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Students' Legal Literacy on Public Service Policies of the Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM): A Siyasah Dusturiyah Perspective

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Abstract:
This study examines the legal literacy of Constitutional Law students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu regarding public service policies of the Regional Public Drinking Water Company (Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba) in Bermani Ulu District, Rejang Lebong Regency, from the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah. The study focuses on students' knowledge of public service regulations, their understanding of community rights and institutional obligations, and their awareness of accountability and complaint mechanisms. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and documentation of relevant legal regulations, particularly Rejang Lebong Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2021 and Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services. The data are analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation of sources. The findings indicate that students generally understand the importance of equitable and accountable public services, but their knowledge of specific regional regulations and practical complaint procedures remains varied. From the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah, public service governance should embody the principles of justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and public welfare (maslahah). This study emphasizes that contextual legal education is essential to strengthening students' ability to understand public service regulations, critically evaluate government policies, and promote accountable governance in accordance with constitutional and Islamic values.

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Introduction (مقدمة)

The development of modern governance requires public institutions to provide services that fulfill people's basic needs in a fair, transparent, accountable, and sustainable manner. Public services represent one of the most important manifestations of the state's responsibility to protect

citizens' rights and improve their quality of life. The quality of public service delivery is therefore an important indicator of effective governance and the implementation of the rule of law. One essential form of public service is the provision of clean water, which is closely related to public health, social welfare, and human dignity. Access to adequate and sustainable water supplies should not be regarded merely as an economic necessity but also as a fundamental aspect of fulfilling citizens' basic rights. Consequently, public institutions and regional government-owned enterprises responsible for water distribution must ensure that their policies and services are consistent with the principles of justice, legal certainty, and public accountability.

In the Indonesian constitutional framework, the state's responsibility for managing water resources is firmly established in Article 33 Paragraph (3) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. This provision emphasizes that land, water, and natural resources contained therein are controlled by the state and utilized for the greatest prosperity of the people. This constitutional mandate establishes the government's obligation to regulate water management and ensure that its utilization benefits the wider community. At the regional level, local governments play an important role in translating this constitutional responsibility into practical public policies and institutional arrangements. One of the mechanisms through which this responsibility is implemented is the establishment of Regional Drinking Water Companies, commonly known as Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum (PDAM), which are entrusted with managing and providing drinking water services. Their existence demonstrates that regional enterprises are not merely economic institutions but also public service providers whose activities should prioritize the fulfillment of community needs.

The legal framework governing public service delivery in Indonesia is further regulated by Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services. This legislation establishes the rights and obligations of public service providers and recipients, while emphasizing principles such as legal certainty, equal treatment, professionalism, participation, transparency, accountability, and accessibility. Public service providers are required to establish service standards, provide adequate facilities, publish service information, and respond appropriately to public complaints. These provisions indicate that public services must be implemented through clear legal mechanisms that protect citizens from arbitrary or discriminatory practices. Furthermore, the legislation recognizes the importance of public participation in monitoring and evaluating service delivery. Therefore, understanding public service regulations is essential not only for government officials and institutional administrators but also for citizens who need to recognize, exercise, and protect their legal rights.

At the regional level, Rejang Lebong Regency has established Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2021 concerning the Regional Public Drinking Water Company Tirta Bukit Kaba of Rejang Lebong Regency. This regulation provides the legal foundation for the establishment, institutional structure, business activities, capital, operational management, supervision, and accountability of the regional drinking water company. Its enactment reflects the local government's responsibility to organize drinking water provision as an essential public service. The regulation also represents an important legal instrument for understanding the relationship between regional government authority, the responsibilities of the water company, and the rights of the community as service recipients. In this context, the regulation should not be understood exclusively as an administrative framework governing the company's institutional arrangements. Rather, it should also be examined in relation to the broader objective of ensuring accessible, reliable, and accountable drinking water services for the public.

The implementation of drinking water services in Rejang Lebong Regency provides an important context for examining public service policies, particularly in Bermani Ulu District. As a geographical setting within the regency, Bermani Ulu offers a relevant case through which the relationship between regional regulations and community access to drinking water services can

be explored. The quality of drinking water services should be assessed through several dimensions, including water availability, distribution continuity, service reliability, affordability, responsiveness to complaints, and transparency of information. Previous research by Dewi and Mursyidah (2022) demonstrates that service quality at PDAM is closely associated with customer satisfaction, particularly through the dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangible facilities. Similarly, Ali et al. (2024) emphasize the importance of analyzing PDAM service quality in relation to the fulfillment of community water needs. These findings illustrate that public service policies must be examined not only from their formal legal provisions but also from the perspective of how people understand and evaluate the services provided.

