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Understanding the State Constitution among Constitutional Law Students at Islamic Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The constitution serves as the fundamental legal framework that governs the organisation of the state, regulates the exercise of governmental power, and safeguards the fundamental rights of citizens. A comprehensive understanding of constitutional principles is therefore essential for students of Constitutional Law, particularly those studying at Islamic higher education institutions, where constitutional studies may intersect with Islamic legal thought, democratic values, and the principles of justice. This study aims to examine the level of constitutional understanding among Constitutional Law students at Islamic higher education institutions and to identify the academic factors that shape their perceptions of constitutional principles and their implementation in state governance. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study explores students' comprehension of constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, the separation of powers, human rights, and the relationship between constitutional values and Islamic principles. The study also considers the role of higher education in fostering constitutional awareness, critical legal reasoning, and democratic citizenship. A sound understanding of the constitution is expected to strengthen students' capacity to analyse constitutional issues critically and to appreciate the constitution as both a legal foundation and a normative framework for democratic governance. Ultimately, enhancing constitutional literacy among law students is crucial to developing future legal professionals who are committed to upholding the rule of law, protecting human rights, and promoting justice within Indonesia's constitutional system.

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Introduction

The constitution occupies a central position in the legal and political structure of a modern state. As the supreme legal framework, it establishes the fundamental principles of governance, defines the distribution and limitation of state power, and guarantees the fundamental rights and freedoms of citizens. Beyond its function as a legal instrument, the constitution also embodies a set of normative values that guide the relationship between the state and society. In a democratic constitutional system, the effective implementation of constitutional principles depends not only on the existence of formal legal provisions but also on the extent to which citizens, particularly those pursuing legal education, understand and internalise their constitutional significance. Consequently, constitutional literacy constitutes an essential component of legal education and democratic development(Mustafa Hussein, 2024).

In Indonesia, constitutional understanding is particularly significant given the country's commitment to constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of human rights under the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The constitution provides the legal foundation for the organisation of state institutions, the exercise of governmental authority, and the protection of citizens' constitutional rights. Nevertheless, the existence of constitutional provisions does not automatically guarantee their effective implementation. A meaningful constitutional order requires individuals to understand the principles underlying constitutional governance, including constitutional supremacy, the limitation of state power, the separation of powers, judicial independence, and the accountability of public institutions. These principles are particularly relevant to students of Constitutional Law, who are expected to develop the analytical competence necessary to examine constitutional disputes, assess governmental policies, and evaluate the compatibility of state actions with constitutional norms(Syukur, 2026).

Students of Constitutional Law occupy a strategic position in the development of constitutional awareness because their academic training prepares them to become future legal practitioners, scholars, public officials, and advocates of constitutional justice. Their understanding of the constitution should therefore extend beyond the memorisation of legal provisions to encompass the ability to interpret constitutional principles, evaluate their practical implications, and critically assess the relationship between law, political authority, and social justice. Such competence requires an educational environment that encourages critical thinking, legal reasoning, academic dialogue, and engagement with contemporary constitutional issues. Without these pedagogical foundations, constitutional education may become predominantly doctrinal, limiting students' ability to connect theoretical knowledge with the realities of constitutional practice(Syukur, 2026).

The significance of constitutional education becomes particularly distinctive within Islamic higher education institutions. These institutions operate within an academic environment in which modern constitutional principles may be examined alongside Islamic legal traditions, ethical values, and conceptions of justice(Najar, 2023). The interaction between constitutional law and Islamic thought provides an important opportunity to explore the relationship between state authority, legal legitimacy, human dignity, public accountability, and the common good. Principles such as justice ('*adl*), deliberation (*shura*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), and the public interest (*maslahah*) may offer valuable perspectives for discussing constitutional governance(R. Ramadhan et al., 2026). However, the relationship between these principles and the positive law of the Indonesian state requires careful scholarly examination rather than the assumption that they are necessarily identical. A rigorous approach enables students to appreciate both the distinctive foundations of constitutional law and the potential contributions of Islamic ethical and legal traditions to contemporary debates on democracy and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the study of constitutional law within Islamic higher education institutions raises important questions concerning the effectiveness of existing teaching and learning practices. Students may demonstrate different levels of understanding depending on their exposure to constitutional theory, judicial decisions, legislative developments, classroom discussions, and practical legal analysis. Their perceptions of constitutional principles may also be influenced by the broader political and social environment in which constitutional issues are debated. Accordingly, examining students' constitutional understanding is important for determining whether legal education has successfully facilitated the development of substantive constitutional knowledge and critical awareness. Such an examination may also identify areas in which curriculum design, teaching methodologies, and academic resources could be improved to strengthen constitutional literacy(Yasmar et al., 2026).

