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### A STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF LAW EDUCATION ON ATTITUDE TOWARD RULE OF LAW BASED ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

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# **A Study on the Effect of Law Education on Attitude toward Rule of Law Based on the Perspective of Legal Knowledge**

Jiyan WANG<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

The rapid advance of technology in past decade results in the constant emergence of distinct new-style infringement of rights, under the lack of proper regulations. The meaning of law education lies in having people understand the precious and importance of law and further abide the law. Law and education are the important partners to guarantee the basic freedom of humans. To construct a complete society, preparation and training are the most important; and, preparation and training are based on education. Aiming at college students in Guangxi Province, as the research objects, total 360 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 267 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 74%. The research results conclude significantly positive correlations between 1. law education and legal knowledge, 2. legal knowledge and attitude toward rule of law, and 3. law education and attitude toward rule of law. According to the research results, suggestions are proposed, expecting to help root domestic law education and cultivate students' correct legal knowledge and good attitude toward rule of law to really practice it in life.

*Keywords:* law education, attitude toward rule of law, legal knowledge, cognitive component, legal principle, school education, social conditions.

## **Introduction**

The changing computer technology in past decade leads human life into the ten times faster era. The digitization and automation of data processing through computer technology allows people enjoy convenient life. The development of the Internet covers new traits of anonymity and boundlessness, in addition to the original characteristics of digitization and automation of computers. Along with the common application of computers and the Internet, the use of computers and networks is no longer the rights of professionals. The rapid advance of technology

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results in the constant emergence of distinct new-style infringement of rights, under the lack of proper regulations. The meaning of law education lies in having people understand the precious and importance of law and further abide the law. Nevertheless, some people would accidentally violate the law because of not knowing legal regulations; some others might violate the law with knowing the law to result in serious disorder society. Human nature of greediness is endless. As old saying goes that covet Sichuan after capturing Gansu, once the power is gained, people would get over the feeling of knowing. The cultivation of people's morality and legal knowledge is therefore an urgent issue.

Law is often the last guard of moral and rule of law is the foundation of education that the importance is absolute. Nevertheless, current law education is not implemented in the discussion of basic legal concept and content. Although there is the examination of legal knowledge every year, students' learning effect is still ineffective as it becomes to memorize. Law and education are the important partners to guarantee humans' basic freedom. Preparation and training are primary for constructing a complete society, and the basis of preparation and training is education. Education presents the function to pull up people from ignorant conditions. Everyone should be aware of the rights and obligations through education to further awake the public so as to innovate the incomplete social conditions. In consideration of increasing number and decreasing age of criminals in current society, legal knowledge should be rooted downwards. Especially, the grass-root students should be informed law-related common knowledge and responsibility as early as possible to prevent students from falling into a wrong path without knowing the reason. Aiming at the effect of law education on legal knowledge and attitude toward rule of law, an empirical research is preceded in this study. It is expected to assist in the rooting of domestic law education and cultivate students' correct legal knowledge and good attitude toward rule of law to really implement it in life.

## Literature review

### *Law education*

Larsen (2016) mentioned that law education would help adolescents learn law and understand the process of law and judicial systems to improve the civil sentiment and ability; understanding the role of law in a democratic society could help students become modern citizens, rather than professional lawyers. Dowell & Meidl (2017) considered that law education allowed students really perceive the essence of law and the needs of law as well as develop the skills of modern citizens through the positive participation in the learning process and the contact with community resources. Arthur *et al.* (2015) indicated that law education should contain two levels. One was law education as constitution education to teach

constitution, especially An Act Declaring the Rights and Liberties of the Subject and Settling the Succession of the Crown, criminal behavior and the reason to abide criminal code, the application of civil code, and important legal issues in modern society, such as environmental protection and women's rights. The other was law education as common education, which was a part of citizenship education to enrich humanities education in social science.

