

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Awareness of DOrSU Cateel Campus Criminology Students on the Implementation of RA 11131

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines the level of awareness of Republic Act No. 11131 also known as the Philippine Criminology Profession Act of 2018, specifically Articles III and IV, among criminology students at Davao Oriental State University – Cateel Campus, focusing on provisions related to licensure, regulation, and professional practice. A quantitative descriptive research design was used, with a random sampling approach, and 262 respondents participated. A researcher-made questionnaire was administered, with its validity and reliability ensured through pilot testing. The majority of respondents were between 17 and 21 years old, with more females than males, and most were in their third and fourth years. The overall level of awareness of RA 11131 was very high with a mean score of 4.21, particularly in areas such as Licensure Examination Requirements, Certification and Professional Identification, Authorized Practice of Criminology, and Professional Responsibilities and Obligations. Awareness of Penalties and Legal Implications was also high with a means score of 4.09. Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in awareness based on age and sex, indicating equal exposure across these demographics. However, significant differences were found based on year level in the areas of Certification and Professional Identification, Penalties and Legal Implications, and Overall Awareness. Upper-year students exhibited greater awareness, suggesting that legal knowledge increases as students advance. This highlights the need for earlier integration of certification and penalties into the curriculum to ensure consistent awareness across all year levels.

**Keywords:** Awareness, criminology, licensure examination, obligations, professional, penalties, RA 11131, responsibilities

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## INTRODUCTION

Concerns have been raised about the inconsistent levels of student awareness among criminology students regarding important laws and policies, including Republic Act (R.A.) 11131, which regulates the criminology profession in the Philippines (Pueblo et al., 2024). In essence, some criminology students may have a thorough understanding of RA 11131, but others may not (Fielding, 2023). Through recognition and resolution of these differences, interested parties can endeavor to guarantee that every student is suitably equipped to handle the moral and legal intricacies of the criminology field (Newman et al., 2021). While it is true that RA 11131 is an expected area of study for criminology students, assessing their actual level of awareness remains important because it identifies existing knowledge gaps that may otherwise be overlooked (Nayoyos-Refugia, 2024). Such findings provide evidence-based insights that can guide curriculum enhancement, ensure consistency in legal and professional preparedness, and strengthen the alignment between criminology education and the demands of professional practice.

Internationally, the implementation of regulatory standards in criminology education plays a key role in shaping future professionals (Bolton-King et al., 2022). Countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have established frameworks to ensure criminology students are knowledgeable about legal and ethical guidelines (Sultan, 2022). These frameworks not only standardize education but also enhance global competency, ensuring graduates are prepared to address complex challenges in the field of criminology (Refugia, 2021). In the Philippine context, the implementation of Republic Act No. 11131 mirrors these international efforts by institutionalizing quality assurance mechanisms in criminology education. RA 11131 aims to elevate academic standards, professional preparedness, and licensure requirements, thereby aligning local criminology education with globally recognized practices. This alignment underscores the importance of adopting international benchmarks to reinforce the credibility and effectiveness of criminology programs in the country.

Despite the implementation of Republic Act (R.A.) 11131, which aims to professionalize and regulate the practice of

criminology, there remains a gap in understanding how well students are aware of this critical law. Thus, this study aimed to address this gap by examining the level of awareness of R.A. 11131 among criminology students at Davao Oriental State University – Cateel Campus. While some may question the need to assess such awareness, recent trends highlight its importance. The PRC reported a low national passing rate of 49.34% in the July–August 2024 Criminology Board Exam, suggesting gaps in student preparedness (Espartero, 2022). Although DOrSU performed better at 62.96%, disparities across campuses point to inconsistencies in program delivery. These patterns underscore the need to evaluate students' awareness of R.A. 11131 as a foundation for professional readiness and quality criminology education.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Description of study area

This research was conducted at Davao Oriental State University – Cateel Campus, located in Mahan-ob, Mainit, Cateel, Davao Oriental. The institution was selected as the study site because it offers a Criminology program, making it relevant for students to gain awareness of Republic Act 11131, also known as the Philippine Criminology Profession Act of 2018. In particular, Articles III and IV were emphasized, as these focus on licensure, regulation, and professional practice, which serve as essential steps for students in preparing to become future professionals.

