Reflective Writing as a Pedagogical Tool to Foster Critical Awareness among Non-English Department Students in Indonesian EFL Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Reflective journaling has increasingly been applied as an instructional approach to promote critical awareness in higher education, including in non-language disciplines. This research explores the reflective journals produced by students of the Criminology Department at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Islam Riau, during the even semester of the academic year 2024/2025. The students' reflections addressed the issue of noise pollution in their immediate environment. The purpose of this study was to analyze students' levels of critical awareness based on five indicators: issue comprehension, critical reflection, real-life connection, recognition of multiple perspectives, and clarity of expression. A total of fourteen journals were evaluated using a four-point analytic rubric. The results reveal that six journals (43%) reached the "Excellent" level, seven (50%) were classified as "Very Good," and one (7%) fell into the "Good" category. These findings indicate that most students demonstrated a solid understanding of the topic and were able to establish meaningful links to real-life situations. Nevertheless, limitations were observed in the depth of critical reflection, consideration of diverse perspectives, and clarity of expression, as several journals exhibited only surface-level discussion. In conclusion, the study confirms the effectiveness of reflective writing in fostering critical thinking and civic awareness among non-English department students, while also underscoring the need for systematic instructional support to encourage deeper multi-perspective analysis and more precise academic writing.

Keywords: *critical awareness; EFL Context; higher education pedagogy; non-English major students; reflective journal writing*

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary higher education faces the dual challenge of preparing graduates not only to master disciplinary expertise but also to act as socially informed and ethically responsible citizens, a demand that extends well beyond the humanities. In response, institutions have increasingly woven explicit objectives of critical and ethical awareness into curricula, viewing such objectives as prerequisites for genuine learning engagement (OECD, 2018; Kemendikbudristek, 2021). Guided by this premise, the pedagogic potential of reflective writing—especially in the form of structured journals—becomes evident, for such practice invites learners to explore personal convictions, lived experiences, and the broader societal frameworks that shape academic and extra-academic life. Within the Indonesian context, the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* initiative reinforces the imperative of learning that is both self-directed and contextually responsive, directing students toward the critical competencies required for contemporary societal problems (Kemendikbudristek, 2020). This study operates on the premise that scholars from non-English disciplines benefit significantly from curricula that provide structured and scaffolded opportunities for reflective writing. Such engagement is crucial, as these scholars are often overlooked in prevailing discourses of critical literacy and reflective pedagogy.

This study is situated within the Department of Criminology precisely because the discipline is grounded in complexity, interdisciplinarity, and ethical urgency. Criminology majors continuously navigate not only statutes and doctrine but also the contours of identity, culture, and ideology that shape both institutions and subjects of policing and punishment. Developing a vigilant and reflexive stance is crucial, lest emerging agents of inquiry, policy, or practice unwittingly reproduce reductive narratives and reinforce structural violence. Although the normative criminological curriculum foregrounds empirical mastery, doctrinal literacy, and theoretical abstraction, reported courses insufficiently engage the hermeneutics of meaning or the arduous work of ethical deliberation (Rukmini, 2019). Consequently, students frequently assimilate hegemonic viewpoints and systemic biases without critical inquiry or reproach. This process often obscures the inner workings of institutional power, the mechanisms of racial surveillance, and the persistent inequalities within the justice system. The present inquiry seeks to redress that omission through the systematic incorporation of reflexive journals into criminological pedagogies. By furnishing a deliberative space wherein students can disclose and interrogate tacit biases, or arrange sociological and punitive constructs alongside situated cases, the initiative enables a transformative linkage between theoretical cognition and quotidian experiences of law. The practice does not merely cultivate conscientious consciousness; it actively composes a

collective memory of justice, thereby urging future practitioners to steward and contest justice in sustained tandem.