Public service governance, however, does not depend solely on the existence of regulations or the performance of service providers. It also requires citizens to possess sufficient legal knowledge to understand their rights, obligations, and available mechanisms for seeking remedies when public services do not meet established standards. Legal literacy refers to an individual's capacity to recognize, understand, interpret, and appropriately use legal information in everyday social and institutional interactions. In the context of PDAM services, legal literacy includes knowledge of the applicable regional regulation, customers' rights, service provider responsibilities, complaint procedures, and mechanisms for public accountability. Soekanto (1982) explains that legal awareness and legal compliance are closely related to individuals' understanding and attitudes toward applicable legal norms. Friedman (1975) also highlights the significance of legal culture in shaping the relationship between legal institutions, legal rules, and social behavior. Accordingly, legal literacy becomes an important foundation for encouraging citizens to participate actively in monitoring public institutions and protecting their rights as recipients of public services.

Higher education institutions have a strategic responsibility to develop students' legal knowledge, critical thinking, and awareness of their roles as members of society. Universities are not merely institutions for transferring theoretical knowledge but also spaces for cultivating civic responsibility, democratic participation, and respect for the rule of law. Students of the Constitutional Law Study Program at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu are particularly relevant to this discussion because their academic discipline focuses on constitutional principles, governmental authority, legislation, and the relationship between the state and citizens. Through constitutional law education, students are expected to understand how legal regulations function as instruments for organizing government authority and protecting public interests. Nevertheless, legal knowledge should not remain confined to classroom discussions or theoretical examinations. It should also be reflected in students' ability to identify, understand, and critically analyze actual public policy issues within society. Research by Syamsuddin (2026) on civic legal literacy among university students also highlights the contribution of legal learning to strengthening legal knowledge, awareness of rights and obligations, and critical thinking.

The relationship between legal literacy and public service policies becomes particularly significant when examined through the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah. In Islamic constitutional jurisprudence, Siyasah Dusturiyah discusses the principles governing state administration, governmental authority, legislation, and the relationship between rulers and citizens based on Islamic legal values. This perspective emphasizes that governmental authority should be exercised to promote justice, public welfare, accountability, and the protection of people's interests. The principles of al-'adl (justice), al-maslahah (public interest), and amanah (trustworthiness) provide an ethical and normative foundation for evaluating public administration. From this perspective, public service providers must exercise their responsibilities fairly and avoid actions that disadvantage particular groups of society. The provision of drinking water, as a fundamental public need, can therefore be examined through the extent to which institutional policies support social welfare and equitable access to essential

services. Recent scholarship by Umah (2026) also discusses the relevance of Siyasah Dusturiyah in modern constitutional governance through the integration of Islamic legal principles, public interest, and governmental accountability.

The application of Siyasah Dusturiyah to public service governance also provides an important conceptual connection between contemporary constitutional law and Islamic political jurisprudence. Justice requires that public services be delivered without discrimination, while amanah requires public institutions to fulfill their responsibilities with integrity and accountability. The principle of maslahah further emphasizes that governmental policies should generate benefits and prevent harm to the wider community. These principles are relevant to evaluating how regional government-owned enterprises implement their responsibilities in providing drinking water services. Faiz et al. (2026), in their study of public participation in regional legislative processes, demonstrate the importance of transparency, consultation, and public interest within the framework of Siyasah Dusturiyah. Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) similarly emphasize that public administration should prioritize democratic citizenship and the interests of citizens rather than treating them merely as consumers of government services. Thus, the integration of these perspectives provides a broader understanding of public service governance that incorporates legal obligations, ethical responsibilities, and active citizen participation.

