

## **Level of Legal Awareness Among Youth: An Empirical Study of College Students**

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### **Abstract**

Legal awareness is the comprehension and knowledge of laws, legal procedures, and the rights and obligations of people in a society. People must be informed and aware of the laws that govern them; it is a necessary component of a democracy. Concern exists in many nations about how well-informed young people are about the law, particularly college students. Students who are in college are maturing into adulthood and frequently deal with a variety of legal difficulties. They might come into contact with issues like contract disputes, traffic infractions, and landlord-tenant disputes, among others. They must consequently have a fundamental understanding of the law in order to handle these situations successfully. College students' knowledge of the law differs depending on their history, education, and exposure to legal concerns, among other things. In order to detect and fill knowledge gaps, it is crucial to gauge the level of legal awareness among college students. Their ability to make educated decisions and successfully participate in legal procedures can increase as a result, making them more responsible citizens.

**Keywords:** Legal Awareness, College students, Democracy, Knowledge Gaps, Responsible Citizens.

### **Introduction**

The effective defense and advancement of human rights, as well as the achievement of good governance, depend on legal literacy. It entails the ability to comprehend legal principles, negotiate the legal system, and fight for one's legal rights. Individuals' capacity to assert their human rights and obtain justice may be severely hampered by a lack of legal literacy. Legally illiterate people might not be able to recognize when their rights are being violated. As a result, people may inadvertently accept rights breaches and refrain from seeking remedies. People might not be able to navigate the legal system and seek redress for rights abuses if they lack a fundamental comprehension of legal principles and the legal system (Power and Allison 2000).

For college students, the media is a crucial source of information that can have a big impact on how well they comprehend legal concepts. Students' legal understanding can be increased via media exposure to legal issues. This is particularly significant because understanding the law is essential for understanding one's rights and obligations. Students can gain insight into the legal system through television programs including newscasts, reality shows, and legal dramas. Students can gain knowledge of the legal system, courtroom protocol, and the functions of judges and attorneys by watching these programs, which highlight actual legal topics and cases. Additionally, social media and newspapers can give students access to a multitude of legal information, including breaking news about significant legal cases, updates on legislative changes, and legal commentary and analysis. Also, exposure to the media can give students a variety of viewpoints on legal subjects, fostering the growth of their critical thinking abilities and a more in-depth comprehension of intricate legal issues. For instance, participation in discussions of contentious legal problems might motivate students to weigh many points of view and evaluate legal arguments and logic (Garg and Duggal 2016). Social Media can play an important role in spreading the awareness about a variety of issues. It can contribute in connecting many-to-many people rather than one to one or one to many (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2015).

To assess the legal literacy of education in college students and its effects on programs for teacher development. In order to deal with potential legal concerns , the study looked at teachers' legal knowledge and expertise. The research indicated that teachers are regularly challenged with legal difficulties such as student discipline, academic freedom, and liability. The study stressed the significance of including legal literacy training in teacher preparation programs to give instructors the knowledge and abilities to successfully manage legal concerns in educational institutions. The study showed that legal literacy instruction can benefit teachers' understanding of their legal responsibilities, protection of their legal rights, and improvement of their students' educational experience. To make sure that educators are well-equipped to handle any legal difficulties that may arise during their employment, teacher preparation programs must take legal literacy seriously. By doing this, they can aid in fostering a supportive learning atmosphere that is advantageous to both students and teachers (Wagner 2007).

**Literature Review**

Legal literacy, or individual legal awareness, must be highly developed in every democratic society. In India's educational institutions, a survey revealed that students' levels of legal literacy were often low. The study identified a number of factors that contribute to this, including poor legal idea training, a lack of student motivation, and limited access to legal resources. People's ability to get justice and effectively participate in the court system may be significantly impacted by this lack of legal literacy (Patil and Lavanya 2012). The general populace in the country had a relatively low degree of legal literacy, according to Rahmati's 2005 study on legal awareness in Iran. The study discovered a number of variables, such as education, income, and age, that affected people's level of legal awareness. The findings revealed that those with greater incomes and educational degrees tended to have a more comprehensive awareness of the law and legal system. In a similar vein, younger people showed a higher level of legal awareness than their older counterparts

The value of legal knowledge for effective governance. Legal literacy, according to him, can enable people to engage in democratic processes productively, hold public authorities accountable, and demand openness and responsibility from governmental institutions. Nonetheless, in many nations, a lack of legal literacy among the populace as a whole can result in corruption, the misuse of authority, and human rights violations. People could not be aware of their legal rights, such as the right to a fair trial, the right to free speech, or the right to privacy, for instance, in some nations. They may be more susceptible to being used or abused by individuals in positions of power as a result of their ignorance. Also, people may not know how to seek redress when their rights are violated or how to access legal remedies, which exacerbates the issue. For the effective implementation of human rights and good governance, efforts to increase individual legal literacy are consequently crucial. This can involve actions like opening more legal resources and establishing legal assistance clinics and community legal education programs. Enhancing legal literacy can provide people more authority to take part in democratic processes, hold public authorities accountable, and call on institutions of power to be transparent and accountable (Pulikuthiyil 2012).