Harold, Libicki, & Stuth (2016) regarded law education as the introduction of real content and concept of law to cultivate students' ability of analysis & thinking, value analysis, and decision making by law as well as understanding personal rights and obligations to further cultivate the law-abiding habit, advocate the spirit of rule of law, and become responsible modern citizens being able to supervise the government thoroughly executing the law in order to adapt to the rule-by-law democratic society. Christensen, Læg Reid, Rykkja (2016) pointed out law education as teaching children to understand the basic function of law, personal rights and obligations, and practical legal knowledge through various educational activity and materials as well as to cultivate the law-abiding habit and attitude so as to adapt to the democratic society with rule of law and solve dispute by law. McReynolds (2016) regarded the point of "law education" as to teach people abiding the law, stressing on disciplines, and understanding the governmental organization structure. For shaping citizens, law education was the major content of citizenship education. For group relationship, on the other hand, citizenship education was a part of law education.

Referring to Yang & Kim (2017), law education in this study covers the following dimensions.

- 1) *Cognitive development*: The cultivation of law-abiding spirit is the major goal of law education, from students' good and bad thinking and value judgment to the judgment of and attitude toward the abidance of code of conduct or law.
- 2) *Development trend*: The rapid development of information enhances the advance of the Internet. The use of information often involves in civil code, criminal code, patent law, and personal data protection law as well as some requirements for changing time and society, such as copyright act, domestic violence prevention act, fair trade law, and social order maintenance act.
- 3) *Life experience*: The materials of law education and the course content designed should be practical, i.e. practical law, which needs to be acquired in students' daily life.

### *Legal knowledge*

Mavroudis & Bournelli (2016) defined legal knowledge as basic legal concept and law-related knowledge in daily life to have students understand how to protect the rights as well as know whether the behavior would constitute a crime. It was therefore considered that, for vocational high school students, the content

of legal knowledge did not need to deeply discuss professional legal knowledge, but generally include the basic concept of law and types of law (constitution, civil code, criminal code, administrative law, litigation law, juvenile delinquency act, and labor standards act), which were closely related to vocational high school students. Banakou, Hanumanthu, & Slater (2016) mentioned that legal knowledge covered the principle, meaning, and objective of law as well as the procedure of enactment, enforcement, action, and amendment of law. Sutter & Perrin (2016) considered that legal knowledge should include basic concept of law, fundamental rights of the people, legal obligations and responsibilities, right of remedy, and basic legal knowledge. In the study on elementary school pupils' legal knowledge and attitude, Egan Daly, & Delaney (2016) contained the following legal cognition content in the legal knowledge test, including: (1) definition, objectives, and property of law; (2) principles of law (constitutional supremacy and administration according to law); (3) process of law (enactment, amendment, interpretation, and action); (4) rights protected and obligations ruled in constitution, and (5) children related content of law.

Referring to Broom (2017), following dimensions are included in legal knowledge in this study.

- 1) *Basic concept*: containing constitution, administrative law, civil code, mercantile law, criminal code, and litigation law.
- 2) *Legal principle*: covering: (a) freedom of contract; (b) absolute ownership, and (c) fault liability, principle of criminal code - no penalty without a law, as well as general principles of application of law, including: no ex post facto law; special law prior to general law, and protection against double jeopardy.
- 3) *Judicial system*: containing status, organization, and authority of judicial Yuan, instance level and authority of common courts, and configuration and authority of prosecutor offices.

### *Attitude toward rule of law*

Hymel & Swearer (2015) defined attitude as the psychological and physiological preparation organized in experience, including all objects and situations correlated to an individual that it generally existed in the daily life and would deeply affect people's behavior. Bose *et al.* (2015) proposed that attitude oriented objects in the rule of law situation were call "attitude toward rule of law"; attitude toward rule of law was the cognition, affection, and action tendency of rule of law system, rule of law goal, and rule of law situation. Hulsman & van der Vloodt (2015) defined attitude toward rule of law as the persistent psychological tendency of people after the interaction among rule of law cognitive, evaluation of rule of law, and law-abiding behavior, based on the protection of people's rights and avoiding unlawful violations of state power in the rule of law society. McEvoy (2015) divided attitude toward rule of law into opinions about law, relationship between law and nation, society, individual, enactment of law, opinions about