Based on this perspective, examining the legal literacy of Constitutional Law students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu becomes an important academic undertaking. As students who study constitutional governance and public law, they are expected to possess the ability to understand regional regulations and evaluate their relevance to the protection of citizens' rights. However, the extent to which their academic knowledge translates into an understanding of specific public service policies remains an empirical question that requires systematic investigation. The policy governing PDAM Tirta Bukit Kaba provides a relevant case for examining students' knowledge of regional regulations, their understanding of public service rights and obligations, and their awareness of mechanisms for public accountability. This research also creates an opportunity to explore how students interpret the principles of justice, amanah, and maslahah in relation to the provision of drinking water services in Bermani Ulu District. By connecting legal education with an actual regional public service policy, the study seeks to contribute to the development of contextual and practice-oriented legal learning. Such an approach may also strengthen the role of higher education in preparing future legal professionals who are capable of understanding legal issues from both normative and social perspectives.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to examine the legal literacy of students in the Constitutional Law Study Program at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu regarding public service policies implemented by PDAM Tirta Bukit Kaba in Bermani Ulu District, Rejang Lebong Regency. Specifically, the research focuses on students' understanding of Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2021, their knowledge of the rights and obligations of public service recipients and providers, and their awareness of legal mechanisms for addressing public service issues. Furthermore, this study analyzes how students understand and interpret the implementation of public service policies through the principles of Siyasah Dusturiyah, particularly justice, trustworthiness, and public welfare. The educational dimension of this research lies in examining the relationship between constitutional law education and students' ability to understand and critically assess public policy in real-life contexts. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of legal literacy studies, contextual legal education, and the application of Islamic constitutional principles in contemporary public administration. Therefore, this research is entitled "Students' Legal Literacy on Public Service Policies of the Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM): A Siyasah Dusturiyah Perspective."

Method (منهج)

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the legal literacy of Constitutional Law students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu regarding public service policies implemented by the Regional Public Drinking Water Company (Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba) in Bermani Ulu District, Rejang Lebong Regency. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on understanding students' knowledge, perceptions, and interpretations of the legal framework governing public services rather than measuring the actual performance or customer satisfaction of the company. The primary data are obtained through semi-structured interviews with selected Constitutional Law students, supported by relevant academic documents and institutional information. Secondary data are collected through a literature review of relevant laws and regulations, scholarly publications, books, and other supporting documents, particularly Rejang Lebong Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2021 concerning the Regional Public Drinking Water Company Tirta Bukit Kaba and Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services.

The data are analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data obtained from interviews are classified into several dimensions of legal literacy, including students' knowledge of public service regulations, understanding of the rights and obligations of service providers and users, awareness of complaint mechanisms, and ability to evaluate public service accountability. The findings are subsequently examined through the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah, emphasizing the principles of justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and public welfare (maslahah) in the administration of public services. Data triangulation is applied by comparing interview findings with relevant legal documents and scholarly literature to strengthen the credibility of the analysis. Through this method, the study seeks to explain the extent to which Constitutional Law students understand public service policies and their ability to assess these policies within the framework of Islamic constitutional governance.

Result (نتائج)

1. Students' Knowledge of Public Service Regulations

The findings indicate that Constitutional Law students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu generally recognize public services as an essential responsibility of the government in fulfilling the basic needs of society. Students understand that the provision of clean water is not merely an economic activity but also a public service that must be delivered fairly, transparently, and accountably. However, their knowledge of the specific regulatory framework governing the Regional Public Drinking Water Company (Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba) remains varied. In particular, some students are familiar with the general function of regional regulations but have limited understanding of the substantive provisions contained in Rejang Lebong Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2021.

Furthermore, students' understanding of the relationship between regional regulations and the implementation of public services requires further development. Although they recognize that local governments have a responsibility to ensure the availability of clean water, not all students can explain how the legal framework regulates the institutional responsibilities, management, and accountability of regional public enterprises. This condition demonstrates that familiarity with general constitutional principles does not automatically translate into an adequate understanding of specific regional legal instruments. Therefore, studying the legal framework governing Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba provides an important opportunity to connect constitutional law knowledge with actual public administration issues at the regional

level.

2. Students' Understanding of Rights, Obligations, and Public Service Accountability

The second finding concerns students' understanding of the rights and obligations of public service providers and users. Students generally recognize that the community has the right to receive adequate, accessible, and nondiscriminatory clean water services. They also understand that public service providers are responsible for maintaining service quality, delivering accurate information, and responding to complaints submitted by the community. These perspectives reflect an awareness of the fundamental principles established in Law Number 25 of 2009 concerning Public Services. Nevertheless, students demonstrate different levels of understanding regarding the practical mechanisms through which these rights can be exercised and protected.

In addition, students' ability to evaluate public service accountability remains an important aspect of legal literacy. Understanding public service regulations requires more than knowing the rights and obligations established by law; it also involves the ability to identify potential violations, understand complaint procedures, and assess the responsibility of public institutions. In the context of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba in Bermani Ulu District, students are expected to understand how the community can seek information, communicate service-related complaints, and demand institutional accountability in accordance with applicable regulations. This finding highlights the importance of strengthening practical legal literacy so that students can move beyond theoretical knowledge toward the ability to analyze public service issues critically and constructively.

