

Knowledge And Public Interest In Everyday Law: A Case Study Of Communities In The Tak Special Economic Zone

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Abstract

This study investigates the levels of legal knowledge and public interest in everyday law among residents of the Tak Special Economic Zone (SEZ), emphasizing demographic variation and the relationship between knowledge and interest. Using a cross-sectional survey of households across the SEZ, the analysis assessed respondents' understanding of life-cycle laws, civil transactions, and routine administrative procedures, as well as their interest in legal topics that affect daily living. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to identify patterns and group differences. The findings show that respondents generally possessed strong knowledge of legal procedures involving direct interaction with state authorities, including birth and death registration, inheritance processes, and compulsory military service. Knowledge was also relatively high in common financial and contractual matters such as pawn transactions, hire-purchase agreements, and mortgage rules. Significant differences emerged across occupational and educational groups, highlighting the influence of socioeconomic factors on legal literacy. In contrast, knowledge of more complex or formalistic legal areas particularly family law and contractual transfers of ownership was comparatively limited. Despite overall high levels of legal knowledge, respondents' interest in everyday law did not significantly correlate with their actual knowledge. Instead, interest was concentrated in legal domains tied to economic security, property transfer, and financial risk, especially among older adults and lower-income households. These results underscore the need for targeted, context-specific legal literacy initiatives that address both cognitive understanding and perceived relevance. The study contributes to current scholarship by illustrating how legal knowledge and legal interest operate as distinct dimensions within rapidly developing border-economic settings such as the Tak SEZ.

Keywords: Legal Literacy; Everyday Law, Socioeconomic Factors, Special Economic Zone.

Introduction

The 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan of Thailand (2017–2021) places strong emphasis on community-based research as the foundation for sustainable local development. Within its first

two strategic directions, the Plan highlights both the enhancement of human capital and the creation of social justice through inclusive participation and development initiatives. In alignment with national policy, the Act on Universities (B.E. 2559) mandates institutions such as the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Northern College to function as key academic anchors for local development. Section 7 of the Act stipulates that institutions are to “empower the local knowledge base, restore learning capacity, honor local wisdom, and cultivate science and the arts for the secure and sustainable advancement of the people, while participating in the management, conservation, and utilization of natural and environmental resources in a balanced and sustainable manner” (Office of the Council of State, 2015). These objectives encompass higher-education provision, academic and professional development, research, community service, technology transfer, cultural stewardship, and the preparation of qualified educators.

Consistent with this mandate, the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Northern College initiated a research project entitled “Community Participation for Self-Reliance: A Case Study of Communities in the Special Economic Zone, Mae Sot District, Tak Province.” The project reflects Thailand’s broader commitment to local development and incorporates multidisciplinary approaches to strengthen its research outcomes. At the same time, the legal discipline has increasingly recognized the importance of community-based inquiry in responding to the priorities of the 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027) and the ongoing responsibilities of Rajabhat institutions. These initiatives aim to enhance community participation in shaping access to justice, reduce inequality, and expand opportunities for citizens to benefit from governmental services.

Despite national efforts, significant challenges remain in the promotion of legal literacy in Thailand, particularly among marginalized or geographically remote communities. In Tak Province’s special economic zone an area characterized by dynamic cross-border movement, rapid economic change, and evolving regulatory frameworks the need for everyday legal knowledge is especially urgent. Many residents lack a clear understanding of the laws that shape their daily experiences and remain unaware of newly enacted regulations. Compounding this issue, data from the Office of Justice Affairs in the Tak provincial area indicate a consistent rise in the number of legal complaints and assistance requests submitted to the local Ombudsman center each year. These cases frequently reflect both insufficient legal knowledge and limited awareness of available governmental support mechanisms.

Given these conditions, there is a pressing need to examine the levels of legal knowledge and legal interest among residents in the special economic zone of Tak Province. This study aims to compare legal knowledge and interest across gender, occupation, and educational background, and to explore the relationship between these variables among residents of Tak Province’s special economic zone. The findings are intended to provide stakeholders particularly those engaged in local-development policy and community outreach with practical insights for enhancing legal competency and stimulating greater civic engagement with everyday law. Strengthening such competencies may help reduce misunderstandings, minimize conflicts, and alleviate social vulnerabilities stemming from legal inequities.

