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THE INFLUENCE OF LEGAL LITERACY ON AWARENESS OF PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION AMONG USERS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aims to examine and analyze the impact of legal literacy on awareness of personal data protection among users of digital platforms in Indonesia, given the public's limited understanding of Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection (PDP Law) amid the widespread use of digital services.

Research Design & Methods: This study employed an associative quantitative approach using a survey method. Since the size of the population of digital platform users is not precisely known, the sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula, resulting in 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected via a 1–5 Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and simple linear regression using IBM SPSS Statistics 26.

Findings: All items in the instrument were found to be valid and reliable (Cronbach's Alpha 0.921 for legal literacy and 0.926 for awareness of personal data protection). The regression results indicate that legal literacy is positively and significantly associated with awareness of personal data protection ($t = 6.430$; $\text{sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$) with a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.297, meaning that legal literacy statistically accounts for 29.7% of the variation in awareness of personal data protection.

Contributions: This study strengthens the empirical evidence that an understanding of personal data protection regulations is a key correlate of users' legal awareness and provides an empirical basis for the formulation of digital legal literacy policies in Indonesia. **Practical Implications:** The findings give regulators, digital platform operators, and educational institutions an empirical basis for prioritizing legal-literacy education—delivered in accessible language and paired with technical literacy and privacy-skill training—as part of strategies to raise public awareness of personal data protection.

Novelty: Rather than focusing on a single digital platform or a specific user segment such as students, as most prior quantitative studies have done, this study uses a Lemeshow-based sampling approach for a population of unknown size to examine legal literacy and awareness of personal data protection across multiple types of digital platforms among the general working-age population.

Keywords: Legal Literacy; Legal Awareness; Personal Data Protection.

JEL codes: K24, K29, O33

Article type: research paper

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has fundamentally changed the way people interact, conduct transactions, and share information. The 2024 Indonesian Internet Penetration Survey released by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) reports that the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached 221,563,479, equivalent to a penetration rate of 79.5% of the total population, with Generation Z and millennials being the largest contributors to daily digital service usage ([Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia \(APJII\), 2024](#)). This increase in the number of users aligns with the expanding penetration of social media, digital wallets (e-wallets), e-commerce, and digital government services. Behind this convenience, every digital activity essentially involves the collection and processing of users' personal data—ranging from identification numbers, transaction histories, and locations to behavioral preferences. This situation makes the protection of personal data an extremely urgent legal issue.

The Indonesian government has addressed this issue by enacting Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection (hereinafter referred to as the PDP Law), which regulates the rights of data subjects, the obligations of data controllers and processors, consent mechanisms, and administrative and criminal penalties for the misuse of

personal data. The enactment of the PDP Law should mark a significant milestone in the protection of citizens' privacy. However, the enactment of a legal norm does not automatically lead to public legal awareness regarding compliance with and utilization of the law. Various reports indicate that public understanding of the provisions and preventive measures for personal data protection remains relatively low (Kurniawan et al., 2023; Priyantiwi & Hufon, 2025), a gap that coincides with continued cases of personal data breaches and misuse in Indonesia.

This phenomenon raises a fundamental question regarding the extent to which legal literacy—that is, an individual's level of knowledge and understanding of applicable legal norms as well as their rights and obligations—plays a role in shaping awareness of personal data protection at the individual level among users of digital platforms. A number of previous studies have examined digital literacy and privacy awareness, for example, among college students in West Java, who demonstrated a fairly good level of awareness but were weak in the behavioral dimension (Sadeli & Irawati, 2023), as well as among college students in Turkey, who linked digital literacy to data security awareness (Göldağ, 2021). Another study found a gap between the subjective and objective privacy literacy of "digital natives," which influences their privacy protection behaviors (Ma & Chen, 2023). Most of these studies, particularly in Indonesia, remain descriptive and qualitative in nature, focusing on a specific group of subjects (college students) or a specific type of platform (Kurniawan et al., 2023); consequently, few have quantitatively tested the causal relationship between legal literacy and awareness of personal data protection across different types of digital platforms within the general population, whose exact size is unknown.

Most existing empirical work has examined general digital literacy or platform-specific privacy behavior rather than isolating legal literacy—knowledge of the PDP Law, understanding of data-subject rights, and the ability to exercise them—as a distinct predictor of awareness spanning multiple types of digital platforms. This study addresses that gap by combining an associative quantitative approach with the Lemeshow sampling technique for a population of unknown size, allowing preliminary generalizations regarding digital platform users more broadly, not limited to a single platform segment or specific age group. Based on this description, this study aims to examine and analyze the influence of legal literacy on awareness of personal data protection among digital platform users, while also providing an empirical contribution to the formulation of legal education and digital literacy strategies in Indonesia.

