the prison also serves as a referral facility for problematic inmates transferred from other institutions, requiring communication strategies that are more adaptive and personalized. This study concludes that inmates' self-transformation is influenced not only by rehabilitation programs but also, and more importantly, by the quality of empowerment communication implemented consistently and humanely.

KEYWORDS: empowerment communication, self-transformation, recidivism, inmates, correctional system.

I. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of rising recidivism rates in Indonesia, particularly among inmates convicted of narcotics-related offenses, has become a critical issue requiring serious attention within the correctional system. Recidivism not only reflects the individual's failure to maintain behavioral change but also serves as an indicator of the suboptimal rehabilitation and empowerment processes within correctional institutions. The Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary represents a tangible example of this problem. Based on observations conducted in December 2024, the recidivism rate in this facility has shown a significant upward trend over the past four years. In 2021, recidivists accounted for 32.4% (35 out of 108 inmates), increasing to 33.3% in 2022 (63 out of 189 inmates), rising further in 2023 to 42.8% (39 out of 91 inmates), and reaching its highest level in 2024 at 55.4% (142 out of 256 inmates). These increases indicate that more than half of the inmates currently serving sentences are individuals who have previously committed similar offenses, with narcotics-related crimes being the most dominant.

This trend aligns with the national situation, which shows that recidivism remains a persistent and unresolved issue. Data from the Ministry of Law and Human Rights (Kemenkumham) in February 2020 states that out of a total of 268,001 detainees and inmates, approximately 18.12% or 48,500 individuals were recidivists. This figure falls within the global recidivism range of 14–45%, suggesting that the problem of recidivism in Indonesia is not isolated, but rather part of a broader pattern of systemic challenges in correctional systems worldwide (Kemenkumham, 2020). Recidivism in narcotics-related cases, in particular, has unique complexities, as it is closely tied to substance dependence, social environmental influences, criminal networks, and inadequate post-release social reintegration (Sudrajat, 2020; Widianoro, 2021).

Within this context, the enactment of the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 22 of 2022 on Corrections provides a normative framework for how inmate rehabilitation should be carried out. The law emphasizes that rehabilitation aims to enhance inmates' personal character and self-reliance through guidance, mentoring, and supervision programs. Personal development includes strengthening mental and spiritual capacities, fostering national awareness, cultivating positive behavior, and preparing inmates for social reintegration, while self-reliance development focuses on vocational skills training, work-based competencies, and productivity. This regulatory mandate positions rehabilitation not merely as an administrative routine but as a holistic transformation process that encompasses psychological, social, and moral dimensions.

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To achieve such transformation, empowerment communication plays a fundamental role. Empowerment cannot be effective without communication that fosters psychological closeness, stimulates self-awareness, and facilitates active inmate participation in the change process. DeVito (2019) highlights that interpersonal communication is not merely the exchange of messages but a process of constructing meaning through interaction, empathy, openness, and emotional support. In the correctional context, interpersonal communication between officers, program facilitators, and inmates becomes essential in building internal motivation, reinforcing a new identity, and encouraging sustainable behavioral change (Wulandari, 2022).

At the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary, empowerment programs are carried out through two forms of rehabilitation stipulated in Law No. 22/2022: personality development and self-reliance development. Personality development includes religious cultivation, national awareness training, intellectual development, positive behavioral reinforcement, physical and spiritual development, legal awareness education, and preparation for social reintegration. Meanwhile, self-reliance development consists of vocational training such as carpentry, agriculture, welding, and handicraft production. These programs are supported by religious activities facilitated both by internal correctional staff and community religious leaders, creating a more interactive and expansive interpersonal communication environment.

However, several facts indicate that the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary has also become a referral destination for problematic inmates from other facilities. In September 2023, the Class IIA Purwokerto Penitentiary transferred 11 inmates to this facility, followed by another 6 inmates in October 2023 (Humas Lapas Purwokerto, 2023; Novianto, 2023). The arrival of inmates with disciplinary issues or behavioral disturbances naturally increases the challenges of rehabilitation, requiring more intensive, adaptive, and personalized empowerment communication strategies.

