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## Optimizing Legal Awareness and Critical Thinking Education Through Moot Court Simulation

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**Abstract:** This study examines the optimization of legal awareness and critical thinking skills through trial simulations (moot courts) among Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) students at STKIP Pasundan Cimahi. Using a case study method, this study aims to evaluate how the implementation of moot courts can improve students' legal understanding and critical thinking skills in the context of legal education. The case study method is applied by observing and analyzing student participation in moot court activities. Data were collected through direct observation, interviews, and questionnaires involving students and lecturers. The main focus of this study was to identify changes in legal awareness, level of involvement, and development of critical thinking skills before and after participating in trial simulations. The results showed that participation in moot courts significantly increased students' legal awareness and encouraged the development of critical thinking skills. Students showed a better understanding of legal principles and their practical applications in trial situations. In addition, active involvement in this simulation provided direct experience that enriched their legal knowledge and strengthened their analytical and argumentative skills. This study concludes that moot court is an effective method to improve legal awareness and critical thinking skills among PPKn students, and recommends further integration of this method in higher legal education curricula.

**Keywords:** Moot Court, Legal Awareness, Critical Thinking, Civics Education, Case Study Method.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education that can provide legal awareness and critical thinking skills is an important component in forming competent and integrated individuals in society. These skills are not only needed for those who aspire to have a career in law, but also for every citizen who wants to contribute actively and effectively to society. By having a deep understanding of legal principles and the ability to analyze and critically formulate arguments, individuals can make better decisions, understand their rights and obligations, and participate in the democratic process more responsibly. Law functions as a means of social renewal (Kusumaatmadja, M. 2006) to maximize its role in social change, effective educational methods are needed to increase legal awareness and critical thinking skills. One method that has proven effective is moot court simulation. Moot court simulation offers a unique opportunity for participants to experience the judicial process firsthand, allowing them to understand and apply legal principles in a practical context. Through this simulation, participants can deepen their understanding of the justice system, legal procedures, and effective argument delivery skills.

According to Rahardjo (2010), law is not just text and regulations that are stated but also contains a deeper meaning than the law itself. This view emphasizes that law has a very important role in people's lives because it is directly related to the culture and social norms of society. In this context,

moot court simulations play a significant role by training participants to think critically and make rational decisions. By facing simulated legal cases, participants not only hone their analytical and argumentative skills but also learn to assess various complex legal perspectives. Practical experience through moot courts helps enrich participants' understanding of how law works in practice and strengthens their readiness to contribute effectively to society. By integrating a deep understanding of the meaning of law as expressed by Rahardjo, legal education can be a more effective tool in preparing individuals to face legal and social challenges in the real world. Through this approach, moot court simulations not only teach legal theory but also apply these principles in contexts that are relevant to the culture and norms of society.

In fact, although moot court simulations offer various benefits, several fundamental problems still need to be addressed to maximize their effectiveness. First, while moot court simulations allow participants to understand and apply legal principles in practice, there is often a gap between theory and practice. Participants may face challenges in connecting legal concepts learned in class to the legal situations they encounter in the simulation. This limitation can lead to difficulties in effectively applying legal principles in real-world contexts. Second, while these simulations are designed to enhance participants' understanding of the justice system and legal procedures, there are often shortcomings in terms of the representation and complexity of the simulated cases. The cases presented in moot courts may not fully reflect real-world legal challenges, so participants may not get a full picture of the dynamics and nuances of a real trial. Third, in terms of argument delivery skills, moot court simulations can expose participants to problems in terms of the feedback they receive. Feedback that is less than constructive or inadequate can limit participants' ability to develop their argumentation skills effectively. Furthermore, the lack of guidance from mentors or experienced legal practitioners in the simulation can diminish the quality of the participants' learning experience.