Data from the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs, as well as various reports from non-governmental organizations, document a series of incidents involving the leakage and misuse of personal data in Indonesia over the past few years, ranging from the public service and financial sectors to e-commerce platforms. These incidents demonstrate that threats to personal data stem not only from weaknesses in the technical security systems of platform operators but also from users' own lack of vigilance and legal understanding regarding their rights—such as a reluctance to read privacy policies, hastily granting consent, or being unaware of the complaint mechanisms available under the PDP Law. It is this gap between existing legal norms and the public's low utilization of them that serves as the starting point for the issues addressed in this study.

Based on this background, this study formulates two research questions: (1) What are the levels of legal literacy and awareness of personal data protection among users of digital platforms? (2) Does legal literacy have a significant effect on the awareness of personal data protection among users of digital platforms? These questions correspond directly to the study's objectives and analytical strategy: the first is addressed through descriptive statistics on the legal literacy and awareness variables, while the second is addressed through simple linear regression and hypothesis testing, from which hypothesis H1 is derived. The scope of this study is limited to working-age users of digital platforms in Indonesia across four service categories: social media, e-commerce, fintech/e-wallets, and digital government services. The study does not distinguish respondents by business sector or professional background. This broader scope was chosen to provide a more comprehensive picture than previous studies, which tended to focus on a single group or a single type of platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Legal Literacy

Legal literacy is defined as a person's ability to know, understand, and apply applicable legal provisions in daily life, including understanding their rights and obligations under the law (Steininger & Rückel, 2013). In the context of personal data protection, legal literacy encompasses knowledge of the existence and substance of the PDP Law, an understanding of data subjects' rights—such as the right to access, correct, and delete their personal data—as well as the ability to exercise those rights when interacting with data controllers. Reddy et al. (2020) emphasize that digital literacy—which includes legal literacy—is a multidimensional competency that is not merely technical but also involves the normative awareness of technology users. Priliyasi (2019) adds that the public's limited legal understanding of personal data protection contributes to an increased risk of data misuse, particularly in online lending transactions.

Personal Data Protection Awareness

Personal data protection awareness is a psychological and behavioral state in individuals that reflects their concern for the security and privacy of their personal data; it consists of cognitive (knowledge of risks), affective (attitudes and concern), and conative (actual protective actions) dimensions (Masur, 2020). Pangrazio and Selwyn (2019) introduced the concept of “personal data literacies” to explain how a critical understanding of digital data shapes an individual’s ability to protect themselves in cyberspace. A study of college students in Indonesia found that awareness of personal data security on social media remains at a moderate level, with major gaps in the areas of privacy settings and app permission verification (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Meanwhile, Epstein and Quinn (2020) demonstrated that privacy literacy gaps correlate with the socioeconomic disparities among social media users, meaning that awareness of data protection cannot be separated from access to adequate legal information. More recently, Meier and Krämer (2025) found that unequal access to privacy-related information—shaped by education and other sociodemographic factors—partly explains persistent digital inequalities in privacy literacy and self-efficacy, reinforcing the view that legal literacy gaps are not evenly distributed across the population.

The Legal Framework for Personal Data Protection in Indonesia

The PDP Law comprehensively regulates the principles of personal data processing, including the principles of purpose limitation, accuracy, security, and accountability, and grants data subjects the right to obtain information, give or withdraw consent, and file a lawsuit for violations. This regulation aligns with global trends toward strengthening privacy laws, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union, which also promotes the enhancement of citizens’ legal literacy as a prerequisite for the effective enforcement of privacy laws (Ducato, 2020). Empirical evidence from a large European survey supports this link: Prince et al. (2024) found that users’ procedural knowledge of their GDPR rights is positively associated with their sense of control over personal data, underscoring legal literacy’s role in privacy empowerment even in jurisdictions with mature data protection regimes. However, the existence of strong regulations does not automatically lead to compliance if the public does not understand their substance, as found in the case of data protection within Indonesia’s digital identity system, which still faces an implementation gap between norms and practices (Priyantiwi, 2025). Widi et al. (2021) also emphasize the importance of strengthening digital consumers’ legal understanding so that their rights regarding personal data can be effectively enforced.

Previous Research

A summary of several previous studies relevant to legal literacy and awareness of personal data protection is presented in Table 1 as the basis for determining the novelty of this study.