3. Analysis of Students' Legal Literacy from the Perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah

From the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah, public service policies should reflect the principles of justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and public welfare (maslahah). Students generally understand that public institutions must provide services without discrimination and prioritize the interests of the community. The principle of justice requires equal treatment in the distribution of public services, including access to clean water. Meanwhile, the principle of amanah emphasizes that public institutions must manage their responsibilities professionally and transparently. The principle of maslahah further reinforces the obligation to prioritize the broader interests of society, particularly in fulfilling essential needs such as access to clean water.

However, the application of these Islamic constitutional principles in evaluating specific regional regulations remains an area that requires further academic development. Students need to strengthen their ability to connect normative Islamic legal concepts with the practical responsibilities of regional public enterprises. In this regard, the governance of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba can be examined not only through the framework of positive law but also through the ethical and constitutional values embedded in Siyasah Dusturiyah. Overall, the findings emphasize that legal literacy among Constitutional Law students should encompass regulatory knowledge, awareness of public rights, critical evaluation of institutional accountability, and the ability to apply Islamic constitutional principles to contemporary public service issues.

Discussion (مناقشة)

The discussion should explore the significance of the results of the work, not repeat them. In the discussion, it is the most significance section of the article. Here you get the chance to make your data. Make the discussion corresponding to the results, but do not reiterate the results. Often should begin with a brief summary of the main scientific findings (not experimental results).

The findings of this study suggest that students' legal literacy should not be understood merely as their ability to recognize the existence of laws and regulations. Legal literacy also involves the capacity to understand legal provisions, identify their implications, and apply legal principles when examining public issues. This interpretation is consistent with Radini et al. (2026), who explain that legal literacy encompasses cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Their research demonstrates that legal knowledge, legal awareness, and law-abiding behaviour are interconnected components of students' legal competence. Therefore, the varying levels of students' familiarity with Rejang Lebong Regional Regulation Number 5 of 2021 indicate the importance of developing legal literacy through both theoretical learning and contextual legal analysis.

The findings also reveal that students' general understanding of public service principles does not necessarily correspond to their ability to interpret specific regional regulations. This condition reflects a distinction between knowing that legal rules exist and understanding how those rules operate within particular institutional arrangements. A comparable pattern was identified by Faridz et al. (2025), whose study of law students found that legal knowledge and understanding did not always translate into consistent legal behaviour. Although their research examined traffic regulation rather than public service policies, the findings provide a useful comparison regarding the gap between normative understanding and practical application. In the present study, this gap highlights the need for legal education that encourages students to examine regulatory provisions, institutional responsibilities, and their consequences for society.

Students' understanding of the public's right to obtain adequate clean water services reflects an important dimension of constitutional citizenship. Access to clean water is closely connected to the state's responsibility to protect the welfare of its citizens and ensure that essential public needs are fulfilled. Masnun et al. (2024) emphasize that water resource management in Indonesia must be grounded in constitutional responsibilities, while regional enterprises must balance their economic orientation with the obligation to provide adequate and quality water services. This perspective reinforces the argument that the operation of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba cannot be examined exclusively through an institutional or commercial perspective. Instead, its public service responsibilities should also be understood in relation to the constitutional interests of the community.

The students' recognition of public service rights also needs to be accompanied by a stronger understanding of institutional accountability. Public service accountability involves not only the obligation of institutions to perform their functions but also their responsibility to provide information, explain decisions, and respond to public concerns. Research conducted by Maharani and Baihaqi (2025) in Bengkulu City demonstrates that accountability, transparency, and public participation significantly contribute to local government performance. Their findings support the argument that effective public governance requires institutions to remain answerable to the people they serve. In the context of this study, students' ability to identify these principles represents an important foundation for evaluating the responsibilities of regional public enterprises.

Another important aspect of public service accountability is the availability of accessible complaint-handling mechanisms. Understanding the right to receive public services is incomplete if individuals do not know how to communicate dissatisfaction, report problems, or seek appropriate remedies. Brewer (2007) argues that complaint-handling systems are essential instruments for protecting citizens' rights and strengthening administrative accountability. Similarly, Hossain et al. (2024) explain that formal grievance mechanisms may become ineffective when institutional procedures do not provide sufficient opportunities for complaints to receive meaningful responses. These perspectives demonstrate why students need to understand not

only the normative rights of service users but also the procedural mechanisms through which those rights can be exercised.