Moot court activities offer significant benefits to students and can be extended to various disciplines to improve legal awareness and critical thinking skills more broadly. This simulation allows participants to practice in a context that is close to the reality of the legal world, explore legal applications, trial strategies, and professional ethics, and form deep and reflective thinking about the role of law in society. This is expected to produce professionals who are technically skilled and have broad legal insights, which in turn support the development of good citizen character and the sustainability of national and state life. However, the implementation of moot courts requires significant resources, such as time and facilities, which may not be available in all institutions. In addition, the effectiveness of moot courts in forming civic dispositions directly needs to be questioned, because the formation of character and ethical values often requires a more holistic and diverse educational approach. As Susanto (2016) states, the development of citizen character is necessary for the sustainability of national and state life. Thus, while moot courts have great potential, their success in achieving broader goals requires attention to the limitations and context of existing education. This study offers innovation in the field of Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) by examining the application of the moot court method as a tool to improve legal awareness and critical thinking skills among students. The main innovation of this study is the application of an in-depth case study approach in the context of PPKn education at STKIP Pasundan Cimahi, which provides empirical insight into the effectiveness of moot courts in a specific academic environment. Unlike previous studies that may have focused more on the theory or implementation of moot courts in law faculties, this study integrates the perspective of citizenship education, showing how this method can be adapted to improve legal understanding in the context of PPKn. The results of this study are expected to provide data-based recommendations for the development of a more effective PPKn curriculum, by integrating moot courts as a practical and interactive learning method. This helps educational

institutions in designing teaching materials that are more relevant to the needs of legal awareness and critical thinking skills in students.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a case study method according to Maxfield, F. N. (1930) Case Study is a research approach that emphasizes an in-depth understanding of an individual or entity in the context of their overall personality. In this study, researchers use case studies to evaluate how the application of moot court simulations can improve students' legal understanding and critical thinking skills in the context of legal education. This approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of student participation in moot court activities and the changes that occur in their understanding and skills. The case study method is applied to provide a comprehensive picture of students' experiences during moot court simulations. This study directly observes how students interact with simulated legal cases and how this experience affects their legal understanding and critical thinking skills. This study involved students from the PPKn 2-A group at the Pasundan Teacher Training and Education College (STKIP Pasundan), Cimahi. The lecturers involved in this study were Dr. Neneng Tripuspita, S.H., M.Pd. Data were collected using several methods, namely direct observation, namely Researchers conducted direct observations of student participation in moot court activities to record their interactions, strategies, and performance during the simulation. Furthermore, interviews were conducted with students and lecturers to gain in-depth insights into their experiences, perceptions of moot court activities, and their impact on legal understanding and critical thinking skills. Data collected from observations, interviews, were analyzed to identify patterns and trends related to changes in students' legal awareness and critical thinking skills. This analysis aims to measure the effectiveness of the implementation of moot courts in improving both aspects.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that participation in moot court significantly increases students' legal awareness. Through trial simulations, students are given the opportunity to interact with complex legal cases, allowing them to better understand legal principles in a practical context. Involvement in this activity helps students realize the importance of applying legal theory in real situations and how law functions in the justice system. Observation results show that students show an increased understanding of various aspects of law that may not have been fully understood before. According to Belladonna, A.P. (2024), a person's character or personality can be greatly influenced by in-depth practical experience. This is in line with the findings of Sunarso et al. (2024) who emphasized that critical and analytical thinking skills are important elements in shaping citizen competence. Participation in moot courts provides students with the opportunity to be directly involved with complex legal cases, which broadens their understanding of legal principles in a more real context. This study shows that through trial simulations, students not only learn to apply legal theory in practical situations but also gain in-depth insight into how law functions in the justice system. This experience allows students to realize the importance of the application of law in practice and how law can affect various aspects of their social and professional lives. Observations revealed that students experienced an increased understanding of various aspects of law that they may not have fully mastered before. This finding supports Belladonna's view that practical experience, such as that gained from moot court, can enrich an individual's character and deepen their understanding of important aspects of their professional life, and is in line with Sunarso et al.'s emphasis that critical thinking skills are integral to forming effective legal competence. To communicate professional competence, it is necessary to rely on the generic pattern of problem-solution (Blazkova, H, 2011). In an interview

with AP, a PPKn student from STKP Pasundan, Cimahi, revealed that the moot court simulation had given me a deeper understanding of the application of legal theory in practice. AP stated:

"The moot court simulation gave me a deeper understanding of how legal theory is applied in practice. I not only learned about the law from books, but also how to deal with real and challenging legal situations. This greatly enriched my learning experience and made me more prepared for future legal practice."