The relevance of this study is underscored by several contemporary trends. First, Thailand’s pursuit of spatially targeted economic development through special economic zones and economic-corridor initiatives requires legal environments capable of supporting social inclusion and citizen empowerment. As regulatory systems evolve, communities must be equipped to navigate legal rights, obligations, and state services. Second, growing public demand for accessible governmental services highlights the need for residents who understand not only the legal frameworks that affect their lives but also the mechanisms through which they can seek assistance and protection. Third, situating this study within a community that lies at the crossroads of national development strategies, local institutional responsibilities, and practical legal challenges enables the research to contribute substantively to an identified gap: the role of everyday legal knowledge and legal interest in shaping local participation, social equity, and sustainable development.

In summary, this study examines (1) community members’ knowledge of everyday law, (2) their interest in legal matters that affect daily life, (3) differences in legal knowledge and interest by gender, occupation, and education level, and (4) the relationship between legal knowledge and legal interest within the special economic zone of Tak Province. By addressing these dimensions, the research aligns with national development strategies, advances the mission of Rajabhat-system institutions, and supports the broader goal

of strengthening legal empowerment among underserved Thai communities. Ultimately, the findings aim to contribute to more effective and inclusive community development, while offering practical guidance for educators, policymakers, and local organizations seeking to enhance legal literacy and community resilience in a rapidly changing socio-economic landscape.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the levels of legal knowledge and interest in everyday law among residents living within the Tak Special Economic Zone.
2. To compare residents' legal knowledge and interest in everyday law across gender, occupational groups, and educational backgrounds within the Tak Special Economic Zone.
3. To analyze the relationship between residents' legal knowledge and their interest in everyday law in the Tak Special Economic Zone.

Research Methods

Scope of the Study. The present study was conducted within clearly delineated boundaries to ensure methodological rigor and internal validity. The population comprised residents living in communities within the Tak Special Economic Zone (Tak SEZ), totaling approximately 300 individuals according to the latest local administrative estimates. From this population, a sample of 171 respondents was selected using Yamane's (1973) formula for determining an appropriate sample size with a 95% confidence level and a sampling error of 0.05. The use of Yamane's method remains common in social science research where finite populations require simplified yet statistically sound sampling procedures (e.g., Etikan & Babatope, 2019).

The independent variables in the study consisted of respondents' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational attainment, occupation, and income level. These variables are widely recognized in legal literacy research as influential determinants of public knowledge and engagement with civic regulations (Chirarattananon, 2015). The dependent variables included (1) legal knowledge related to laws that shape individuals' life cycles and daily interactions within society and (2) interest in everyday legal matters, specifically laws governing financial agreements, family matters, and civil transactions.

The geographical scope of the study was confined to communities located within the Tak SEZ. These areas were selected based on their growing economic activity, demographic diversity, and structural shifts associated with border-economic development, which often shape residents' exposure to legal frameworks and rights-based knowledge (Laungaramsri, 2020).

The content scope focused exclusively on laws relevant to daily life, including but not limited to: the legal processes surrounding birth registration, death registration, education, national identification, military service obligations, marriage, family matters, and inheritance. Additionally, the study examined provisions within Thailand's Civil and Commercial Code concerning routine financial and contractual activities such as loans, insurance transactions, mortgages, pledges, buying and selling, hire-purchase, and property leasing. This framework follows the categorization provided by the Law Center of the Faculty of Law (2012), which outlines legal domains essential for civic functioning and day-to-day decision-making.

Conceptual Framework. The study's conceptual model was structured around the interaction between demographic characteristics (independent variables) and two primary dependent variables: (1) legal knowledge related to life-cycle events and daily civil interactions, and (2) interest in legal matters governing everyday activities.

Independent variables: 1. Gender, 2. Age, 3. Educational level, 4. Occupation, 5. Income.

Dependent variables: **1. Legal knowledge** regarding: 1.1 Loan transactions, 1.2 Insurance contracts, 1.3 Mortgage agreements, 1.4 Pledge agreements, 1.5 Buying and selling, 1.6 Sale with right of redemption, 1.7 Leasing, 1.8 Hire-purchase contracts. **2. Interest in legal matters**, paralleling the areas of legal knowledge listed above. This conceptualization aligns with prior research suggesting that demographic

characteristics tend to influence legal awareness and civic engagement (Sukasem & Boonchai, 2021). It also reflects models employed in legal literacy studies in Southeast Asia, which frequently assess both cognitive and attitudinal dimensions of legal engagement (Phrommintikul, 2020).