Despite the importance of constitutional understanding in legal education, the relationship between students' comprehension of constitutional principles and the educational context of Islamic higher education institutions warrants further investigation. In particular, attention needs to be directed towards how students understand the constitution as the supreme legal framework, how they interpret the relationship between constitutional norms and the exercise of state power, and how they perceive the relevance of constitutional values to the principles of justice and public accountability. Investigating these issues can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of constitutional education in Indonesia. It can also provide an academic basis for assessing the extent to which higher education institutions prepare students to participate critically and responsibly in constitutional and democratic life. The precise nature of this research gap should, however, be established through a systematic review of relevant empirical studies and scholarly literature.

Against this background, this study aims to examine the understanding of the state constitution among Constitutional Law students at Islamic higher education institutions. Specifically, it seeks to explore students' comprehension of fundamental constitutional principles, analyse their perspectives on the implementation of constitutional norms within Indonesia's system of governance, and identify educational factors that may influence their constitutional awareness. By focusing on the intersection of constitutional law, legal education, and the intellectual environment of Islamic higher education, this study seeks to contribute to discussions on the development of constitutional literacy among future legal professionals.

The findings of this study are expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions to the advancement of constitutional legal education. Theoretically, the study may enrich academic discussions on constitutional understanding by situating students' knowledge within the broader framework of constitutional democracy, the rule of law, and Islamic higher education. Practically, it may offer insights for lecturers, curriculum developers, and higher education policymakers seeking to improve the teaching of Constitutional Law and strengthen students' capacity for critical legal analysis. Ultimately, fostering a deeper understanding of the constitution among university students is essential to cultivating a generation of legal professionals who are capable of upholding constitutional supremacy, protecting fundamental rights, promoting justice, and contributing to the consolidation of democratic governance in Indonesia.

Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the understanding of the state constitution among Constitutional Law students at Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. Data are collected through interviews and a review of relevant

literature, including constitutional law books, scholarly journal articles, and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia.

The data are analysed descriptively by identifying key themes related to students' understanding of constitutional principles, the rule of law, human rights, and the implementation of the constitution in state governance. The findings are then interpreted in relation to relevant constitutional provisions and academic literature.

To ensure the credibility of the findings, information obtained from interviews is compared with relevant documentary sources. Ethical principles are maintained throughout the research process by ensuring voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent, and protecting the confidentiality of participants.

Results and Discussion

1. Results

This study examines the understanding of the state constitution among Constitutional Law students at Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. The analysis focuses on several fundamental aspects of constitutional knowledge, including the meaning and function of the constitution, the principles of constitutional supremacy, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, and the relationship between constitutional principles and Islamic values. These aspects are important for understanding how constitutional law is taught and interpreted within the academic environment of Islamic higher education.

1.1. Students' Understanding of Constitutional Principles

The constitution is the fundamental legal framework that establishes the structure of the state, regulates the exercise of governmental authority, and guarantees the fundamental rights of citizens. For students of Constitutional Law, understanding the constitution requires more than familiarity with legal provisions. It also involves recognising the constitutional principles that guide the relationship between state institutions and society(Kvashyn, 2026).

In the Indonesian context, the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia provides the principal legal foundation for the organisation of state power and the protection of citizens' constitutional rights. Students need to understand the position of the constitution within the national legal system and its role in ensuring that governmental actions remain consistent with constitutional requirements(Zulkefli, 2026).

Constitutional understanding also includes knowledge of the separation of powers, the distribution of authority among state institutions, and the mechanisms established to prevent the abuse of power. These principles are essential to maintaining a system of constitutional governance in which public officials exercise their authority within legally defined limits(Putri et al., 2026).

A comprehensive understanding of these concepts can help students develop the analytical skills required to examine constitutional disputes, interpret legal provisions, and assess the legitimacy of governmental decisions. Therefore, constitutional education should encourage students to understand both the theoretical foundations and the practical implications of constitutional law.