criminals and committing a crime, law-abiding idea, and the viewpoints of law enforcement authority and officials as well as judicial procedure. Donohoe & O'Sullivan (2015) indicated that a teacher's attitude toward law should include: (1) opinions about law; (2) viewpoints about law enforcement authority, officials, and judicial procedure; (3) law-abiding idea; (4) enactment of law; (5) opinions about criminals and committing a crime, and (6) relationship between law and nation, society, and individual. Reyes, Alexandrowicz, & Molina (2015) studied vocational high school students and classified attitude toward law into: (1) basic concept about law; (2) evaluation of judicial officers and judicial procedure; (3) opinions about attitude toward law abiding; (4) effects of law on nation, society, and individual, and (5) opinions about committing a crime.

Referring to Gaete *et al.* (2017), "attitude toward law" refers to rule of law systems, rule of law goals, and cognition, affection, and action tendency of legal situations. According to the composition of attitude, attitude toward law also covers following dimensions.

- 1) *Cognitive component*: referring to individual belief or ideas about legal objects, and the known and actually observed information, e.g. belief, opinions, and acquaintance.
- 2) *Affective component*: referring to individual emotional feelings about legal objects, such as like/dislike evaluation, agreement or disagreement, and for or against.
- 3) *Tendency component*: referring to individual reaction tendency to legal objects, i.e. individual legal behavior to present actions on legal objects.

### *Research hypothesis*

Harold, Libicki, Stuth (2016) indicated that law education presented remarkable effects on the strengthening of students' legal knowledge; and, the enhancement of students' participatory activity and rule of law teaching matching the real life experience could effectively cultivate students' legal knowledge and attitude toward rule of law as well as encourage students changing the learning attitude to cram up texts in credentialism, but thinking more about rule of law issues. It would show larger predictability of adolescents' legal knowledge performance. Turan & Ulutas (2016) stated that the practice of law education reflected on such course content and activity to cultivate students' legal knowledge and literacy. Saarento, Boulton, & Salmivalli (2015) regarded the meaning of law education as allowing students understanding the rights and obligations in legal knowledge as well as the reason and purpose of such regulations so as to cultivate the law-abiding habit and learn to be responsible for the behavior. Yang & Kim (2017) considered that law education, through law related problems in daily life experience, had law become accessible for students and cultivated students to enjoy the rights and practice the obligations as a citizen, through education analysis and comprehension

of legal knowledge. According to above literature review, the following research hypothesis is inferred in this study.

*H1: Law education reveals significantly positive correlations with legal knowledge.*

Sutter & Perrin (2016) pointed out notable predictability of students' rule of law knowledge to the performance on attitude toward rule of law as well as obvious effects of students' attitude toward rule of law on the performance on rule of law knowledge. As a result, strengthening students' legal knowledge would assist in promoting the attitude toward rule of law. Walker, Roberts, & Kristjansson (2015) defined attitude toward rule of law as citizens' persistent psychological tendency after the interaction of legal knowledge, rule of law evaluation, and law-abiding behavior, based on protecting people's rights and avoiding unlawful violations of state power in the rule of law society. Schulz et al. (2016) mentioned that legal knowledge had students understand individual rights and obligations and the reason and meaning of regulations to cultivate the law-abiding attitude toward rule of law and learn to be responsible for the behavior. Broom (2017) proposed that presenting correct legal knowledge could adapt to the life in modern society with rule of law without breaking the law without knowing the law. On the other hand, the important legal knowledge of rule of law through education could teach students' behavioral value to show positive attitude toward rule of law and become modern citizens abiding the law by knowing the law. According to above literature review, the following hypothesis is inferred in this study.