The findings further indicate that legal literacy should encourage students to move beyond the passive recognition of public service problems toward active and informed civic participation. Knowledge of regulations becomes more meaningful when students can identify the appropriate procedures for seeking information, expressing concerns, and evaluating institutional responses. Putri et al. (2025) identify gaps between young people's awareness of public participation, their understanding of participation procedures, and their actual involvement in policy processes. Their research demonstrates that awareness alone does not automatically produce meaningful participation. In this regard, the present study emphasizes the importance of strengthening students' procedural understanding so that legal knowledge can support responsible engagement with public institutions.

From the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah, public service administration should be oriented toward the realization of justice, responsible authority, and public welfare. The principle of al-'adl requires public institutions to ensure that services are delivered fairly and without unjustified discrimination. Meanwhile, amanah emphasizes that institutional authority and public resources must be managed responsibly in accordance with the interests of society. The principle of maslahah further establishes that public policies should generate benefits and protect essential community needs. These principles provide a normative framework for understanding why clean water services should be evaluated not only through administrative effectiveness but also through their contribution to social justice and public welfare.

The principle of justice (al-'adl) is particularly relevant to the discussion of clean water services in Bermani Ulu District. Equal access to public services requires institutions to consider the needs of different groups within the community and avoid discriminatory treatment in service delivery. Students' recognition of nondiscriminatory service principles indicates an initial understanding of the relationship between legal rights and substantive justice. However, applying this principle requires the ability to examine how regulations and institutional policies may influence the distribution and accessibility of public services. Consequently, legal literacy should enable students to assess whether public service arrangements are consistent with the broader objective of protecting the rights and interests of the community.

The principle of amanah provides another important dimension for evaluating the responsibilities of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba. As a regional public enterprise entrusted with managing an essential public service, the institution is expected to exercise its authority responsibly and maintain transparency in its operations. From an Islamic constitutional perspective, public authority is not merely an administrative privilege but also a responsibility that must be exercised for the benefit of society. Students' understanding of institutional accountability can therefore be developed by connecting positive legal obligations with the ethical dimension of amanah. This connection strengthens the educational relevance of Siyasah Dusturiyah because it enables students to evaluate public institutions through both legal standards and Islamic governance values.

The principle of maslahah further emphasizes that the ultimate orientation of public service policies should be the protection and improvement of community welfare. In the context of clean water provision, public welfare is closely related to the availability, accessibility, and sustainability of water services. This principle also provides a basis for understanding the relationship between the economic objectives of regional enterprises and their public service obligations. The discussion by Masnun et al. (2024) regarding the constitutional responsibilities of regional water companies reinforces the importance of balancing institutional sustainability with the fulfillment of the public's right to water. Accordingly, students' legal literacy should

include the ability to assess whether institutional policies are directed toward achieving broader social benefits rather than merely fulfilling organizational objectives.

The discussion demonstrates that strengthening legal literacy among Constitutional Law students requires an integrated approach involving regulatory understanding, awareness of public rights, procedural knowledge, and ethical evaluation of public institutions. The findings contribute to the understanding of legal education by positioning regional public service policies as contextual learning materials through which students can connect constitutional law with real institutional responsibilities. Unlike studies that primarily examine legal awareness or public service accountability separately, this study brings these dimensions together through the analytical framework of Siyasah Dusturiyah. The integration of justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and public welfare (maslahah) provides students with a broader perspective for assessing public service governance. Thus, the educational significance of this research lies in encouraging students not only to understand the law but also to develop the critical capacity to evaluate public policies in accordance with legal and Islamic constitutional values.

Conclusion (خاتمة)

This study concludes that the legal literacy of Constitutional Law students at UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu regarding public service policies of Perumda Air Minum Tirta Bukit Kaba encompasses not only their knowledge of applicable regulations but also their understanding of public rights, institutional obligations, and service accountability. The findings indicate that students generally recognize the importance of fair, transparent, and accountable public services, although their understanding of specific regional regulations and practical complaint mechanisms requires further strengthening. From the perspective of Siyasah Dusturiyah, public service policies should reflect the principles of justice (al-'adl), trustworthiness (amanah), and public welfare (maslahah), which provide an ethical and constitutional foundation for evaluating the responsibilities of regional public enterprises. This study highlights the importance of integrating contextual legal education with contemporary public service issues to develop students' critical awareness and capacity to evaluate public policies. Strengthening legal literacy through the study of regional regulations and Islamic constitutional principles is therefore essential to preparing students to become informed, critical, and responsible citizens who can contribute to the realization of equitable and accountable public governance.

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