



Reconstruction of the Normative Legal Research Paradigm in Responding to Global Challenges: An Epistemological Analysis

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Article	Abstract
<p>Keywords: Interdisciplinary, Comprehensive, Paradigm, Legal Research.</p>	<p><i>Legal research is essentially a scientific activity conducted by both academics and legal practitioners. Legal research has so far been dominated by a normative approach that focuses on internal analysis of the legal system, although its development has led to various problems. This article aims to propose a legal research paradigm to address global challenges. The analysis results show that there is an urgency to reconstruct the legal research paradigm towards a more comprehensive approach. This approach emphasizes the integration of the strengths of normative analysis with external dimensions through empirical, sociological, and interdisciplinary perspectives. The reconstruction of this paradigm is not intended to replace the normative approach, but rather to expand and enrich legal analysis to make it more contextual, adaptive, and reflective. With epistemological, methodological, and axiological renewal, the legal research paradigm is expected to drive a more substantive, just, and relevant transformation of law to meet the needs of society in the contemporary era.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Research is essentially a structured and systematic scientific activity with a specific methodology (Suteki, 2018). Research is generally conducted based on a specific field of science. This field of science is important in determining the focus of the research and its methodology, as well as its relevance to the problems to be addressed in the research method. One field of research that has "specific" characteristics in line with its scientific discipline is the field of law.

Legal science is a branch of science that has distinctive characteristics compared to other social sciences (Ariawan, 2019). The main difference lies in the object of study and methodological approach. While social sciences in general are oriented towards descriptive and interpretive explanations of empirical phenomena, law places greater emphasis on assessing, interpreting, and formulating legal norms

that apply within a particular legal system (Soekanto & Mamudji, 2006). Thus, legal science acts as a normative science that seeks to explain law as an ideal system of norms that are binding in society. Therefore, the approach used in legal research is not entirely identical to that of other social sciences, because law contains values, certainty, and prescriptiveness.

Legal research plays a very important role in supporting the development of legal science and legal practice. Through research, various legal issues can be identified, analyzed, and solutions proposed in a systematic manner. Moreover, legal research serves as a scientific basis in the process of forming legislation, developing legal theory, and enforcing fair law (Marzuki, 2024). In other words, legal research not only produces knowledge, but also contributes to national legal development, both in terms of formal aspects (written rules) and material aspects (substance of legal justice). This shows that legal research cannot be viewed merely as an academic activity, but also as a reconstructive instrument in the development of the Indonesian legal system.

In Indonesia, the normative-doctrinal approach remains the mainstream in legal education and research. This approach focuses on the study of positive legal norms with an emphasis on the interpretation of legislation, legal principles, doctrines, and jurisprudence. This tendency can be seen in the curricula of many law faculties, which focus on the study of written law as the main source of research (J. Efendi, 2016). Although this approach has the advantage of providing legal certainty, it still faces methodological challenges in responding to the social dynamics and multidimensionality of contemporary legal issues. Therefore, it is important to reexamine the dominance of the normative approach by opening space for a more integrative and comprehensive approach, including promoting an interdisciplinary and even multidisciplinary approach.

Normative legal research is a type of legal research that focuses on the study of applicable positive legal norms. Its main objects include legislation, legal principles, doctrines, and court decisions. In this research, law is understood as a logical, closed, and systematic system of norms. The method used is normative juridical, which is analyzing legal regulations based on the logical structure of the law and the principles contained therein (Negara, 2023). The main data sources come from primary legal materials such as laws, government regulations, and court decisions, as well as secondary legal materials such as legal literature and scientific journals. This study does not require empirical data because it does not aim to observe social phenomena but rather to examine the validity and consistency of legal norms.

The normative approach has a fundamental function in answering legal questions, especially those related to how laws should be formulated, applied, and interpreted. This approach allows researchers to construct a complete legal framework through consistent legal reasoning, from the identification of norms to the formulation of legal arguments. Normative legal research is also important in harmonizing legislation and developing legal theory (J. Efendi, 2016). As a method oriented towards legal texts, this approach is effective in formulating new norms, evaluating conflicting

norms, and drafting legal policy proposals based on general principles and the applicable legal system.