Table 1. Summary of Previous Research

Researchers (Year)	Method	Key Findings
Sadeli & Irawati (2023)	Quantitative (AHP), students in West Java	PDP awareness is in the “good” category in terms of knowledge and attitude, but weak in terms of behavior.
Göldağ (2021)	Quantitative, Turkish students	Digital literacy is significantly associated with data security awareness.
Kurniawan et al. (2023)	Quantitative, Indonesian college students	Awareness of personal data security on social media is in the moderate category.
Ma & Chen (2023)	Quantitative, Chinese digital natives	Subjective and objective privacy literacy do not always correlate; cognitive biases influence protective behaviors.
Choi (2023)	Structural Equation Modeling, social media users	Privacy literacy is a significant predictor of advanced privacy practices.

Source: Compiled by the author from reviewed literature, 2026.

Framework

Based on a review of existing theories and prior research, this study develops a conceptual framework positing that legal literacy (X)—as reflected in legal knowledge, an understanding of rights and obligations, and the ability to apply legal provisions—is hypothesized to directly influence awareness of personal data protection (Y), as reflected in the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of digital platform users, as illustrated in Figure 1.

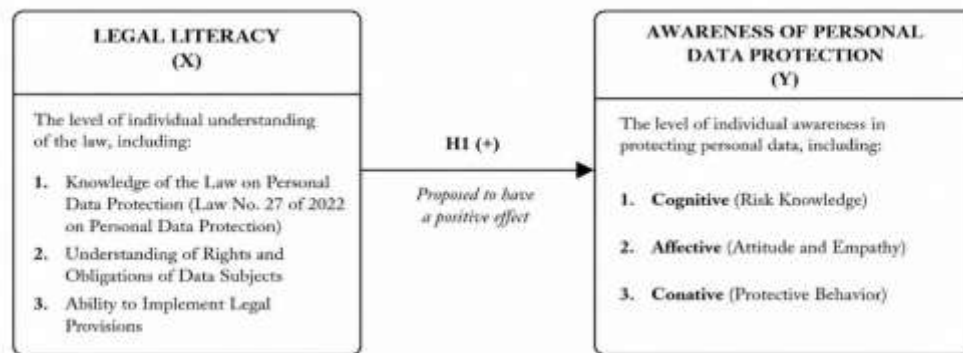


Figure 1. Research Framework

X : Independent variable, namely Legal Literacy

Y : Dependent variable, namely Awareness of Personal Data Protection

H1 : First research hypothesis

A number of studies have shown a positive correlation between digital/legal literacy and privacy awareness. Göldağ (2021) found a significant relationship between digital literacy levels and students' data security awareness. Choi (2023) demonstrated that privacy literacy among social media users serves as an important predictor of privacy management behavior. Conversely, Ma and Chen (2023) warn that subjective literacy (overconfidence) without objective understanding can actually weaken protective behaviors, indicating that proper and structured legal literacy—not merely perception—is key to strengthening privacy awareness. Zhang et al. (2024) also emphasize that an understanding of post-GDPR regulations influences the gap between users' intentions and their privacy protection behaviors. Based on this review, this study formulates the following hypothesis:

H1: Legal literacy has a positive and significant effect on awareness of personal data protection among users of digital platforms.

H1 is tested at the level of the composite awareness score. Because the awareness instrument is built from cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions that need not respond identically to legal literacy, dimension-specific hypotheses (H1a: legal literacy is associated with cognitive awareness; H1b: legal literacy is associated with affective awareness; H1c: legal literacy is associated with conative/behavioral awareness) are conceptually plausible extensions of H1; the present simple-regression design tests only the composite relationship, and disaggregated tests of H1a–H1c are proposed as a direction for future research using the dimension-level scores already collected.

METHODS

This study employs a quantitative approach with an associative design using a cross-sectional survey method; because data were collected at a single point in time, the design supports inferences about statistical association rather than causal sequence. The independent variable (X) is legal literacy, and the dependent variable (Y) is awareness of personal data protection.

Population and Sample

The study population consists of all users of digital platforms (social media, e-commerce, fintech/e-wallet services, and digital government services) in Indonesia who are at least 17 years old. Since the size of this population is unknown, the sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula as follows:

$$n = Z^2 \times P(1-P) / d^2$$

where $Z = 1.96$ (95% confidence level), $P = 0.5$ (maximum proportion), and $d = 0.1$ (10% margin of error), resulting in $n = (1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5) / 0.1^2 = 96.04$, rounded to 100 respondents. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) at least 17 years of age, (2) residing in Indonesia, and (3) actively using at least one digital platform in the past six months. The questionnaire was distributed online during March–April 2026, and 100 respondents who met the criteria were obtained.

