

The Role of Legal Psychology in the Formation of Legal Culture in the Conditions of Military Operations

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Abstract

The article aims to determine the possibilities of improving students' legal culture formation by integrating legal psychology knowledge in times of war. Through testing and a formative experiment, the study confirms the hypothesis that integrating legal psychology positively impacts the formation of students' legal culture in war conditions. Students showed average indicators of legal culture criteria, which proves that young people as subjects of the law may deliberately violate the law and be prone to illegal behaviour, discrimination, etc. Such data indicate that the students under the study may be prone to criminal behaviour under unfavourable conditions, as they have a basic level of knowledge about the legal system, unstable motivation for legal behaviour, fragmented legal competencies, a predominant orientation towards stereotyped, patriarchal values of gender culture, and different types of personal self-determination in the system of patriarchal and egalitarian coordinates. It can be argued that the legal culture formation programme significantly impacts the formation of respect for human rights in the educational environment and reduces the propensity for illegal and non-violent behaviour.

Keywords: Legal psychology, legal culture, legal knowledge, students, martial law, illegal behaviour, gender culture.

Introduction

The study of legal culture will solve significant theoretical and practical problems (Pennisi, 2022) and is especially valuable in an interdisciplinary approach to determine the impact of legal aspects of a particular society (Lomaka, 2023).

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One of the priorities of the educational process at universities is reinforcing behaviour that complies with the law (Dong & Zeb, 2022). The formation of legal culture in higher education allows the training of specialists to be aware of their rights and responsibilities and to exercise them in performing professional functions (Shadiev et al., 2021). New social challenges require a change in approaches to the legal education of students, which involves a combination of traditional and innovative academic tools (de Oliveira Fornasier, 2021; Zhylin et al., 2022). In this context, forming legal culture involves assimilating basic legal ideas and their integration into the mind (Sheng, 2023). Psychological knowledge in legal education contributes to achieving this goal, as it helps to understand the motives and emotions accompanying compliance with or violating the law (Dash & Modi, 2019). Understanding and observing legal norms occurs in a specific socio-cultural context (Cotterrell, 2019). Given this, the problem of forming a legal culture in times of war deserves special attention from scholars, which has a destructive impact on the legal system and its subjective perception (Marchenko, 2023). Higher education in wartime is characterised by several features (e.g., a steady decline in students' learning motivation) that need to be considered in systemic pedagogical influence (Bereziak et al., 2022). Forming a legal culture stabilises social interaction, reducing the risk of illegal behaviour (Baysal, 2023). That is why studying the peculiarities of legal culture formation in wartime is an urgent task from a theoretical and practical point of view.

The article aims to identify possibilities for improving the process of forming students' legal culture by integrating knowledge of legal psychology in the context of war.

Research Objectives

- to analyse the formation of legal culture in higher education in scientific sources;
- to determine the indicators of the formation of legal culture in higher education students;
- develop and test a programme for forming a legal culture based on knowledge of legal psychology.

Methods and materials

Stages of empirical research

The theoretical stage is analysing the “legal culture” concept in higher education. Particular attention was paid to the technologies and means of forming students' legal culture in different countries, especially in Ukraine, as they reflect the socio-cultural specifics of the educational system, legal norms and legal culture. The study identifies the following criteria of legal culture: motivational and value-based (motives and needs that regulate human actions in solving legal problems); cognitive and informational (knowledge of the legal system); activity and behavioural (skills and abilities that characterise a person in specific legal situations). The criteria and indicators of legal culture used in the study were taken from previous studies of a similar nature (Pidlisnyi, 2021). The theoretical analysis of the problem made it possible to determine the research hypothesis that the integration of legal psychology positively impacts the formation of students' legal culture in the context of military operations.

Research planning involves determining the algorithm of research actions and considering material, human, and time resources. This stage's central aspects were the formation of representative samples, the selection of valid data collection instruments, and the definition of effective formative experiment procedures.