Research Instruments. Data collection relied on a **structured questionnaire**, designed to obtain quantitative data suitable for statistical analysis. The instrument was divided into four sections:

Section 1: Demographic information. Respondents were asked to provide basic background data using multiple-choice items. **Section 2: Legal knowledge related to life-cycle and daily legal matters.** Knowledge-based items were presented in a closed-ended format to measure the accuracy of respondents' understanding. This measurement approach is commonly used to assess legal literacy and cognitive comprehension (Tait & Thomas, 2019). **Section 3: Interest in legal matters.** A **five-point Likert scale** was used, ranging from "least interested" to "most interested." Likert-type measurement remains a standard tool for assessing attitudes and levels of interest in social-science research (Joshi et al., 2015). **Section 4:**

Open-ended suggestions. Respondents were invited to share additional opinions or recommendations to complement the quantitative data.

The questionnaire was pre-reviewed by experts in legal studies and social research to ensure content validity and clarity. The structure and item formats were informed by previously validated instruments used in Thai legal literacy studies (e.g., Sricharatchanya, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures. Field data collection was conducted directly by the researcher to ensure uniform administration of the questionnaire and to build rapport with community members. Although the primary study area was the Tak SEZ, the data collection was carried out in Ban Lao community, Chaiyo District, Ang Thong Province, due to the temporary relocation and availability of households representing similar demographic and socio-legal characteristics. Direct engagement in field settings enhances response accuracy, reduces nonresponse bias, and ensures contextual understanding an approach frequently recommended in community-based legal research (Kittisuksathit & Siripanich, 2020). Prior to data collection, respondents were informed of the study's objectives and assured of confidentiality. Informed consent procedures were followed in accordance with institutional ethics standards.

Data Analysis and Statistical Procedures. Data analysis was performed using a standard statistical software package for social sciences. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the relationship between demographic characteristics, legal knowledge, and interest in legal matters.

Descriptive Statistics. Frequency and percentage were used to summarize respondents' demographic information. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze legal knowledge and interest levels. These statistical tools allow clear interpretation of central tendencies and data distribution, consistent with analytical practices in legal literacy research. **Interpretation of Likert-scale Scores.** Mean scores were categorized into five levels, 1.00–1.50: Very low interest, 1.51–2.50: Low interest, 2.51–3.50: Moderate interest, 3.51–4.50: High interest, 4.51–5.00: Very high interest. **One-Way ANOVA.** To compare differences in legal knowledge and interest across demographic groups specifically gender, occupation, and educational level. One-Way ANOVA was employed. ANOVA is appropriate when examining mean differences across multiple groups and is widely used in policy and legal-awareness studies (Field, 2018). **Pearson Correlation Coefficient.** Pearson's *r* was applied to explore the relationship between legal knowledge and legal interest. This method is suitable for examining linear relationships between continuous variables and is a standard practice in social-science correlational research (Schober & Schwarte, 2018).

Research Results

The results of this study provide an empirical overview of the demographic characteristics, legal knowledge, and legal interest of residents living in the Communities of the Tak Special Economic Zone. A

total of 171 respondents completed the questionnaire. The statistical analyses include descriptive statistics, mean comparisons using one-way ANOVA, and Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the relationship between legal knowledge and legal interest.

Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents. The demographic findings reveal that the majority of respondents were female (57.9%), and most were 50 years of age or older (59.6%), followed by those aged 40-49 and 30-39 years. Educational attainment was primarily at the primary school level (55.6%), while secondary school/vocational certificate, lower secondary/vocational diploma, and non-formal educational backgrounds followed in descending order. The largest occupational group consisted of wage laborers (36.8%), followed by traders, agricultural workers, and those unemployed. Regarding income, most earned between 5,001 and 10,000 baht (29.8%), followed by those earning less than 5,000 baht, those earning 10,001-15,000 baht, and those without income. This demographic profile aligns with socioeconomic patterns in border economic zones, where informal labor and aging populations tend to predominate. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample demographics (n = 171)

Variable	Category	%	n
Gender	Female	57.9	99
Age	50+ years	59.6	102
Education	Primary school	55.6	95
Occupation	Wage labour	36.8	63
Income	5,001–10,000 THB	29.8	51