There is an urgent requirement for graduates in Indonesia to balance technical expertise with ethical literacy and social responsibility, particularly as the national criminological agenda is increasingly shaped by socio-political dynamics and digital surveillance. To address this imperative, the present study examines reflective writing as an instructional instrument designed to cultivate heightened critical awareness within students enrolled in non-English faculties. The investigation focuses on the degree to which systematically structured journal writing, as a curricular intervention, prompts students to investigate personal, academic, and societal phenomena through the lens of critical reflection. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study analyses open-ended questionnaire responses alongside rubric-driven evaluations of the students' reflective journals in order to gauge the participants' evaluations of the journaling experience and to assess the degree of intellectual engagement disclosed in their entries. While reflective writing has frequently been confined to teacher-training and foreign-language programmes, this study positions the activity as a transdisciplinary instrument for fostering both personal maturation and intellectual refinement at the tertiary level (Hidayati and Sofwan, 2020; Rahayu and Cahyono, 2021)

The overarching aim of this research is to furnish educators, curriculum architects, and policy framers with actionable knowledge that advances an integrated and learner-driven educational landscape. Complementing the Kemendikbudristek motto of *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka,* which prioritises flexibility, learner autonomy, and workforce relevance, the systematic introduction of reflective journaling is posited as a mechanism to engineer deliberate pauses for individual inquiry and evaluative dialogue. The proposition is that this mechanism can traverse boundaries typically ascribed to the arts and humanities, embedding reflective practice as a curricular universal across institutions of engineering, economics, and criminology. The scholarly consensus indicates that reflective writing accelerates metacognitive calibration, socio-emotional maturation, and contextualised civic cognizance (Choy and Oo, 2012). The anticipated outcome therefore resides in reconstructing the pedagogical interface that currently separates acquired technical competences from the deeper currents of self-narrative and social accountability characterising contemporary Indonesian higher education. The research's contribution is novel for its deliberate codification of critical reflection within a curricular space not tamed by antecedent empirical returns. Retail detachment traced to the health sciences, language instruction, and teacher training disciplines (Marzban and Ashrafi, 2021; Allas, Leijen, and Toom,

2020) Research remains scarce regarding the curricular outcomes of disciplines focused on technical mastery, including engineering and economics, as Indonesian longitudinal inquiries in these fields are currently unavailable. Framed epistemically as critical pedagogy, reflective journaling thus emerges as a provocateur for interrogating latent epistemic hierarchies, enabling the laboratory of reasoning to interweave deep analysis, normative reflection, and civic responsibility in domains typically hostile to affective inquiry.

The application of reflective writing in non-language disciplines, specifically criminology, has received limited scholarly attention in Indonesia, notwithstanding its widespread examination in fields such as composition studies and English language education. Previous studies have primarily positioned reflective journals as tools for enhancing language proficiency, metacognitive awareness, and critical literacy within genre-based or academic writing courses (Putri and Muslim, 2022; Hidayati and Sofwan, 2020;Rahayu and Cahyono, 2021). However, criminology as a discipline inherently addresses complex social realities, ethical considerations, power relations, and legal responsibilities, all of which require a distinct and advanced form of critical reasoning. Criminological inquiry requires students to interrogate social harm, accountability, public order, and structural inequality through analytical, ethical, and multi-perspective lenses. Despite this strong conceptual alignment, the pedagogical integration of reflective writing into criminology curricula has received limited empirical attention. This study therefore addresses this gap by situating reflective journaling within criminological learning as a means of fostering students' critical awareness of social issues, particularly in relation to environmental and public order problems.

In consequence, to guide the systematic exploration of the aforementioned gap, the study articulates the following primary investigative question: How do the students of Criminology Department demonstrate critical awareness in their self-reflective journals?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine how reflective journal writing fosters awareness and critical reflection among students in non English programs, particularly those in the Department of Criminology. Qualitative methods were used so the students could share real thoughts, deeper insights, and a better understanding of the social issues they faced during their Problem-Based Learning (PBL) presentations. By focusing on their subjective experiences, the approach lets researchers see how meaning is created in real-life contexts (Creswell and Poth, 2018; (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

Fourteen undergraduate students from the Department of Criminology in the

Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at an Islamic higher education institution in Indonesia participated in this study during the Even semester of the 2024-2025 academic year. They were chosen through purposive sampling because they were already writing reflective journals after working on PBL projects that tackled social and environmental issues. Although the group is small, this is typical in qualitative research, which values case depth over large, generalized samples (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, 2013; Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan, and Hoagwood, 2015).

In this study, the researcher served as the course instructor and primary data analyst. In this dual role, the researcher facilitated the learning activities, designed the reflective journal prompts, collected the data, and conducted the analysis. To minimize potential bias arising from the researcher's instructional role, data interpretation was carried out systematically using a predefined analytic rubric, and selected journal excerpts were cross-checked with rubric criteria to ensure consistency in scoring.