The primary diagnostics was to determine the formation of students' legal culture using the selected diagnostic tools. The next stage was forming a critical legal culture, which tested the research hypothesis. Repeated diagnostics of the criteria of legal culture helped to determine the effectiveness of the formative impact.

The last stage of the study is data processing and interpretation. The article determines the change in quantitative indicators of the components of students' legal culture from the statistical significance point of view and generalises the results of the research work.

Tools

A questionnaire was used to determine the legal culture's formation level (Pidlisnyi, 2021). According to this tool, each of the components of legal culture under study has three formation levels: high, average, and low. Preliminary testing and expert assessments confirmed the validity of the questionnaire.

The use of observation is focused on recording the behaviour of the subjects during the experiment. In particular, we were interested in the following indicators: the subjects' interest in the material and the programme's tasks, the peculiarities of communication between students and experimenters during the

programme's implementation, and their emotional attitude to various aspects of the experimental work.

Formative experiment is a method aimed at establishing causal links between pedagogical influence and changes in the structure of legal culture. The study's independent variable is a programme for forming students' legal culture with the involvement of legal psychology. The dependent variable is students' legal culture's motivational, value, cognitive, informational, activity and behavioural components.

Sample

An experimental and a control group were organised to ensure control of extraneous influences, providing for the presence and absence of experimental influence. These groups were formed based on Donetsk State University of Internal Affairs. The study involved first- to fourth-year students. The control group consisted of 137 students. The experimental group consisted of 140 students. The samples were formed based on randomisation. This approach allows us to maximise the representativeness of the sample. At the same time, we avoided factors related to the researchers' personal attitudes towards the participants. Also, the sample composition allows us to test the research hypothesis and fully meet the aim of the study. The equivalence of the samples was established through expert evaluation and a survey of students and teachers.

Data collection

The authors and their assistants conducted the study. The diagnostics occurred online and offline, depending on the student's capabilities. The experimental programme for forming legal culture included 25 classes in the first half of 2023, 1–1.5 hours each. The experimental and control groups were divided into groups of 20 people each, where direct work on forming legal culture was carried out. The structure of the classes was typical: introduction, motivation of participants to work, presentation and study of new material, problem-solving, skills development, and reflection. Classes were held outside regular working hours and included a combined form of implementation (alternating online meetings and direct contact). The experimental programme made extensive use of materials from legal psychology. In particular, the following conditional modules were considered: “components of offences”, “motives of legal behaviour”, “emotional experiences in implementing legal behaviour”, “intellect and compliance with legal norms”, and “communication in legally ambiguous situations”. Analysis examples were taken from films, literature, and specific social and legal situations. In the control group, a programme for forming a legal culture was implemented, which was more

informative and did not involve the active use of a psychological component. It should be noted that in addition to the influence of the independent variable, the control and experimental samples were in identical conditions.

The data analysis involved using the tabular method, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, and the criterion of differences significance. We used the software's capabilities and data analysis to substantiate the falsity or truth of the primary hypothesis.

The ethical criteria were met by ensuring the principle of confidentiality and voluntary, informed participation in the study. The content of the experimental programme does not violate the honour and dignity of the subjects. The authors of the article have no conflict of interest.

Literature review

The concept of legal culture is used to explain the relationship between the legal system, society and human life (Čehulić, 2021). The term was first coined by Friedman (1975), who described it as part of a general culture that provides for a value-based attitude to law, defines specific legal relationships and regulates the position of the legal system in a particular society (Nikitin & Nikitina, 2023). In general, the concept is very controversial. It can have many interpretations, from the orientation of a person towards law to the consideration of legal norms about socio-cultural specifics (Nelken, 2016).