The advantage of the normative approach lies in its ability to support legal certainty and stability of the legal system, particularly in the context of a codified legal system such as Indonesia's. By referring to written sources of law as the main reference, this approach provides a solid foundation for the formation and enforcement of predictable and consistent laws. In the European Continental legal system, where laws are codified in the form of statutes, the normative approach is considered the most relevant and dominant analytical tool (Soekanto & Mamudji, 2006). The legal certainty produced through this approach is an important pillar in realizing justice and legal protection for society (Muh. Ali Masnun, Dicky Eko Prasetyo, Mohd Badrol Awang, 2024).

The normative approach in legal research, although still the dominant method in Indonesia, faces various limitations in responding to increasingly complex and multidimensional modern legal challenges. Contemporary issues such as digital transformation, human rights protection, environmental justice, and shifting global economic relations demand a legal perspective that goes beyond the analysis of written norms alone. These issues are not only related to rules, but are also closely related to the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts of society (Cotterrell, 2005)(Banakar & Travers, 2005). Therefore, legal research models that rely solely on deductive reasoning from applicable legal norms are insufficient in providing a holistic understanding of legal reality.

The main criticism of the normative approach is its tendency to ignore social facts and empirical experiences as part of the sources of legal understanding. In the context of a constantly changing society, law is not only shaped by the state through legislation, but also develops sociologically in everyday practices (Twining, 1997). The normative approach is considered too textual, formalistic, and insufficiently reflective of how law actually works in the field (Legrand, 1997). This creates a gap between the construction of law in academic circles and the reality experienced by society, especially vulnerable groups who are often not accommodated by a rigid and prescriptive normative approach.

These limitations are exacerbated by the lack of integration between legal approaches and empirical interdisciplinary methods. In many countries, the socio-legal approach has developed in response to the need to view law in relation to social realities. This approach encourages the use of qualitative and quantitative methods to understand the effectiveness of law, public perceptions of justice, and the impact of regulation on social behavior (Webley, 2010)(Hoecke, 2011). In Indonesia, the integration of empirical methods in legal research is still limited, both in terms of the legal education curriculum and the methodological capacity of legal researchers. In fact, the synergy between normative and empirical-interdisciplinary approaches can produce a richer understanding of law that is more relevant to the needs of society (Irianto, 2013). The development of legal research globally shows the emergence of interdisciplinary approaches that challenge the dominance of traditional normative methods.

Intellectual movements such as law and society, socio-legal studies, and critical legal studies have broadened the methodological horizons of legal research by incorporating approaches from the social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, economics, and even legal psychology (Patricia Ewick, 1998)(Hunt, 1993). This interdisciplinary approach stems from the realization that law is not only a system of norms, but also a complex social product and process. As a consequence, legal studies are no longer sufficient in analyzing the text of laws or jurisprudence, but must also pay attention to how laws are produced, implemented, and responded to by society.

This article aims to present developments in legal research methods in response to increasingly complex, comprehensive, and significantly changing societal developments. In this context, this paper aims to discuss and elaborate on two important aspects, namely: (i) the urgency of developments in legal research: from normative to comprehensive, and (ii) efforts to reconstruct the legal research paradigm.

METHOD

This research is a normative legal study that examines the paradigm of legal research with an emphasis on epistemological, methodological, and axiological aspects in response to global societal developments (Anjari, 2023). The approaches used include conceptual and philosophical approaches by examining theories, doctrines, and scientific thoughts on normative legal research to comprehensive and interdisciplinary approaches. The legal materials used consist of primary legal materials in the form of scientific works in the fields of legal philosophy, legal theory, and legal research methodology, as well as secondary legal materials in the form of journal articles and relevant research results. The analysis of legal materials obtained through literature studies is carried out qualitatively and prescriptively to formulate a more comprehensive and contextual reconstruction of the legal research paradigm.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Urgency of Legal Research Development: From Normative to Comprehensive