Legal Knowledge Related to the Life Cycle. The analysis indicates that respondents demonstrated relatively high levels of legal knowledge related to various stages of the human life cycle, with an overall mean knowledge level of 85.7%. When examined by category, the highest levels of knowledge were associated with birth registration. Specifically, 98.8% of respondents knew that household heads must report a birth within 15 days. This was followed by knowledge about inheritance law (97.7%), particularly the legal succession of property to statutory heirs and beneficiaries. Respondents also showed strong understanding of legal requirements for marriage registration (94.7%), death reporting procedures (94.2%), and compulsory military service obligations for Thai males at age 18 (89.5%). Moderate levels of legal knowledge were observed for compulsory education (83.6%) and national identification card requirements (81.3%). The areas with the lowest levels of knowledge concerned legal definitions surrounding non-registered marital relationships (65.6%) and the legal validity of engagement for minors under 17 years (65.5%). These findings echo prior studies indicating that legal knowledge in Thailand is often strongest in areas requiring routine interaction with state authorities, such as civil registration, while areas involving legal interpretation or family law may be less understood.

Legal Knowledge Related to Daily Life. Participants also demonstrated generally high levels of legal knowledge concerning daily life, with an overall mean of 84.5%. The highest scores pertained to pawn transactions, with 95.9% correctly identifying examples of movable property eligible for pawning. Respondents also showed strong understanding of hire-purchase agreements (93.0%) and mortgage law related to immovable property (89.5%). Moderate levels of knowledge were found concerning sale with right of redemption (86.5%), property rental rights (86.5%), and suretyship law (83.6%). Lower levels of understanding were observed in loan agreements, where only 80.7% correctly recognized the legal requirement of transferring possession of money for a loan to be valid. The lowest levels of knowledge

were associated with the legal transfer of ownership in sales contracts (60.8%). These findings are consistent with legal literacy research suggesting that knowledge tends to be highest in issues that directly affect household assets and financial obligations.

Interest in Laws Related to the Life Cycle. Overall, respondents exhibited moderate interest in laws related to the life cycle (Mean = 3.43, SD = 0.79). The areas of highest interest were inheritance law (Mean = 4.37, SD = 0.79), death-related legal procedures (Mean = 3.80, SD = 0.98), and family law, specifically marriage and engagement (Mean = 3.61, SD = 0.98). These findings indicate that respondents tend to prioritize legal matters directly affecting family security and intergenerational asset transfer. Conversely, moderate levels of interest were found in education law (Mean = 3.34, SD = 1.14), national identification card regulations (Mean = 3.25, SD = 1.10), child-related legal issues (Mean = 3.11, SD = 1.10), military conscription (Mean = 3.01, SD = 1.02), and birth registration (Mean = 2.95, SD = 1.07). The lower interest in these areas may be linked to the demographic composition of the sample, particularly its older age structure.

Interest in Laws Related to Daily Life. The respondents' interest in laws related to daily life was generally high (Mean = 3.60, SD = 1.04). The highest interest levels were reported for laws governing loan agreements (Mean = 4.13, SD = 0.94), suretyship (Mean = 4.04, SD = 0.95), sale transactions (M = 3.74, SD = 1.09), and mortgage law (Mean = 3.54, SD = 1.14). Respondents displayed moderate interest toward rental law (Mean = 3.46, SD = 1.06), pawn transactions (Mean = 3.34, SD = 1.05), hire-purchase agreements (Mean = 3.32, SD = 1.07), and sale with right of redemption (Mean = 3.22, SD = 1.07). The prominence of interest in financial and contractual law corresponds with patterns in border communities, where informal lending, asset pawning, and credit-based purchasing are common.

Comparative Analysis of Legal Knowledge and Legal Interest. **1. Gender Differences,** Results from one-way ANOVA indicate no statistically significant differences in legal knowledge between male and female respondents. **2. Occupational Differences,** there were statistically significant differences in legal knowledge across occupational groups. Post hoc comparisons revealed that unemployed respondents, wage laborers, and government employees differed significantly in their levels of legal knowledge. Significant differences were also observed between agricultural workers and wage laborers, as well as between agricultural workers and government employees. These findings suggest that occupational exposure may influence individuals' access to or engagement with legal information. **3. Educational Differences,** Educational attainment was significantly associated with legal knowledge. Respondents with no educational background differed from those with primary, lower secondary/vocational certificate, upper secondary/vocational diploma, associate degree, and bachelor's degree levels. Additional pairwise comparisons found significant differences between primary school and associate degree holders, between lower secondary/vocational certificate and associate degree holders, and between upper secondary/vocational diploma and associate degree holders. These results align with legal literacy research showing that education is one of the strongest predictors of legal understanding.

