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Strengthening Civic Legal Literacy of PPKn Students Through Legal Learning

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ABSTRACT

Legal learning in the Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) study program plays a strategic role in shaping students' legal awareness as prospective civic educators. This study aims to reveal how the legal learning process contributes to strengthening the civic legal literacy of PPKn students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Halu Oleo. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with ten PPKn students from the 2025 cohort, observation, and documentation study, then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldāña. The findings reveal five main themes representing the strengthening of students' civic legal literacy: the strengthening of legal understanding and knowledge, the effectiveness of case-based learning, increased awareness of rights and obligations and a supportive attitude toward fair law enforcement, strengthened critical thinking and anti-hoax legal literacy, and the concrete application of legal values in daily life. This study confirms that civic legal literacy is formed through a graduated process from knowledge to legal behavior, and that case-based learning proves to be an effective key strategy, although the complexity of legal language and limited field practice experience remain challenges that require attention

Keywords: civic legal literacy, legal learning, PPKn, legal awareness, university students.

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INTRODUCTION

Pancasila and Civic Education (PPKn) at the higher education level plays a strategic role in shaping citizens who not only understand the concept of nationhood but also possess adequate legal awareness and competence. As a study program that prepares prospective PPKn teachers, students are required to master legal substance comprehensively, given that they will later become agents who instill legal and civic values in the next generation. Nevertheless, the mastery of legal concepts among students still faces various challenges in practice, both in terms of substantive understanding and its application in daily life.

At the national level, the state of legal awareness among Indonesian society is still relatively low. The National Legal Development Agency (BPHN) recorded that Indonesia's Legal Development Index in 2021 only reached a score of 0.25, categorized as "poor," prompting the government to strengthen legal development through policies aimed at legal compliance. In 2025, BPHN even developed a new measurement instrument called the Legal Development Index (IPH), covering five pillars legal culture, legal substance, legal institutions, law enforcement, and legal information and communication measured through 18 variables and 49 indicators drawn from administrative data of ministries/agencies, public surveys, and expert interviews (Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional, 2024, 2025). This data confirms that the problem of legal literacy and awareness is not merely an individual issue but a structural challenge in national legal development that also touches the world of education.

This phenomenon of low legal literacy is also reflected among university students. Several national cases illustrate how students themselves have become entangled in legal problems due to a lack of understanding of the risks and legal consequences of digital activity. In May 2025, a student at Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha (Undiksha) became embroiled in a legal case related to the promotion of online gambling, which was subsequently referred to the Buleleng District Prosecutor's Office, prompting the university to strengthen its legal education and digital literacy programs for students (Baliberkabar.id, 2025). A similar phenomenon has occurred more broadly: data from the Financial Transaction Reports and Analysis Center (PPATK) in the first quarter of 2025 recorded that online gambling deposits among the 17–19 age group—a range close to that of incoming university students exceeded IDR 47.9 billion, while the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs (Komdigi) blocked 1.3 million pieces of online-gambling-related content between October 2024 and April 2025 (Pusat Pelaporan dan Analisis Transaksi Keuangan, 2025). This series of phenomena shows that students' legal vulnerability is not solely caused by limited access to information, but also by weak legal literacy in recognizing, understanding, and responding to legal issues developing in digital space.

In this context, the concept of civic literacy becomes relevant to examine further. Milner (2002) defines civic literacy as the knowledge capacity and ability of citizens to understand their socio-political world, which serves as a prerequisite for intelligent and responsible citizen participation. This concept can then be extended into civic legal literacy, namely the capacity of citizens in this case, students to understand legal norms, procedures, rights, and obligations, and to be able to apply them critically in social life. Winataputra (2012) asserts that civic education is multidimensional in nature, encompassing moral values education, political education, legal and human rights education, and democracy education, so that legal learning should serve as one of the main pillars of the PPKn curriculum rather than merely supplementary material.



Theoretically, legal awareness cannot be separated from the four indicators put forward by Soekanto (1982), namely legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitude, and legal behavior. These four indicators are hierarchically interrelated: knowledge forms the basis for understanding, understanding shapes attitude, and attitude ultimately manifests in daily legal behavior. The Law-Related Education (LRE) approach is also relevant as a framework for legal learning within PPKn, as LRE emphasizes the integration of knowledge, skills, and values that students need to actively participate in a plural and democratic, rule-of-law-based society.