*H2: Legal knowledge shows notably positive correlations with attitude toward rule of law.*

Federle & Katherine (2016) considered that law education was not to have students become lawyers, but aimed to connect to the goal of science studies, i.e. emphasis on learning basic content, clarifying value, and applying skills of critical thinking and problem solving; it mainly aimed to cultivate students' attitude toward rule of law. Webber (2015) stated that law education allowed students starting from understanding basic spirit and content of law to further comprehend and know the procedure of enactment, enforcement, action, and amendment of law as well as content of law to build good foundation for cultivating students' attitude toward rule of law. Terrana et al. (2016) regarded the cultivation of law-abiding behavior as the main goal of law education; a student's opinions and judgment of good, bad, doing, and not doing behavior were related to the judgment and attitude toward rule of law to abide or not to abide certain regulations or law. Gaete et al. (2017) indicated that introducing legal systems and political structure to students through law education activity allowed students understanding the effect of law on the daily life and how to change law; such cross-thinking could enrich students' legal knowledge and cultivate the rule of law spirit and attitude, including law

education course teaching and various law education activities. According to above literature review, the following hypothesis is inferred in this study.

*H3: Law education presents remarkably positive correlations with attitude toward rule of law.*

## Methodology

### *Method model*

Goodness-of-fit in LISREL model could generally be tested from overall model fit (i.e. external quality of model) and internal quality of model. In regard to the test of overall model fit, the common indices contain (1)“ $\chi^2$  ratio” (Chi-Square ratio), standing for the difference between actual theoretical model and expected value, which is better smaller than 3, (2)goodness of fit index (GFI) and adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), which stand for better fit when being close to 1, (3)root mean square residual (RMR) to reflect “fit residual variance/covariance mean”, which is better smaller than 0.05, and (4)incremental fit index (IFI), which shows good model fit when being higher than 0.9.

The indices commonly used for internal quality of model in LISREL include (1)square multiple correlation (SMC) of individual manifest variable, as R<sup>2</sup> of manifest variable and latent variable, which is better higher than 0.5, (2)component reliability ( $\rho$ ) of latent variable, as the Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of observed indicator of latent variable, which is better higher than 0.6, and (3)average variance extracted of latent variable, which is calculated by the R<sup>2</sup> sum of various manifest variables of a latent variable dividing by the number of manifest variables to reveal the percentage of the latent variable being measured with manifest variables; it is better higher than 0.5.

### *Research sample and object*

Taking college students in Guangxi Province as the research objects, total 360 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 267 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 74%.

### *Reliability and validity test*

The questionnaire content of this study is based on past theories and referred to the actual conditions of the research object to design the tool being able to authentically express the essence and complete representativeness so as to ensure the content validity. Besides, the final commonality estimate of the factor analysis result is applied to test the construct validity of the measured items, and the acquired validity appears in 0.7~0.9, showing good validity of the questionnaire.



In basic research, the reliability coefficient above 0.8 reveals the scale with high reliability, while the reliability 0.7 is acceptable in exploratory research. The measured Cronbach's  $\alpha$  appears in 0.80~0.95, apparently conforming to the argument that Cronbach's  $\alpha$  being in 0.70-0.98 is the high reliability range.

## Results and discussion

### Factor analysis

With factor analysis, *Table 1*, three factors are extracted from the law education scale, including "cognitive development" (eigenvalues=3.122,  $\alpha=0.80$ ), "development trend" (eigenvalue=1.975,  $\alpha=0.85$ ), and "life experience" (eigenvalue=1.644,  $\alpha=0.87$ ). The cumulative covariance explained of the factors achieves 76.588%. The legal knowledge scale, after factor analysis, is extracted three factors of "basic concept" (eigenvalue=2.162,  $\alpha=0.83$ ), "legal principle" (eigenvalue=1.834,  $\alpha=0.84$ ), and "judicial system" (eigenvalue=1.591,  $\alpha=0.86$ ). The cumulative covariance explained of the factors reaches 79.162%. The attitude toward rule of law scale, after factor analysis, is extracted three factors of "cognitive component" (eigenvalue=3.327,  $\alpha=0.88$ ), "affective component" (eigenvalue=2.564,  $\alpha=0.90$ ), and "tendency component" (eigenvalue=2.291,  $\alpha=0.91$ ). The cumulative covariance explained of the factors achieves 81.397%.