In General English class, students tackled real-life problems through social inquiry and active engagement. The class was a perfect setting for using reflection as a teaching tool. Each student explored pressing issues like crumbling public facilities, pollution, and social inequality. PBL fits well with today's educational goals that prioritize student-driven and question-focused learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2013; Wood, 2020). Adding reflective journaling allowed students to think deeply and become more aware of their roles as citizens (Allas, Leijen, and Toom, 2020).

Data collection for this study involved two key tools: a self-reflective journal and an open-ended questionnaire. After attending peer-led presentations on various social issues, each student wrote a reflective journal entry. These journals captured how well the students grasped the problems, the personal links they made, the insights they gained, and any ideas for future improvement. Alongside this, they answered an open-ended questionnaire to share their views on the reflective writing process itself.

To gauge how deeply the journals encouraged critical thinking, we applied a scoring rubric adapted from contemporary guidelines for evaluating reflective writing. Our rubric drew inspiration from well-regarded frameworks, including the REFLECT rubric created by Wald, Borkan, Taylor, Anthony, and Reis (2012) and the 5R model by Bain, Ballantyne, Mills, and Lester, (2002). The rubric is made up of five specific areas of focus, each rated on acale of 1 for "needs improvement" up to 4 for "excellent." The scoring guidelines can be found in the table below.

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured through several strategies to enhance the credibility and dependability of the findings. A consistent analytic rubric was applied to all reflective journals to ensure scoring reliability. Data validation was conducted through methodological

triangulation by combining quantitative rubric scores with qualitative analysis of students' journal excerpts. Peer debriefing with a colleague was also employed to review the scoring and interpretation process in order to minimize researcher bias and strengthen analytical consistency.

Ethical principles were strictly observed throughout the study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their participation was based on voluntary consent. Students were assured that their identities would remain confidential and that the data would be used solely for research purposes. Participation in the study did not influence students' academic assessment or course grades. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in reporting students' reflective excerpts.

Table 1. Scoring Rubric for Self-Reflective Journal

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Understanding of the Issue	Clearly identifies the problem with insightful explanation of causes and effects.	Identifies the problem and its causes/effects with some detail.	Basic understanding with limited explanation of causes or effects.	Minimal or inaccurate understanding of the issue.
Critical Reflection and Questioning	Demonstrates deep reflection, asks thoughtful questions, and challenges prior thinking.	Shows some reflection and attempts to question or rethink assumptions.	Shows limited reflection or questioning of the issue.	No evidence of reflection or critical thinking.
Connection to Real Life	Makes meaningful and specific connections to personal or community experiences.	Provides general connection to real-life situations.	Mentions real-life relevance but lacks depth.	No connection to real-life context.

Awareness of Multiple Perspectives	Clearly acknowledges and considers different viewpoints or solutions.	Mentions alternative views or solutions briefly.	Shows minimal awareness of other perspectives.	No awareness of multiple perspectives.
Clarity and Expression	Well-organized, clearly written, free of grammatical errors.	Mostly clear with minor errors; ideas are understandable.	Somewhat disorganized or difficult to follow.	Poorly written and lacks clarity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

This section delineates the empirical findings of the study in direct alignment with the research question examining how criminology students manifest critical awareness through self-reflective journals. The results are systematically structured according to the five analytical dimensions operationalized in the assessment rubric—Understanding of the Issue, Critical Reflection, Connection to Real Life, Awareness of Multiple Perspectives, and Clarity and Expression. The findings are derived from rubric-based evaluations and supported by qualitative excerpts from fourteen student journals, providing an integrated portrayal of students' levels and characteristics of critical engagement within the criminology learning context.

Understanding the Issue

The first dimension assessed in this study is *Understanding of the Issue*, which measures students' ability to identify, explain, and contextualize the problem of noise pollution presented during the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) activities. The results show that students demonstrated a generally high level of understanding of the issue. Based on the rubric assessment, eight reflective journals (57%) received an *Excellent* score, five reflective journals (36%) were categorized as *Very Good*, and one reflective journal (7%) was rated *Fair* for this indicator. This distribution indicates that nearly all students were able to comprehend the core characteristics of the problem.