Based on this review, it appears that research on civic legal literacy among PPKn students, particularly research that directly links it to the process of legal learning within the study program, remains relatively limited. Most previous studies have focused on legal awareness among secondary school students or the general public, while studies specifically targeting prospective PPKn teachers who will later become the spearhead of instilling legal literacy in learners remain scarce. In fact, PPKn students should ideally constitute a group with a higher level of civic legal literacy compared to students of other study programs, given the close relationship between their curriculum and legal, constitutional, and civic material.

Thus, there exists a research gap that needs to be filled, namely the scarcity of studies specifically analyzing how legal learning within the PPKn study program contributes to strengthening students' civic legal literacy, particularly in facing the complexity of contemporary legal issues such as online gambling, illegal online loans, and other forms of digital legal violations. This study focuses on PPKn students at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Halu Oleo, from the 2025 cohort, considering that this cohort consists of new students who are at the early stage of internalizing legal and civic values through the PPKn curriculum, making it relevant to examine the extent to which the legal learning process they undergo is able to concretely shape the strengthening of civic legal literacy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design to reveal in depth how the process of legal learning within the PPKn study program contributes to strengthening students' civic legal literacy. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not aim to numerically measure students' level of legal literacy, but rather seeks to comprehensively understand the process, context, and dynamics of the legal learning taking place, while also exploring how students construct meaning from and internalize the legal knowledge, attitudes, and behavior they acquire. A case study design was used because the phenomenon under investigation is bound to a specific context, namely the process of legal learning among PPKn students of the 2025 cohort within the FKIP environment of Universitas Halu Oleo, requiring an in-depth, contextual, and bounded exploration of a single unit of analysis.

Research Location and Subjects

This research was conducted within the Pancasila and Civic Education Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Halu Oleo. The research subjects were PPKn students from the 2025 cohort who had completed or were currently enrolled in courses containing legal material. Subjects were selected using a purposive sampling technique, that is, the selection of informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research focus, including: (1) active students from the 2025 cohort, (2) having



completed at least one law-based course, and (3) willing to participate as informants voluntarily. This study involved ten PPKn students as the main informants, with a composition of five male and five female students from the sixth and eighth semesters.

Types and Sources of Data

The data in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly through in-depth interviews and observation of students. Secondary data were obtained from supporting documents such as the Semester Learning Plan (RPS), course syllabi, and student assignments/portfolios relevant to legal material.

Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through three main techniques: in-depth, semi-structured interviews with students to explore their understanding, attitudes, and experiences related to legal learning and its application in daily life; observation of the legal learning process in the classroom; and documentation study to complement and confirm the primary data.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldña (2014), consisting of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The interview data were grouped into main themes based on similarities in meaning, then organized narratively to describe the pattern of strengthening students' civic legal literacy.

Data Validity Technique

To ensure the credibility and validity of the data, this study applied several data validation techniques, namely source triangulation, method triangulation, and member checking, by reconfirming the results of data interpretation with the informants.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Informant Profile

This study involved 10 PPKn students from FKIP Universitas Halu Oleo as informants, with a balanced gender composition (5 male, 5 female) and coming from two different cohorts (sixth and eighth semesters), allowing for a more varied exploration of experiences regarding the legal learning process they had undergone.

Table 1. Informant Profile

Code	Gender	Semester
AR	Male	VI
MF	Female	VI

Code	Gender	Semester
NS	Female	VIII
IA	Male	VIII
FR	Male	VI
DS	Female	VIII
AN	Male	VI
RH	Female	VIII
WP	Male	VI
LK	Female	VIII

Based on the in-depth interviews with the ten informants, five main themes were identified representing the process of strengthening PPKn students' civic legal literacy through legal learning, namely: (1) the strengthening of legal understanding and knowledge, (2) case-based legal learning as the primary strategy, (3) awareness of rights, obligations, and attitudes toward law enforcement, (4) the strengthening of critical thinking skills and anti-hoax legal literacy, and (5) the application of civic legal literacy in daily life.

Table 2. Research Themes

Main Theme	Description of Findings
Strengthening of Legal Understanding and Knowledge	Students experienced increased understanding, moving from general legal knowledge to a more specific understanding of legal principles, types, and processes
Case-Based Learning	Case discussion methods and problem-based learning became the dominant strategy driving applicative understanding
Awareness of Rights, Obligations, and Attitude toward Law Enforcement	Students became increasingly aware of the balance between rights and obligations and supported fair, non-discriminatory law enforcement
Critical Thinking and Anti-Hoax Legal Literacy	Students were able to analyze legal issues based on facts and verify information before believing or sharing it



Main Theme	Description of Findings
Application of Civic Legal Literacy	Students applied legal understanding through compliance with campus and traffic rules, social media conduct, and peer education

Theme 1. Strengthening of Students' Legal Understanding and Knowledge

All informants demonstrated a fairly mature understanding of the basic concept of law, namely as a set of rules functioning to create order, justice, and the protection of citizens' rights. Informant 1 (AR) explained:

"In my view, law is a set of rules made to regulate community life so as to create order, justice, and legal certainty. Law also serves as a guideline for resolving conflicts that occur in society."

