

THE ROLE OF KARANG TARUNA IN STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEGAL AWARENESS OF THE YOUNG GENERATION OF BUKIT LITI VILLAGE, PULANG PISAU REGENCY

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Abstract: Bukit Liti Village in Kahayan Tengah District, Pulang Pisau Regency, is one of the villages that continues to grow through various facility improvements and empowerment-oriented village programs aimed at improving community welfare. Amidst this development spirit, increasing political participation and legal awareness among youth and Karang Taruna (Youth Organization) administrators remains a neglected component of development, even though political participation and legal awareness are two factors that contribute to the success of a village's development. This study employed a qualitative, participatory approach with action research methods. In-depth interviews and direct observations were conducted with Karang Taruna administrators, village officials, and village youth. The results indicate that alignment between the village government and Karang Taruna administrators is key to implementing activities and programs aligned with the strategic development vision. Furthermore, the Karang Taruna's strategic approach, which includes humanistic, socio-cultural, and participatory approaches, is a key factor in fostering political participation and legal awareness among the village's youth.

Keywords: Awareness, Participation, Youth, Karang Taruna

Introduction

The ongoing process of democratization in Indonesia is not something achieved effortlessly; rather, it represents a continuum of the people's struggle that must be sustained and transformed into societal life. Political participation and legal awareness are two essential components that directly contribute to the development of democracy in Indonesia and other nations. Consequently, efforts to enhance political participation and legal awareness have become strategic agendas for both the government and society in building a civilized democratic community.

Enhancing youth political participation is not merely about encouragement or persuasion. As stated by Sentosa et al. (2025), increasing political participation among young people requires adequate support, particularly through education, to ensure that they first understand their rights and obligations as citizens. Civic education carries the mission of cultivating civic intelligence and virtue among citizens, including the youth, one of which is the development of legal awareness. A key factor



in achieving this is a sound understanding of the prevailing legal regulations (Kurniyawan & Tanszil, 2024).

In the broader context of democratic development, the village holds a significant role as the smallest social unit. Villages today are granted greater autonomy through initiatives such as the Village Fund (*Dana Desa*) and other policies, enabling many to advance rapidly—both in infrastructure and in non-physical development. These changes, as noted by Ismail et al. (2020), have led to more efficient use of time and resources, gradually reducing rural poverty. Furthermore, Sari and Yudhistira (2023) emphasize that the Village Fund has a strong correlation with community welfare, serving as a catalyst for rural development and directly improving the electability of village leaders.

Village progress, however, is influenced by many factors beyond financial resources—one of the most strategic being the youth generation. In political and legal dimensions, young people play a pivotal role in shaping local political systems and strengthening the rule of law. As Zaenuddin et al. (2025) explain, youth organizations such as *KNPI* (Indonesian Youth National Committee) have contributed to political education among young villagers, thereby enhancing youth political participation. Similarly, Azmi, Ikhwan, and Listyaningsih (2024) highlight the *Desa Patriot* program in West Java, where rural youth are trained to contribute to economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental problem-solving.

Nevertheless, apathy, individualism, and distrust have emerged as significant challenges among young generations. Many rural youths are disinterested in community development, politics, or legal issues. Siregar (2024) found that disappointment with elites and institutions, corruption cases, and socio-economic pressures are key determinants of political distrust among young people. Although the impact of this distrust on voting participation is relatively minor, it signals a deeper detachment from civic engagement. Similarly, Morissan (2016) observed that growing individualism and antisocial behavior among youth weaken social sensitivity, including awareness of political and legal responsibilities.

These trends create potential risks for power misuse and stagnation in village development. Youth are valuable assets capable of transforming rural life, yet neglecting their role endangers progress. As noted by Asmaul Husna (2019), youth disillusionment with institutions, lack of political knowledge, and apathy contribute to the declining preparedness of future leaders.

The potential of rural youth must therefore be actualized through external support. One of the key actors in empowering rural youth is *Karang Taruna* a village-based youth organization. According to the Regulation of the Minister of Social Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia No. 25 of 2019 on *Karang Taruna*, the organization is not solely focused on socioeconomic activities, but is also mandated to promote social, national, and civic awareness as well as legal consciousness among youth. As Mohammad Rafiie et al. (2025) suggest, villages should facilitate youth, including *Karang Taruna* members, in accessing legal education to strengthen their civic and political engagement. This implies that rural advancement must be deliberately prepared, not merely expected as a byproduct of demographic or economic bonuses.