There are many scientific approaches to understanding the legal culture of an individual. Let us focus on the most typical positions. In particular, Kachur and Kozin (2021) identify the following components: intellectual (understanding of legal aspects, ability to legal education and self-education, reflection on legal actions); motivational – legal motivation, respect for the rights and freedoms of others, focus on legal education; knowledge, skills and abilities in the legal field. Professional experience and intellectual analysis of legal norms play an essential role in the functioning of the legal culture of a particular person (Hunt, 1999). Generally, it determines the legal orientation of a person's activities (Giliker, 2018). The media is essential in forming the phenomenon under study in the modern world (Haiba & Marat, 2017). Legal culture affects the adequacy of the perception of the legal system and may include stereotypes and destructive prejudices (Wijffels, 2018).

The development of legal culture is a critical factor in forming an effective rule-of-law state (Ibragimov & Makhmudova, 2020). Legal culture can be developed at different stages of life in the context of a specific educational system – preschool, school, or university (Absattarov, 2019). Within higher education, the phenomenon under study is a component of the general social identity of higher

education students, and its main element is legal knowledge and skills (Togaybaeva, 2013). The legal culture of students includes legal knowledge, value attitudes to legal norms and legally justified actions, and a way of creative self-realisation of the individual in the legal society and professional activity (Sovhira et al., 2019). Its most important functions are cognitive, regulatory, normative, communicative, prognostic, humanistic and socialising (Ashirova et al., 2021). Scholars emphasise the positive prospects for forming students' legal culture (Gafurova, 2023) and gender culture as a set of socio-economic, legal and ethnopsychological conditions for the functioning of society, which involves forming women and men as socially equal individuals. In the psychological context, the content of the values formed in gender educational discourse and the focus on the egalitarian (partnership) construct of gender interaction are relevant (Kikinezhdi et al., 2020).

Any developmental influence in the student environment should consider the specific characteristics of society, such as the impact of military operations on the activities of students. In this context, students' life plans are changing significantly due to the destabilisation of the usual rhythm of life and disappointment in the educational process (Dzhedzhera, 2022). During wartime, the destructive processes in higher education also manifest in decreased academic performance and a weakening of competence development (Diab & Schultz, 2021). Military operations also significantly worsen the financial situation of students, which determines the need to find additional work and reduce responsibility in education (Cervantes-Duarte & Fernández-Cano, 2016). These considerations are essential for adequately organising pedagogical influence and developmental work.

Legal psychology has a solid educational and developmental potential by exploring complex social topics related to law compliance (Bull, 2004). It focuses on the functioning of the psyche (emotions, intelligence, motivation, communication) in the social and legal system (Demidenko & Bilous, 2023). Recent scientific trends indicate legal psychology is an up-and-coming scientific field (Tortosa & Osca-Lluch, 2017).

The study of legal culture is of particular practical importance in the context of the correction of unlawful behaviour in the educational process. The purposeful involvement of an individual in the education system and legal education significantly reduces the risk of developing criminal behaviour (Åslund et al., 2018). Systemic higher education has a substantial impact on lowering student misconduct (Dong, 2021). In this context, it is vital to introduce the principles of gender equality in education, which, in particular, include equality of rights and opportunities, absence of discriminatory influences and respect for human dignity, implementation of innovative gender and educational technologies

in the academic and professional training of future competitive specialists in socio-economic professions (Kravets et al., 2023). That is why studying how to form a legal culture will help strengthen the impact of higher education on reducing illegal behaviour.

Results

The results of the formative experiment are shown in Table 1. The vast majority showed average indicators of motivation for legally justified behaviour. The motivational and value components in the control group changed significantly after implementing the formative experiment. The growth of students with an average score of this component of legal culture by 2.92% was recorded. Interestingly, only one student scored high on this criterion during the entire study period. A third of the subjects in the experimental group showed a decrease in their average scores during the repeated diagnosis. High scores increased by 33.57%. Such results indicate the effectiveness of legal psychology in developmental influence. The analysis of the respondents' answers in the questionnaires suggests that the most significant changes are recorded in the parameters "readiness to use legal knowledge in professional activities", "awareness of the value of one's legal status", "awareness of the value of the rights and obligations of the social environment". The most unchanged parameters of this criterion are the "desire for legal self-education" and the "desire to improve the legal culture of others".