*Table 1.* Factor analysis

variable	factor	eigenvalue	$\alpha$	cumulative variance explained
law education	cognitive development	3.122	0.80	76.588
	development trend	1.975	0.85	
	life experience	1.644	0.87	
legal knowledge	basic concept	2.162	0.83	79.162
	legal principle	1.834	0.84	
	judicial system	1.591	0.86	
attitude toward rule of law	cognitive component	3.327	0.88	81.397
	affective component	2.564	0.90	
	tendency component	2.291	0.91	

### Correlation analysis

From *Table 2*, there are significant correlations among law education, legal knowledge, and attitude toward rule of law. The result reveals the possibility of

multicollinearity. The remarkable correlations among research dimensions also reveal the match with research hypotheses.

Table 2. Pearson’s correlation analysis

research dimension	$\alpha$	law education	legal knowledge	attitude toward rule of law
law education	0.85			
legal knowledge	0.84	0.34**		
attitude toward rule of law	0.90	0.28**	0.25**	

Model fit test

“Maximum Likelihood” (ML) is used for the estimation in this study. The acquired LISREL analysis results achieve convergence, where overall model fit indices appear (1) $\chi^2$  ratio= $\chi^2=1.247$ , smaller than 3, (2)GFI=0.96, higher than 0.9, and AGFI=0.85, higher than 0.8, (3)RMR=0.032, smaller than 0.05, and (4) incremental fit index=0.92, higher than 0.9. Overall speaking, the actual number of samples 267 is higher than the requirement for basic number of samples, and the overall model fit indices pass the test, fully reflecting good external quality of the LISREL model.

Regarding the test of internal quality of model, SMC of manifest variables is higher than 0.5 (Table 3 and Table 4), showing good measuring indices of latent variables. Furthermore, latent variables of law education, legal knowledge, and attitude toward rule of law reveal the component reliability higher than 0.6, and the average variance extracted of dimensions is higher than 0.5 (Table 5), apparently conforming to the requirement for internal quality of model.

Table 3. SMC of variable to dimension

law education		
cognitive development	development trend	life experience
0.73	0.77	0.81

Table 4. SMC of variable to dimension

legal knowledge			attitude toward rule of law		
basic concept	legal principle	judicial system	cognitive component	affective component	tendency component
0.72	0.76	0.83	0.75	0.80	0.86

Table 5. Component reliability and average variance extracted of variable

item	law education	legal knowledge	attitude toward rule of law
component reliability	0.837	0.861	0.878
average variance extracted	0.81	0.85	0.87

*Path relationship test*

When latent variables of cognitive development, acceptance, inner satisfaction, and task performance are selected as the reference indices being fixed 1, the causal path in Table 6 shows the notable estimates between other dimensions and variables that development trend=1.05 presents more explanatory power than cognitive development, legal principle=0.97 appears less explanatory power than basic concept. The hypothesis test results are shown in Table 7.

Table 6. Overall linear structural model analysis result

factor/evaluation standard		estimate
law education	cognitive development( $\alpha_1$ )	1.00
	development trend( $\alpha_2$ )	1.05
	life experience( $\alpha_3$ )	1.10
legal knowledge	basic concept( $\beta_1$ )	1.00
	legal principle( $\beta_2$ )	0.97
	judicial system( $\beta_3$ )	0.95
attitude toward rule of law	cognitive component( $\sigma_1$ )	1.00
	affective component( $\sigma_2$ )	1.03
	tendency component( $\sigma_3$ )	1.08
law education $\rightarrow$ legal knowledge		0.351
legal knowledge $\rightarrow$ attitude toward rule of law		0.306
law education $\rightarrow$ attitude toward rule of law		0.278

Note: \* stands for  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* for  $p < 0.01$ , and \*\*\* for  $p < 0.001$ .