This situation shows that rehabilitation at the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary must not only provide training or programmatic activities but also build interpersonal communication relationships that encourage inmates' mental transformation. Inmate self-transformation is a long-term process that requires psychosocial support, constructive dialogue, and motivational interpersonal communication. Without effective communication, empowerment becomes merely an administrative procedure lacking substantive impact on behavioral change.

Therefore, this study is crucial to examine how empowerment communication is implemented at the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary and how such communication contributes to inmate self-transformation. This research not only offers academic contributions by enriching the study of empowerment communication within correctional contexts but also holds practical value in assisting correctional institutions in improving the quality of rehabilitation programs to reduce recidivism rates in the future.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative case study method, which aims to provide a comprehensive, systematic, and detailed account of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs. The primary focus of a descriptive case study is to present a depiction of the phenomenon within both theoretical and empirical frameworks, enabling readers to gain a clear understanding of the situation being examined (Yin, 2018). The central focus of this research is the self-transformation of inmates at the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary through empowerment communication.

Data collection was conducted through direct observation and in-depth interviews with selected informants. The researcher implemented data triangulation by analyzing and processing the interview transcripts to identify how the inmates' self-transformation occurs. This process provides insight into how both parties involved describe and interpret the situations that unfold between them.

Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The informants in this study include:

Name (Initials)	Address	Position/status	Duration	Age
GB	Kudus	Recidivist inmate	1 year	45 y.o.
OP	Solo	Recidivist inmate	1 year 9 month	40 y.o.
MC	Salatiga	Recidivist inmate	1 year	41 y.o.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Forms and Patterns of Communication in the Inmate Empowerment Program

1. Structure of the Empowerment Program at the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary

The empowerment programs implemented at the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary are divided into two main categories: mandatory development programs and skills development programs. The mandatory development programs must be attended by all inmates and include religious development and sports activities. For religious development, Muslim inmates participate in regular Qur'an recitation, tajwid learning, articulation (makhraj) training, and proper Qur'anic reading. Meanwhile, Christian inmates attend worship (Mass) on Tuesdays and Saturdays, facilitated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Banyumas Regency.

Sports development is also a mandatory program intended to maintain inmates' physical health, although its implementation has changed. GB explained that the sports program, previously guided by an external instructor, is now led alternately by inmates

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themselves and is limited to muscle-stretching exercises. In addition to the mandatory programs, optional skills development programs are provided based on inmates' interests, including handicrafts, barbershop training, and culinary arts.

This program structure shows a clear differentiation between mandatory and voluntary activities. From the perspective of empowerment communication, this differentiation reflects an effort to accommodate basic spiritual and physical needs through mandatory programs while providing space for individual skill development through optional programs. However, the implementation of these two program types encounters distinct dynamics and challenges in practice.

2. Top-Down Communication Patterns and Limited Participatory Dialogue

Findings indicate that empowerment communication at the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary is still dominated by top-down, one-way communication with limited space for dialogue. This is evidenced by MC's statement that interactions between officers and inmates only occur when inmates initiate questions, and communication regarding programs depends heavily on available facilities, space, and time. As MC S. explained, "If we ask, then yes, there is interaction. But if not, then there is no interaction between officers and inmates. Greetings, yes. Communication related to the programs exists, but again, it depends on the facilities, space, and time available."

This condition resonates with Freire's (1970) critique of the "banking concept" of communication, where communication flows vertically, and participants remain passive recipients of information. Servaes (1999), in the context of empowerment communication, emphasizes that communication should be dialogic and participatory rather than monologic or instructive. Effective empowerment communication requires horizontal dialogue that enables all parties to share knowledge, experiences, and aspirations. Raharjo (2020), in his study of empowerment communication within correctional institutions, identified that hierarchical communication structures often hinder meaningful empowerment processes. When communication remains one-directional, inmates lose opportunities to express their needs, aspirations, and potentials optimally—an obstacle to the self-transformation process, which is a central goal of Indonesia's correctional system.