Instruments and Measurement

The research instrument consisted of a closed-ended questionnaire using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The legal literacy variable was measured using 10 items covering three dimensions: knowledge of the existence and substance of the PDP Law, understanding of the rights and obligations of data subjects, and the ability to apply legal provisions in digital interactions, adapted from Reddy et al. (2020) and Sadeli and Irawati (2023). The personal data protection awareness variable was measured using 10 items covering cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions, adapted from Masur (2020) and Kurniawan et al. (2023).

The operational definitions of both variables are presented in Table 2, while the complete list of statement items is included in the Appendix.

Table 2. Operational Definitions of Variables

Variable	Dimension	Indicator	Number of Items
Legal Literacy (X)	Legal Knowledge	Knowledge of the existence, substance, and penalties of the PDP Law	3
	Understanding of Rights and Obligations	Understanding the rights of data subjects and the obligations of data controllers	4
	Ability to Apply the Law	Ability to apply and enforce one's legal rights	3
Awareness of Personal Data Protection (Y)	Cognitive	Awareness of risks and types of sensitive personal data	3
	Affective	Concern and vigilance regarding data security	3
	Conative	Concrete protective behaviors in safeguarding personal data	4

Source: Compiled by the author, 2026.

Because the source instruments were originally developed and validated in other languages and contexts, each item was translated into Indonesian and back-translated into English by two independent translators to check semantic equivalence, then reviewed by two lecturers in law and communication for content relevance to the Indonesian PDP Law before a pilot administration to 30 respondents outside the main sample; items were retained only after this pilot indicated adequate clarity and item-total correlation. Within the legal literacy construct, the "Ability to Apply the Law" dimension (items X8–X10) is conceptually distinct from the legal-knowledge and rights-understanding dimensions: it captures self-reported behavioral tendencies and perceived capability (e.g., reading privacy policies, filing complaints) rather than factual legal knowledge. This dimension is retained as part of legal literacy because applying legal provisions in practice is a recognized behavioral component of legal literacy in prior conceptualizations, but the distinction from cognitive knowledge is acknowledged as a limitation of self-report measurement addressed further in the Discussion.

This study followed standard ethical procedures for survey-based social research involving personal data. Participation was voluntary, and the online questionnaire opened with an informed-consent statement describing the study's purpose, the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation, and respondents' right to withdraw at any time before submission. No directly identifying information (e.g., name, national ID number, or exact contact details) was collected, and responses were stored and analyzed only in aggregate, de-identified form.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26 software through the following steps: (1) validity testing using Pearson's correlation (item-total), with an item deemed valid if the calculated $r >$ table r ($n = 100$, $\alpha = 5\%$, table $r = 0.196$); (2) a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha coefficient with a threshold of > 0.60 ; (3) tests of classical assumptions, including the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test, the linearity test (deviation from linearity), and the Glejser heteroscedasticity test; (4) simple linear regression analysis to test the effect of legal literacy on awareness of personal data protection; and (5) hypothesis testing using the t-test and the coefficient of determination (R^2) at a 5% significance level.

RESULT

The characteristics of the 100 study respondents are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Respondent Characteristics ($n = 100$)

Characteristics	Category	Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	52	52.0%
	Female	48	48.0%
Age	18–24 years	40	40.0%
	25–34 years	35	35.0%
	35–44 years	18	18.0%
	> 44 years	7	7.0%
Highest Level of Education	High School/Equivalent	33	33.0%
	Diploma/Bachelor's Degree	59	59.0%

Characteristics	Category	Total	Percentage
Primary Digital Platforms	Master's/Doctorate	8	8.0%
	Social Media	36	36.0%
	E-commerce	44	44.0%
	Fintech/e-wallet	12	12.0%
	Digital Government Services	8	8.0%

Source: Processed primary data, 2026.

Table 4 presents the item validity results for the legal literacy instrument (X) and the personal data protection awareness instrument (Y). All items were valid, as each calculated *r* value exceeded the table *r* value of 0.196.

Table 4. Results of the Item Validity Test for Instruments X and Y

Item	Calculated <i>r</i>	Table <i>r</i>	Notes	Item	Calculated <i>r</i>	Table <i>r</i>	Notes
X1	0.679	0.196	Valid	Y1	0.697	0.196	Valid
X2	0.726	0.196	Valid	Y2	0.674	0.196	Valid
X3	0.701	0.196	Valid	Y3	0.671	0.196	Valid
X4	0.643	0.196	Valid	Y4	0.751	0.196	Valid
X5	0.703	0.196	Valid	Y5	0.678	0.196	Valid
X6	0.693	0.196	Valid	Y6	0.659	0.196	Valid
X7	0.624	0.196	Valid	Y7	0.757	0.196	Valid
X8	0.717	0.196	Valid	Y8	0.766	0.196	Valid
X9	0.740	0.196	Valid	Y9	0.777	0.196	Valid
X10	0.791	0.196	Valid	Y10	0.727	0.196	Valid

