

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## Diagnosis of the formation of legal culture in representatives of the civil society of Sancti Spiritus

Diagnóstico sobre la formación de la cultura jurídica en representantes de la sociedad civil espiritvana

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**Abstract** This study evaluated the legal culture among civil society representatives in Sancti Spiritus to identify gaps and opportunities to strengthen their legal skills. Through surveys, interviews, and analysis of regulatory documents, the level of legal knowledge and the perception of the relevance of law in their daily work were evaluated. The results revealed significant deficiencies in access to legal information, training in key regulations, and developing skills for interpreting and applying law. Among the main limitations detected were the lack of knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba and the legal system. In addition, it was identified that a large part of society is unaware of the availability of legal professionals who offer advice in a collaborative and free manner, even from academic institutions, which limits access to legal services that could facilitate the understanding and application of current regulations. In response to this, a legal training plan was proposed aimed at improving knowledge and understanding of the law among representatives of civil society in Sancti Spiritus, providing theoretical and practical tools for the exercise of their functions and promoting more significant interaction with current regulatory frameworks.

**Keywords** legal culture, civil society, legal training, free legal advice.

**Resumen** El presente estudio evaluó la cultura jurídica entre los representantes de la sociedad civil espiritvana, con el objetivo de identificar carencias y oportunidades para fortalecer sus competencias legales. Mediante encuestas, entrevistas y análisis de documentos normativos, se evaluó el nivel de conocimiento jurídico y la percepción sobre la relevancia del derecho en su quehacer diario. Los resultados revelaron deficiencias significativas en el acceso a la información legal, formación en normativas clave y desarrollo de habilidades para la interpretación y aplicación del derecho. Entre las principales limitaciones detectadas se encontraron el desconocimiento de la Constitución de la República de Cuba, y del ordenamiento jurídico. Además, se identificó que gran parte de la sociedad desconoce la disponibilidad de profesionales del derecho que ofrecen asesoramiento de manera colaborativa y gratuita, incluso desde instituciones académicas, lo que limita el acceso a servicios legales que podrían facilitar la comprensión y aplicación de las normativas vigentes. En respuesta a esto, se propuso un plan de capacitación jurídica orientado a mejorar el conocimiento y la comprensión del derecho entre los representantes de la sociedad civil espiritvana, proporcionando herramientas teóricas y prácticas para el ejercicio de sus funciones y promoviendo una mayor interacción con los marcos normativos vigentes.

**Palabras clave** cultura jurídica, sociedad civil, capacitación jurídica, asesoramiento legal gratuito.

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## Introduction

Legal culture is a theoretical concept and a pressing need for any community's civic and social development. In the current Cuban context, marked by constant legislative changes and socioeconomic transformations, the legal training of civil society representatives becomes even more relevant. However, various investigations have shown that knowledge of current regulations is limited and often insufficient to guarantee effective participation in the country's political and administrative life.

In 2022, the National Union of Jurists of Cuba (2022), at its 9th Congress, emphasized the need to strengthen legal culture to consolidate the socialist state of law and social justice. This Congress, a significant event in the legal community, highlighted the importance of continuous training and professional development of jurists and promoting a legal culture that contributes to developing a more just and equitable society (García & Rodríguez, 2019; Garavito, 2003).

Likewise, the approval of the new Family Code (2022) by popular referendum represents a milestone in updating the Cuban legal framework. This code introduces significant changes in family rights, gender equality, and protection of vulnerable groups, which implies new challenges for the legal training of the social actors in charge of its implementation.

This study aims to diagnose the state of legal culture among civil society representatives in Sancti Spiritus, identifying deficiencies and opportunities for strengthening their legal skills. It is based on the premise that a solid legal culture improves social actors' performance in their respective organizations and consolidates a more participatory and efficient rule of law.