DeVito (2016) states that effective interpersonal communication requires openness, empathy, positiveness, supportiveness, and equality. In the context of the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary, although formal mechanisms such as complaint systems and evaluation forums exist, these core elements of interpersonal communication are not yet fully manifested in daily practice.

3. Program Planning and Socialization Processes

Communication during the program planning process is conducted through face-to-face interaction rather than formal questionnaires. As GB noted, "There is, but not in the form of a questionnaire. Only through face-to-face interactions." Regarding openness, the penitentiary provides some space for inmates to offer suggestions. GB explained, "For example, in the handicraft training I attended, officers asked inmates about which products had strong market potential, what materials were needed, and so on."

Although communication space exists in the planning phase, another key finding reveals a significant gap between inmates' aspirations and the actual realization of empowerment programs. GB stated, "Surveys exist. Communication regarding programs that match our interests also exists. But if the programs are not realized, it becomes pointless. In the end, it is the system. We inmates must follow the program; the program does not adjust to us."

This indicates that the communication process has not fully implemented the principles of participation that form the foundation of empowerment communication. Fetterman (2001), through the concept of empowerment evaluation, emphasizes the importance of involving participants actively in all program stages—from planning to implementation and evaluation. Genuine participation is not limited to listening to aspirations; it requires integrating those aspirations into program design and execution. In this context, empowerment communication should serve as a bridge connecting inmates' needs with institutional policies, not merely as a procedural formality.

Djazuli (2024), in his study on the evaluation of community empowerment programs, explains that one indicator of successful empowerment communication is the program's level of responsiveness to participant needs. When participants' aspirations are not acted upon, this may lead to apathy and reduced motivation to participate actively. This condition is evident in the case of the handicraft program at the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary, where inmate interest was actually high, but due to unresolved issues in marketing, the program eventually stopped, leaving only a few inmates still participating.

4. Complaint System and Program Evaluation Mechanisms

The Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary provides a complaint system that enables inmates to submit grievances. OP explained, "Social and mental support can perhaps be realized through the complaint system to the registration officer—whether the complaints concern religious development, personal issues, or the environment. Even though the officers are also Muslims, every complaint is always followed up." Complaints may also be delivered through inmate representatives. As GB noted, "For the complaint system, we usually convey it through a tamping representative (a person trusted by the leadership). Sometimes we do not feel comfortable telling the officers directly. But if we feel comfortable, then we go straight to the officers."

The evaluation system for empowerment programs is conducted irregularly. GB explained, "There is evaluation, but not regularly. Only when there is a complaint about the development program or supporting facilities. It is more often conducted face-to-face,

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sometimes in a forum.” Evaluation forums are held byT gathering representatives from each inmate block. “Here, each block has a head. So if we make a mistake, the block head is reprimanded by the officers, and the block head then conveys it to the residents (cellmates). Usually, forums are gathered through the representatives of each block head.”

Although these mechanisms indicate the presence of communication channels, their unstructured and irregular nature may reduce the effectiveness of the evaluation process. Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that effective program evaluation requires systematic, continuous mechanisms involving all stakeholders. Evaluation should not function merely as administrative oversight but as a process of collaborative learning that enables ongoing improvement. In empowerment communication, evaluation plays a crucial role in strengthening participatory dialogue and ensuring that programs remain aligned with participants’ needs.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), through the naturalistic inquiry approach, highlight the importance of involving participants in the evaluation process to ensure the credibility and contextual relevance of findings. A participatory evaluation system allows inmates not only to be objects of evaluation but also active subjects who provide insight and perspectives on program effectiveness.