Legal science (jurisprudence), like other fields of science, has also undergone developments, particularly in this era of massive technological advancement and modernization in society (Dicky Eko Prasetio Adam Ilyas Felix Ferdinand Bakker, 2021). When other fields of science, particularly natural sciences and social sciences, experienced significant developments in the era of positivism as proposed by Auguste Comte, jurisprudence also experienced similar developments, albeit with various adjustments in the field of jurisprudence (Gavison et al., 1982). Jurisprudence also experienced the dominance of “legal positivism” as proposed by John Austin. Legal positivism simply equates what is referred to as law with legislation passed by the state (law is the command of the sovereign) (Lyons & Dworkin, 1977)(Chroust, 1952). This view, although novel in its time for making law more certain, has actually degraded the meaning of law to merely a narrow set of regulations. Satjipto Rahardjo even offered harsh and firm criticism that legal positivism has distanced law from its relevance to

human values because, in the perspective of legal positivism, law is only enforced through automated thinking without involving the soul, feelings, and intentions of humans (Rahardjo, 2008)(Prasetyo, 2024).

The development of positivism in various disciplines that has implications for legal science as formulated above is also related to the development of research methods in legal science. The development of research methods in legal science, particularly in Indonesia, has predominantly focused on normative or doctrinal legal research. Methodologically, the normative approach still occupies a dominant position in legal research practice in Indonesia and in many countries with a civil law tradition. This approach positions law as a systematic and logical written norm and focuses on the interpretation of legislation, legal principles, and jurisprudence yurisprudensi (Marzuki, 2024)(J. Efendi, 2016). In this context, the normative approach plays an important role in maintaining the consistency of legal logic and providing a legal basis for the formation of new laws. Although Peter Mahmud Marzuki argues that “normative” is actually different from “positivism” because in the normative legal approach, the use of moral values, particularly through legal principles, remains the main focus, whereas in legal positivism, law is only identified as rules made by the state, so that applying the law is synonymous with applying rules (Marzuki, 2024)(Widowati, 2019). Although substantively different, “normative” and “legal positivism” have similarities in that they both emphasize ‘internal’ analysis in law, so that even though “non-legal” analysis is permitted in legal research, it is limited in nature and only complements legal research whose main focus is “internal” analysis of law. This “internal” analysis of law is commonly viewed from various aspects, such as: gaps in rules, conflicts between rules, ambiguities in rules, and even incompleteness of rules.

However, in normative legal research as described above, there are problems when dealing with complex global issues—such as digitization, climate crisis, and social change—as this approach is considered limited in revealing the empirical and sociological dimensions of law (Friedman, 2002). Another development is that since 2015, countries around the world have begun to launch the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030), so that almost all disciplines have the practical goal of realizing the SDGs 2030 (Friedman, 2002). The problem for legal science, which only emphasizes normative legal research, is that it will face difficulties when the law is intended as a means to achieve the SDGs 2030 at the global, national, regional, and even village levels (Iskandar, 2020)(Zurba & Papadopoulos, 2021).

The main weakness of the normative approach lies in its closed nature and its often ahistorical and a-contextual nature. This approach tends to ignore the social, political, and cultural contexts that help shape the dynamics of law in society (Tamanaha, 2001). When dealing with interdisciplinary issues, such as the protection of human rights in migration policy or ecological justice in agrarian conflicts, the normative approach does not provide sufficient analytical tools to examine how the law actually operates and is accepted by society. In addition, limitations in methodological training in legal education contribute to the low capacity of legal

academics to incorporate empirical and social approaches into their research (Webley, 2010)(Banakar & Travers, 2005).