To this end, a methodology based on the application of surveys, interviews, and analysis of regulatory documents has been used to assess the level of legal knowledge and the perception of the relevance of law in their daily work. The results reveal significant deficiencies in access to legal information, training in key regulations, and developing skills for interpreting and applying law. Among the main limitations detected were the lack of knowledge of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, the lack of access to the Official Gazette, and the absence of continuous training in fundamental aspects of the legal system due to not knowing that they are available digitally for everyone free of charge stand out.

Responding to these findings, we propose a comprehensive legal training plan. This plan is not just a response but a beacon of hope for improving the legal culture among civil society officials in Sancti Spiritus. It seeks to provide theoretical and practical tools for exercising their functions, promote more significant interaction with current regulatory frameworks, and foster a culture of legality and social res-

ponsibility.

Through this diagnosis, we aim to empower you, the civil society representatives, to contribute to improving the legal training process. Your active participation is key to aligning the legal culture with Cuban society's current needs and demands. Continuing legal training is not just a task. It is a responsibility that guarantees a more informed, participatory society aware of its rights and duties, ultimately strengthening the country's institutionality and social development.

In recent studies, authors such as López-Rivera and Sánchez-Pérez (2022) have pointed out that limited access to legal education in non-specialized sectors directly impacts citizens' ability to exercise their rights and fulfill their duties. According to these researchers, the lack of legal training programs in organized communities generates a knowledge gap that hinders effective participation in local decision-making and implementing essential regulations. This problem is not exclusive to Cuba but has been documented in various Latin American societies, where legal culture still challenges democratic development and inclusive governance. Therefore, the legal training of social actors is a key factor in reducing inequalities and strengthening the institutional framework of any nation.

On the other hand, in comparative research between different Latin American countries, Rodríguez and Molina (2023) have shown that constant legal training in social organizations positively impacts reducing legal conflicts and strengthening the community fabric. Their study shows that those societies with higher levels of legal education (Montoya, 2010; López-Rivera & Sánchez-Pérez, 2022). They have more empowered citizens who can demand transparency and accountability from the authorities. In the Cuban context, this reality takes on special relevance, considering the recent legislative reforms and the active role that civil society plays in the implementation of new regulatory provisions. Hence, this diagnosis seeks not only to identify the deficiencies in the legal culture of the representatives of Sancti Spiritus but also to propose strategies that allow them to strengthen their knowledge and skills in this area.

Furthermore, Molina (2024) highlights the importance of legal and political criticism in America, pointing out that a deep understanding of regulations and their historical context is essential for effective citizen participation. This critical approach allows social actors to question and reformulate existing legal structures, promoting more equitable justice adapted to local realities. Legal training, therefore, should not only focus on knowledge of current laws but also on developing an analytical capacity that facilitates social transformation from a legal perspective.

## Methodology

This study adopts a mixed methodological approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods to accurately diagnose the formation of legal culture in representatives of civil society in Sancti Spiritus. This research design seeks not only to describe the level of knowledge and application of law in this population group but also to analyze the causes of its deficiencies and formulate strategies for improving it.

The study follows an exploratory and descriptive design, aiming to identify the current state of legal culture in this sector and analyze the gaps in legal training. At the same time, it is a diagnostic study, as it allows the collection of detailed information on training needs and the structure of a training plan adapted to the characteristics of the context investigated.

Research design it was structured in three fundamental phases:

1. Document collection and analysis phase: We carried out a comprehensive study of Cuban legal regulations, institutional documents, and academic literature on legal training in the Latin American context. This allowed us to define the theoretical and normative framework of the study and establish the analysis criteria for the empirical evaluation.

2. Empirical diagnosis phase: Surveys, interviews, and observation techniques were applied to obtain direct information on the legal culture in Sancti Spiritus's civil society. This phase allowed us to identify strengths and weaknesses in the participants' legal knowledge and access to legal tools.

3. Strategy and proposal formulation phase: Based on the findings of the two previous phases, a legal training plan was designed to address the identified needs. This plan considers methodological, logistical, and monitoring aspects to ensure effectiveness in improving legal training in this sector.