However, in practice, legal awareness and political participation remain relatively unpopular among rural youth compared to their urban counterparts. Observations in Bukit Liti Village, Kahayan Tengah District, Pulang Pisau Regency, Central Kalimantan, indicate that most young people pay little attention to political or legal issues in their village—such as involvement in village deliberations or participation in local elections. Noviyantho et al. (2025) found that urban youth demonstrate higher political participation due to greater social media engagement, supported by better connectivity, longer usage duration, and denser online networks.

Despite this, Azmi et al. (2024) argue that levels of participation in social organizations between rural and urban youth are not significantly different. The key distinction lies in access to information, urban youth have broader opportunities. Moreover, Fehser et al. (2025) observed that

urban youth tend to feel more appreciated by their governments, while in villages, political structures remain hierarchical and exclusive, leaving many rural youths feeling excluded from local systems.

In some cases, low legal awareness among rural youth manifests in problematic behaviors such as social media misuse and alcohol consumption. Zainuddin and Salle (2022) reported that a majority of rural youths lack understanding of the ethical use of social media; alarmingly, 72% had violated online regulations. This underscores the urgent need to promote digital and legal literacy among rural youth.

In addressing these issues, *Karang Taruna* plays a strategic role. As illustrated in the study by *Taruna Desa Blumbang & Purbalingga Skripsi* (n.d.), *Karang Taruna* can be empowered to prevent juvenile delinquency by involving youth in positive community activities. Similarly, Herini et al. (2025) found that youth participation in entrepreneurship and other productive initiatives helps prevent social deviance such as drug abuse.

In Bukit Liti Village, *Karang Taruna* is already established; however, preliminary observations reveal that its organizational function remains suboptimal. Several factors contribute to this: 1) The leadership and organizational management of *Karang Taruna Bukit Liti* are still developing and have not yet reached an established level due to its recent formation; 2) The organization's vision and mission are not yet well-structured, resulting in a lack of alignment between goals and actions; 3) Orientation and training for *Karang Taruna* administrators remain limited, leading to heavy dependence on leadership directions for program initiatives and execution.

Based on this background, this study adopts a **Research and Development (R&D)** approach focused on enhancing political literacy and legal awareness among rural youth. The research begins with the internalization of legal and political literacy among *Karang Taruna* members of Bukit Liti Village. It focuses on two primary objectives: 1) to measure the responses of *Karang Taruna* administrators toward the internalization process, and 2) to examine how *Karang Taruna* disseminates and applies this knowledge to improve political participation and legal awareness among the village youth.

Method

This study employs a participatory–qualitative approach using an action research method. This approach was selected because it is collaborative and transformative, allowing the researcher and the target community (*Karang Taruna*) to work together in identifying problems, designing solutions, and reflecting on the changes that occur. It is also aligned with the principles of citizenship education, which emphasize active participation, critical reflection, and social responsibility. The problem-solving steps in this research include:

- 1) Preliminary study and mapping of the legal–political awareness of youth in Bukit Liti Village through interviews, observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).
- 2) Designing a legal and political literacy program based on the local context and the needs of village youth, involving the active participation of *Karang Taruna* at every stage.
- 3) Implementing the literacy program, which consists of disseminating the designed media products to the youth of Bukit Liti Village.
- 4) Evaluation and reflection to measure changes in attitudes, understanding, and legal–political participation of village youth through questionnaires or open-ended questions.

This approach is believed to be capable of producing contextual, practical, and sustainable solutions.

Result and Discussion

Before discussing the changes or impacts resulting from the internalization process, this section first presents the findings from interviews conducted with the administrators of *Karang Taruna* in Bukit Liti Village. The first aspect concerns **motivation**. In general, the *Karang Taruna* administrators stated that their involvement in the organization stemmed from a desire to contribute



to village development. This finding aligns with the theory of **civic engagement**, which posits that young people or citizens are more likely to participate when they possess confidence and belief that they can influence policymaking by joining relevant associations or organizations (Miura et al., 2025; Maulana & Milanti, 2023).