W. Laird Hunter (2010) described legal literacy as the capacity for people to comprehend the law and make use of it to their benefit in his essay for Law Now Magazine. He underlined that having a solid understanding of the legal system, which includes all of the different legal organizations and the processes involved in court cases, is just as important as having a solid understanding of the law. Legal literacy, according to Hunter, is crucial for citizens to engage in the legal system and exercise their legal rights in a democratic society. He added that people who lack legal literacy may find it difficult to deal with the legal system and may be at a disadvantage when trying to exercise their legal rights. For college students, legal literacy is especially significant because they are in a critical phase of life where they are becoming adults and assuming more responsibility. Students should be informed of their legal rights and obligations, particularly when it comes to matters like work, housing, and contracts. It is necessary for colleges and universities to focus legal literacy education for their students. Offering classes or workshops on legal subjects including contracts, employment law, and housing law is one way to do this. Other tools that universities might offer to assist students in navigating the legal system and asserting their legal rights include legal clinics and legal assistance services.

Several studies have looked into how peers and family affect college students' awareness of the law. In order to determine how peer and family influences affect college students' awareness of the law in India, Srivastava and Singh (2017) undertook a study. A higher level of legal awareness was found to be more common among students who had relatives or classmates who were engaged in legal matters. According to the experts, college students' legal understanding can be significantly shaped by their classmates and family. The social learning theory can be used to describe how legal knowledge is influenced by family and peers. This hypothesis proposes that people pick up new skills by seeing how others behave and imitating them. When it comes to legal awareness, pupils are more likely to learn about legal issues and their significance if their family members or peers are interested in them and frequently discuss them. As a result, pupils may grow to have a greater understanding of the law.

According to a study done by Suri (2014) among college students, those who engaged in legal activities had a higher level of legal awareness than those who did not. The study also discovered that involvement in lawful activities enhanced pupils' capacity for critical thought, problem-

solving, and communication. Students can present their arguments to judges and attorneys in mock courtrooms, for instance. Students have the chance to hone their legal research, analysis, and advocacy abilities through these exercises. Students who participate in moot courts are exposed to a variety of legal issues and court procedures, which can heighten their understanding of the law. Another type of legal activity that can aid students in expanding their legal knowledge is legal aid camps.

A democratic society must have a strong legal system because it enables people to understand their obligations and rights and to make wise decisions. Several international studies have emphasized the value of legal literacy. Ahramnia and Mollaei (2010) did a study to look at the percentage of teachers who are politically and legally literate. According to the study, there was a lack of legal literacy among teachers. The quality of education given to pupils, even college students, may be impacted by teachers' lack of legal knowledge. College students may not be aware of their legal rights and obligations if teachers are illiterate in the law, which could result in ineffective instruction. A study was undertaken by Mishra and Mishra (2018) to gauge the degree of legal literacy among Delhi college students. According to the report, pupils' knowledge of the law is not adequate. the necessity of including legal education in school and college curricula in order to raise students' legal literacy. The study's findings are significant because they show how crucial it is to raise legal literacy among Indian college students.

Legal knowledge and mediation are important, according to Tomlinson (2011). The parties involved in mediation should have a basic understanding of the law in order to ensure that they are aware of the procedure and their rights. Legal ignorance can impede the mediation process and possibly result in an unfavorable outcome. To guarantee that they understand their rights and can fully participate in the mediation process, college students, who are frequently involved in conflict resolution processes, must possess a basic degree of legal literacy.

## **OBJECTIVE**

To measure the level of legal awareness among youth

**METHODOLOGY**

The researcher had considered youth and young generation to know the level of legal awareness among youth. The primary data of the study is collected with the help of a survey using structured questionnaire and random sampling method. The data was analyzed and evaluated using mean to get the results.