Table 1.

Dynamics of formation of legal culture criteria in the control and experimental groups

Criteria of legal	Levels of Formation	Number of subjects							
		Control group				Experimental group			
		Primary diagnostics		Secondary diagnostics		Primary diagnostics		Secondary diagnostics	
	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	%	Quantity	
Motivational	Low	3,65	5	0,73	1	5	7	1,43	2
	Average	95,6	131	98,5	135	92,8	130	62,8	88
	High	0,73	1	0,73	1	2,14	3	35,7	50

Cognitive and	Low	10,2 2	14	6,57	9	10,7 1	15	6,43	9
	Average	78,8 3	108	70,0 7	96	79,2 9	111	70	98
	High	10,9 5	15	23,3 6	32	10	14	23,5 7	33
Activity-	Low	13,8 7	19	10,9 5	15	10	14	1,43	2
	Average	85,4	117	87,5 9	120	87,8 6	123	70,7 1	99
	High	0,73	1	1,46	2	2,14	3	27,8 6	39

In both groups, the average values of the cognitive-informational criterion prevail (80 %). At the same time, the component's high and low values were distributed similarly – 10 % of the subjects. The high values of the element in the control group increased by 12.41 %. In the experimental group, the shift in high levels of legal knowledge is at the level of 13.57%. Both groups show similar trends in students' legal culture's cognitive and informational criteria. In implementing the programme, the students' assessment of their own and others' activities in legality and justice increased. Interestingly, during the study, students demonstrated the lowest environmental, labour and civil law knowledge. The respondents' average awareness of the Constitution of Ukraine was recorded.

Diagnostics of the activity-behavioural criterion also revealed a predominance of people with average indicators. In the control group, the number of people with an average level of component development slightly increased (by 2.19%), but these changes cannot be called significant. The experimental group showed significant positive dynamics; in particular, a quarter of the students showed higher levels of legal behaviour. The percentage of people with average levels decreased by 17.15% after the experiment. As a result of the experiment, the indicators of lawful and non-victim behaviour increased the most. The ability to see legal aspects in everyday situations has also increased. The operational and technological aspects of using legal documentation and understanding of the relevant terminology remained almost unchanged.

Table 2.

Results of calculating the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion

Criteria of legal culture	Asymptotic significance	
	Control group	Experimental group
Motivational and value-based	0,732	0,442
Cognitive and informational	0,801	0,303
Activity-behavioural	0,728	0,185

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion was used to determine the feasibility of using statistical methods (Table 2). This statistical tool allows you to check the analysed statistical series for compliance with the normal distribution. For each criterion of legal culture, the asymptotic significance was more significant than 0.05, which indicates the feasibility of using parametric statistical methods.

Table 3.

Indicators of the student's t-test of the components of legal culture of the studied samples

Criteria of legal culture	Student's t-test	
	Control group	Experimental group
Motivational and value-based	1,230	3,121**
Cognitive and informational	2,177*	2,488*
Activity-behavioural	1,401	3,991**

The results of the Student's t-test are presented in Table 3. In the control group, significant changes at $p = 0.05$ were found only in the cognitive-informational criterion of legal culture ($t = 2.177$). No significant changes were recorded for the other two components in the control group. In the experimental group, substantial changes after the formative impact are observed in the motivational and value criterion ($t = 3.121$; $p = 0.01$), cognitive and informational criterion ($t = 2.488$; $p = 0.05$), activity and behavioural criterion ($t = 3.991$; $p = 0.01$). Thus, the statistical analysis results indicate the experimental programme's effectiveness.

