

Developing a Legal Literacy Scale for Human Resource Practitioners: Preliminary Psychometric Evidence from Malaysia's Manufacturing Sector

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ABSTRACT

Human resource (HR) practitioners translate employment regulation into organisational policies and decisions, yet the literature offers few context-specific instruments for assessing the legal literacy required for this work. This study developed and preliminarily validated a Legal Literacy Scale for HR practitioners in Malaysia's manufacturing sector. Scale development comprised literature-informed item generation, expert review, content validity assessment, face validation, pilot testing, data screening, exploratory component analysis, and reflective measurement-model assessment using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Five subject-matter experts evaluated 35 initial items, five HR practitioners assessed face validity, and 30 HR practitioners participated in the pilot study. The main survey obtained 226 responses; 193 cases remained after screening. Exploratory analysis reduced the scale to 24 items. The retained structure comprised six first-order dimensions nested within three conceptual domains: Legal Consciousness; Proactive Compliance Practice and Ethics and Compliance Integrity under Legal Attitude; and Knowledge of Rights and Protection, Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority, and Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions under Legal Knowledge. In the PLS-SEM assessment, outer loadings ranged from .692 to .925, composite reliability ranged from .835 to .914, average variance extracted ranged from .541 to .842, and all heterotrait-monotrait ratios were below .85. These results provide preliminary evidence of internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The scale offers a structured basis for diagnosing legal-literacy gaps in HR practice. Because the exploratory analysis and measurement-model assessment used the same purposive sample, independent cross-validation is required before the instrument can be treated as fully validated

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.INTRODUCTION

HR practitioners make decisions that routinely carry legal consequences. Recruitment, contractual terms, wages, working time, leave, disciplinary action, dismissal, employee representation, workplace safety, and grievance handling are not merely administrative activities; they are governed by statutory duties, procedural requirements, and principles of fairness. Errors in these areas can affect employee rights and expose organisations to disputes, penalties, financial loss, and reputational harm. Legal competence is therefore part of responsible HR practice rather than an optional specialist capability.

The need is particularly salient in Malaysia. The Employment Act 1955, Industrial Relations Act 1967, Minimum Wages Act 2012, Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, and related regulations establish overlapping obligations that HR practitioners must interpret and operationalise. The Employment (Amendment) Act 2022, which took effect in 2023, also widened and updated several employment protections. Regulatory change increases the risk that practice will lag behind law unless HR practitioners can identify relevant legal issues, update their knowledge, and translate statutory requirements into defensible organisational procedures.

Legal literacy is broader than recalling legal provisions. It includes knowing relevant rules, recognising when a situation has legal significance, understanding the limits of organisational authority, and adopting a professional orientation that treats compliance and fairness as integral to decision-making [1]-[3]. This distinction matters because legal knowledge does not automatically produce compliant conduct. A practitioner may know a rule but fail to recognise its relevance to a particular decision, or may understand a duty yet regard compliance as secondary to managerial convenience. An adequate HR-specific measure must therefore capture cognitive, perceptual, and attitudinal aspects of legal literacy.

Existing evidence does not provide such a measure. Studies of legal literacy have mainly examined citizens, students, consumers, educators, employees, or legal professionals. Malaysian research has documented incomplete knowledge of employment rights among employees and has qualitatively highlighted weaknesses in legal literacy among HR officers [4], [5]. Other work has examined employers' awareness of legislated employment rights [6]. These studies establish the practical relevance of the problem, but they do not supply a psychometrically evaluated instrument tailored to the work performed by HR practitioners.

This measurement gap limits both research and practice. Without a defensible instrument, researchers cannot examine the antecedents or consequences of HR legal literacy with confidence. Organisations and professional bodies also lack a systematic way to diagnose whether weaknesses lie in legal awareness, compliance orientation, ethical commitment, or knowledge of specific employment protections. Generic legal-knowledge tests are insufficient because they may omit the recognition and attitudinal processes through which HR practitioners apply law at work.

This study addresses the gap by developing and preliminarily validating a context-specific Legal Literacy Scale for HR practitioners in Malaysia's manufacturing sector. Manufacturing was selected because HR work in the sector commonly spans shift arrangements, wages and overtime, occupational safety, employee welfare, discipline, dismissal, and industrial relations. The study asks two questions:

RQ1. What empirical dimensions underlie legal literacy among HR practitioners in the selected context?