To analyze the phenomenon comprehensively, we used theoretical, empirical, and statistical methodological approaches. Theoretical methods allowed us to analyze and contextualize the problem from a conceptual and normative perspective, identifying the essential elements of legal culture and its relevance to the performance of civil society representatives.

**Document analysis:** Primary and secondary sources were examined, including the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba (2019), the criminal Code, and other key regulations in labor, family, and agricultural relations, and academic publications on legal education and legal culture in Latin America.

**Analysis-synthesis method:** This method was used to identify patterns in understanding and applying law within the group studied. This allowed the components of legal culture to be broken down and related to the organizational structure of civil society in Sancti Spiritus.

**Systemic-structural approach:** This method examined le-

gal culture's relationship with other social, political, and educational factors. It helped to understand how their institutional environment and community dynamics influence the legal education of civil society representatives.

Empirical methods were essential to collect direct information from participants, ensuring a realistic and evidence-based diagnosis.

**Structured surveys:** These were applied to civil society representatives in Sancti Spiritus to measure their level of knowledge on key regulations, their access to legal information, and their perceptions of the importance of legal culture. The surveys included closed and open questions to obtain quantitative and qualitative data.

**Semi-structured interviews:** These were conducted with managers and officials from various civil society organizations, allowing for a more in-depth exploration of the difficulties and opportunities in legal training in this sector. The interviews helped identify institutional barriers and previous strategies used successfully or unsuccessfully in legal training.

**Participant observation:** This was carried out within organizational spaces where legal issues are discussed to evaluate how regulations are incorporated into the daily dynamics of institutions and how civil society representatives interact with the law in their daily practice.

To analyze the data obtained, basic statistical techniques were used to quantify and compare the information collected in surveys and interviews:

**Frequency analysis:** Tables and graphs represented the distribution of responses regarding the participants' legal knowledge.

**Data comparison:** The results obtained were compared with previous studies on legal training in similar contexts, allowing for the identification of common trends and differences specific to the Cuban case.

The study's target population consisted of representatives of various civil society organizations in Sancti Spiritus. Purposive sampling was used to select actors with strategic roles in decision-making within their organizations.

The selection criteria required participants to belong to a civil society organization in Sancti Spiritus, hold a leadership role or influence decision-making, possess at least two years of experience, and voluntarily agree to participate in the study. Surveys were applied to a representative number of officials, ensuring diversity in civil society sectors and level of prior legal training. Surveys were applied to a representative number of officials, ensuring diversity in civil society sectors and level of prior legal training.

To ensure data reliability, the following criteria were applied: methodological triangulation. Various techniques (surveys, interviews, and observation) were combined to ve-

rify the consistency of the findings. Expert validation: The questionnaire was reviewed by academics and specialists in law and social sciences before its application. A pilot test was carried out with a small group before applying the instruments to the total sample to evaluate the questions' clarity and the content's relevance.

The methodology used allowed for the development of a solid diagnosis of the legal culture of civil society representatives in Sancti Spiritus. The combination of theoretical, empirical, and statistical methods facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and laid the foundations for a legal training plan proposal. Despite the limitations, the findings constitute a valuable input for improving legal training in this sector. They can serve as a reference for future research on legal education in the Cuban context.

## Results and discussion

The analysis of data collected through surveys and interviews allowed for an assessment of the level of legal knowledge among representatives of civil society in Sancti Spiritus across various areas of law. In Constitutional Law, 35% of respondents demonstrated adequate knowledge, revealing a limited understanding of the Constitution of the Republic of Cuba and its practical implications. Regarding Administrative Law, 50% of participants showed competence, indicating moderate familiarity with regulations governing public administration and its interaction with citizens. In Labor Law, 65% of respondents exhibited solid knowledge, reflecting a greater understanding of labor legislation and workers' rights. In Family Law, 45% of participants demonstrated adequate knowledge, suggesting the need for a deeper understanding of regulations related to family relations and associated rights. For Criminal Law, 40% of respondents showed competence, indicating a limited grasp of criminal legislation and court procedures. Finally, in Civil Law, only 30% of participants demonstrated adequate knowledge, highlighting a significant deficiency in this fundamental legal area.