The weaknesses of normative legal research above actually provide a simple illustration that the increasingly complex developments of the world in the 21st century require the presence of law through research methods that are not only normative in nature but can also be more comprehensive in accommodating various social developments (Dicky Eko Prasetyo, Muh Ali Masnun, 2024). One criticism of the development of legal science that accommodates societal developments is the loss of the identity and characteristics of legal science, which is *sui generis* in nature. Law that is too accommodating of societal developments is feared to “go with the flow” and even feared to experience an enigma in which legal research becomes another type of social science and humanities research. This actually requires efforts to expand the study of law, so that law is not only studied or analyzed from a normative or doctrinal perspective, but can be expanded in various aspects that can accommodate social developments so that the development of legal research methods can evolve from normative to comprehensive legal research methods.

Comprehensive legal research means that legal research can be studied and analyzed broadly in accordance with the needs and issues of the research to be addressed. While normative legal research emphasizes only “internal studies” in legal science, comprehensive legal research attempts to include both ‘internal’ and “external” studies in legal science. This comprehensive legal assessment is intended so that a legal issue being studied can be analyzed more holistically so that before a legal solution is formulated, the legal issue is first explained and described as to why it arose. This can be illustrated, for example, in a “normative” manner, there is a law that requires the formation of implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations. However, budgetary efficiency has prevented the formation of implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations as mandated by law, which clearly causes problems related to legal issues. If this problem is analyzed using normative legal research methods, then the analysis will only relate to the authority and characteristics of delegated regulations concerning the formation of implementing regulations, as well as the appropriate sanctions for regions that have not yet formed implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations as mandated by law. This discussion seems “partial” and has not been able to analyze in depth why implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations as mandated by law have not been established. Of course, it would be different if the problem were examined and analyzed using a comprehensive legal research method.

In the case study above, if analyzed through a comprehensive legal research method, it is not only viewed in terms of the authority and characteristics of delegation regulations related to the formation of implementing regulations and the existence of appropriate sanctions for regions that have not yet formed implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations as mandated by law, but also analyzed in relation to non-legal reasons why implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations as mandated by law have not yet been established. Referring to a

comprehensive analysis of this issue, a non-legal analysis was formulated to examine the real problem, which is that implementing regulations in the form of regional head regulations as mandated by law have not been formed due to budget efficiency measures by the central government. Given this issue, it is necessary to analyze the economic (budgetary) dimension of law, such as Richard Posner's Economic Analysis of Law approach and the use of Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) methods in the formulation of legislation, one of the objectives of which is to formulate effective legislation that has an impact on society while still striving to minimize costs (Posner, 2012)(Spalding & Restrepo, 2024). Of course, the use of the Economic Analysis of Law and Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) perspectives also needs to involve various disciplines outside of law, such as economics, public policy, and other relevant disciplines.

The illustration above provides a brief overview of how comprehensive legal research methods can be applied. Comprehensive legal research methods cannot be viewed as the opposite or antithesis of normative legal research. Comprehensive legal research methods are research methods that "complement" normative legal analysis so that an analysis of legal issues can be carried out more holistically and can describe legal issues in a more complex manner. This is urgent so that the legal prescriptions formulated can address more substantive legal issues by accommodating both "internal" and "external" legal aspects simultaneously.

Efforts to Reconstruct the Legal Research Paradigm

The reconstruction of paradigms related to legal research is essentially something that must be done. Erlyn Indarti, quoting the views of Guba and Lincoln (1994), emphasizes that a paradigm is "a set of belief systems" adopted by each scientific community that offers a model of problems and a model for solving problems within a particular scientific community (Indarti, 2010)(Indarti, 2016). In this context, the reconstruction of the legal research paradigm is intended so that legal research methods are able to formulate holistic and comprehensive problem models while also being able to formulate responsive and applicable legal problem-solving efforts related to existing legal needs. This essentially confirms that the reconstruction of the paradigm in legal research seeks to renew the normative legal research methods commonly adopted and practiced by legal academics and practitioners in Indonesia.