RQ2. Does the retained item set demonstrate adequate preliminary reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity?

The study contributes by translating a broad legal-literacy concept into a professional measurement model. It also distinguishes between three

conceptual domains—legal consciousness, legal attitude, and legal knowledge—and the six narrower dimensions that emerged from the data. This distinction prevents the empirical factor structure from being overstated as a complete theory of legal literacy and provides a transparent basis for subsequent cross-validation.

II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

A. Legal Literacy as a Professional Competency

Legal literacy refers to the capacity to understand and use law in ways that support informed action. For non-lawyers, it does not require the doctrinal expertise expected of legal practitioners. It requires sufficient knowledge and interpretive ability to identify legally significant circumstances, understand rights and obligations, seek specialist advice when necessary, and act within lawful boundaries [1], [7]. Empirical reviews also show that knowledge of law is uneven and that individuals may confuse personal norms with legal rules, weakening the assumption that formal regulation automatically produces informed compliance [3].

In organisational settings, legal literacy is role-specific. HR practitioners are intermediary actors between external regulation and internal employment practice. They draft or administer policies, advise managers, document procedures, communicate rights and obligations, and influence how consistently rules are applied. Their legal literacy therefore affects more than their own conduct: it can shape organisational systems and employees' access to fair treatment. Cartan and Vilkinas [8] identified legal literacy as a management capability, while Curran and Quinn [9] showed that attitudes towards employment regulation affect how legislation is received and implemented in employment-relations practice.

Malaysian evidence reinforces the need for role-specific measurement. Omar et al. [5] found gaps in employees' knowledge of statutory rights, and Abd Razak et al. [4] reported that HR officers' legal literacy was consequential for the protection of employee rights. These studies do not establish the prevalence or causes of inadequate HR legal literacy, but they show why a structured assessment is warranted.

B. Legal Consciousness

Legal consciousness concerns how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to law in everyday settings. Workplace decisions often appear operational before their legal implications are recognised. For an HR practitioner, legal consciousness includes noticing that inconsistent selection criteria may raise fairness concerns, that a disciplinary decision requires procedural safeguards, or that a proposed deduction, working-time arrangement, or dismissal may be constrained by statute.

This domain is conceptually prior to detailed legal analysis. A practitioner cannot apply the correct rule if the legal issue is not recognised. Legal consciousness also includes awareness of uncertainty and of the point at which legal advice is required. Research on workplace legal consciousness shows that perceptions of rights and the organisational context influence whether legal concerns are identified and acted upon [10]. Accordingly, the present study treats legal consciousness as awareness of legal responsibilities, legal risks, employee rights, and the procedural implications of HR decisions.

C. Legal Attitude

Legal attitude refers to beliefs and evaluative orientations towards legal compliance, fairness, employee rights, and professional responsibility. It addresses whether practitioners see employment regulation as a legitimate component of good HR practice or as an obstacle to managerial discretion. This domain is necessary because knowledge and awareness do not guarantee action. Implementation depends partly on whether the practitioner is willing to update procedures, challenge non-compliant decisions, document actions, and apply rules consistently.

Curran and Quinn [9] demonstrated that managerial attitudes towards employment legislation influence employment-relations practice. McCormack et al. [2] similarly link organisational legal literacy to a law-informed mindset, professional ethics, and respect for equality and social justice. In HR practice, these orientations may appear in two related forms: proactive compliance behaviour, such as reviewing contracts and monitoring regulatory change; and

ethical compliance integrity, such as prioritising fairness and consistency when organisational pressure favours expediency.

D. Legal Knowledge

Legal knowledge is understanding of legal rules, rights, duties, limits, and procedures. In employment settings, it includes substantive knowledge of minimum standards and procedural knowledge of how lawful decisions should be made. Employment-rights research shows that awareness and accurate knowledge cannot be assumed even among people directly affected by regulation [11], [5]. For HR practitioners, knowledge must extend beyond recalling the names of statutes to distinguishing lawful from unlawful practices in realistic workplace scenarios.