Correlation Between Legal Knowledge and Legal Interest. The Pearson correlation test ($r = .051$, $p = .505$) indicated no statistically significant relationship between legal knowledge and legal interest among residents of the Tak Special Economic Zone. This suggests that higher legal knowledge does not necessarily translate into higher legal interest, and vice versa consistent with studies in legal psychology indicating that knowledge and interest may function independently depending on personal experience and perceived legal relevance. As shown in Table 2 to Table 7.

Table 2. Knowledge about life-cycle laws.

Item	% correct	Approx. n (of 171)
Birth registration (report within 15 days)	98.8	169

Item	% correct	Approx. n (of 171)
Inheritance law (succession to heirs/legatees)	97.7	167
Marriage registration (legal effect requires registration)	94.7	162
Death reporting (report within 24 hours)	94.2	161
Military service (men must register at 18)	89.5	153
Compulsory education	83.6	143
National ID card requirements	81.3	139
Status of children from non-registered unions	65.6	112
Validity of engagement for minors (<17)	65.5	112

Table 3. Knowledge about daily-life civil/contract law.

Item	% correct	Approx. n (of 171)
Pawn (movable property eligible for pawning)	95.9	164
Hire-purchase agreements	93.0	159
Sale with right of redemption	86.5	148
Leasing/property rental	86.5	148
Suretyship / insurance-related obligations	83.6	143
Loan agreements (conditions for valid loan)	80.7	138
Sale (transfer of ownership upon contract)	60.8	104

Table 4. Interest in life-cycle laws.

Item	Mean (M)	SD
Overall — life-cycle laws	3.43	0.79
Inheritance law	4.37	0.79
Death-related law	3.80	0.98
Family law (engagement, marriage)	3.61	0.98
Education law	3.34	1.14
National ID card	3.25	1.10
Child-related legal issues	3.11	1.10
Military conscription law	3.01	1.02
Birth registration law	2.95	1.07

Table 5. Interest in daily-life laws.

Item	Mean (M)	SD
Overall — daily-life laws	3.60	1.04
Loan agreements	4.13	0.94
Suretyship / insurance obligations	4.04	0.95
Sale transactions	3.74	1.09
Reservation / Mortgage-type transactions	3.54	1.14
Rental	3.46	1.06
Pawn	3.34	1.05
Hire-purchase	3.32	1.07
Sale with right of redemption	3.22	1.07

Table 6. Comparative analyses.

Comparison	Test	Result
Gender differences (legal knowledge)	One-Way ANOVA	No significant difference
Occupation differences (legal knowledge)	One-Way ANOVA + post hoc	Significant differences among occupational groups. Post hoc pairwise findings reported: unemployed vs. wage labour vs. government employees differ; agriculture vs. wage labour differ; agriculture vs. government employees differ.
Education differences (legal knowledge)	One-Way ANOVA + post hoc	Significant differences across education levels. Pairwise differences include: no-formal-education vs. primary / lower secondary / upper secondary / associate / bachelor; primary vs. associate degree; lower secondary/vocational vs. associate; upper secondary/vocational vs. associate.

Table 7. Correlation between legal knowledge and legal interest.

Variables	Pearson's r	p (2-tailed)	n	Interpretation
Legal knowledge vs. legal interest	.051	.505	171	Non-significant correlation ($p > .05$). Knowledge and interest are not correlated in this sample.

Conclusion & Discussion

The present study examined the levels of legal knowledge and public interest in everyday law among residents living within the Tak Special Economic Zone (SEZ), with a focus on demographic variation and the relationship between knowledge and interest. Three major conclusions can be drawn from the findings. First, respondents demonstrated relatively high levels of legal knowledge related to both life-cycle laws and daily civil transactions. Second, statistically significant differences were observed across occupational and educational groups, reinforcing the central role of socioeconomic factors in shaping legal literacy. Third, despite high knowledge in several legal domains, residents' interest in law did not correlate significantly with their actual knowledge. This suggests that the cognitive and affective dimensions of legal literacy operate independently in this context, influenced by perceived relevance rather than familiarity with legal