A similar understanding was expressed by Informant 2 (MF), who interpreted law as an instrument that protects rights while also imposing sanctions on violators. Other informants such as NS, DS, and WP likewise consistently interpreted law as an instrument that safeguards order, social justice, and serves as a guideline for community life, indicating a shared pattern of conceptual understanding among students across semesters.

Notably, all informants reported experiencing a significant change in their legal knowledge after participating in the learning process, shifting from a general understanding to a more specific one. AR stated that he began to understand "the types of law, legal principles, and the process of law enforcement in Indonesia," while MF reported beginning to understand "the relationship between the constitution, citizens' rights, and the judicial system." Informant NS even specifically mentioned beginning to understand "the principle of legality, the supremacy of law, and the rule-of-law state" technical terms indicating a cognitive leap from lay understanding toward a more conceptual and systematic understanding.

Theme 2. Case-Based Legal Learning as the Primary Strategy

All informants consistently identified case-based learning methods as the key factor driving their legal understanding. AR explained that the lecturer "did not only explain theory but also provided case studies related to current legal issues, making the material easier to understand." A similar point was made by MF, who noted that lectures became "more engaging when the lecturer connected theory to cases of corruption, violence, and human rights violations."

Supporting factors mentioned repeatedly by nearly all informants included case discussions, group presentations, problem-based learning, access to literature/journals, and communicative interaction with lecturers. However, all informants also reported fairly uniform obstacles, namely the complexity of legal language and legislation (mentioned by AR, MF, NS, RH, and LK), the frequent changes in regulations (NS), and limited field practice experience (IA, AN, LK). These findings indicate a gap between fairly strong conceptual understanding and limited applicative field experience.

Theme 3. Awareness of Rights, Obligations, and Attitude toward Law Enforcement

The majority of informants reported increased awareness of the balance between rights and obligations as citizens. AR firmly stated:



“I have become more aware that as a citizen I have rights that must be respected, but also obligations to comply with applicable regulations.”

This statement aligns with MF, who noted that “rights are always accompanied by responsibility as a citizen,” as well as IA, who reported “valuing others’ rights more” after engaging in legal learning.

Regarding attitudes toward law enforcement, all informants without exception expressed the same view: support for law enforcement that is fair, consistent, non-discriminatory, and free from interference by particular interests. AR asserted that “law enforcement must be carried out fairly without distinguishing social status or a person’s position,” a view echoed by MF (“all citizens must be treated equally before the law”), NS (substantive justice), RH (freedom from interference), and WP (professionalism of law enforcers). This consistency of attitude among all informants indicates that legal learning in PPKn has succeeded in instilling a shared orientation toward justice as a common value, not merely technical knowledge.

Theme 4. Strengthening of Critical Thinking Skills and Anti-Hoax Legal Literacy

This theme represents one of the findings most relevant to today’s digital context. Students demonstrated an increased analytical ability in addressing legal issues, no longer relying solely on opinions or information circulating on social media. AR stated:

“Now I am better able to view a case from a legal perspective, not merely based on opinion or information from social media.”

MF reinforced this finding by stating that she is “not quick to conclude that someone is guilty before examining the facts and legal basis” a strong indication of an emerging basic capacity for legal reasoning. Regarding the specific dimension of countering hoaxes, all informants consistently reported verifying information through official sources before believing or sharing legal news. AR checks “legal information through government websites or credible news sources,” while MF “compares information from several media outlets and looks for the regulation underlying the news.” A similar pattern emerged among all other informants (NS, IA, FR, DS, AN, RH, WP, LK), making information verification a practice that appears to have been evenly internalized among the PPKn students who served as informants in this study.

Theme 5. Application of Civic Legal Literacy in Daily Life

The final theme illustrates how the legal knowledge and attitudes formed through learning are translated into concrete behavior. The most frequently mentioned forms of application were compliance with campus and traffic regulations (AR, FR, WP), caution in using social media so as not to violate legal provisions (MF, NS), and efforts to educate and remind peers about the importance of complying with rules (AR, DS, LK). Informant 10 (LK) provided the most comprehensive illustration of this application, namely “implementing civic legal literacy through compliance with rules and educating peers” a statement that explicitly links legal knowledge with students’ active role as agents in spreading legal awareness within their social environment, consistent with the role of PPKn students as prospective civic educators.

