



LEGAL AWARENESS AND LEGAL CULTURE: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND NATIONAL APPROACHES

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Abstract

This article examines the theoretical foundations of legal awareness and legal culture, their significance in social development, and the processes of their formation based on international experience. The aim of the study is to explore international practices in developing legal culture and to identify possibilities for implementing such experiences in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Legal awareness, legal culture, international experience, legal reforms, legal education, civil society.

Introduction

In today's era of globalization and digital transformation, one of the most crucial tasks for all nations is to build a society founded on the principles of human rights, justice, and the rule of law. Although humanity has undergone various political, economic, and cultural revolutions throughout history, the issues of legal awareness and legal culture have become the cornerstone of global stability. Indeed, any development or reform begins within the human mind — in the way individuals perceive law, justice, and responsibility.

The sustainable development of every nation, the formation of democratic values, and the strengthening of civil society are directly related to the level of citizens' legal awareness and legal culture. Legal awareness is an individual's ability to perceive, understand, and evaluate legal reality, as well as to form an active attitude toward it. It integrates concepts such as law, justice, duty, and equality



into a coherent mental system, shaping individuals who act responsibly under the law.

Legal culture, in turn, represents the practical and social manifestation of legal awareness. It is reflected in the legal relations between individuals, society, and the state — in daily life, work, education, governance, and the judicial system. As Habermas (2005) notes, *“Legal culture is not only about knowing the law but about accepting it as a moral and social value.”* Thus, promoting legal culture is not merely a legal reform, but also an issue of moral and intellectual progress.

In Uzbekistan, large-scale reforms have been implemented since independence to build a democratic state and civil society. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev’s concept of *“New Uzbekistan — a state where the rule of law prevails”* has become a strategic framework for enhancing legal awareness and legal culture. This approach fosters respect for the law, strengthens public trust in justice, and creates a culture of legal consciousness.

Legal awareness and legal culture are interconnected — the former shapes lawful thinking, while the latter manifests it socially. Raising legal culture, therefore, means transforming legal thinking and justice into core social values.

Methodology

This research employs comparative legal analysis and content analysis to examine international practices in legal education and civic awareness. The institutional bases for the development of legal awareness and culture in countries such as Germany, Japan, and the United States were analyzed. Furthermore, Uzbekistan’s legal and educational reforms were evaluated using reports from the Ministry of Justice and the United Nations.

Results and Discussion

Legal awareness and legal culture complement each other as key components of social stability. Without legal awareness, individuals cannot fully comprehend or internalize the meaning of laws. Therefore, enhancing legal awareness is a prerequisite for developing legal culture — a process realized through education, media, state policy, and civil society.



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Legal culture manifests not only at the individual level but also within social institutions and governance systems. In societies with developed legal culture, laws are perceived not as a source of fear, but as guarantees of justice and order. This harmony between moral and legal norms helps build social immunity against corruption and lawlessness.

Global experience shows that the development of legal culture is not universal but deeply rooted in national traditions.

For example, in Japan, legal culture is based on the principle of “*responsibility for the benefit of society*.” As Kawamura (2017) observes, the Japanese perceive compliance with law as a moral duty and social harmony as a fundamental goal. This approach cultivates the principle of “*not for me, but for us*”, ensuring trust and stability across society.

In the United States, legal culture is grounded in civic education and free expression. As noted in *Harvard Law Review* (2020), the U.S. government allocates nearly \$2 billion annually for civic education programs, which teach students their rights, responsibilities, and active citizenship. An independent judiciary, a free press, and transparent governance all contribute to public trust and the strengthening of the rule of law.

In the European Union, legal culture is shaped by the principles of human rights, gender equality, and tolerance. The *UN Human Rights Education Programme* (2019) and UNESCO’s *Education for Justice and Peace* (2021) play key roles in fostering respect for human rights and the rule of law across member states.

Uzbekistan’s approach aligns closely with these international standards. Since independence, the country has prioritized the establishment of a “*legal state*” and “*civil society*.” The 2019 Presidential Decree on “*Enhancing Legal Awareness and Legal Culture in Society*” provided the conceptual foundation for this effort. The constitutional reforms of 2023 further strengthened human rights guarantees and reaffirmed the rule of law as a core national value.

Practical measures have also been implemented: legal information centers have been established under the Ministry of Justice, “*Adolat*” newspaper and “*Huquq bilimdoni*” contests have been launched, and “*Legal Literacy Weeks*” are regularly held across the country. According to the Ministry of Justice (2024), the



legal literacy rate among citizens increased from 38% in 2017 to 67% in 2024 — a clear indicator of progress.

Education plays a vital role in this process. The *Law on Education* (2020) makes legal studies compulsory for all students, while the “*Legal Culture — the Foundation of Social Progress*” project promotes responsible citizenship and justice-oriented thinking among youth.

Today, Uzbekistan’s experience represents a synthesis of global best practices and national values. The country’s evolving legal model embodies human dignity, justice, social solidarity, and respect for the rule of law.

Conclusion

The analysis demonstrates that legal awareness and legal culture are indispensable for sustainable national development. International experience shows that enhancing legal awareness must begin in early education and be supported by active media and civic institutions. Uzbekistan’s approach — integrating national traditions with international norms — is shaping a unique and effective model of legal culture.

A society with a high level of legal culture is one grounded in justice, freedom, and the rule of law. Thus, Uzbekistan’s “*policy for human dignity*” finds its true expression through the advancement of legal culture.

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