principles. Overall, respondents showed strong knowledge in legal procedures that require direct state interaction, such as birth registration, death reporting, inheritance, and compulsory military service. This pattern is consistent with prior research indicating that legal knowledge tends to accumulate in areas where the public engages in bureaucratic processes or where compliance is mandatory for accessing state benefits (Sukasem & Boonchai, 2021). Daily-life legal knowledge also ranked relatively high, particularly in pawn transactions, hire-purchase agreements, and mortgage-related rules. The prominence of these areas reflects the socioeconomic structure of the Tak SEZ, where informal lending, cyclical indebtedness, and credit-based purchasing represent common risk-management strategies for low-income households. These findings mirror those of Chirarattananon (2015), who argued that communities located near border-trade zones often possess strong practical knowledge about financial and contractual obligations due to frequent exposure to market-based transactions.

In contrast, lower knowledge scores were recorded in areas involving more complex legal reasoning, such as the legal transfer of ownership in sales contracts or the legal status of non-registered unions. This is consistent with observations by Phrommintikul (2020), who noted that procedural or formalistic areas of law tend to be less understood by the general public unless they are tied to routine administrative processes. That respondents performed less well on questions involving family law and nuanced legal interpretations suggests that these domains may require more advanced legal reasoning or greater exposure to legal counseling services. The fact that misconceptions persist around engagement for minors and the legality of non-registered marital relationships reflects broader societal uncertainties documented in Thai legal literacy surveys (Sricharatchanya, 2018). With respect to interest in everyday law, the study found that respondents expressed the highest levels of interest in inheritance law, death-related procedures, and financial transactions. This aligns with research in legal psychology suggesting that individuals are most interested in laws that affect material security, asset transfer, and family stability (Tait & Thomas, 2019). The higher interest in these areas can be understood in the context of the demographic profile of the sample namely, the high proportion of older adults and low-to-moderate income households. Older individuals often prioritize end-of-life planning, while economically vulnerable groups are more attentive to regulations governing debt, collateral, and property management. Thus, the respondent profile provides an important contextual explanation for why certain legal areas garnered greater interest than others. By contrast, interest was moderate or low for birth registration, compulsory education, national identification, and child-related legal issues. These patterns likely reflect generational differences, as many respondents no longer have school-aged children or immediate engagement with early life-cycle legal processes. Similar findings were reported in studies of rural communities in northern Thailand, where interest in state administrative procedures was strongest among younger adult populations (Laungaramsri, 2020). The results therefore highlight the need for age-targeted legal literacy initiatives to ensure that legal education materials are responsive to the life-stage needs of citizens.

The comparative analyses provide further insight into the social determinants of legal knowledge. Gender differences were not statistically significant, echoing international research showing diminishing gender gaps in civic and legal understanding when educational access is relatively equal. However, substantial differences across occupational and educational groups were observed, suggesting that occupational exposure and formal education shape legal cognition more powerfully than gender. Individuals with higher educational attainment showed significantly greater legal knowledge, consistent with global studies that identify education as a principal predictor of legal literacy (Field, 2018). Similarly, workers in more structured or formal occupations, such as government employees, tended to outperform wage laborers or agricultural workers. These differences can be attributed to the greater likelihood that individuals in formal employment settings encounter contracts, regulations, and administrative processes as part of their work. In contrast, informal workers often rely on social networks and customary arrangements rather than formal legal mechanisms, which may limit opportunities to gain legal knowledge.

One of the most noteworthy findings concerns the non-significant relationship between legal knowledge and legal interest. The absence of correlation ($r = .051$, $p > .05$) suggests that knowing more about the law does not necessarily make individuals more interested in learning about it, nor does a high level of interest guarantee deeper legal understanding. This finding aligns with Schober and Schwarte's (2018) assertion

that cognitive knowledge and attitudinal engagement are often independent constructs within civic learning. In the context of the Tak SEZ, it is likely that interest is driven more by perceived personal relevance and immediate economic necessity rather than by the depth of legal knowledge itself. For instance, even respondents with limited legal knowledge expressed high interest in loan agreements and suretyship, reflecting economic vulnerability rather than cognitive familiarity. Conversely, respondents may be knowledgeable about mandatory administrative processes without exhibiting strong intrinsic interest in these areas.