Discussion

1. Legal Learning as a Means of Transforming Knowledge into Legal Awareness

The findings in Theme 1 and Theme 3 reveal a pattern of transformation consistent with the four indicators of legal awareness proposed by Soekanto (1982), namely legal knowledge, legal understanding, legal attitude, and legal behavior, which are hierarchically interrelated. Students in this study demonstrated a graduated development: from general legal knowledge (Theme 1) toward a deeper conceptual understanding of legal principles and systems, which was then internalized into an attitude supporting justice and non-discriminatory law enforcement (Theme 3), and ultimately manifested in daily legal behavior (Theme 5). This graduated pattern confirms that legal learning within PPKn does not stop at the mere transfer of cognitive knowledge, but has the potential to foster a fuller internalization of legal values—an achievement consistent with the concept of civic literacy proposed by Milner (2002), namely the knowledge capacity and ability of citizens that serves as a prerequisite for better participation and social responsibility.

2. Case-Based Learning Methods as a Key to Effectiveness

The findings in Theme 2 reinforce the argument in the literature that legal learning through PPKn is more effective when implemented in a thematic-integrative and contextual manner, rather than through mere normative theoretical delivery. The preference of all informants for case study, discussion, and problem-based learning methods indicates that the Law-Related Education (LRE) approach which emphasizes the integration of knowledge, skills, and values within real-life contexts is consistently relevant when applied within the PPKn study program. Nevertheless, the obstacles reported by nearly all informants, namely the complexity of legal language and limited field practice experience, indicate that strengthening civic legal literacy still requires further development of applicative skills, not only cognitive-conceptual aspects.

3. Critical Thinking and Anti-Hoax Literacy as a Contemporary Dimension of Civic Legal Literacy

The findings in Theme 4 make an important contribution to expanding the concept of civic legal literacy in the digital era. Students' ability to verify legal information before believing or sharing it represents a direct response to the national challenges outlined in the Introduction, namely the prevalence of legal misinformation and students' entanglement in digital legal issues such as online gambling and illegal online loans. The fact that all informants in this study, without exception, have practiced information verification through official sources suggests that legal learning in PPKn has the potential to serve as a protective factor against the digital legal vulnerability experienced by some students at other universities across Indonesia. Civic legal literacy can therefore no longer be narrowly understood as normative knowledge of regulations, but must also encompass digital literacy skills and critical thinking abilities in responding to legal information circulating in the online public sphere.

4. The Role of PPKn Students as Agents Spreading Legal Awareness

The findings in Theme 5, particularly the informants' statements linking legal compliance with efforts to educate peers, affirm the relevance of Winataputra's (2012) theory regarding the multidimensional nature of PPKn, one dimension of which is legal and human rights education. PPKn students in this study were not merely passive recipients of legal knowledge but began to demonstrate an active role as agents spreading legal awareness within their social environment a capacity consistent with



the goal of shaping PPKn students as prospective educators who will later instill similar values in their future students.

Overall, the results of this study show that legal learning within the PPKn study program at FKIP Universitas Halu Oleo contributes significantly to strengthening students' civic legal literacy, encompassing the dimensions of knowledge, attitude, critical thinking ability, and daily legal behavior. Nevertheless, challenges such as the complexity of legal language and limited field practice experience still require attention in the future development of legal learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study reveals that legal learning within the PPKn study program at FKIP Universitas Halu Oleo plays an important role in strengthening students' civic legal literacy. This strengthening is reflected in five main aspects: increased conceptual legal understanding and knowledge, the effectiveness of case-based learning methods, increased awareness of rights and obligations and an attitude supporting fair law enforcement, strengthened critical thinking skills and anti-hoax legal literacy, and the concrete application of legal values in daily life, including students' role as agents of legal education for their peers.

These findings confirm that civic legal literacy is not merely a product of normative knowledge transfer, but the result of a graduated process integrating legal knowledge, understanding, attitude, and behavior, as proposed by Soekanto (1982). Case-based legal learning proved to be an effective key strategy, although challenges such as the complexity of legal language and limited field practice experience still require further attention.

Recommendations

The PPKn study program is advised to strengthen experiential learning components, such as visits to judicial institutions or courtroom simulations, in order to complement students' conceptual understanding with applicative experience. In addition, legal-based digital literacy needs to be continuously developed given the high risk of legal misinformation in today's digital space. Future research is recommended to expand the scope of informants across study programs in order to compare the level of civic legal literacy between PPKn students and non-PPKn students.

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