1.2. Awareness of Constitutional Implementation

Another important aspect of constitutional understanding is students' awareness of how constitutional provisions are implemented in practice. Knowledge of constitutional principles becomes more meaningful when students can relate those principles to the functioning of state institutions, the formulation of public policies, and the protection of citizens' rights(Risang, 2026).

In a constitutional democracy, the government is required to exercise its authority in

accordance with the constitution and applicable laws. The principle of the rule of law ensures that public power is subject to legal limitations and that individuals receive equal protection under the law. Students of Constitutional Law therefore need to understand the relationship between constitutional norms and the practical exercise of governmental authority.

Constitutional implementation also involves mechanisms of accountability and institutional oversight. These mechanisms are intended to ensure that state institutions perform their duties within their respective constitutional mandates. An understanding of these arrangements enables students to evaluate the importance of institutional checks and balances in preventing arbitrary government action(Rafiqi et al., 2026).

Furthermore, constitutional awareness includes an appreciation of the importance of judicial independence and constitutional review. These mechanisms contribute to the protection of constitutional supremacy by providing legal means through which the constitutionality of certain laws and governmental actions can be examined. Such knowledge is particularly relevant for students preparing for careers in legal practice, public administration, academia, and other fields related to constitutional governance.

1.3. The Relationship Between Constitutional Principles and Islamic Values

Islamic higher education institutions provide an academic setting in which constitutional principles can be studied alongside Islamic legal traditions and ethical values. This context creates opportunities to examine the relationship between constitutional governance, religious ethics, justice, and public responsibility(Mohd Arshad, 2026).

Several concepts within Islamic thought are relevant to discussions of constitutional governance. The principle of '*adl* emphasises justice, while *shura* highlights consultation and deliberation in collective decision-making. The concept of *amanah* emphasises trustworthiness and responsibility, particularly in the exercise of authority. In addition, *maslahah* concerns the public interest and the promotion of social welfare(Javied et al., 2026).

These concepts can provide ethical perspectives for examining political leadership, public accountability, and the protection of human dignity. When discussed alongside constitutional principles, they may help students appreciate the moral dimensions of state governance and the responsibilities associated with the exercise of public power(Samah et al., 2026).

Nevertheless, Islamic ethical concepts and constitutional legal provisions should not automatically be treated as identical. Their relationship requires careful analysis of their respective foundations, interpretations, and applications. By examining both constitutional law and Islamic thought critically, students can develop a broader understanding of the relationship between legal norms, ethical principles, and democratic governance in Indonesia.

1.4. The Role of Higher Education in Strengthening Constitutional Literacy

Higher education institutions play an important role in developing students' constitutional knowledge and awareness. Constitutional Law courses provide the theoretical foundation for understanding the structure of the state, the distribution of governmental authority, and the legal protection of fundamental rights(Hasugian et al., 2026).

However, the effectiveness of constitutional education depends not only on the content of the curriculum but also on the teaching methods used in the classroom. Teaching that relies exclusively on lectures and the memorisation of legal provisions may provide students with basic knowledge but may offer limited opportunities to develop independent legal reasoning(Ula, 2026).

More interactive learning methods can help students understand the practical

significance of constitutional principles. Classroom discussions, case studies, analyses of constitutional court decisions, and debates on contemporary legal issues can encourage students to evaluate legal arguments and consider different interpretations of constitutional provisions(W. Ramadhan et al., 2025).

Access to academic literature and primary legal sources is also important. By examining constitutional texts, judicial decisions, scholarly publications, and relevant legislation, students can strengthen their ability to distinguish between legal rules, theoretical arguments, and practical interpretations. These learning experiences can contribute to the development of constitutional literacy and prepare students to engage critically with constitutional issues.

2. Discussion

2.1. Constitutional Understanding as a Foundation of Legal Education

The understanding of the state constitution constitutes an essential element of legal education because the constitution provides the fundamental framework within which state authority is organised and exercised. For students of Constitutional Law, constitutional knowledge is necessary to understand the legal relationship between the state, its institutions, and its citizens(Handono et al., 2026).