It is worth analysing the results of observing students' behaviour during the experiment. Students were generally quite interested in the classes, but their motivation level was higher in the experimental group. At the beginning of the programme, there were difficulties with exercises and solving particular legal

problems. These students needed additional incentives and detailed explanations of certain aspects to complete the tasks.

The tasks and examples related to the war and military operations evoked the most incredible emotional response from the study participants. In particular, when analysing material about war crimes committed by the Russian Federation, students experienced outbursts of anger or, conversely, distanced themselves from the work. Emotional reactions were stimulated by information about the motivation for criminal behaviour. It is worth noting that the issues related to gender legal culture and gender-based violence provoked an active discussion. The peculiarities of gender-sensitive attitudes of student youth in subject-subject interaction were identified.

Some students had conflicts with the teacher while implementing the experimental legal culture programme. The subject of such disputes was controversial issues of the programme material, such as experiences of unlawful behaviour and the value basis for compliance with legal norms. Conflicts were limited at the stage of tension by adjusting communication.

Based on observation, several types of student behaviour can also be identified during programme implementation:

1. Calm, interested in completing the programme's tasks, and eager to communicate. Prone to questions and constructive discussions. They can argue their position on controversial legal issues in detail. However, their assessment of their success is often not deep enough.

2. Calm, not interested enough in fulfilling the content of the formative programme, prone to qualitative reflection. They do not show an active communicative position but are prone to deep reflection on the material they have learned. They do not need to communicate with the programme leader and other community members.

3. Formal participation in the study. Reflection and communication are superficial without expressed cognitive interest. They are not prone to conflict, can take a passive position and reduce verbal activity in the classroom to a minimum.

4. Destructive attitude. Such students are characterised by conflict, low motivation, and passive aggression. Insufficient responsibility in fulfilling the programme tasks. They have difficulties with an adequate assessment of their successes and problems.

It is worth noting that most students can be attributed to the first two types. The formation of such a typology opens up opportunities for further optimisation of the formation of legal culture.

Discussion

Diagnostics of the components of legal culture show the total dominance of average indicators at the student age. That is, it can be assumed that students have a certain level of knowledge about the legal system, relatively stable motivation for legal behaviour, and fragmentary legal skills. The fact that most students do not have high levels of legal culture may indicate difficulties in understanding and perceiving the legal system in modern society. This trend can be explained by the social crisis and ineffective functioning of the judiciary, which causes people to lose faith in Ukrainian justice. Our assumption is consistent with the idea that legal culture depends on socio-cultural conditions (Cotterrell, 2019). The experimental programme, which included the introduction of elements of legal psychology in the process of forming legal culture, proved effective in all respects. The system of exercises demonstrated the most negligible effectiveness in the case of the cognitive and informational criterion. The data on the possibility and efficacy of targeted formation of students' legal culture are confirmed (Gafurova, 2023). The role of an interdisciplinary approach in forming legal culture manifested in the integrated functioning of psychology, pedagogy and law has also been confirmed (Lomaka, 2023). A positive aspect of the formative impact is a better understanding of students' rights and responsibilities, which will affect future professional activities' effectiveness (Shadiev et al., 2021).

In our study, we were guided by Friedman's (1975) opinion regarding the structure and essence of the individual's legal culture. We believe this approach has not lost its relevance but needs to be expanded when considering modern realities. In particular, the criteria we used (Pidlisnyi, 2021) reflect the psychological characteristics of a person in terms of perception of the legal system. However, this approach should also be clarified. In particular, it is advisable to consider, separately from the intellectual component, a distinctive reflexive component of legal culture that determines the degree of comprehension and depth of assimilation of legal ideas. The scholars' opinion about prejudices and stereotypes regarding legal activities is correct (Wijffels, 2018). This is especially relevant in the context of studying the gender culture of students and the formation of a gender-fair, non-discriminatory environment in higher education institutions on the path to the EU and ensuring a national mechanism for building a parity democracy in Ukraine (Kikinezhdi et al., 2020; Shablystiy & Liudvik, 2023). We also agree with the prospects for developing theoretical and practical legal psychology (Tortosa & Osca-Lluch, 2017). The potential of this science allows optimising processes in the field of legal education of students, which is confirmed by the empirical data we have obtained. We believe that further improvement of the programme we have developed requires more careful consideration of the peculiarities of students in