This statement highlights how participation in moot court not only broadens students' legal understanding but also provides them with hands-on experience that is essential for their readiness to face real legal challenges. This is in line with the views of Suyato, Y Hidayah, and Y Ismiyani (2024), who emphasized that critical thinking skills are a key component in shaping the competence of a democratic society. These skills are important in the context of moot court because trial simulations encourage students to think analytically, make rational decisions, and assess various legal perspectives in depth.

In an interview with NP, the lecturer in charge of the course, it was revealed that the moot court method made a significant contribution to the development of students' critical thinking skills. NP stated,

"Through moot court, students not only learn how to construct legal arguments, but also how to think critically and analyze cases from various perspectives. I see a significant improvement in their critical thinking skills and how they present arguments in front of the court. This is an important indicator of the success of this learning method."

This statement supports the findings of the study which shows that moot court is not only a tool for learning to construct legal arguments, but also serves as an effective platform for training students in critical and analytical thinking.

As stated by JD Saputro & Y Hidayah (2024) that critical thinking skills are a very important element. Critical thinking refers to a person's ability to distinguish relevant information from irrelevant information, connect ideas, conclude and justify whether certain assumptions are acceptable or unacceptable (Jaswal, P., & Behera, B, 2024). Through moot court, students are given the opportunity to not only understand legal theory but also apply it in a practical context by facing various complex legal situations. The increase in critical thinking skills observed by NP indicates that this method is effective in preparing students for the challenges they face in real legal practice. Thus, moot court plays an important role in ensuring that students not only have legal knowledge, but also the analytical and argumentative skills essential for success in the legal profession. Moot court has a very positive impact on students' legal awareness and critical thinking skills. By providing a trial simulation experience that is close to a real legal situation, moot court allows students to directly apply legal principles in a practical context. This gives them the opportunity to not only understand legal theory but also develop analytical and argumentative skills that are essential in legal practice. Through participation in this simulation, students can deepen their understanding of how law functions in the justice system and how legal theory is translated into practice.

According to Sanusi, A. (1991), the educational process is an effort to instill and change positive values through empowerment and development of students' personalities. According to Rimiene, V, (2002) the development of critical thinking is an important step in achieving holistic educational goals. In the context of moot court, this process is reflected in the way students are faced with complex and challenging legal situations, which effectively develop their critical thinking skills. This simulation

not only helps students understand legal theory but also prepares them to face practical challenges that they may encounter in their legal careers. Thus, moot court acts as a powerful educational tool in shaping students' competence and readiness for the real world of law. This finding underscores the importance of integrating moot courts into the legal education curriculum. By including this method as an integral part of the learning process, legal education institutions can be more effective in preparing students to face the complexities and challenges of the real world of law. Moot courts provide a platform that allows students to hone their critical thinking skills and apply legal principles in realistic contexts, making them a very valuable component in legal education.

This study revealed that moot court significantly encourages the development of students' critical thinking skills. According to Sunarso et al. (2024), critical thinking skills are an important element in shaping a person's academic and professional competence. In this case, during the moot court simulation, students are faced with various challenges, such as evaluating evidence, building supporting arguments, and making decisions based on information that is often complex and ambiguous. This process forces students to use analytical and rational thinking, as well as the ability to consider various legal perspectives, which are key components in developing effective legal skills. According to Aston, K. J. (2023), practical experience allows for direct involvement. Lee, D. E. (2006) added that simulations such as moot courts also encourage students to consider diverse legal perspectives that they may not have thought of in a more conventional academic context.

Through trial simulations, students practice constructing arguments from various legal positions and responding effectively to opposing arguments. This experience trains them to think more flexibly and comprehensively, equipping them with the skills necessary to deal with complex and dynamic legal cases in the real world. Thus, the integration of methods such as moot courts into the legal education curriculum not only deepens the understanding of theory but also improves students' ability to apply legal principles better in practice. Interviews conducted in this study support these findings by confirming that students felt more skilled in assessing cases from various perspectives after participating in moot courts. They reported improved ability to construct logical and structured arguments, as well as in adapting to complex legal perspectives. These skills are essential in legal practice, as they allow students to approach cases with a more comprehensive and informed approach. Moot court simulations, therefore, not only help students understand legal theory but also prepare them practically for real legal challenges through the development of in-depth critical thinking skills. Participation in moot courts provides students with a valuable opportunity to practice communication skills that are crucial in the legal context. As stated by Kuncorowati, P. W. (2009), legal education aims to form individuals who understand their rights and obligations as citizens, and one way to achieve this is by developing communication skills. Through moot court, students learn to convey arguments persuasively and effectively in front of an audience, and respond to opposing arguments professionally. This experience not only improves their public speaking skills, but also their writing and legal argumentation skills. These skills are essential to prepare them for the challenges of the legal profession, where good communication skills can make a big difference in the outcome of a case. This study shows that moot court has a significant positive impact on students' legal awareness and critical thinking skills. According to Hasibuan, Malayu S. (2013), the effectiveness of legal education lies not only in knowledge of applicable laws, but also in a deep understanding of the contents of these regulations which fosters legal awareness. According to Takwim, T., et al. (2024) knowledge of laws is part of the national commitment. By participating in moot court, students are given the opportunity to apply legal principles in scenarios that closely resemble real trial experiences, allowing them to integrate theory with practice.