The results also have important implications for legal literacy policy and community-based legal education. First, the findings reinforce the argument that legal literacy should be approached as a multidimensional construct involving not only legal knowledge but also attitudes, motivation, and perceived relevance. Second, the fact that interest does not align closely with knowledge suggests that legal education campaigns cannot rely solely on information dissemination. Instead, they must be designed to capture public interest by emphasizing the concrete benefits of legal understanding particularly for financial and contractual matters that affect household economic security. Finally, occupational and educational disparities indicate that targeted interventions may be required to reach groups with lower levels of legal exposure, such as informal workers, agricultural laborers, and individuals with limited formal education.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing literature on legal literacy in Southeast Asia by providing an empirically grounded analysis of legal knowledge and interest within a rapidly developing border-economic zone. The findings highlight the uneven distribution of legal knowledge across demographic groups, the need for law-related education to align with community interests, and the importance of recognizing legal literacy as both a cognitive and affective process. For policymakers, civil society organizations, and legal educators, these insights underscore the need for context-sensitive, participatory, and community-based legal education initiatives capable of empowering residents to navigate the increasingly complex legal environment shaped by economic development and cross-border mobility in the Tak SEZ.

Suggestions

Based on the empirical findings and the patterns observed in legal knowledge and public interest among residents of the Tak Special Economic Zone, several recommendations emerge for policymakers, local administrative units, and organizations engaged in legal literacy promotion. These suggestions aim to enhance both the cognitive and motivational dimensions of legal understanding, while addressing the demographic disparities revealed in the study.

First, legal education initiatives should prioritize targeted, life-stage-specific programs. The study showed that interest in laws related to early life events such as birth registration, compulsory education, and child-related legal procedures was relatively low among older adults. This generational gap indicates that a one-size-fits-all approach is unlikely to be effective. Local administrative units may consider developing segmented legal education materials tailored to different age groups, such as youth-focused workshops on identity documentation or family law, and elder-focused modules addressing inheritance, property rights, and end-of-life legal planning. Tailoring content in this way would align legal education with citizens' lived realities, thereby increasing relevance and engagement.

Second, occupational disparities in legal knowledge suggest a need for workplace-based outreach. Individuals employed in formal sectors, particularly government and administrative work, demonstrated significantly higher legal knowledge than those in informal labor or agriculture. To address this divide, legal literacy programs could be integrated into community labor centers, farmers' cooperatives, and migrant support networks. Short, practical sessions on contract law, debt obligations, collateral use, and consumer protection would help strengthen the capacity of workers who frequently interact with moneylenders, credit shops, or informal financial arrangements. Embedding legal outreach within familiar occupational settings may also increase trust and participation, particularly among populations with limited formal education.

Third, the results highlight the importance of shifting legal literacy strategies from information-based dissemination to relevance-based engagement. The absence of correlation between legal knowledge and

legal interest suggests that supplying information alone will not necessarily motivate individuals to deepen their legal understanding. Public agencies may consider emphasizing the direct benefits of legal literacy such as financial security, family protection, and conflict prevention in order to stimulate interest. Narratives, case examples, and interactive scenarios could help illustrate how legal knowledge can reduce risks commonly encountered in border-economic zones, such as exploitative lending, contract misunderstandings, or inheritance disputes.

Fourth, community-based legal counseling should be strengthened, particularly in domains where respondents showed weaker knowledge, such as the legal status of non-registered unions, the validity of engagement for minors, and the legal transfer of ownership in sales agreements. These topics often involve complex reasoning or culturally sensitive issues, making them less accessible to individuals without formal legal training. Mobile legal clinics, rotating legal advisors, or partnerships with local universities could provide periodic consultations and informational sessions. Such initiatives would bridge knowledge gaps while fostering a culture of informed decision-making.

Fifth, cross-border and multilingual legal materials should be expanded, given the demographic diversity and mobility patterns of residents in the Tak SEZ. Many community members engage directly or indirectly with migrant populations, border trade, or cross-jurisdictional financial activities. Providing legal information in multiple languages and accessible formats visual guides, audio explanations, or simplified handbooks would ensure that legal literacy efforts resonate with a broader audience.

Finally, future research should continue to investigate the interplay between demographic factors and legal engagement, including qualitative dimensions that may not be captured through structured questionnaires. Understanding how residents perceive legal institutions, how they navigate disputes, and how social networks influence legal decision-making may offer further insights into designing effective community-level interventions.

Overall, these recommendations underscore the need for multifaceted, context-sensitive approaches that acknowledge both the structural conditions and lived experiences of communities within the Tak Special Economic Zone.

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