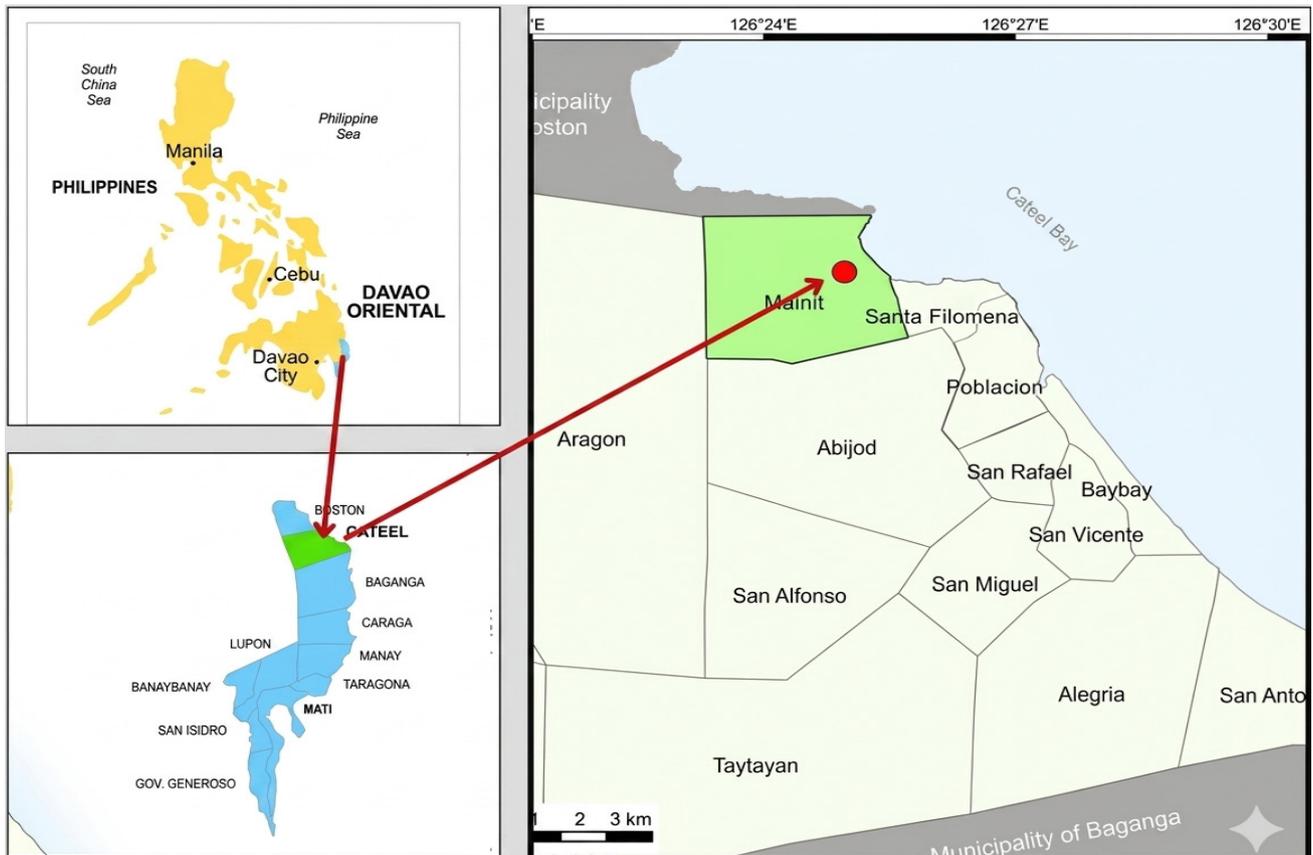


Figure 1. Map showing Davao Oriental State University - Cateel Campus.

### Research design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-comparative design to assess and determine the respondents' level of awareness regarding RA 11131. This design compares two or more groups or phenomena to highlight differences and similarities (Siedlecki, 2020). By using numerical representation, the study provided objective insights into the varying degrees of awareness among the respondents. Furthermore, the comparative aspect of the design allowed for the identification of differences or similarities in awareness across groups, leading to more informed generalizations and conclusions. While it may be valuable in future research to expand the scope to Davao City universities and focus on 4th-year students, this study intentionally included students from first to fourth year at Davao Oriental State University–Cateel Campus to capture a broader perspective of awareness across year levels, thereby providing a comprehensive view of how awareness develops throughout the criminology program.