The majority of students were able to define noise pollution accurately and to describe its sources, such as illegal street racing, modified vehicle exhausts, and uncontrolled urban activities. They also identified various consequences, including sleep disturbance, psychological stress, reduced learning concentration, and discomfort among community members. For example, Student 1 wrote:

> *"The main problem is illegal racing activities that produce loud noise from non-standard exhausts, causing sleep disturbances, stress, and discomfort for residents."*

This excerpt illustrates a clear identification of both the source of the problem and its direct effects on the community. Similar patterns were observed across most journals, indicating that students comprehended the core characteristics of noise pollution as a social and environmental disturbance.

Nevertheless, a small number of journals received slightly lower scores (*Very Good* or *Good*) because the descriptions tended to remain general and lacked specific supporting details. These entries identified noise pollution as a problem but provided limited explanation of its underlying causes or broader social consequences.

Overall, the findings for this dimension indicate that students demonstrated a strong foundational understanding of the issue of noise pollution, showing their ability to recognize, define, and describe the problem accurately within the context of their learning activities.

Critical Reflection

The second dimension assessed in this study is *Critical Reflection*, which examines students' ability to move beyond surface description by evaluating the issue, questioning underlying assumptions, and demonstrating reflective judgment. The rubric assessment indicates moderate variation in students' performance in this dimension. Five reflective journals (36%) received an *Excellent* score, seven reflective

journals (50%) were categorized as *Very Good*, and two reflective journals (14%) were rated *Good*. These results suggest that while most students demonstrated reflective engagement, the depth of critical analysis was not uniform.

Students who received higher scores demonstrated the ability to interpret noise pollution not only as a physical disturbance but also as a social and moral issue. They reflected on community behavior, social responsibility, and the normalization of deviant practices. For example, Student 5 wrote:

> *"The issue of noise pollution does not only disturb individuals physically, but it also reflects the lack of social awareness in our community. People seem to normalize these disruptions, which shows how society often ignores small problems until they become bigger."*

This excerpt illustrates evaluative thinking that goes beyond factual description, as the student interprets the phenomenon in relation to collective attitudes and social behavior. Similar reflective patterns were found in several journals that linked the problem to weak social control and limited public discipline.

However, a number of journals remained largely descriptive. These entries focused primarily on reporting the existence of noise pollution and its immediate effects without further questioning its broader implications or social meanings. Such journals typically received lower scores for this dimension

because they did not demonstrate sustained analytical engagement.

Overall, the findings indicate that while many students were able to engage in meaningful critical reflection, the depth and consistency of reflective analysis varied across the dataset. This suggests that students are beginning to develop evaluative thinking skills, although not all have yet achieved a fully critical level of reflection.

Connection to Real Life

The third dimension assessed in this study is *Connection to Real Life*, which measures students' ability to relate the issue of noise pollution to their personal experiences and to real conditions within their communities. The rubric assessment shows that five journals (36%) received an *Excellent* score, seven journals (50%) were categorized as *Very Good*, and two journals (14%) were rated *Fair*. These results indicate that most students were able to establish meaningful links between the classroom discussion and their lived environments.

Students who achieved higher scores provided specific descriptions of how noise pollution affected their daily activities, neighborhoods, and educational settings. They commonly referred to disturbances caused by illegal street racing, loud vehicle exhausts, and uncontrolled public noise in residential areas. For example, Student 9 wrote:

"Noise pollution around schools disrupts learning activities and creates danger for students when racing takes place near the area."

This excerpt demonstrates how the student situates the issue within an educational context, showing a clear transfer of theoretical understanding into real-life conditions. Similar reflections were found in journals that described sleep disruption, community discomfort, and psychological stress experienced by residents.

Some students extended their real-life connections by identifying broader structural issues related to the problem. Student 7, for instance, noted:

"If the government provides a special racing circuit, young people will not race on the highway and disturb the residents."

This reflection indicates an awareness that real-life disturbances are not only individual behaviors but are also shaped by infrastructural and regulatory conditions.

However, a small number of journals exhibited weaker real-life connections. These entries tended to describe noise pollution in general terms without referring to concrete personal or community experiences. Such journals typically received lower scores because the reflections remained abstract and lacked situational detail.

Overall, the findings for this dimension indicate that most students were able to successfully connect the issue of noise pollution to their everyday lives and social environments. This shows that reflective journal writing effectively facilitated the transfer of classroom learning into authentic real-world contexts.