B. Spiritual Transformation as the Primary Dimension of Inmate Empowerment

1. Religious Development as a Catalyst for Self-Transformation

Findings show that religious development programs provide the most significant transformative impact on inmates at the Class IIB Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary. All three informants consistently described fundamental changes in their spiritual lives—from increased faith and improved scriptural reading skills to a strengthened relationship with God. MC stated, “There are many benefits—strengthening my faith, gaining more knowledge, improving my Qur’an recitation; before, I read carelessly. Now we learn articulation, tajwid, and proper recitation.” GB expressed similar changes: “Through religious development, we now understand basic religious teachings, increase our religious knowledge, and improve our Qur’an recitation.”

OP, a Christian inmate, experienced profound spiritual transformation. He stated, “The benefits are many. From previously not knowing worship and not being close to God. I used to be viewed negatively by society and my family. But since I regularly worship, read the Bible, and draw closer to God, I now understand the meaning of life. My time before this was wasted.”

Mezirow (2000), through transformative learning theory, explains that genuine transformation occurs when individuals undergo deep shifts in their frames of reference, including cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. In the context of inmates at the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary, religious development functions as a disorienting dilemma that encourages critical reflection on past life choices and fosters the emergence of new perspectives about the meaning and purpose of life.

Spiritual transformation experienced by inmates aligns with the concept of spiritual capital, which emphasizes the central role of spirituality in empowerment processes. Rakhmat (2018) notes that in the Indonesian cultural context—deeply rooted in religiosity—spiritual dimensions strongly influence identity formation and behavioral change. Religious development in correctional institutions is therefore not simply ritual practice but character formation grounded in moral, ethical, and spiritual values that become the foundation for self-transformation.

Nugraha (2022), in his study on inmate development, identified that religious programs are the most effective in promoting behavioral change among inmates. This is because religious development touches the deepest existential dimension of human life—the spiritual dimension, which becomes the source of intrinsic motivation to change. When inmates discover meaning through spirituality, they develop strong internal motivation for self-improvement that does not rely solely on external reinforcement.

2. Behavioral Change as a Manifestation of Internal Transformation

The impact of religious development extends beyond spiritual growth and manifests in concrete behavioral changes. MC experienced transformation in communication style and emotional regulation. He shared, “There are many changes. Before entering the penitentiary, I used to speak harshly and rudely and could not control my emotions, and my Qur’an recitation was incorrect. Alhamdulillah, now it is better, even though I am still learning. I actually learn more about religion here inside.”

GB also reported improved religious consistency: “Regarding religious development, I rarely prayed or recited the Qur’an before. Now I routinely perform worship.” These changes demonstrate that spiritual transformation has been internalized into observable character development and everyday behavior.

Littlejohn et al. (2017) note that behavioral change results from communication processes involving cognitive, affective, and conative transformations. In religious development programs, communication between spiritual advisors (ustadz or pastors) and inmates includes the transmission of religious knowledge (cognitive), the cultivation of spiritual awareness (affective), and the motivation to practice religious teachings (conative). These three dimensions interact synergistically to produce sustainable behavioral change.

Mulyana (2018) explains that communication has an instrumental function: influencing attitudes and behaviors. In the context of religious development at the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary, communication between spiritual advisors and inmates not only conveys information but also shapes attitudes and values that guide daily behavior. MC even expressed a desire to record the religious lectures so he could reread them in his block indicating ongoing internalization of values through continuous personal reflection.

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3. Inner Peace and Psychological Well-Being

MC experienced a sense of calm through religious activities, stating, “The most memorable experience was when I continuously read the Qur’an; it made me feel calm.” This inner peace is an important indicator of psychological well-being, which is one of the core objectives of empowerment.

Rakhmat (2018), in his study of communication psychology, explains that communication has a therapeutic function that can provide psychological comfort and reduce stress. In the context of correctional institutions where inmates face psychological pressures due to loss of freedom and social stigma religious guidance functions as a coping mechanism that helps them manage stress and find inner peace.