### Research instrument

The study employed a researcher-made questionnaire formulated based on the provisions of Republic Act No. 11131, particularly Articles III and IV, which outline the licensure, regulation, and practice of the criminology profession. From these provisions, 40 statements were initially constructed to measure students' level of awareness.

To ensure the instrument's quality, a pilot test was conducted among 65 criminology students. The larger number of respondents was necessary to capture diverse perspectives and ensure more accurate assessment of the instrument before its actual administration. The validity of the questionnaire was examined through factor analysis, which showed that the instrument was suitable for analysis (KMO = 0.717) and that the data were correlated (Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square = 1722.64,  $df = 741$ ,  $p$ -value = 0.000). The scree plot identified eight valid factors, and the rotated component matrix suggested the removal of five items, resulting in thirty-five valid statements.

For reliability testing, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was computed, yielding a value of 0.931, which indicates that the questionnaire has excellent internal consistency and is highly reliable.

**Data collection**

The researcher took into account several key considerations throughout the course of the study. Initially, a pilot test of the survey questionnaire was carried out at Southern Technological Institute of the Philippines, Inc., a private institution situated in Mangagoy, Bislig, Surigao del Sur, with the participation of 65 criminology students who voluntarily took part. This institution was selected for the pilot testing to avoid familiarity bias and ensure that the actual respondents at Davao Oriental State University-Cateel Campus were not exposed to the instrument beforehand. Conducting the pilot test in a different but comparable criminology program also strengthened the objectivity of the validation process while preserving the integrity of the main study. The primary objective of this pilot testing was to evaluate the questionnaire's reliability and validity. Items that were found to be invalid or unreliable were eliminated from the final version. The tabulated results from the 65 pilot respondents were submitted to one statistician for analysis.

The researchers began the formal process by submitting a permission letter to the campus administrator, outlining the purpose and methodology of the study and requesting approval to conduct the research within the campus. Before answering the questionnaires, all respondents were given informed consent forms, which explained the purpose of the study, emphasized the voluntary nature of participation, and guaranteed the confidentiality of their responses.

Once permission was granted, the researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to the 262 respondents who were selected randomly inside the classroom. This approach ensured that all participants received the same instructions and could ask clarifying questions if needed. The researchers closely

monitored the respondents while they answered, ensuring that the process was completed individually and without external influence. Each session lasted for approximately 40 minutes. Afterward, the completed questionnaires were collected and carefully checked for completeness before encoding. The data were then encoded into a Microsoft Excel file and subsequently exported to statistical software for analysis. Prior to conducting the statistical tests, data cleaning was performed, which involved checking for missing, incomplete, or inconsistent responses to ensure accuracy and reliability of the results. Finally, the organized dataset was forwarded to a statistician, where appropriate statistical methods were applied to interpret the findings and draw valid conclusions.

**Data analysis**

To ensure the appropriateness of the instrument prior to full data collection, a pilot test was conducted among criminology students. Content validity was examined through exploratory factor analysis, with results showing a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.72 and a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $\chi^2 = 1722.64$ ,  $df = 741$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), confirming that the data were suitable for analysis. The analysis led to the refinement of items, resulting in 35 valid statements that clustered into meaningful dimensions of legal and professional awareness. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.931, indicating excellent internal consistency.

For data analysis, frequency and percentage were employed to describe the demographic profile of respondents in terms of age, sex, and year level. Meanwhile, the weighted mean was used to measure the level of awareness of RA 11131 across its key components, namely licensure examination and requirements, certification and professional identification, penalties and legal implications, authorized practice of criminology, and professional responsibilities and obligations, thereby addressing the second research question.

**Table 1.** Table of interpretation.

Range of mean	Interpretation	Description
4.20 -5.00	Very High	The level of awareness is highly evident.
3.40 -4.19	High	The level of awareness is evident.
2.60 -3.39	Moderate	The level of awareness is moderately evident.
1.80 – 2.59	Low	The level of awareness is somewhat evident.
1.00 – 1.79	Very Low	The level of awareness is not evident.