The participation of rural youth generally remains limited to incidental activities such as village head elections (*Pilkades*) or general elections (*Pemilu*). Several factors contribute to this, including a lack of political education, economic constraints, limited time availability, and a tendency toward pragmatic motivation. These findings are consistent with Ilmar et al. (2023), who noted that youth inactivity largely stems from an underdeveloped participatory ecosystem and limited access to political information. Moreover, rural youth tend to equate development solely with physical infrastructure, lacking awareness of human resource development or other abstract forms of progress.

One potential solution is **political education interventions through online learning**, which have proven effective in increasing youth engagement and awareness of politics (“Educational Intervention Program for Young Voters: Improving Political Knowledge and Voting Behavior in the 2020 Simultaneous Local Elections,” 2022).

The study also found that *Karang Taruna* administrators’ awareness of legal and political issues remains relatively low, with their knowledge being more practical and experience-based (e.g., participating in elections) rather than conceptual. This reflects a broader condition among rural youth. Furthermore, the relationship between *Karang Taruna* and the village government remains weak interaction tends to occur only when specific events or activities are organized. This situation indicates that the vision, mission, and empowerment of *Karang Taruna* as an essential village component have not yet been effectively realized. The organization’s involvement remains technical rather than strategic.

Several factors contribute to this condition. Ardiyansya Nur & Tenri Padang (2021) explain that the limited optimization of *Karang Taruna*’s potential and role is caused by the exclusion of youth organizations from village planning and decision-making processes, weak institutional collaboration between *Karang Taruna* and local authorities, and the limited capacity of *Karang Taruna* members.

In addition to interviews with the core administrators, information gathered from other members and village youth revealed that their understanding of legal and political issues remains low. Although the village government occasionally conducts socialization programs, participation tends to be minimal. Consequently, many youths rely more on social media for learning about law and politics rather than formal educational sources such as books.

Interestingly, this low literacy level is not due to the absence of reading materials the village has a public library that provides books on politics and law. However, young people’s **interest in reading remains weak**, largely due to economic pressures that compel them to prioritize work over study, as well as a pragmatic orientation toward immediate results.

Furthermore, young people prefer seeking information through **social media** rather than traditional reading, as it is perceived to be more engaging and enjoyable. Salleh @ Abdul Latif et al. (2024) note that the penetration of social media as an information source among youth is extremely high, especially in information processing. Compared with books and other conventional media, social media provides faster, easier, and more attractive access to information, whereas learning through books requires more time, concentration, and effort.

Upon deeper reflection, both the youth and *Karang Taruna* administrators of Bukit Liti Village acknowledge that learning about law and politics to foster legal awareness and political participation is not an easy task. The **complexity of the subject matter** serves as a major obstacle. Although the goal is not to transform youth into legal or political experts, the absence of structured guidance and clear learning pathways makes the process difficult. Marshman et al. (n.d.) argue that self-directed learning without supervision or mentoring tends to be less effective than guided learning with teacher facilitation. Learners who study independently without mentors or discussion partners

often struggle to apply their knowledge to practical contexts or real-life situations. This supports the view that few succeed through self-learning compared to those who learn through structured mentorship.

Despite these challenges, the youth and *Karang Taruna* administrators of Bukit Liti Village exhibit strong enthusiasm and willingness to learn. They expressed a desire for **training in legal and political education**, particularly in the areas of: 1) **Advocacy skills**; 2) **Basic legal principles**; and 3) **Understanding electoral processes**.

These competencies are essential for rural youth especially *Karang Taruna* administrators to strengthen civic participation and legal consciousness amid the accelerating flow of digital information. Shetunyenga (2024) emphasizes that youth play a vital role from the planning to the evaluation stages of village development, ensuring inclusivity and accelerating progress. The following section outlines the **benefits and applications** of learning basic legal principles, advocacy skills, and electoral literacy among rural youth and *Karang Taruna* members.

Table 1.

Correlation Between the Internalization of Basic Legal Principles, Advocacy, and Electoral Literacy with the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills of Rural Youth