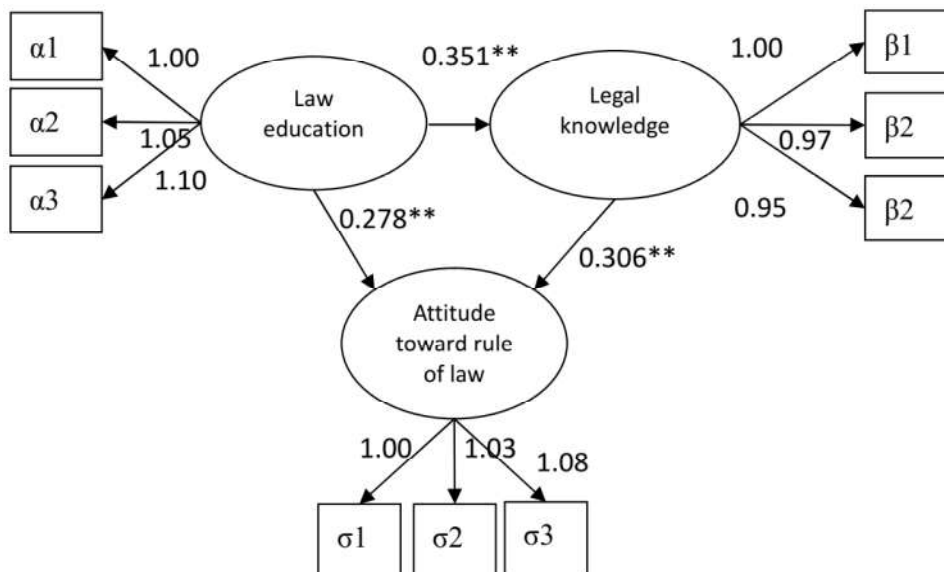


Figure 1. Relation path diagram

Table 7: Hypothesis test

research hypothesis	correlation	empirical result	P	result
H1	+	0.351	0.00	supported
H2	+	0.306	0.00	supported
H3	+	0.278	0.00	supported

### Conclusion

The research results prove that law education could enrich students' legal knowledge, more positive attitude toward law, correct opinions about law, more active attitude toward learning and application of law, positive points of view about committing a crime and criminal behavior, and more positive perspectives between law and individual, society, nation. Students with higher legal knowledge show more positive attitude toward law, better law-abiding attitude, higher willingness to learn and apply law, more positive points of view about criminals and crime committing as well as law enforcement authority and officials, and more positive perspectives between law and nation, society individual. Moreover, bad demonstration in the society would endanger the promotion of school education, e.g. mass media exaggerating illegal events and bad social climate. Such phenomena often result in helplessness of schools. In this case, the combination of family, social, and school

education could establish a complete law education mechanism, spread correct law education seeds, as well as collaboratively discuss law education issues with parents in parent-teacher conference to have parents understand that the practice of law education is not simply the responsibility of schools and society, while parents should play more positive roles to cooperatively reduce adolescents' crime rate and have students grow up healthily and safely.

### *Suggestions*

Aiming at the research results and findings, practical suggestions are proposed in this study.

1) Schools are the main channel to acquire legal knowledge that they are the best places to practice law education. The importance of TV media cannot be ignored. As a result, good law education relies on the match among teachers, schools, and educational authorities as well as good use of multimedia and promotion of teaching quality to cultivate students' concepts of and attitude toward rule of law to become modern citizens.

2) Law education should have self-made complementary materials close to students' life and apply multiple teaching methods, such as playing teaching media, field visit, team activity, simulation teaching, role-play activity, or simulated courts, to implement practical, multiple, and active teaching activity. Besides, law education content should be timely combined with students' life experience to interpret the possible legal consequence involved in law-related behavior between students.

3) Suitable courses should be designed, according to region and class characteristics, for law education; and, in consideration of students' cognitive development, the design should suit the comprehension of different age groups so as to develop the maximal effectiveness of law education courses or teaching.

4) Schools could hold election campaign of student government for students participating in and learning from the election. Keynote speeches, rule of law promotion, or printing handbooks of law for parents' reference could enhance parents' legal knowledge. On one hand, parents could have more correct concepts of law. On the other hand, children could be influenced through family education to have such future citizen's present good attitude toward rule of law.

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