To address the third research problem, which sought to determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of awareness of RA 11131 among criminology students when grouped by demographic variables, appropriate inferential statistical tests were applied. Mann-Whitney U test was used to assess differences based on sex, which involves comparing two independent groups. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied for comparisons across multiple groups such as age and year level. These non-parametric tests are more robust when assumptions for parametric testing are not met and provide reliable insights into group differences.

**RESULTS**

The demographic profile shows that most respondents are within the 17–21 age bracket (52.29%), followed by those aged 22–26 (46.18%), indicating that the sample is composed predominantly of young adult students. There are slightly more female respondents (53.82%) than males (46.18%). In terms of year level, third-year (34.73%) and fourth-year (32.82%) students make up the majority, while first-year (12.21%) and second-year (20.23%) students are fewer. This distribution suggests a balanced representation across sexes and age groups, with a notable

**Table 2.** Demographic profile of the respondents.

		Frequency	Percent
Age bracket	17-21	137	52.29
	22-26	121	46.18
	27-32	4	1.53
	<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Sex	Male	121	46.18
	Female	141	53.82
	<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Year level	First year	32	12.21
	Second year	53	20.23
	Third year	91	34.73
	Fourth year	86	32.82
	<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>100.00</b>

concentration of respondents in the upper year levels, providing a broad view of awareness across different academic stages.

The results in Table 3 show that criminology students have a very high level of awareness of Republic Act 11131, particularly Articles III and IV, which deal with licensure, regulation, and professional practice. The overall mean score of 4.21 with a standard deviation (SD) of 0.65 indicates that most students consistently rated their awareness as high to very high. This means their knowledge about the law is not only strong but also generally shared by the majority of respondents. Among the indicators, the highest scores are in licensure examination and requirement, professional responsibilities and obligations, and authorized practice of criminology. This shows that students are highly aware of the need to pass the board exam, the standards expected from them as future criminologists, and the rules on who can legally practice the profession. These

results are expected since many of their academic subjects and review preparations emphasize these parts of the law. Awareness of certification and professional identification also ranked very high. This indicates that students recognize the importance of having proper certification and a PRC-issued ID, which serve as legal proof of their professional status. Exposure to discussions with faculty members and seminars likely strengthened this awareness.

On the other hand, the lowest score was found in penalties and legal implications. Although still high, this suggests that students are less informed about the sanctions under Article IV for those who violate the law, such as practicing without a license or engaging in misconduct. This may be because the emphasis in classroom instruction is usually on the process of obtaining a license rather than the consequences of illegal practice.

**Table 3.** Consolidated overall mean scores of awareness dimensions.

Criminology students awareness	Mean	Std. deviation	Interpretation
1. Licensure examination and requirements	4.32	0.54	Very High
2. Certification and professional identification	4.20	0.72	Very High
3. Penalties and legal implications	4.09	0.80	High
4. Authorized practice of criminology	4.22	0.63	Very High
5. Professional responsibilities and obligations	4.24	0.64	Very High
Overall	4.21	0.54	Very High

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test in Table 4 revealed that there are no significant differences in the distribution of licensure examination and requirements (LER), certification and professional identification (CPI), penalties and legal implications (PLI), authorized practice of criminology (APC), professional responsibilities and obligations (PRO), and overall awareness when respondents are grouped according to age, since all

significance values are greater than the 0.05 level of significance. This indicates that age does not have an effect on how respondents perceive or understand these aspects, suggesting that regardless of age group, they demonstrate comparable levels of knowledge and awareness. Therefore, the null hypotheses were retained across all tested variables.

**Table 4.** The difference between the level of awareness of RA 11131 and age.

Null hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of LER_Ave is the same across categories of Age.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.61	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of CPI_Ave is the same across categories of Age.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.42	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of PLI_Ave is the same across categories of Age.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.75	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of APC_Ave is the same across categories of Age.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.65	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of PRO_Ave is the same across categories of Age.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.34	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of Awareness is the same across categories of Age.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.58	Retain the null hypothesis

Also, Table 5 indicates no statistically significant difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) in the level of awareness of RA 11131 between male and female respondents across all domains, suggesting that gender does not influence how students understand the law's

provisions. This uniformity implies that both sexes likely receive comparable academic exposure to topics such as licensure requirements, certification, and professional obligations.