The reconstruction of paradigms in normative legal research essentially encompasses epistemological, methodological, and axiological renewal. The proposed reconstruction model does not eliminate the normative approach, but rather expands it by opening up dialogue with interdisciplinary and empirical approaches. The socio-legal approach, which integrates law with social sciences, can serve as a bridge that enables more contextual and socially relevant legal analysis (Hoecke, 2011). This paradigm reconstruction should encourage legal researchers to re-examine the sources, validity, and function of law in society, as well as adopt methods that allow for the involvement of empirical realities, such as interviews, observations, and quantitative

data analysis. Thus, legal research will be more reflective, responsive, and effective in addressing legal issues that are undergoing massive development.

The normative legal research paradigm is essentially based on the assumption that law is an autonomous, rational, and systematic system of norms. This research aims to interpret, assess, and construct applicable legal norms through doctrinal analysis of legislation, principles, and jurisprudence (Marzuki, 2024)(Soekanto & Mamudji, 2006). However, when critically examined, this approach tends to position law in a space that is impervious to social reality, thereby ignoring the political, economic, and cultural dynamics inherent in legal practice. This tendency results in legal research that is abstract and legalistic in nature, which contributes little to solving real problems in society (Friedman, 2002). In the context of modern academia, which demands multidimensionality and social relevance, this paradigm requires epistemological renewal.

The limitations of the normative approach become increasingly apparent when dealing with contemporary legal issues that are interdisciplinary and complex. For example, the issue of climate change not only concerns environmental legal norms, but also touches on aspects of ecological justice, human rights, and state support for vulnerable groups (Moeliono & Soetoprawiro, 2020). Similarly, digital legal issues require a socio-technical understanding that goes beyond the text of the law (Tamanaha, 2001)(Cotterrell, 2005). In many cases, the normative approach fails to capture the social dynamics behind legal texts because it does not rely on empirical data or interdisciplinary perspectives. Therefore, it is important to recognize that this method is not the only valid way to understand law, and that a plurality of methods actually enriches legal analysis (Banakar & Travers, 2005).

Referring to Shidarta's view, that the development of every science (including law) can be seen in at least two developments, namely multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary developments (Shidarta, 2024). Multidisciplinary development is the development of knowledge that views a problem as a "shared problem" across various or interdisciplinary fields of knowledge, which is then solved collaboratively in relation to its relevance to each discipline. This implies that in multidisciplinary development, each discipline will "interact" and meet, even though each still maintains its identity and characteristics. Interdisciplinary development emphasizes collaboration and intensity in efforts to "solve shared problems." In this type of development, it must be acknowledged that one or more disciplines act as "coordinators" for other disciplines in solving a particular problem.

With regard to research methods in legal science, interdisciplinary developments are indeed appropriate and relevant to efforts to build a more comprehensive legal research paradigm. Interdisciplinary developments in legal research continue to place normative legal research as the primary method of studying law, despite innovations in the use of "other disciplines" outside the discipline of law to optimize existing legal solutions in society. This interdisciplinary development in legal research is relevant to societal developments, particularly when technological

developments, the virtual world, and artificial intelligence play an important role in global developments, especially in the 21st century (Richard Susskind, 2022).

This interdisciplinary legal research method, in its application, needs to consider three important aspects, namely: (i) what is the problem to be answered? (ii) what disciplines other than law can support the analysis and efforts to resolve the issue?, and (iii) what theories and concepts in legal and non-legal disciplines can be used as “analytical tools” in answering a problem and how are these theories and concepts in legal and non-legal disciplines applied? These three basic questions are essentially important aspects that need to be considered when conducting interdisciplinary legal research. One example of the application of interdisciplinary legal research is related to DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) testing as a means of determining the kinship between children and parents outside of marriage, as confirmed in Constitutional Court Decision No. 46/PUU-VIII/2010 (Disantara, Fradhana Putra et al., 2024). The substance of Constitutional Court Decision No. 46/PUU-VIII/2010 is essentially an effort to provide justice, particularly in affirming the rights of children in relation to kinship between children and parents outside of marriage. However, on the other hand, interdisciplinary studies are certainly very relevant in view of the development of DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) testing as a basis for the validity of kinship between children and parents outside of marriage. In this context, disciplines outside of law play an important role, such as medicine, biology, or other sciences relevant to the development of DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid) testing. Therefore, in this case, interdisciplinary legal research methods are relevant when applied, particularly in efforts to explore and comprehensively explain existing legal issues.