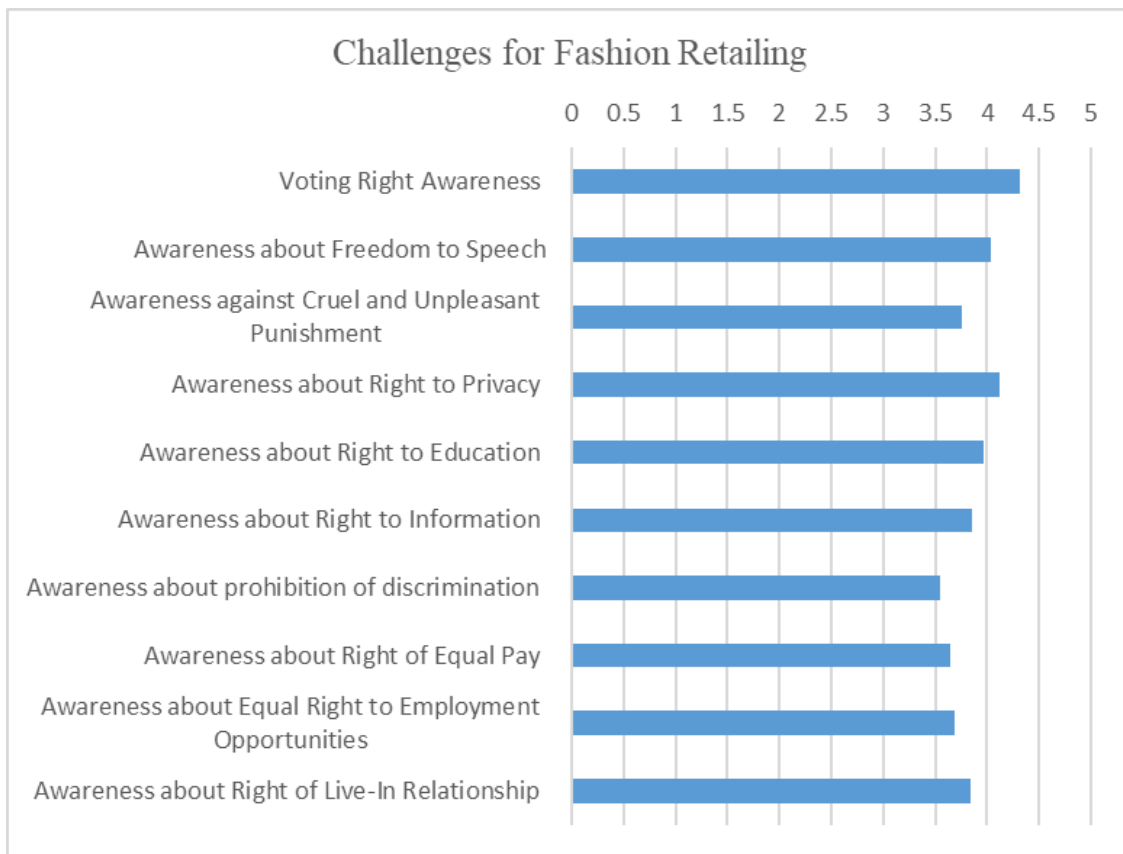
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Level of legal awareness among Youth**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Mean Value</b>
1.	I am aware that I can start voting at the age of 18	4.32
2.	I have the freedom to speech both at school and college	4.03
3.	I have protection against cruel and unusual punishment	3.76
4.	I have right to privacy which means no one can interfere in my private life or family matters	4.12
5.	I have the right to education i.e., the state should open up enough institutions so that education is available for the desired ones	3.97
6.	I have the right to information where I have the right to seek, impart and receive information	3.85
7.	I have the right to prohibit the discrimination based on sexual orientation	3.54
8.	I have the right to equal pay for equal type of work	3.64
9.	I have the equal right of opportunity in matters of public employment	3.69
10.	I have the right to live-in relation under the article 21 of the India constitution	3.84

Table above is showing level of legal awareness among youth in India. It is found that I am aware that I can start voting at the age of 18 with mean value 4.32, I have right to privacy which means no one can interfere in my private life or family matters with mean value 4.12 and I have the freedom to speech both at school and college with mean value 4.03. The respondent says that

it is their right to education i.e. the state should open up enough institutions so that education is available for the desired ones with mean value 3.97, I have the right to information where I have the right to seek, impart and receive information with mean value 3.85 and I have the right to live-in relation under the article 21 of the India constitution with mean value 3.84. The respondent shares that they have protection against cruel and unusual punishment with mean value 3.76, I have the equal right of opportunity in matters of public employment with mean value 3.69, I have the right to equal pay for equal type of work with mean value 3.64 and I have the right to prohibit the discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation with mean value 3.54. Figure 1 represents the mean values graphically.



**Figure 1 Mean Values for Legal Awareness**

**Conclusion**

To conclude, legal awareness is an important part of contemporary society and it is important for people to be aware of their legal rights and obligations. A person's ability to navigate the legal system, stand up for their rights, and avoid legal conflicts can all be improved by having a good

understanding of the law. Higher legal education and awareness programmes in educational institutions are required, according to studies on college students' degree of legal awareness. These research' findings suggest that many college students lack basic legal awareness and understanding, which may have negative effects on their future professional and personal life. The extent of students' compliance with the law has been demonstrated to be significantly influenced by several variables, including education, peer and family influence, and involvement in lawful activities. In order to give students a legal education and hands-on experience with legal issues and the legal system, educational institutions should concentrate on creating and executing programmes that can do so. Furthermore, it is crucial for the general public as well as college students to be informed of the law. The general public's knowledge of the law has a big impact on how well the legal system works and how society functions. Legal awareness among the general people has been proven to be significantly influenced by elements like education, money, and age. Promoting legal literacy can help people better understand the legal system, fight for their rights, and navigate it, which will make society more just and equitable.

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