**Table 5.** Difference between the level of awareness of RA 11131 and sex.

	LER_Ave	CPI_Ave	PLI_Ave	APC_Ave	PRO_Ave	Awareness
Mann-Whitney U	7626.00	8315.50	7596.50	8510.50	8398.00	7913.50
Wilcoxon W	15007.00	15696.50	14977.50	15891.50	15779.00	15294.50
Z	-1.48	-.35	-1.55	-.03	-.22	-1.01
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.14	.72	.12	.97	.83	.31

Lastly, the Table 6 revealed that while no significant differences were found among year levels for awareness of licensure exam requirements (LER), authorized practice of criminology (APC), and professional responsibilities (PRO), there were statistically significant differences in certification and professional identification (CPI), penalties and legal implications (PLI), and overall awareness ( $p < 0.05$ ). This suggests that as students advance academically, their exposure to more complex

regulatory topics—such as the legal consequences of misconduct and professional credentialing—appears to increase. These areas may be more thoroughly covered in higher-year coursework or seminars, contributing to the variation in awareness. The results highlight a possible progression in content familiarity that aligns with curriculum structure, underscoring the importance of integrating these essential topics earlier in the academic journey to ensure consistent understanding across all year levels.

**Table 6.** Difference between the level of awareness of RA 11131 at the year level.

Null hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of LER_Ave is the same across categories of year level.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.18	Retain the null hypothesis
.581The distribution of CPI_Ave is the same across categories of year level.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.002	Reject the null hypothesis
The distribution of PLI_Ave is the same across categories of year level.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.01	Reject the null hypothesis
The distribution of APC_Ave is the same across categories of year level.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.08	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of PRO_Ave is the same across categories of year level.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.103	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of awareness is the same across categories of year level.	Kruskal-Wallis Test	.01	Reject the null hypothesis

**DISCUSSIONS**

The demographic profile of respondents reflects common trends in Philippine criminology programs. Over half were aged 17–21, aligning with Suarez et al. (2020) and Trebilcock and Griffiths (2021), who noted that most criminology students enter directly after senior high school. In terms of sex, female students made up a slight majority. This trend aligns with Gateley (2020) and Belknap (2020), who observed rising female interest in justice and legal reform. Poikela et al. (2024) noted that topic preferences may vary by gender, but this growing representation points to broader engagement in criminology. The distribution across year levels was highest among third-year and fourth-year students, possibly reflecting strong academic retention and commitment. Barbera et al. (2020) linked upper-year concentration to student satisfaction and perseverance, while Roberts (2023) connected lower first-year enrollment (12.21%) to adjustment challenges and early dropout risks.

On the other hand, the findings show that criminology students have a very high level of awareness of Republic Act 11131, particularly on licensure requirements, certification, professional obligations, and the authorized practice of criminology. The highest-rated areas were those most emphasized in coursework and board exam preparation, such as passing the licensure exam and maintaining professional standards. These results support Asuncion (2019) and Escalona and Nabe (2024), who emphasized the curriculum's role in

reinforcing licensure-related knowledge, and Llanes and Tragant (2024), who noted that repeated classroom exposure strengthens awareness.

Awareness of certification and professional identification was also very high, which aligns with Hamilton (2017) and Asuncion (2019) who stressed the early development of professional identity in higher education. However, Villaflores (2023) cautioned that knowledge alone doesn't ensure readiness, suggesting the need for hands-on guidance in navigating actual certification processes.

Although awareness of penalties and legal implications was still high, it was relatively lower than other dimensions. This suggests students may be less familiar with the consequences of misconduct or illegal practice, as classroom discussions often focus more on licensure processes than disciplinary provisions. Jacobs (2024) and Ramirez and Palos-Sanchez (2018) linked awareness of penalties to internship experience, highlighting the importance of experiential learning in reinforcing ethical and legal standards. The legal framework's emphasis on moral standards, as underscored by the Supreme Court E-Library (2018), further reinforces students' understanding of ethical consequences. Pohlmann and Starystach (2023) emphasized the deterrent effect of these legal mechanisms in upholding professional standards.

Similarly, strong awareness of the authorized practice of criminology and professional responsibilities reflects how well these topics are embedded in academic programs. This echoes

Manwong (2025) and Tolentino et al. (2023), who emphasized the role of structured licensure review and practicum programs in shaping students' understanding of regulatory obligations. However, Bosito (2025) and Osannah (2022) reported persistent misconceptions among students who believed that graduation alone qualifies one for practice indicating gaps in orientation in some institutions.