From the above description, a more reflective and integrative paradigm reconstruction concept is needed. This reconstruction includes combining the strengths of normative analysis with socio-legal approaches and empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative. The new paradigm offered is not intended to completely replace the normative approach, but to broaden the methodological horizons of legal research so that it is more adaptive to the times (Hoecke, 2011). Thus, legal research can play a role not only as a guardian of normative order, but also as a critical and contextual tool for social change. This approach encourages researchers to understand law as a product of dynamic social interaction, which must be continuously tested and updated through dialogue between norms, values, and the realities of society (Webley, 2010)(Patricia Ewick, 1998).

Demands for legal research methods that are more adaptive and responsive to social realities are growing stronger, both in academia and in practice. Academically, legal scholars are challenged to not only focus on legal reasoning, but also to understand the dynamics of law in an ever-changing socio-cultural context (Tamanaha, 2001). In practice, policymakers, judges, and lawyers need more contextual data and analysis to formulate effective and fair legal policies. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach in legal research is able to bridge the gap between legal texts and empirical

facts, as well as open up the possibility of using qualitative and quantitative data as part of legal analysis (Banakar & Travers, 2005)(Webley, 2010).

This condition emphasizes the urgency of reconstructing the legal research paradigm, especially in its epistemological dimension. Until now, the normative legal approach has often claimed objectivity and legal truth from within the legal system itself. However, this approach tends to close off the possibility of dialogue with realities outside the legal text. The reconstruction of legal epistemology means dismantling this closed way of thinking and opening up to pluralism in methods, approaches, and sources of scientific truth (Hoecke, 2011)(Friedman, 2002). This also requires a redefinition of the position of law as a science, which is not only normative but also empirical and reflective. In this context, the legal research paradigm can no longer be monolithic, but must be flexible, collaborative, and open to social change.

CONCLUSION

The development of legal science, which has been dominated by a normative approach, has made an important contribution to maintaining the consistency of legal logic and the legitimacy of legal norms in the legislative system. However, increasingly complex and interdisciplinary global dynamics, such as digitalization, climate change, and the sustainable development agenda (SDGs 2030), show that a normative approach alone is no longer sufficient to respond to the ever-changing legal reality, which is rich in social, political, economic, and cultural contexts. Therefore, there is an urgent need for legal research to move towards a more comprehensive approach—one that not only emphasizes “internal” analysis of legal norms, but also incorporates “external” dimensions through the integration of empirical, sociological, and interdisciplinary perspectives. This comprehensive approach is not intended to negate the normative approach, but rather to complement it so that legal analysis becomes more holistic, contextual, and relevant to the needs of society. Thus, the direction of legal research methods should be aimed at integrating the power of normative analysis and an understanding of factual conditions and social dynamics in the field, in order to produce legal prescriptions that are more substantive, applicable, and have a real impact on justice and the usefulness of law in society.

Efforts to reconstruct the legal research paradigm are a necessity amid the complexity of societal developments, technology, and growing scientific needs. The normative paradigm that has been dominant in the tradition of legal research, although still relevant for maintaining legal continuity and certainty, has proven to have limitations in responding to factual and contextual social dynamics. Therefore, paradigm reconstruction is not intended to negate the normative approach, but rather to expand it through the integration of empirical, interdisciplinary, and socio-legal approaches that are more responsive to reality. This new paradigm assumes that law is not merely a closed system of norms, but rather a dynamic social product that must be understood through dialogue between legal texts, social contexts, and values of justice. Thus, the reconstruction of the legal research paradigm needs to be directed towards epistemological, methodological, and axiological renewal that makes legal research

more adaptive, reflective, and effective in promoting substantive legal transformation that is relevant to the needs of the times.

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