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.921 for the legal literacy variable and 0.926 for the personal data protection awareness variable, indicating that both instruments are highly reliable (Table 5). These values exceed the conventional 0.90 threshold often used as a caution signal in scale-development guidance; such unusually high internal consistency for a 10-item scale can reflect genuine coherence among items but can also indicate item redundancy (near-duplicate wording across items within a dimension) or common method bias arising from single-source, single-occasion self-report data. The item wording was reviewed and no item was found to be a near-duplicate of another, but the single-source, cross-sectional data collection method cannot rule out common method bias, and this is noted as a limitation in the Discussion.

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Notes
Legal Literacy (X)	10	0.921	Highly Reliable
Awareness of Personal Data Protection (Y)	10	0.926	Highly Reliable

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

Descriptive statistics for the two research variables are presented in Table 6. The total scores for each variable range from 10 to 50.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Legal Literacy (X)	100	11	50	34.61	8.53
Awareness of Personal Data Protection (Y)	100	12	50	34.36	8.59

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

Before conducting the regression analysis, classical assumption tests were first performed. The test results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Results of Classical Assumption Tests

Assumption Test	Test Statistic	Value	Sig.	Notes
Normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.049	0.962	Data are normally distributed
Linearity (Deviation from Linearity)	F	1.132	0.330	The relationship between X and Y is linear
Heteroscedasticity (Glejser Test)	t	-1.238	0.219	No heteroscedasticity

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

The results of the simple linear regression analysis are presented in Table 8. The regression equation obtained is $Y = 15.363 + 0.549X$, which means that every one-unit increase in the legal literacy score will increase the personal data protection awareness score by 0.549 units.

Table 8. Results of Simple Linear Regression Analysis

Model	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	t-value	Sig.	Notes
Constant (a)	15.363	2.904	5.291	0.000	Significant
Legal Literacy (b)	0.549	0.085	6.430	0.000	Significant

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

The t-test showed that the calculated t-value of 6.430 exceeded the critical t-value ($df = 98$; $\alpha = 0.05$) of 1.984, with $sig. = 0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, H_1 is accepted: legal literacy is positively and significantly associated with awareness of personal data protection. Because the model has only one predictor, the simultaneous F-test ($F = 41.344$; $sig. = 0.000$) is mathematically equivalent to the t-test for the slope and is reported here only for completeness and comparability with studies that report both statistics; it does not provide information beyond the t-test in this single-predictor model. As shown in Table 9, the correlation coefficient (R) is 0.545 and the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.297. In other words, legal literacy statistically accounts for 29.7% of the variation in awareness of personal data protection. The remaining 70.3% was not decomposed by this model; experience with data breaches, trust in platforms, and overall digital literacy are plausible candidates suggested by the literature, but as they were not measured in this study, this remains a proposed direction for future research rather than an empirical finding of the present data.

Table 9. Results of the Coefficient of Determination Test and F-Test

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F	Sig.
0.545	0.297	0.290	41.344	0.000

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

To enrich the interpretation, the personal data protection awareness score (Y) was categorized into three levels using the mean-and-standard-deviation banding procedure (low: score $< \text{mean} - 1 \text{ SD}$; moderate: $\text{mean} - 1 \text{ SD}$ to $\text{mean} + 1 \text{ SD}$; high: score $> \text{mean} + 1 \text{ SD}$), a norm-referenced categorization approach commonly applied to Likert-scale composite scores in the absence of an external clinical or policy cut-off (Azwar, 2012), yielding Low < 30.06 ; Moderate 30.06–38.66; High > 38.66 . The categorization results show a relatively balanced distribution: 33 respondents (33.0%) in the low category, 33 respondents (33.0%) in the moderate category, and 34 respondents (34.0%) in the high category, as presented in Table 10 along with their distribution by type of digital platform used.