Statistical analysis revealed no significant differences in awareness based on age or sex, suggesting consistent instruction across demographic groups. This supports Belisle et al. (2020) and Butler (2018), who concluded that well-structured programs neutralize age and gender disparities. However, Alcoran et al. (2024) noted that older students may interpret legal content more deeply, possibly pointing to nuanced differences in comprehension, even if not statistically significant.

In contrast, year level showed significant differences in some areas particularly in certification, penalties, and overall awareness—with higher scores among advanced students. These findings align with Damuag et al. (2024) and Trebilcock and Griffiths (2022), who noted that upper-year students benefit from deeper exposure to legal content and practical experiences. The lack of difference in other areas may reflect successful integration of licensure topics in earlier years, as Li (2023) suggested. However, factors like post-pandemic academic disruptions (Nguyen et al., 2021) and modality shifts (Mohabati et al., 2025) may also have influenced learning outcomes across cohorts.

These findings highlight the effectiveness of criminology programs in instilling knowledge of RA 11131, particularly in areas related to licensure, ethics, and authorized practice. The consistency in awareness across age and gender indicates equitable academic delivery, while the differences by year level suggest the need to reinforce key legal topics earlier in the curriculum. From an educational perspective, institutions must ensure that all students regardless of year receive comprehensive instruction on penalties, certification procedures, and legal limitations. Integrating experiential learning, such as practicums and simulations, may enhance understanding of legal consequences and professional responsibilities.

Policy-wise, the results support continued development of standardized curricula, especially for under-resourced schools, to address disparities noted in prior research (Nilendu, 2024). The findings also emphasize the importance of clear communication from regulatory bodies like the PRC, ensuring students across all institutions are equally prepared to meet legal and professional standards. These results align with national trends in criminology education, as discussed by Suarez et al. (2020) and Gateley (2020), but they also reveal areas for improvement, particularly in equipping students with a full understanding of the legal implications of their future profession.

## CONCLUSION

The study's results underscore the need for sustained and structured efforts to enhance criminology students' awareness of Republic Act No. 11131, particularly in areas where understanding was found to be comparatively lower, such as penalties and legal implications. Although the respondents demonstrated a very high overall level of awareness, the findings suggest that academic progression plays a significant role in developing legal knowledge, as indicated by the variation in awareness across year levels. In contrast, the absence of significant differences based on age and sex implies that standardized curricula are effective in delivering equal educational exposure across demographic groups.

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that future studies ensure a more balanced representation of respondents across age groups and year levels to allow for more generalizable and nuanced insights. Furthermore, researchers may examine the potential relationship between awareness of RA 11131 and performance in the criminology licensure examination to assess its practical relevance in students' professional outcomes. Finally, academic institutions are encouraged to strengthen the integration of RA 11131 across all year levels through evidence-based instructional strategies, ensuring that legal awareness progresses in a consistent and meaningful manner throughout the criminology program.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

J. R: Conceptualization. J. R, J. S and M. K. L: Methodology. R. A and J. B: Software. J. R, J. S, M. K. L and M. G. M: Validation. J. R, J. S, M. K. L and M. G. M: Formal analysis. J. R, J. S and M. K. L : Resources. J. R, J. S and M. K. L : Data curation. J. R, J. S and M. K. L: Writing-original draft preparation. M. G. M : Writing-review editing, Visualization, and Supervision. J. R, J. S, M. K. L and M. G. M: Project administration. J. R, J. S and M. K. L: Funding acquisition.

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Researcher - funded / self-funded.

## DECLARATION

### Informed consent statement

The researchers ensured that all ethical standards were observed in the conduct of this study. A formal letter of permission was secured from the Dean of Davao Oriental State University – Cateel Campus, granting approval to carry out the research within the institution. Additionally, an informed consent form was provided to all participants prior to data collection, clearly outlining the study's purpose, procedures, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. Respondents were assured that their identities would remain anonymous and that all information gathered would be used solely for academic purposes.

### Conflict of interest

The researchers declare that there is no conflict of interest related to the conduct, findings, or publication of this study. All activities were carried out independently and solely for academic purposes.

### AI Disclosure

The authors declare that no Artificial Intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

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