times of war. Thus, it is necessary to focus on the possible loss of the meaning of life and the destruction of the life plans of students (Dzhedzhera, 2022), which can negatively affect the quality of the programme objectives and the assimilation of the information offered. In addition, during wartime, destructive processes in higher education manifested a decrease in academic performance and a weakening of competence development (Diab & Schultz, 2021).

Theoretical sources do not sufficiently cover the formation of legal culture in wartime. In this context, the data obtained during the experiment are relevant. Forming a legal culture in wartime should be implemented to ensure participants' emotional support and resilience. Before starting pedagogical activities, it is necessary to determine students' emotional indicators. Particular attention should be paid to the target groups of students from sensitive categories of the population - IDPs, military personnel, relatives of killed or wounded soldiers, etc. One should be very careful about the legal analysis of war-related issues. Such situations should be considered from a legal point of view, controlling the experience as much as possible. If students do not want to discuss specific topics, it is better to change the pedagogical strategy. It is advisable to coordinate efforts with the psychologist of the educational institution to form a legal culture in the context of war.

Limitations

The strategy of presenting the material in control and experimental groups was somewhat different. For example, implementing the formative programme, in addition to elements of legal psychology, included an even more significant number of exercises to develop skills in navigating legal problems. Therefore, the conclusions about the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable should be clarified in further research.

Conclusions

The conducted experimental study and the analysis of empirical data confirm the research hypothesis that the integration of knowledge of legal psychology positively impacts the formation of students' legal culture in the context of military operations. In the student period, the average indicators of the formation of legal culture prevail. The studied students have basic knowledge about the legal system, unstable motivation for legal behaviour, fragmentary legal competencies, and ambivalent views of gender culture. Such data indicate that the subjects may be prone to illegal behaviour under unfavourable conditions. The experimental programme, which used legal psychology knowledge in forming legal culture, proved effective in terms of motivational and value, cognitive and informational,

and activity and behavioural criteria. The system of exercises demonstrated the most minor effectiveness in terms of the dynamics of legal knowledge acquisition. It can be argued that the programme used impacts reducing the propensity to engage in illegal behaviour. The practical significance of the results obtained is to improve legal education in the higher education system. The empirical data obtained also allows us to improve educational programmes during wartime. We see further prospects for the study in clarifying the gender aspect of the formation of students' legal culture in times of war, the scientific justification of women's involvement in the security and peacebuilding sector, the fight against gender-based violence, as well as overcoming gender stereotypes, strengthening human rights education and educating students in the spirit of democratic citizenship.

Recommendations:

- The administration of universities and guarantors of educational programmes should plan additional legal education disciplines (normative and elective).
- Strengthen the legal aspect of education in the context of teaching humanities disciplines.
- To use knowledge of legal psychology to form a legal culture and reduce the risk of students' criminal behaviour.
- Problem-based teaching should be actively used to form students' legal culture.
- As a stimulus for the development of legal culture, it is advisable to analyse materials from films and literature.
- Teachers must moderate discussions on controversial legal and psychological issues in the educational environment to control conflict and ensure optimal interaction.
- Provide conditions for the formation of emotional self-control of students as a condition for preventing criminal behaviour.

Administrative obstacles, namely the lack of managerial flexibility, may hinder the implementation of these recommendations. That is, the implementation of legal culture programmes may go beyond the focus of the educational programme and the specifics of the university's activities. It is advisable to introduce a position on the relevance of legal culture formation in the Charters of specific universities to overcome this barrier. Managers and administrators of educational institutions should undergo appropriate training. It is also advisable to organise roundtables and seminars on this issue.

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