Table 10. Cross-Tabulation of Personal Data Protection Awareness Categories (Y) by Type of Digital Platform

Digital Platforms	Low	Medium	High	Total
Social media	11 (30.6%)	15 (41.7%)	10 (27.8%)	36
E-commerce	14 (31.8%)	13 (29.5%)	17 (38.6%)	44
Fintech/e-wallet	4 (33.3%)	3 (25.0%)	5 (41.7%)	12
Digital government services	4 (50.0%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)	8
Total	33	33	34	100

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

The chi-square test showed no significant relationship between the type of digital platform and the category of personal data protection awareness ($\chi^2 = 3.237$; $df = 6$; $sig. = 0.779 > 0.05$). Similarly, the one-way ANOVA test also showed no significant differences in the mean personal data protection awareness scores across digital platform types ($F = 0.198$; $sig. = 0.897$), nor in the mean legal literacy scores across respondents' educational

levels ($F = 0.389$; $\text{sig.} = 0.679$). These findings indicate that, considered separately, personal data protection awareness does not vary significantly by platform type or by educational level. Because platform type and education were not entered as competing predictors alongside legal literacy in a single comparative model, these bivariate results should not be read as evidence that legal literacy outweighs demographic characteristics as a determinant of awareness; they only show that awareness is broadly similar across these subgroups.

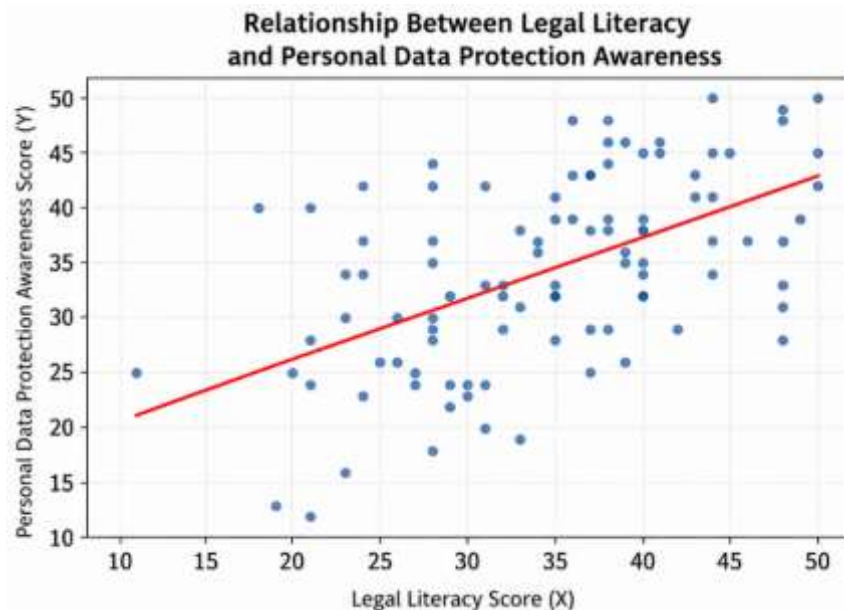


Figure 2. Scatter Plot and Regression Line Showing the Relationship Between Legal Literacy (X) and Awareness of Personal Data Protection (Y)

Source: SPSS 26 output, processed primary data, 2026.

DISCUSSION

The research findings demonstrate that legal literacy is positively and significantly associated with awareness of personal data protection among users of digital platforms; therefore, research hypothesis (H1) is accepted. This finding aligns with the study by [Göldağ, 2021](#)), which found a significant relationship between digital literacy levels and data security awareness among college students, as well as the study by [Sadeli and Irawati \(2023\)](#), which showed that understanding the PDP Law contributes to a “good” level of privacy awareness in both the knowledge and attitude dimensions, although it remains weak in the behavioral dimension. The consistency of these findings reinforces the argument that normative knowledge regarding legal rights and obligations is one of the key foundations in shaping awareness and protective behaviors toward personal data. Thus, the better an individual’s understanding of the legal provisions governing personal data protection, the greater their tendency to recognize the importance of safeguarding, managing, and protecting personal data when using digital platforms.

A coefficient of determination of 0.297 indicates that legal literacy statistically accounts for 29.7% of the variation in awareness of personal data protection; a moderate share by conventional benchmarks for single-predictor social-science models, but one that leaves most of the variance (70.3%) unexplained by this model. These results indicate that legal literacy is one relevant correlate but, on its own, a modest determinant in shaping awareness of personal data protection. This is consistent with the dependent variable’s composite nature: because awareness in this study spans cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions, a moderate association with composite awareness is compatible with legal literacy having a closer association with what respondents know and feel than with what they actually do to protect their data—a distinction also raised by [Sadeli and Irawati \(2023\)](#), who found PDP awareness strong on knowledge and attitude but weaker on behavior. These findings align with the research by [Ma and Chen \(2023\)](#), which revealed a gap between subjective and objective privacy literacy—influenced by privacy concerns—in shaping data protection behavior. This means that improving legal literacy does not necessarily directly result in an optimal level of data protection awareness if it is not accompanied by other supporting factors. Psychological factors—such as the level of concern regarding privacy, trust in platform operators, personal experiences related to data breaches or misuse, and social norms within the digital environment—can also determine how individuals understand and respond to risks to their personal data. [Epstein and Quinn \(2020\)](#) also emphasize that the privacy literacy gap may be linked to disparities in access to information. Therefore, efforts to improve legal literacy must be inclusive so that the benefits of data protection education are not limited to those segments of society that have better access to information and educational resources.