Awareness of Multiple Perspectives

The fourth dimension assessed in this study is *Awareness of Multiple Perspectives*, which measures students' ability to recognize, consider, and evaluate viewpoints beyond their own position or immediate experience when reflecting on the issue of noise pollution. The rubric assessment shows that five reflective journals (36%) received an *Excellent* score, five reflective journals (36%) were categorized as *Very Good*, and four reflective journals (28%) were rated *Fair* for this indicator. This distribution indicates that while some students demonstrated the ability to adopt multiple viewpoints, a considerable proportion still showed limited perspective-taking.

Students who achieved higher scores were able to acknowledge that noise pollution involves competing social interests, including those of residents, business owners, and other community members. For example, Student 7 wrote:

"For some people, especially business owners, the use of loudspeakers or machinery is part of their livelihood, even if it disturbs others. Meanwhile, residents often feel their comfort is sacrificed for economic activities."

This excerpt demonstrates the student's ability to recognize conflicting social interests and to move beyond a single, resident-centered viewpoint. Similar reflections were found in a small number of journals that considered the role of government regulation, economic necessity, and public behavior in shaping noise-related problems.

However, many journals focused primarily on the negative impacts of noise pollution on individuals and communities without acknowledging alternative viewpoints. These entries commonly framed noise solely as a source of disturbance and discomfort, without exploring the social, economic, or institutional factors that contribute to the persistence of the problem. Such journals typically received *Fair* scores because of their limited engagement with multiple perspectives.

Overall, the findings for this dimension indicate that awareness of multiple perspectives remains uneven among students. While several students were able to recognize the complex and multi-actor nature of noise pollution, many reflections were still dominated by a single-point-of-view interpretation.

Clarity and Expression

The fifth dimension assessed in this study is *Clarity and Expression*, which examines students' ability to communicate

their ideas coherently, logically, and with appropriate linguistic accuracy in their reflective journals. The rubric assessment shows that five journals (36%) received an *Excellent* score, seven journals (50%) were categorized as *Very Good*, and two journals (14%) were rated *Fair* for this indicator. These results indicate that most students were able to express their reflections clearly, although variations in writing quality were still evident.

Students who achieved higher scores demonstrated the ability to convey their ideas in well-structured sentences with clear logical flow and minimal grammatical errors. For example, Student 2 wrote:

"Noise pollution is not only about sound disturbance but also about how it affects the mind and emotions of people in daily life."

This excerpt illustrates concise and coherent expression of a complex idea, showing the student's ability to articulate reflective judgment in an organized and intelligible manner. Similar clarity was observed in several journals that used appropriate vocabulary and cohesive sentence structures.

However, some students exhibited limitations in expressive ability. These journals typically relied on short, repetitive sentences and provided minimal elaboration of ideas. Student 10, for instance, wrote:

"Noise pollution is bad. It makes people angry. People cannot sleep."

Although the meaning is understandable, the repetitive structure and lack of elaboration reduced the overall communicative effectiveness of the reflection. Such journals generally received *Fair* scores because the ideas, while relevant, were not sufficiently developed in a coherent academic manner.

Overall, the findings for this dimension indicate that most students demonstrated adequate to strong clarity and expression in their reflective writing. Nevertheless, a small number of students still experienced difficulties in organizing and elaborating their ideas effectively in written form.

Discussion

This discussion interprets the research findings in relation to the research question concerning how criminology students demonstrate critical awareness through self-reflective journals. The results indicate that reflective journaling supports the development of students' critical awareness, particularly in the dimensions of *Understanding of the Issue* and *Connection to Real Life*. However, variations were evident in the depth of *Critical Reflection*, *Awareness of Multiple Perspectives*, and *Clarity and Expression*, indicating that students' critical engagement developed unevenly across dimensions. This pattern aligns with the view that reflective learning is a developmental process that requires

sustained instructional design and guidance (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 2013).

The strong performance in *Understanding of the Issue* suggests that reflective journal writing, when integrated with Problem-Based Learning (PBL), effectively supports students' conceptual understanding of social problems. Students' ability to accurately identify the causes and consequences of noise pollution reflects meaningful cognitive engagement with the learning task. This finding is consistent with Bain, et.al, (2002) and Ryan (2011), who emphasize that structured reflective activities enhance students' ability to process complex experiences into coherent conceptual understanding. In the Indonesian context, Hidayati and Sofwan (2020) likewise reported that reflective writing enables students to better comprehend social issues through systematic self-examination.