The legal-knowledge domain in this study covered three practical areas. The first was employee rights and protection, including safeguards relevant to HR decisions. The second was the limits of employer authority, which recognises that managerial power is bounded by statute and due process. The third was statutory benefits and working conditions, including minimum employment standards. Together, these areas represent the technical foundation on which legal consciousness and legal attitude can operate.

E. Proposed Domain Structure

The initial item pool was organised around three broad domains derived from the literature. These domains guided item generation rather than imposing a final factor structure. The empirical analyses were used to determine whether narrower dimensions were necessary.

TABLE I
CONCEPTUAL DOMAINS USED FOR ITEM GENERATION

Domain	Operational definition	Measurement focus
Legal Consciousness	Awareness that HR decisions implicate legal rights, obligations, risks, and procedures	Recognition of legal issues, employee rights, procedural risks, and the need for compliant action
Legal Attitude	Evaluative orientation towards compliance, fairness, integrity, and professional responsibility	Proactive compliance, consistency, ethical commitment, and acceptance of legal constraints
Legal Knowledge	Accurate understanding of employment-law rules, rights, limitations, and minimum standards	Employee protection, limits of employer authority, statutory benefits, and working conditions

III. METHOD

A. Design and Setting

The study used a sequential instrument-development design combining qualitative expert judgement with quantitative psychometric assessment. The process followed established scale-development principles: define the construct, generate items, assess content and face validity, pilot the instrument, examine its exploratory structure, and evaluate the retained measurement model [12], [13]. The target population comprised HR

practitioners working in Malaysia's manufacturing sector.

The sector was selected because its HR practitioners frequently manage legally regulated matters including working time, wages, leave, safety, employee welfare, disciplinary procedures, termination, and industrial relations. Eligible respondents were required to perform HR-related functions in a manufacturing organisation and to have experience or responsibility for employment-related matters.

B. Item Generation

An initial pool of 35 items was newly written rather than directly adapted from an existing scale. Item development was guided by the operational definitions in Table I, the legal-literacy literature, Malaysian employment-law requirements, and common HR decision contexts. Eleven items represented Legal Consciousness, 12 represented Legal Attitude, and 12 represented Legal Knowledge.

Items were drafted to maintain correspondence between the construct definition and the intended behavioural or knowledge domain. Consciousness items addressed recognition of legal consequences and procedural risks. Attitude items addressed proactive compliance, fairness, integrity, and professional responsibility. Knowledge items addressed employee protection, employer authority, statutory benefits, and working conditions. The item-development process prioritised employment-specific content because general legal-literacy measures may not represent the decisions for which HR practitioners are accountable.

The questionnaire comprised four sections and required approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. All 35 substantive items used a four-point agreement scale without a neutral midpoint: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. Legal Consciousness comprised 11 positively keyed items. Legal Attitude comprised 12 items, of which five negatively worded items (LA5, LA6, LA7, LA8, and LA12) were reverse coded so that higher scores consistently represented a more favourable legal-compliance attitude.

Legal Knowledge and Application comprised 12 factual statements or workplace scenarios presented using the same four-point agreement scale. Six items stated legally inaccurate propositions (LKA1, LKA3, LKA5, LKA7, LKA9, and LKA11) and were reverse coded; the other six stated legally accurate propositions. After directional alignment, higher scores represented stronger endorsement of legally accurate answers. This format measures graded confidence in, or endorsement of, legal propositions rather than dichotomous test accuracy.

C. Content Validity and Face Validation

Five experts with relevant expertise in employment law, HR management, industrial relations, or instrument development assessed each item's relevance, clarity, and representativeness. Relevance was rated on a four-point scale (1 = not relevant, 2 = less relevant, 3 = relevant, and 4 = highly relevant); ratings of 3 or 4 were counted as agreement. Item-level content validity indices (I-CVIs) and scale-level average CVIs (S-CVI/Ave) were calculated. With five experts, an I-CVI of .80 indicated that at least four experts rated an item as relevant. Quantitative indices were interpreted together with written feedback; items were revised when wording was ambiguous, overlapping, or insufficiently aligned with the Malaysian HR context [14], [15].

Face validation followed the expert review. Five HR practitioners from the target population evaluated item clarity, readability, ease of interpretation, and relevance to their work. Their feedback was used to refine wording before pilot administration.