The spiritual transformation that generates this sense of tranquility also contributes to the development of resilience among inmates. Mezirow (2000) notes that true transformation involves changes in how individuals interpret their life experiences. When inmates are able to reinterpret their incarceration as an opportunity for self-improvement and spiritual growth, they develop a more positive outlook that strengthens their mental resilience in facing challenges.

4. Increased Self-Confidence and Post-Release Readiness

Empowerment programs, particularly religious guidance, also influence inmates’ self-confidence. MC acknowledged an increase in confidence specifically in performing religious practices, noting, “I feel more confident in performing worship; for other things, not so much.” OP similarly felt more prepared for life after release, stating, “For me, I rely on religious development. The religious guidance here makes me ready to live a better life, to be closer to God.”

Skills training also provides benefits by enhancing inmates’ practical skills and self-confidence. GB stated, “Through handicraft training, we can develop our skills. I had joined handicraft training in my previous prison, so here I am just improving it.” He also feels more confident with the skills he has acquired: “Yes, of course. After being released, I am able to make crafts just like in the training here, even though it may not be my primary source of income.” He sees handicraft training as a potential source of livelihood: “Handicraft training can be one of the ways for me to earn money after release, even if not as my main job.”

The inmates also show awareness of their own transformation process. GB acknowledged, “Regarding control over my self-change process, you could say so, but it’s still standard. I’m not yet expert in religious knowledge, but not completely ignorant either.” MC also recognizes that he is still in the learning process: “Alhamdulillah, I am better now, even though I’m still in the learning stage.”

C. Structural Barriers in the Implementation of Empowerment Programs

1. Limited Facilities as Barriers to Communication

Limited facilities represent a significant obstacle in the implementation of empowerment programs. MC described constraints related to learning materials: “For me personally, the challenge is the limited number of books and writing tools. When the ustad gives a sermon, we want to take notes to review later in the block so we don’t forget, but the materials are limited.”

Access to clean water is also a serious issue. GB explained, “One major issue is the lack of water. If the water in the cell doesn’t flow, we have to get it from outside, and even then it depends on whether the water is flowing. Most cells have difficulty with water.”

In communication theory, facilities and infrastructure serve as channels or media that facilitate the transmission and storage of information. DeVito (2016) explains that communication media play a significant role in the effectiveness of the communication process. When media—such as books, writing tools, or physical facilities—are limited, the encoding and decoding of messages become difficult, and recipients have limited ability to process and retain information. In religious learning contexts, such limitations are particularly critical since internalizing spiritual values requires reflection and repetitive engagement.

Raharjo (2020) identifies that limited facilities in correctional institutions often create systemic barriers that reduce the effectiveness of empowerment programs. When inmates lack sufficient access to learning media, the empowerment process becomes suboptimal because they cannot develop knowledge or skills independently. This contradicts the principle of empowerment, which emphasizes the importance of fostering individuals’ capacity for self-directed learning.

The issue of clean water availability, as expressed by GB, also represents a serious barrier that affects inmates’ quality of life. Although not directly related to empowerment communication, poor access to basic necessities creates stress and discomfort that can reduce inmates’ motivation to actively participate in empowerment programs. Fetterman (2001) emphasizes that empowerment requires a supportive environment that enhances the physical and psychological well-being of participants.

2. Limited Time and Human Resources

OP, a Christian inmate, expressed concerns about the limited duration of religious sessions: “The problem is time because the session is limited to less than an hour. On Tuesdays, there is no schedule for Christian inmates. It starts from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. It should be longer, maybe from 9 to 11 a.m.” This time limitation reflects structural barriers in resource allocation for empowerment programs. Servaes (1999) explains that effective empowerment communication requires adequate investment of time to build trust, mutual understanding, and meaningful dialogue. When the allocated time is very limited, communication tends to become transactional and

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instructional rather than transformative and dialogic. This limits inmates' opportunities to explore spiritual issues in depth and develop comprehensive understanding of their religious teachings.