Seventy percent of respondents indicated that their primary legal information source is workshops and seminars organized by government institutions. Fifty percent mentioned using self-study materials, such as manuals and legal guides, to complement their training. Only 25% of respondents reported having regular access to professional legal advice, which limits their ability to resolve specific and complex queries.

Eighty percent of respondents recognized the importance of solid legal training for adequately performing their functions within civil society. 60% expressed the need for ongoing training programs that address legislative updates and delve into specific areas of law. To more clearly visualize the distribution of legal knowledge in the different areas evalu-

ated, observe in Figure 1.

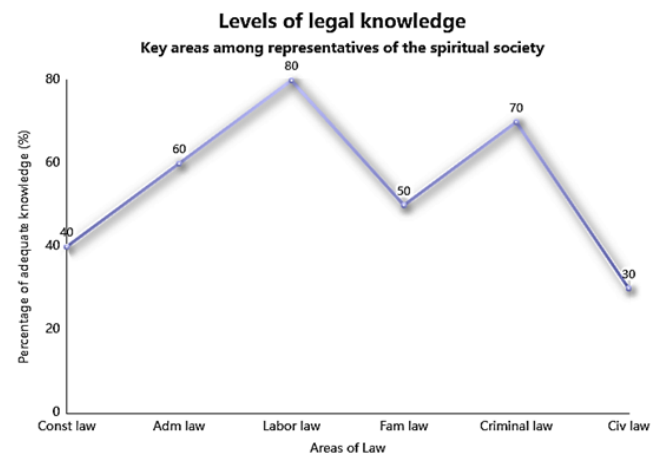


Figure 1. Levels of legal knowledge by area.

The results reveal a significant disparity in legal knowledge among civil society representatives in Sancti Spiritus. While areas such as Labor Law present a more consolidated knowledge, other fundamental disciplines, such as Civil and Constitutional Law, show worrying deficiencies.

These shortcomings can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the predominant reliance on government workshops and seminars as the primary source of legal information suggests limited and possibly biased training, which does not cover these social actors' complete training needs. Furthermore, access to professional legal advice prevents a deeper and more practical understanding of the current regulations, although it is unknown.

Current literature emphasizes the importance of comprehensive legal training to strengthen civil society's capacity to promote and defend human rights. For example, the International Institute for Civil Society (2009) highlights that a proper understanding of the legal framework is essential for organizations to operate effectively and advocate for positive social change.

Recent studies also indicate that the lack of adequate legal training can limit civil society's effective participation in democratic processes and monitoring compliance with the law. Therefore, it is imperative to develop training and dissemination programs that address these deficiencies and promote a solid legal culture among civil society representatives in Sancti Spiritus.

The findings of this study underline the need to implement broader and more accessible legal training strategies. These strategies will enable civil society actors to perform their roles more effectively and contribute to strengthening the rule of law in Cuba.



## Conclusions

Civil society representatives in Sancti Spíritus face challenges due to their limited knowledge of current regulations, making participating in legal and administrative processes difficult. This situation is aggravated by the lack of ongoing legal training programs and awareness about the availability of free legal advice offered by professionals and academic institutions. These deficiencies negatively affect their ability to engage in an informed manner in local decision-making and the implementation of essential regulations. It is crucial to implement legal training plans and promote the dissemination of free legal advice services to strengthen legal culture in the community and improve the performance of these social actors.

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## Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

## Author contributions

Yoan L. Pereira, Vania González and Dario Delgado: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, drafting the original manuscript and writing, review, and editing.

## Data availability statement

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Statement on the use of AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and clarity of the article.

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