The findings of the additional analysis, which indicate no significant differences in awareness of personal data protection based on platform type or educational level—as shown in Table 10—have important implications for understanding the characteristics of digital users' privacy awareness. Awareness of personal data protection does not automatically increase with higher levels of formal education or differences in the characteristics of the platforms used. This suggests that formal education does not always provide specific knowledge regarding personal data protection, as legal literacy and digital literacy are competencies that require a specialized learning process. This finding reinforces the view of [Peng and Yu \(2022\)](#) that digital literacy needs to be developed through targeted and contextual education, rather than relying solely on formal educational attainment. Thus, data protection awareness programs need to reach users from various educational backgrounds and not be directed solely at groups with specific educational levels.

In terms of regulation, the results of this study further confirm that the effectiveness of the legal framework for personal data protection is greatly influenced by the public's ability to understand and utilize existing legal provisions. This aligns with the views of [Priyantiwi and Hufon \(2025\)](#) and [Widi et al. \(2021\)](#) that personal data protection regulations will not be fully effective if data subjects lack an adequate understanding of their rights and obligations. Although the PDP Law has provided a comprehensive legal framework, data subjects' rights—such as the right to access data, request corrections, and file complaints—may not be fully exercised if the public is unaware of their existence or the mechanisms for exercising them. Thus, legal literacy serves not only as normative knowledge but also as an instrument that enables the public to exercise their rights as data subjects.

This situation can also be understood through the experience of implementing the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union. Although data protection regulations have provided a strong legal framework, an "intention-behavior gap"—the discrepancy between intentions and actual privacy protection behaviors—is still observed among some users ([Zhang et al., 2024](#)). A comparable pattern has been documented in other developing-country settings: [Maguraushe et al. \(2026\)](#) found that university students in Zimbabwe reported high awareness of, and strong expectations for, their data protection rights, yet had markedly lower confidence that institutions actually complied with those rights—suggesting that the gap between legal awareness and realized protection is not unique to Indonesia. This indicates that the existence of regulations alone is not sufficient to ensure the development of consistent data protection behaviors. Individuals may possess the knowledge and intention to protect their personal data, but in practice, they may not necessarily implement protective measures optimally. Therefore, the results of this study suggest that strengthening legal literacy should be incorporated as part of a broader data protection strategy, which includes enhancing awareness, technical capabilities, risk perception, and digital trust.

Theoretically, the findings of this study enrich the literature on personal data literacies presented by [Pangrazio and Selwyn \(2019\)](#) by affirming that the legal dimension is a key component in shaping awareness of personal data protection. Until now, discussions on personal data literacy have tended to emphasize technical and social aspects, while the legal aspect has received relatively little attention. The research results indicate that the ability to understand rights, obligations, legal risks, and data protection mechanisms can make a tangible contribution to users' privacy awareness on digital platforms. These findings also expand upon [Masur \(2020\)](#) perspective on data protection awareness, which encompasses cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The significant contribution of legal literacy to data protection awareness, as indicated by the composite score, suggests that legal understanding is not only related to knowledge but also has the potential to influence the formation of attitudes and behavioral tendencies toward data protection. Thus, legal literacy can be positioned as one of the multidimensional elements in the construction of personal data protection awareness in the digital environment.

In practical terms, the findings have several implications for regulators, digital platform operators, and educational institutions. Regulators—including the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs and agencies responsible for personal data protection—and platform operators need to raise public awareness of the substance of the PDP Law using simple, communicative language. Education should not merely explain that the regulation exists; it must also build practical understanding of data subjects' rights, the risks of data misuse, consent mechanisms, privacy settings, and complaint procedures. Because legal literacy accounts for only 29.7% of the variation in awareness, these programs should be multidimensional, combining legal education with technical literacy, privacy-setting skills, and efforts to build digital trust. Educational institutions at all levels should also integrate basic personal data protection material into their digital literacy curricula, since awareness of data protection does not differ significantly across levels of formal education. A sustainable, contextual educational approach that reaches diverse user groups is expected not only to enhance knowledge but also to foster more consistent protective behavior in everyday digital life.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine whether legal literacy is associated with digital platform users' awareness of personal data protection. The findings show that legal literacy is positively and significantly associated with this awareness ($t = 6.430$; $\text{sig.} = 0.000$), statistically accounting for 29.7% of its variation ($R^2 = 0.297$); most of the variance falls outside what this single-predictor model can explain. Awareness levels were also similarly distributed

across platform types and educational backgrounds, which is consistent with—though not proof of—legal literacy being a more relevant correlate of the awareness gap identified in the introduction than the demographic characteristics examined here.