D. Pilot Study

Thirty HR practitioners completed the online pilot questionnaire and were excluded from the main study. The pilot assessed administration procedures, item clarity, preliminary internal consistency, and the performance of reverse-worded items. SPSS was used to compute corrected item-total statistics and Cronbach's alpha. The pilot coefficients were .88 for Legal Consciousness, .86 for Legal Attitude, .84 for Legal Knowledge, and .91 for the full 35-item instrument. No item was deleted at this stage, although wording and sentence structure were refined in response to participant feedback.

E. Sampling and Data Collection

Purposive sampling was combined with convenience-based access because no complete sampling frame of HR practitioners in Malaysia's manufacturing sector was available. The questionnaire was distributed online to individuals who met the eligibility criteria. A total of 226 responses were received. The demographic section collected gender, age group, highest education level, primary educational background, current position, length of HR experience, and organisation size.

F. Data Screening

The dataset was examined for distributional characteristics, linearity, and multivariate outliers. Skewness values ranged from -1.415 to .436 and kurtosis values from -1.023 to 1.675, remaining within the study's prespecified ± 2 guideline. Visual inspection of scatterplots did not indicate pronounced curvilinear relationships among the three initial domains. Mahalanobis distance was calculated across the three initial domain scores and compared with the χ^2 critical value for three degrees of freedom at $p < .001$ ($\chi^2 = 16.266$). Thirty-three cases exceeded this threshold and were removed, leaving 193 cases for the main analyses.

Because removal of 14.6% of the collected cases can materially affect results, the basis for the critical Mahalanobis threshold and the substantive characteristics of removed cases should be documented. The retained sample was adequate for the reported item-to-case ratio, but sample adequacy alone does not eliminate the need for replication.

G. Analytical Strategy

SPSS was used for data screening, preliminary reliability analysis, and exploratory component analysis. The original analysis used principal component analysis (PCA), with Varimax rotation for multidimensional solutions. The method is reported as PCA rather than exploratory factor analysis because PCA extracts components from total observed variance and is not equivalent to common-factor extraction. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistics, Bartlett's test, component loadings, cross-loadings, and explained variance informed item retention.

SmartPLS was then used to assess the retained reflective measurement model. This stage is described as PLS-SEM measurement-model assessment, not covariance-based confirmatory factor analysis. Indicator reliability was examined using outer loadings. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), convergent validity using average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). Outer loadings near or above .708, CR above .70, AVE above .50, and HTMT below .85 were used as decision guidelines [16], [17].

The same 193 cases were used for exploratory component analysis and PLS-SEM assessment. Consequently, the second stage does not constitute independent confirmation of the structure discovered in the first. The results are interpreted as preliminary internal validation. A stronger validation design would split a sufficiently large sample or use a new sample for confirmatory testing [13].

IV. RESULTS

A. Content Validity

All retained items achieved I-CVI values between .80 and 1.00. S-CVI/Ave values were .91 for Legal Consciousness, .92 for Legal Attitude, and .94 for Legal Knowledge; the overall S-CVI/Ave was .92. Twenty-eight items were retained without wording changes, while seven were revised. No item was deleted at this stage. These results indicate strong agreement among the five experts regarding relevance, although content validity remains a judgement-based form of evidence rather than proof of construct validity.

TABLE II
CONTENT-VALIDITY RESULTS

Domain	Initial items	Retained without revision	Revised	Deleted	I-CVI range	S-CVI/Ave
Legal Consciousness	11	8	3	0	.80-1.00	.91
Legal Attitude	12	9	3	0	.80-1.00	.92

Domain	Initial items	Retained without revision	Revised	Deleted	I-CVI range	S-CVI/Ave
Legal Knowledge	12	11	1	0	.80-1.00	.94
Overall	35	28	7	0	.80-1.00	.92

B. Preliminary Reliability and Item Screening

Before structural exploration, Legal Consciousness produced a Cronbach's alpha of .800 across 11 items. Five Legal Attitude items required reverse coding; after correction, the 12-item domain produced an alpha of .850. Six legally inaccurate, negatively keyed

Legal Knowledge and Application items were reverse coded, and two items with negative item-total correlations were removed. The resulting 10-item domain produced an alpha of .697. The latter value is marginal and supported further item-level investigation rather than a claim of strong reliability.