Similarly, the high performance in *Connection to Real Life* confirms that reflective journaling functions as a bridge between academic learning and lived experience. By relating the issue of noise pollution to their communities, students demonstrated the ability to situate academic concepts within real social contexts. This finding supports the experiential orientation of reflective learning as emphasized by Boud, Keogh, and Walker (2013) and Thorpe (2004), who argue that reflection becomes meaningful when learners connect theory with practice. Rahayu and Cahyono (2021) further found that reflective journals

facilitate students' social awareness by encouraging them to interpret real-life issues through an academic lens.

In contrast, students' performance in *Critical Reflection* showed moderate variability, with several students demonstrating evaluative thinking while others remained at the descriptive level. This pattern supports Ryan's (2015) argument that critical reflection does not emerge automatically from journaling alone but depends heavily on the quality of instructional scaffolding and reflective prompts. Mezirow (1997) similarly emphasized that transformative reflection requires learners to question assumptions and engage in deeper meaning-making processes. Without sustained guidance, students tend to remain at the level of recounting experiences rather than critically interrogating their social implications.

The relatively weak performance in *Awareness of Multiple Perspectives* indicates that many students interpreted the issue of noise pollution primarily from a single viewpoint, especially that of community disturbance. From a criminological and social-educational perspective, this limitation is significant because social problems are inherently shaped by multiple actors and competing interests. Taylor (2017) and Allas, Leijen, and Toom, (2020) emphasize that multi-perspective awareness must be intentionally cultivated through reflective and dialogic learning designs. The findings of this study suggest that without explicit instructional support,

students may struggle to move beyond a single-frame interpretation of social phenomena.

With regard to *Clarity and Expression*, the findings indicate that variations in linguistic competence influenced how effectively students articulated their critical awareness in writing. While most students demonstrated acceptable clarity, a small number experienced difficulty in organizing and elaborating their ideas. This supports the findings of Choy and Oo (2012) and Leijen, Lepp, and Remmik (2020), who reported that the quality of reflective writing is closely related to students' prior writing experience and their familiarity with reflective genres. In non-English academic contexts, limited expressive resources may constrain the depth of reflection even when cognitive understanding is present (Sari, 2020; Sari and Prasetyo, 2021).

Overall, the findings confirm that reflective journal writing serves as a productive pedagogical tool for cultivating critical awareness among criminology students in a non-English academic context. The strongest gains were observed in students' conceptual understanding of social issues and their ability to relate those issues to real-life contexts. However, deeper levels of critical reflection, multi-perspective awareness, and expressive clarity require more intentional instructional design. As suggested by prior studies (Ryan, 2015; Taylor, 2017; Allas, et.al, 2020), reflective journaling will be most effective when supported by explicit critical prompts, perspective-taking activities, and systematic feedback mechanisms that guide students toward higher levels of analytical and ethical reasoning.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how reflective journal writing supports the development of critical awareness among criminology students in a non-English academic context. The findings demonstrate that structured reflective journaling, integrated with Problem-Based Learning activities, effectively fosters students' critical engagement with real-world social issues, particularly in terms of understanding the issue and connecting learning to real-life contexts.

Most students showed a strong conceptual grasp of the problem of noise pollution and were able to relate it meaningfully to their personal and community experiences. However, the depth of critical reflection, awareness of multiple perspectives, and clarity of written expression varied across the cohort. While several students demonstrated evaluative and socially oriented reasoning, others remained at a more descriptive level. These variations indicate that critical awareness develops unevenly and requires sustained instructional support.

From a pedagogical perspective, the results confirm that reflective journal writing is a valuable instructional tool for cultivating critical awareness in criminology education. However, its

effectiveness depends on the presence of structured guidance, explicit critical prompts, and continuous feedback. To strengthen students' critical reflection and multi-perspective reasoning, reflective tasks should be complemented with instructional strategies such as guided questioning, case-based discussion, and perspective-taking activities.

This study is limited by its small sample size and its focus on a single instructional context and topic. Future research may involve a larger and more diverse participant group, explore longitudinal development of students' critical awareness, or examine the impact of different scaffolding models on reflective depth. Despite these limitations, the present findings contribute empirical evidence that reflective journaling can serve as an effective pedagogical medium for fostering critical awareness among non-English major students in applied social science disciplines.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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