Lack of instructors also poses challenges for empowerment programs. The sports training program, for instance, has been affected by the absence of external instructors. GB shared, "In sports training, we used to have aerobic instructors from outside, but now we don't. We are waiting because it boosts inmates' motivation and serves as refreshing, at least once every two weeks. Now inmates take turns leading the exercises, but they only do stretching, not aerobic exercises."

Nugraha (2022) finds that the quality of instructors significantly influences the effectiveness of empowerment programs. When instructors lack adequate competence, the process of transferring knowledge and skills becomes less optimal.

3. Sustainability Issues in Skills Training and Product Marketing

The major challenge in skills training programs is the lack of product marketing, which has caused the handicraft program to cease operations. GB described the situation: "Marketing is the problem. Only three inmates joined the handicraft program out of about 300. When inmates saw that product marketing was weak, they lost interest. But actually many wanted to participate."

He added, "We used to run it for 3–4 months when I first arrived. There was an officer (Rehan) who managed external marketing, so we received some orders. But now he has moved, and there is no marketing. The last training was seven months ago, in December 2024." GB also shared his previous experience: "I joined handicraft training before, but because marketing was poor, production stopped, so I quit. If production resumes, I will join again, but it rarely happens now."

Djazuli (2024) argues that sustainability is a crucial indicator of the success of empowerment programs. Programs that are not sustainable not only cause economic loss but also create psychological effects such as disappointment and loss of trust in the institution. In the context of the Purwokerto Narcotics Penitentiary, the discontinuation of the handicraft program sends a message that inmates' aspirations are not valued, which may reduce their motivation to participate in empowerment activities.

Freire (1970) emphasizes that true empowerment must include an economic dimension that enables individuals to achieve financial independence. When skills programs do not produce tangible economic outcomes, their empowerment function becomes limited. Ideally, handicraft programs should teach technical skills while also enabling inmates to generate income, preparing them economically for reintegration into society.

The marketing issue also indicates a lack of integration between the empowerment program and external ecosystems. Raharjo (2020) points out that empowerment in correctional institutions should not operate in isolation but must be linked to broader social and economic networks. When no staff member actively connects handicraft products to external markets—as was previously done by officer Rehan—the program becomes unsustainable and disconnected from potential economic opportunities.

D. Discrepancies Between Programs and Prisoners' Vocational Needs

1. Misalignment Between Programs and Occupational Backgrounds

The research findings indicate a significant discrepancy between the available empowerment programs and the prisoners' occupational backgrounds and vocational needs. GB expressed the incompatibility of the programs with his needs: "They are not sui Table because they do not match my previous occupation. I used to work as a vendor selling shoes, sandals, and bags at the market. I also operated a small workshop at home, so the training here does not align with my interests and needs."

Fetterman (2001), through the concept of empowerment evaluation, emphasizes the importance of identifying participants' needs (needs assessment) as an initial step in designing empowerment programs. Needs should not be determined unilaterally by institutions but through participatory dialogue that involves participants in identifying their own needs. In the context of Lapas Narkotika Kelas IIB Purwokerto, although communication mechanisms exist to capture prisoners' aspirations, program implementation has not been fully responsive to the needs identified.

Nugraha (2022) explains that empowerment programs in correctional institutions should consider prisoners' occupational backgrounds to support smoother social reintegration. When the skills provided are irrelevant to previous work experience or future career aspirations, prisoners will struggle to apply these skills once released. This situation increases the risk of recidivism, as prisoners lack marketable skills that could help them secure appropriate employment.

2. Aspirations for Technical and Vocational Skills

Prisoners expressed the need for more practical and applicable skill programs. MC stated, "I want to learn electronics, so when I leave the prison it can help me get a job." GB expressed similar aspirations: "Automotive training, welding, workshop skills." These aspirations indicate that prisoners are aware of the importance of having marketable skills to prepare for life after incarceration.