TABLE III
PRELIMINARY RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Domain	Initial items	Corrective action	Items after screening	Cronbach's alpha
Legal Consciousness	11	None	11	.800
Legal Attitude	12	Five items reverse coded	12	.850
Legal Knowledge and Application	12	Six legally inaccurate items reverse coded; two items removed	10	.697

C. Exploratory Component Structure

Legal Consciousness was examined as a one-component domain based on its theoretical definition. LC2 and LC9 were removed because of low loadings. The retained nine-item component had loadings from .412 to .869 and explained 46.635% of the variance. The .412 loading is weak by conventional standards and should be reconsidered in an independent validation sample even though the item was retained in the present model.

For Legal Attitude, the KMO value was .756 and Bartlett's test was significant, supporting the use of component analysis. Five items were removed because of low loadings or problematic cross-loadings. The remaining seven items formed two

components that jointly explained 58.821% of the variance. Proactive Compliance Practice comprised LA9, LA10, LA11, and LA12_Rev, with loadings from .643 to .877. Ethics and Compliance Integrity comprised LA1, LA2, and LA3, with loadings from .750 to .862.

For Legal Knowledge, two further items were removed because of low measures of sampling adequacy. The final KMO value was .683, and Bartlett's test was significant, $\chi^2(28) = 502.897$, $p < .001$. Eight items formed three components that jointly explained 71.121% of the variance. Knowledge of Rights and Protection comprised four items with loadings from .588 to .842. Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority

comprised two items with loadings from .897 to .938. Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions comprised two items with loadings from .761 to .890.

The exploratory stage therefore retained 24 items: nine for Legal Consciousness, seven for Legal Attitude, and eight for Legal Knowledge. The three conceptual domains were represented empirically by six first-order dimensions.

TABLE IV
EXPLORATORY COMPONENT-ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Conceptual domain / empirical dimension	Items	Loading range	Variance explained within domain
Legal Consciousness	9	.412-.869	46.635%
Proactive Compliance Practice	4	.643-.877	58.821% (two-component Legal Attitude solution)
Ethics and Compliance Integrity	3	.750-.862	58.821% (two-component Legal Attitude solution)
Knowledge of Rights and Protection	4	.588-.842	71.121% (three-component Legal Knowledge solution)
Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority	2	.897-.938	71.121% (three-component Legal Knowledge solution)
Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions	2	.761-.890	71.121% (three-component Legal Knowledge solution)

D. PLS-SEM Measurement-model Assessment

The 24 retained items were specified as reflective indicators of the six first-order dimensions. Outer loadings ranged from .692 to .925 (Table V). Twenty-three loadings exceeded .70; LKA10 loaded

at .692 and was retained because its value was close to the guideline and the corresponding construct met the CR and AVE criteria. Item retention should nevertheless be reassessed during cross-validation rather than treated as final solely because aggregate reliability remained acceptable.

TABLE V
OUTER LOADINGS OF THE RETAINED MEASUREMENT MODEL

Dimension	Item	Outer loading	Decision
Legal Consciousness	LC1	.812	Retained
	LC3	.745	Retained
	LC4	.781	Retained
	LC5	.768	Retained

Dimension	Item	Outer loading	Decision
	LC6	.834	Retained
	LC7	.726	Retained
	LC8	.759	Retained
	LC10	.801	Retained
	LC11	.773	Retained
Proactive Compliance Practice	LA9	.822	Retained
	LA10	.798	Retained
	LA11	.846	Retained
	LA12_Rev	.721	Retained
Ethics and Compliance Integrity	LA1	.742	Retained
	LA2	.805	Retained
	LA3	.827	Retained
Knowledge of Rights and Protection	LKA8	.789	Retained
	LKA5_Rev	.741	Retained
	LKA1_Rev	.728	Retained
	LKA10	.692	Retained with caution
Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority	LKA9_Rev	.914	Retained
	LKA3_Rev	.925	Retained
Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions	LKA6	.881	Retained
	LKA2	.857	Retained

Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .701 to .891, and CR values ranged from .835 to .914 (Table VI). All six dimensions therefore exceeded the .70 internal-consistency guideline. AVE values ranged from .541 to .842, exceeding .50 for every dimension and supporting convergent validity. The two-item

dimensions showed high loadings and acceptable CR and AVE, but their narrow indicator coverage remains a content limitation. Additional items may be needed to improve domain representation without sacrificing parsimony.