Aspects and Benefits of the Fields of Study		
Basic Principles of Law	Advocacy Skills	Electoral Literacy
To Serve as an Agent or Facilitator in Providing Basic Legal Education to the Community	To Enhance Self-Confidence in Expressing and Articulating Aspirations Appropriately and Legally	To Understand the Democratic Process, Enabling Youth Not Only to Exercise Their Voting Rights but Also to Monitor the Implementation of Elections
To Actively Participate in Resolving Various Social Issues Fairly and in Accordance with Legal Principles	To Prevent, Reduce, and Resolve Conflicts Through More Humanistic, Persuasive, and Constructive Approaches	To Provide Foundational Knowledge and Skills for Youth to Serve as Election Supervisors or Organizers in the Future
To Know, Understand, and Apply Various Legal Regulations in Everyday Life	To Equip Youth with the Ability to Channel Community Aspirations Effectively	To Foster a Sense of Responsibility Among Youth Toward the Implementation of Democracy at the Village Level
To Understand Rights and Obligations as Part of Citizenship	To Serve as a Bridge Between the Community and Village Government or Other Institutions	To Serve as Agents of Political Education and Socialization, Encouraging Other Citizens to Become Critical and Intelligent Voters Who Are Not Easily Influenced by Money Politics or Campaign Promises
To Develop Legal Awareness in Order to Avoid Legal Violations and Misconduct	To Build Solidarity and Equality Among Youth in Strengthening Collective Power to Pursue Common	To Develop Political Awareness That Enhances Participation and a Sense of Responsibility as Part of the Political System

Source: Data Processed by the Researcher (2025)

From the table above, several key points can be identified. First, it is essential for both youth and the community to understand the basic principles of law, particularly in recognizing rights, obligations, and the mechanisms for addressing conflicts or legal issues. Numerous studies have shown that providing legal education significantly enhances legal awareness. For instance, a study conducted by Febrianty et al. (2025) found that participants who received legal education achieved an average legal awareness score of 4.10 substantially higher than those who had never participated in such programs (average score 3.30), with a large effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.80$). Furthermore, Donny Seta (2024) emphasized that community-based legal education substantially improves both legal awareness and the community's capacity to address local issues.

Second, advocacy is considered effective when rural youth are able to assist their communities in resolving social issues at least at the local level. According to Rappaport (1987) as cited in Zimmerman (1995), within the framework of empowerment theory, advocacy functions as a form of empowerment that strengthens a community's bargaining position. In Indonesia, appropriate advocacy practices have proven successful in enhancing access to justice and community capacity. For example, legal empowerment initiatives conducted by organizations such as MaPPI FHUI and APIK Jakarta for community paralegals have strengthened access to justice for women and children (Indonesian Judicial Research Society [IJS], 2024).

Third, understanding the electoral process, including village elections (Pilkades), enables rural youth not only to exercise their voting rights but also to engage in conscious, meaningful participation. Theories of political participation (Putnam; Milbrath & Goel) assert that meaningful participation strengthens democratic communities. A study by Azmi et al. (2024) in several villages in Temanggung revealed that while political participation in terms of voter turnout is relatively high, youth involvement in voicing development aspirations remains low. This suggests that youth advocacy capacity does not necessarily correlate with their overall participation levels. Rustandi and Suryadi (2023), in a global literature review on political participation, conclude that inclusive and critical youth when nurtured through youth organizations can become a significant force in strengthening democratic civilization.

The aspects of basic legal knowledge, advocacy, and electoral literacy together form a strong foundation for developing youth who are active, participatory, and capable problem solvers. Leadership development theory (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) emphasizes that leadership grows through experience, morality, and socio-political capability. In the same spirit, UNICEF and Bappenas highlight the urgency of creating spaces for youth actualization as a means to cultivate a generation that is active, participative, and engaged in development.

Based on the results of the internalization of legal and political awareness conducted by the research team, it was found that village youth and Karang Taruna members felt greatly assisted and reported a clearer understanding of fundamental legal principles particularly the importance of developing legal awareness and participating actively in political life.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and analysis of the research results, several important conclusions can be drawn. First, conceptually, Karang Taruna holds a strategic role in accelerating village development. However, in practice, only a few Karang Taruna organizations are able to perform their roles and functions optimally. The lack of institutional coordination and collaboration between village governments and Karang Taruna is identified as the primary factor that hinders the optimization of these functions. Second, the Karang Taruna of Bukit Liti Village, after receiving educational and training interventions on legal awareness and political participation, demonstrated a greater understanding and enhanced capacity to fulfill its organizational roles. Members were able to conduct socialization activities and promote legal awareness and political participation among other youth within the community. Third, it is necessary to establish synergy between village governments and Karang Taruna to strengthen collaborative efforts in village development. Furthermore, legal and

political education programs should be made a priority agenda for Karang Taruna as part of efforts to promote sustainable village development, particularly in non-physical (human and civic) aspects.

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