Mezirow (2000), in the transformative learning theory, explains that meaningful learning occurs when individuals can connect what they learn with their real-life contexts. When empowerment programs are irrelevant to prisoners' practical needs, learning becomes less meaningful and the motivation to learn decreases. Conversely, when programs align with their aspirations, prisoners are more likely to be motivated and learn actively and independently.

Djazuli (2024) emphasizes that empowerment programs should be demand-driven rather than supply-driven. Programs should be designed based on participants' needs rather than merely on available resources or institutional convenience. In Lapas Narkotika

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Kelas IIB Purwokerto, greater efforts are needed to develop training programs that are responsive to prisoners' aspirations, including establishing partnerships with vocational institutions or industries capable of providing quality training.

GB also offered constructive input regarding program development: "More on improving the marketing of products outside the prison. Whatever products are made in the prison, if they can be marketed outside, the activities will continue, production increases, we earn income, and we don't think too much about the sentence."

3. Diversity of Empowerment Needs

It is noteworthy that not all prisoners share the same aspirations regarding skill programs. OP stated, "I do not want skills training, only religious guidance." This indicates the existence of diverse empowerment needs among prisoners that must be accommodated in program design.

Servaes (1999), through the multiplicity approach, emphasizes that empowerment communication must acknowledge and respect the diversity of participants' needs, aspirations, and contexts. There is no one-size-fits-all empowerment model; each individual has unique needs that must be understood and addressed. In correctional contexts, diversity in educational background, work experience, personality, and life aspirations necessitates flexible and individualized empowerment approaches.

Littlejohn et al. (2017) explain that effective communication requires an understanding of individual and contextual differences. In empowerment programs, this means that institutions must develop mechanisms enabling prisoners to select empowerment pathways that align with their needs and aspirations. For prisoners like OP, who experience deep spiritual transformation through religious guidance, focusing on spiritual dimensions may be more meaningful than technical skill training.

E. Egalitarian Systems and Participation in Empowerment Programs

1. Equality in the Treatment of Religious Minorities

The findings show that Lapas Narkotika Kelas IIB Purwokerto demonstrates strong commitment to equality, especially in the treatment of religious minorities. OP, a Christian prisoner, reported no difficulties in practicing Christian religious guidance: "As a Christian and a minority here, I do not have difficulties in receiving religious guidance. My fellow Christians and I are treated equally by both officers and Muslim prisoners."

DeVito (2016) identifies equality as a fundamental principle of effective interpersonal communication. Equality in communication means that every individual is treated with respect and dignity regardless of background or status. In correctional facilities with diverse religious populations, the application of equality principles is crucial for creating an environment conducive to empowerment.

Freire (1970), in the pedagogy of liberation, asserts that genuine empowerment cannot occur in contexts of oppression or discrimination. Any form of inequality hinders the humanization process central to empowerment. In Lapas Narkotika Kelas IIB Purwokerto, equal treatment of religious minorities reflects the implementation of humanization principles foundational to Indonesia's correctional system.

OP also mentioned a responsive support system: "Social and mental support can be provided through a complaint system to the registration officer. Even though the officers are Muslim, every complaint is followed up." This indicates that equality is not only formal but also substantive.

However, OP noted that the duration of Christian religious programs is very limited compared to what is desired, indicating that while equal treatment exists, resource allocation still requires improvement to achieve substantive equality.

2. Structural Boundaries in Staff/Prisoner Relations

GB acknowledged the presence of structural boundaries: "There are some inequalities. Even though we interact, there are limits. They are officers, we are prisoners. But the interaction is good." He also felt respected: "I feel very respected in this prison."

These structural boundaries are institutional realities inherent in correctional systems. Mulyana (2018) explains that communication within organizations is influenced by hierarchical structures that can create communication barriers. In prisons, hierarchy functions to maintain order and security but should not obstruct humane, empathetic communication.