TABLE VI
INTERNAL CONSISTENCY AND CONVERGENT VALIDITY

Dimension	Items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Legal Consciousness	9	.891	.913	.541
Proactive Compliance Practice	4	.812	.876	.639
Ethics and Compliance Integrity	3	.701	.835	.628
Knowledge of Rights and Protection	4	.746	.842	.572
Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority	2	.819	.914	.842
Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions	2	.735	.866	.764

HTMT values ranged from .421 to .641 and were below the conservative .85 criterion (Table VII). The results support empirical distinctiveness among the six dimensions within this sample. Because the same data informed dimension discovery and assessment, these values may be optimistic and require replication.

TABLE VII
HETEROTRAIT-MONOTRAIT RATIOS

Dimension	LC	PCP	ECI	KRP	KLEA	KSBWC
Legal Consciousness (LC)	-					
Proactive Compliance Practice (PCP)	.612	-				
Ethics and Compliance Integrity (ECI)	.584	.641	-			
Knowledge of Rights and Protection (KRP)	.496	.532	.508	-		
Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority (KLEA)	.421	.467	.439	.598	-	
Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions (KSBWC)	.438	.482	.451	.624	.579	-

V. DISCUSSION

A. Interpretation of the Measurement Structure

This study developed a 24-item Legal Literacy Scale for HR practitioners and obtained preliminary support for six first-order dimensions. The structure clarifies an important conceptual point: HR legal literacy is not reducible to factual legal knowledge. It includes the capacity to recognise legal implications and an orientation towards applying law proactively, consistently, and ethically.

Legal Consciousness remained a single dimension. This finding is consistent with the view that recognition of legal relevance precedes rule application. HR practitioners routinely encounter situations in which the legal issue is embedded in an operational decision. A coherent consciousness dimension therefore captures whether practitioners identify rights, obligations, risks, and procedural requirements before a problem escalates. Its distinctness from the attitude and knowledge dimensions suggests that awareness cannot be inferred solely from knowing legal rules.

Legal Attitude separated into Proactive Compliance Practice and Ethics and Compliance Integrity. This distinction is substantively useful. Proactive Compliance Practice captures outward, preventive action: monitoring regulatory change, reviewing employment documents, and addressing risks before they become violations. Ethics and Compliance Integrity captures the normative commitment that supports consistent and fair application. The distinction indicates that a practitioner may endorse fairness yet remain reactive, or may perform compliance routines without fully internalising their ethical basis. Treating both as a single undifferentiated attitude score would conceal this difference.

Legal Knowledge separated into Knowledge of Rights and Protection, Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority, and Knowledge of Statutory Benefits and Working Conditions. These dimensions reflect different legal tasks. Knowing employee safeguards does not necessarily imply understanding the legal limits placed on managerial action, and neither guarantees accurate knowledge of minimum statutory standards. This differentiation can make diagnostic use of the

instrument more meaningful because a total knowledge score might obscure a severe gap in one area.

The results also warrant restraint. Two knowledge dimensions contain only two indicators, and one Legal Consciousness item had an exploratory loading of .412. Although the PLS-SEM results met the reported thresholds, threshold compliance is not a substitute for broad content coverage or independent replication. The six-dimension structure should therefore be treated as a plausible, empirically supported model for further testing rather than a definitive taxonomy.

B. Theoretical Contribution

The study contributes to legal-literacy research in three ways. First, it specifies legal literacy as a professional, context-dependent competency. The content is tied to decisions for which HR practitioners are responsible rather than to abstract civic or general legal knowledge. This role-based approach is consistent with the argument that non-lawyer legal literacy should be assessed in relation to the tasks for which law must be understood and used [1].

Second, the study connects three broad conceptual domains to six narrower empirical dimensions. This domain-to-dimension mapping provides more precision than treating legal literacy as either a single knowledge score or an unstructured collection of awareness, attitude, and behaviour items. It also creates testable propositions for future research, such as whether legal knowledge influences compliant practice directly or through legal consciousness and ethical commitment.