A comprehensive understanding of the constitution should extend beyond the ability to identify constitutional provisions. Students must also be able to interpret legal principles, examine the purposes of constitutional arrangements, and assess the implications of constitutional rules for public governance. This distinction is important because constitutional law is not merely a collection of legal texts; it also concerns the principles that regulate political power and protect individuals against arbitrary government action(Wilandari, 2026).

In Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution establishes the fundamental principles governing the state and provides a legal basis for the protection of citizens' rights. Understanding this framework enables students to examine how constitutional principles operate within the Indonesian legal and political system. It also provides a foundation for analysing legal disputes and evaluating whether the exercise of governmental authority is consistent with constitutional requirements.

Accordingly, Constitutional Law education should integrate doctrinal knowledge with critical analysis. Students should be encouraged to consider not only what the constitution provides but also why particular constitutional safeguards are necessary and how they contribute to accountable and democratic governance.

2.2. Constitutional Literacy and Democratic Governance

Constitutional literacy refers to the ability to understand fundamental constitutional principles and recognise their relevance to public life. It is closely associated with democratic awareness because citizens and future legal professionals need to understand the legal limits of state authority, the protection of fundamental rights, and the responsibilities of public institutions(Siolimbona et al., 2026).

For university students, constitutional literacy is particularly important because higher education provides opportunities to develop critical thinking and informed participation in public affairs. Students who possess a sound understanding of constitutional principles can engage more effectively with debates concerning governmental accountability, legal reform, human rights, and the performance of state institutions(Agus, 2026).

The relationship between constitutional literacy and democratic governance is also reflected in the importance of legal accountability. In a constitutional state, government decisions must be consistent with the applicable legal framework, and public authority cannot legitimately be exercised without regard to constitutional limitations. Understanding these principles allows students to evaluate public policies and recognise

the significance of institutional oversight.

Nevertheless, constitutional literacy should not be understood solely as the acquisition of factual knowledge. It also involves the ability to apply constitutional principles to particular situations, evaluate competing legal arguments, and appreciate the importance of protecting the rights of others. Therefore, constitutional education should cultivate both intellectual competence and a sense of responsibility towards democratic and constitutional values.

2.3. Integrating Constitutional Law and Islamic Ethical Perspectives

The study of constitutional law at Islamic higher education institutions presents an opportunity to examine the relationship between positive law and Islamic ethical traditions. This integration can enrich students' understanding of constitutional governance by introducing ethical perspectives on justice, leadership, deliberation, and public responsibility.

The principle of *'adl*, for example, provides an important ethical perspective for discussing fairness and justice in public decision-making. Similarly, *shura* emphasises the value of consultation, while *amanah* highlights the responsibility of individuals entrusted with authority. These concepts can inform academic discussions about accountable leadership, participatory governance, and the ethical exercise of public power(Khusnah & Ansori, 2026).

The concept of *maslahah* may also contribute to discussions concerning public welfare and the objectives of public policy. In the context of constitutional governance, such discussions can encourage students to consider how legal and political decisions affect the interests and rights of society(Dorskaia & Dorskii, 2026).

However, integrating Islamic perspectives into constitutional education requires an academically balanced approach. Islamic ethical principles should be examined in relation to Indonesia's constitutional framework, which is grounded in Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. Students should be encouraged to explore areas of convergence and potential differences without assuming that religious principles and positive constitutional law always produce identical conclusions.

Such an approach can strengthen students' capacity to engage in constructive academic dialogue and understand the complexity of constitutional questions in a pluralistic society. It also enables Islamic higher education institutions to contribute to constitutional education while maintaining rigorous legal analysis and respect for Indonesia's constitutional order.

2.4. Improving Teaching and Learning in Constitutional Law

The development of constitutional understanding requires appropriate teaching strategies that connect legal theory with practical constitutional issues. Lecturers play an important role in creating a learning environment in which students can discuss constitutional principles, analyse legal cases, and evaluate different interpretations of constitutional provisions.

Case-based learning is one approach that can support this objective. By examining decisions of the Constitutional Court of Indonesia, students can observe how constitutional principles are interpreted and applied in legal disputes. This method also enables them to understand the relationship between constitutional texts, judicial reasoning, and the protection of constitutional rights(Herlambang, 2026).