Raharjo (2020) identifies one challenge in empowerment communication as balancing institutional authority with open dialogue. Officers must position themselves as facilitators rather than mere enforcers. In Lapas Narkotika Kelas IIB Purwokerto, GB's acknowledgment that he feels respected shows positive communication between officers and prisoners despite structural boundaries.

3. Participation in Empowerment Programs

Some prisoners show adaptive tendencies toward available programs. MC stated, "I am not selfish; here we must undergo the programs." OP also shared similar adaptation.

This adaptation indicates awareness of their institutional context. However, in empowerment communication, genuine participation should be active and critical rather than passive or obligatory. Freire (1970) distinguishes between pseudo-participation merely following instructions and genuine participation involving critical dialogue and shared decision-making.

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GB demonstrated more active participation by selecting programs aligned with his abilities: “I follow the programs that suit my interests and abilities. For example, barber training not all prisoners can do that; learning it is hard.” This indicates the presence of some space for self-directed participation within existing program limits.

F. Support Facilities and Program Implementation Systems

1. Time Allocation for Programs

GB described the daily schedule: “The block opens at 07.00 and closes at 13.00. It reopens at 14.30 and closes at 17.00.” After 17.00, prisoners cannot leave their blocks until the next morning.

This time structure limits the opportunities for empowerment activities. Servaes (1999) notes that effective empowerment communication requires sufficient time for trust building and meaningful dialogue. Strict schedules restrict such opportunities, especially for informal communication that helps build meaningful mentoring relationships.

2. Supporting Facilities

GB described the available facilities: “There is a TV, shared toilet, kitchen for prisoners, a kitchen for work training like culinary arts, and a canteen where we can buy items using e-money. There are also sports facilities.”

Regarding the adequacy of facilities, he noted: “Facilities for active programs are sufficient. For programs that are not running, the issue is not the facility but that the program itself is inactive, such as handicrafts.”

Fetterman (2001) asserts that adequate infrastructure is essential for successful empowerment programs. However, infrastructure alone is insufficient without good management systems and institutional commitment to sustaining programs. In this prison, the issue lies more in sustaining programs—such as product marketing and instructor availability—than in the absence of facilities.

3. Social and Mental Support

Social and mental support is provided through a flexible complaint system. GB explained: “Usually we communicate complaints through tamping (trusted inmates). Sometimes we are not comfortable reporting directly to officers.”

This flexibility is important because not all prisoners feel comfortable communicating directly with officers. DeVito (2016) explains that effective communication requires psychological comfort and a sense of safety. Alternative communication channels show institutional awareness of the psychological dynamics in hierarchical contexts.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on interviews with three inmates at the Class IIB Narcotics Correctional Facility in Purwokerto, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Spiritual Transformation as a Major Impact:

The empowerment programs particularly religious guidance have a significant transformative impact on the inmates’ spiritual lives and personal character. The changes include strengthened faith, improved behavior, better emotional regulation, and a deeper closeness to God.

2. Limited Empowerment Communication:

Although communication channels between officers and inmates do exist, participatory and dialogic empowerment communication remains limited. Communication tends to be top-down, with minimal opportunities for inmates to participate in program planning.

3. Structural Constraints Hindering Program Sustainability:

Limitations in facilities and infrastructure, difficulties in product marketing, and a shortage of instructors are major obstacles that hinder the sustainability of vocational programs.

4. Misalignment Between Programs and Vocational Needs:

There is a mismatch between the available empowerment programs and the inmates’ occupational backgrounds and vocational needs. Inmates expect more applicable skill-based programs such as electronics, automotive work, and metalworking.

5. A Fairly Egalitarian System:

The correctional facility demonstrates a commitment to principles of equality, particularly in its treatment of religious minorities, although structural boundaries between officers and inmates remain.

6. Need for a More Participatory Empowerment Communication Model:

There is a need to develop a more participatory, dialogic, and responsive empowerment communication model that aligns more closely with inmates’ needs in order to optimize their transformation process and readiness for post-release social reintegration.

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