Third, the scale extends limited Malaysian research on employment-law awareness. Earlier studies identified gaps in employee or HR-officer legal literacy [4], [5], but did not provide a multidimensional scale for larger-sample organisational research. The present study supplies an initial measurement model that can be refined and used to examine training, professional experience, organisational compliance climate, and decision quality.

C. Practical Implications

The instrument is best used as a diagnostic profile rather than a pass-fail test. Organisations can compare scores across the six dimensions to distinguish a lack of knowledge from weaknesses in issue recognition or compliance orientation. For example, low Knowledge of Limits of Employer Authority would justify targeted learning on lawful deductions, discipline, dismissal, and procedural fairness. Low Proactive Compliance Practice would point instead to governance processes such as legal-update mechanisms, policy review cycles, escalation protocols, and documentation standards.

HR professional bodies and training providers can use the domain structure to design modular development programmes. Knowledge modules should use applied scenarios rather than memorisation alone. Consciousness can be developed through issue-spotting exercises, case analysis, and structured reflection on when specialist advice is required. Attitude-related dimensions require organisational reinforcement because individual training will have limited effect when managers reward expediency or discourage challenge.

The scale should not be used for high-stakes selection, discipline, or certification until stronger validity evidence is available. Such uses require independent validation, examination of criterion-related validity, assessment of measurement invariance, and defensible scoring standards. Current evidence supports research and developmental diagnosis, not consequential classification of individual practitioners.

D. Limitations and Research Agenda

Five limitations define the boundaries of the findings. First, the purposive, convenience-access sample came only from the manufacturing sector. The results cannot be generalised to all Malaysian HR practitioners, particularly those working under different organisational, occupational, or regional conditions.

Second, the same sample was used for exploratory component analysis and PLS-SEM assessment. This design can capitalise on sample-specific patterns and overstate model stability. The next study should test

the 24-item structure using an independent probability-informed or stratified sample. If sample size permits, covariance-based CFA could compare the proposed six-factor model with plausible alternatives and report global model fit.

Third, PCA was used during item reduction. PCA is suitable for data reduction but does not model common latent variance in the same way as common-factor analysis. Replication should use principal-axis factoring or maximum-likelihood EFA where distributional assumptions permit, parallel analysis for factor retention, and oblique rotation because legal-literacy dimensions are theoretically related.

Fourth, all three domains relied on self-reported agreement and may be affected by social desirability, acquiescence, or confidence that exceeds actual legal accuracy. Although the knowledge domain used factual and scenario-based propositions, a four-point agreement response is not equivalent to an objectively scored knowledge test and does not distinguish uncertainty from moderate confidence. Future validation should compare these scores with a criterion-based answer format, behavioural simulations, supervisor or audit indicators, training responsiveness, and compliance outcomes. Test-retest reliability and measurement invariance across industry, organisational size, experience, and jurisdiction should also be examined.

Fifth, the Legal Knowledge and Application domain combined positively and negatively keyed propositions. Reverse wording can reduce acquiescence but may also introduce wording-method effects, particularly when items contain legally technical or qualified statements. Future studies should pretest comprehension, report the legal answer key and scoring rule explicitly, examine item difficulty and discrimination, and compare the present graded-agreement format with true/false/not-sure or multiple-choice formats designed to assess objective knowledge.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study produced a 24-item Legal Literacy Scale designed for HR practitioners in Malaysia's manufacturing sector. The retained model comprises six dimensions representing legal consciousness, proactive and ethical compliance

attitudes, and three areas of employment-law knowledge. Internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity met the reported PLS-SEM guidelines within the analysed sample.

The evidence is promising but preliminary. The use of a single purposive sample for both exploration and measurement-model assessment prevents a claim of full psychometric validation. Subject to independent replication, the scale offers a useful framework for research and developmental diagnosis by distinguishing what HR practitioners know, what legal issues they recognise, and how they approach compliance in practice.

VII. DECLARATIONS

A. Funding

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B. Ethics Approval and Informed Consent

The questionnaire informed participants that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for academic research. It also instructed participants to answer all questions honestly.

C. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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