This simulation not only deepens students' understanding of how the law functions in a practical context, but also significantly improves their critical thinking skills. The findings of this study

emphasize the importance of integrating moot courts into the legal education curriculum, as this activity prepares students to face the challenges and complexities of the real world of law. By practicing in an environment that resembles a real trial situation, students can develop essential analytical and argumentation skills, and increase their awareness of the application of law in practical situations. The results of the study showed that participation in moot court significantly increased students' legal awareness. Through trial simulations, students get the opportunity to interact with complex legal cases, allowing them to apply legal principles in a practical context. According to Y. Hidayah & R.P. Hamonangan (2024), involvement not only deepens students' understanding of theory but also improves their ability to face real challenges. This hands-on experience enriches their knowledge of how the law is applied in practice and strengthens analytical skills that are essential for the legal profession.

Direct involvement in these activities helps students understand how the law is applied in real situations and how various aspects of the law function in the justice system. Observations indicate that students experience an increased understanding of legal principles that may not have been fully understood from theory alone. In an interview with one of the moot court participants, FA states,

"The moot court simulation gave me invaluable hands-on experience. I learned how legal theory is applied in practice and how to deal with real legal situations. This not only enriched my legal knowledge, but also strengthened my analytical and argumentative skills."

Andi's statement shows that the practical experience in the moot court has broadened his understanding of the law and improved important skills needed in legal practice. The lecturer in charge of the NP course also highlighted the positive impact of the moot court. He stated, "Active involvement in the moot court allows students to truly experience how the legal process takes place. They not only learn from books, but also from direct experience in formulating and presenting legal arguments. This strengthens their analytical skills and gives them confidence in presenting arguments in front of an audience." The NP statement emphasized that moot courts play a crucial role in developing students' critical thinking and analytical skills, which are essential for their careers in law.

Moot courts contribute significantly to increasing students' legal awareness and critical thinking skills. According to AP Belladonna, Y. Hidayah, and N. Triuspita (2024), to be directly involved in something that is close to real experience of legal principles requires simulation in practice. Through this simulation, students not only learn legal theory, but also how to apply it in complex legal situations, thus broadening their horizons in understanding the function of law in a more practical context. Active involvement in moot courts also provides valuable experiences that enrich students' legal knowledge and strengthen their analytical and argumentative skills. These findings suggest that trial simulations can develop critical thinking skills that are essential in the legal profession. By integrating moot courts into the legal education curriculum, students can be better prepared to face challenges in the real world of law. Therefore, the integration of moot courts into legal education not only improves students' professional readiness but also ensures that they have a strong foundation in applying law practically.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that participation in moot court significantly improves legal awareness and critical thinking skills among Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn) students. Through trial simulations, students not only gain a better understanding of legal principles, but also strengthen their abilities in case analysis and argumentation. Active involvement in moot courts provides practical

experience that enriches their legal knowledge and prepares them to face challenges in the real world of law. These findings suggest that moot courts are a very effective tool in integrating legal theory with real practice, as well as in developing critical skills needed in the legal profession. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that the moot court method be further integrated into the curriculum of higher education in law. The addition of moot court activities in law study programs will provide students with wider opportunities to experience trial simulations and apply legal principles in practice. This integration will not only improve students' understanding of the justice system and legal procedures, but will also strengthen their critical thinking skills and analytical abilities. As part of the curriculum, moot courts can be adapted to various types of legal cases to broaden the scope of learning and provide a more diverse experience.

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