These results make two contributions. Empirically, they provide quantitative evidence, drawn from a broad cross-section of digital platform users rather than a single group or platform type, that legal knowledge translates into privacy awareness. Practically, they give regulators and platform operators a concrete basis for treating legal-literacy education as a policy priority alongside technical and consumer-protection measures for implementing the PDP Law.

This study has five limitations. First, its cross-sectional design cannot establish longitudinal causality between legal literacy and awareness. Second, its purposive sampling procedure limits the generalizability of the findings to the wider population of digital platform users. Third, its reliance on self-report measures, collected from a single source on a single occasion, may introduce social desirability, perception bias, and common method bias, which may partly explain the high internal-consistency values observed for both instruments. Fourth, its single-predictor model captures only 29.7% of the variance in awareness, leaving other relevant factors unexamined. Fifth, the composite awareness score does not allow separate conclusions about the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions, so it is not yet possible to say whether legal literacy is more strongly linked to what users know and feel than to what they actually do.

Future research should extend this model by incorporating variables such as trust in digital platforms, prior experience with data breaches, privacy concerns, and general digital literacy, whether as independent, moderating, or mediating factors. Probability-based sampling would strengthen generalizability, and longitudinal or experimental designs would allow stronger causal inference. A mixed-methods approach is also recommended to explore why legal knowledge does not always translate into protective behavior, particularly in the conative dimension, so that future models can more fully explain how awareness and protective behavior form in the digital environment.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

RESEARCH ETHICS STATEMENT

This study involved human participants who voluntarily participated in the research by completing a structured questionnaire. All participants received sufficient information about the study's purpose and procedures and provided informed consent before participating. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequences. The researchers maintained participants' confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research process and used the data exclusively for academic and research purposes.

AI USAGE STATEMENT

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were utilized exclusively to support the language editing process, including grammatical correction, sentence refinement, and enhancement of the manuscript's clarity, coherence, and readability. AI tools were not employed to generate research data, perform statistical analyses, or independently develop the study's findings and conclusions. OpenAI ChatGPT (version 5.2) was used by the author solely as a language-editing and writing-support tool. All AI-assisted outputs were carefully reviewed, verified, and subsequently revised by the author to ensure their accuracy, appropriateness, and alignment with the research content prior to manuscript submission.

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Appendix

The following appendix contains the item guidelines for the research questionnaire, measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

A. Legal Literacy Variable (X)

Code	Dimension	Statement
X1	Legal knowledge	I am aware that Indonesia has Law No. 27 of 2022 on Personal Data Protection.
X2	Legal knowledge	I understand the definition of personal data as stipulated in the Personal Data Protection Law.
X3	Legal knowledge	I am aware that there are legal sanctions for parties who misuse personal data.
X4	Understanding of Rights & Obligations	I understand that I have the right to know the purpose for which a digital platform collects my personal data.
X5	Understanding of Rights & Obligations	I understand that I have the right to withdraw the consent I have given for the processing of my personal data.
X6	Understanding of Rights & Obligations	I understand that I have the right to request the deletion of my personal data from the data controller.
X7	Understanding of Rights & Obligations	I understand the data controller's obligation to safeguard users' personal data.
X8	Ability to Apply the Law	I read the privacy policy before agreeing to use a digital application or platform.
X9	Ability to Apply the Law	I am able to file an objection or complaint if my personal data is misused.
X10	Legal Literacy	I am able to distinguish between digital platforms that have implemented the provisions of the PDP Law and those that have not.

B. Awareness of Personal Data Protection (Y)

Code	Dimension	Statement
Y1	Cognitive	I am aware that my personal data can be misused if not managed properly.
Y2	Cognitive	I am aware of the risk of data breaches when sharing personal information on digital platforms.
Y3	Cognitive	I understand the types of personal data that are sensitive and pose a high risk if leaked.
Y4	Affective	I feel concerned when my personal data is used without permission.
Y5	Affective	I care about the privacy settings on the digital platform accounts I use.
Y6	Affective	I feel it is necessary to always be wary of links or apps that request excessive amounts of personal data.
Y7	Conative	I regularly check and update the privacy settings on my digital accounts.
Y8	Conative	I use different, strong passwords for each digital platform account.
Y9	Conative	I limit the personal data I provide to only the information that the platform truly requires.
Y10	Conative	I report any indications of personal data misuse to the authorities or the platform operator.