Classroom discussions and academic debates can further encourage students to formulate legal arguments and respond critically to alternative perspectives. These activities are particularly useful for developing analytical reasoning and improving students' ability to communicate complex legal ideas(Sukma Hardaningtyas et al., 2026).

In addition, lecturers can encourage students to examine contemporary constitutional

developments through scholarly publications, legislation, judicial decisions, and credible news sources. Such activities help students connect theoretical knowledge with the changing realities of constitutional governance.

The effectiveness of these teaching methods should nevertheless be assessed through appropriate research evidence. Student participation, the quality of legal reasoning, and the ability to apply constitutional principles to specific cases may serve as indicators of learning progress. A combination of theoretical instruction and practical analysis can therefore provide a more comprehensive foundation for constitutional education.

2.5. Implications for Islamic Higher Education Institutions

The discussion highlights the importance of strengthening constitutional education within Islamic higher education institutions. Constitutional Law programmes should provide students with a solid understanding of the constitution while encouraging critical reflection on the relationship between legal principles, ethical values, and democratic governance(Idami et al., 2023).

Curriculum development should ensure that students are familiar with the fundamental provisions of the 1945 Constitution, the structure of Indonesian state institutions, the protection of human rights, and the mechanisms for constitutional review. At the same time, learning activities should provide opportunities to apply these principles to legal cases and contemporary governance issues.

Islamic higher education institutions can also promote interdisciplinary dialogue by connecting constitutional law with Islamic legal thought, political theory, and civic education. Such an approach may broaden students' perspectives and help them examine constitutional questions from legal, ethical, and social viewpoints(Mohsen et al., 2025).

However, the success of these initiatives depends on the availability of qualified lecturers, relevant learning resources, appropriate curricula, and opportunities for active student participation. Institutional support is therefore important for ensuring that constitutional education develops students' knowledge as well as their capacity for independent analysis.

Ultimately, strengthening constitutional literacy among students is relevant to the preparation of future legal professionals who can contribute to the development of constitutional democracy in Indonesia. Students who understand the constitution and its underlying principles are better positioned to support the rule of law, respect fundamental rights, and promote accountable governance.

3. Summary of the Discussion

The understanding of the state constitution is a fundamental component of Constitutional Law education at Islamic higher education institutions. It encompasses knowledge of constitutional provisions, an appreciation of the limits of governmental authority, and an understanding of the importance of protecting fundamental rights.

The discussion also demonstrates the relevance of constitutional literacy to democratic governance and the potential contribution of Islamic ethical principles to academic reflection on justice, deliberation, and public accountability. Furthermore, effective constitutional education requires teaching strategies that combine theoretical instruction with practical legal analysis.

Therefore, Islamic higher education institutions should continue to strengthen constitutional education through relevant curricula, interactive learning methods, and critical engagement with legal and constitutional issues. These efforts can help prepare students to become knowledgeable, analytical, and responsible legal professionals who understand the importance of upholding the constitution within Indonesia's democratic system.

Conclusion

Understanding the state constitution is an essential aspect of legal education, particularly for Constitutional Law students at Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. The constitution provides the fundamental legal framework for the organisation of state power, the protection of human rights, and the implementation of democratic governance. Therefore, constitutional education should not be limited to the memorisation of legal provisions but should also encourage students to develop critical thinking, legal reasoning, and a deeper understanding of constitutional principles.

This study highlights the importance of constitutional literacy, awareness of the rule of law, and an understanding of the relationship between constitutional principles and Islamic ethical values. Principles such as justice, deliberation, and public accountability can enrich academic discussions on constitutional governance when examined critically within Indonesia's constitutional framework. Furthermore, effective teaching methods, including case studies, classroom discussions, and the analysis of constitutional court decisions, can help students connect theoretical knowledge with practical legal issues.

Islamic higher education institutions consequently have an important role in strengthening students' constitutional understanding through relevant curricula, interactive learning strategies, and the integration of constitutional theory with practical legal analysis. These efforts are essential for preparing future legal professionals who are capable of upholding constitutional supremacy, protecting fundamental rights, and promoting justice and accountability.

Ultimately, strengthening constitutional understanding among students is an important step towards developing a legally aware and democratically responsible generation. Further empirical research is recommended to examine students' actual levels of constitutional knowledge, identify factors that influence their understanding, and evaluate the effectiveness of constitutional law education in Islamic higher education institutions.

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