

Uncovering The Stories of Repeaters in Criminologists' Licensure Examination: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

The licensure examination is essential for many professionals as it validates their competency and expertise in their respective fields. This study investigated the experiences of repeaters in the Criminologist Licensure Examination. This study used the qualitative phenomenological research design, particularly Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology approach. The participants of this study were the 12 repeaters of the criminologist licensure examination from one of the Private Higher Educational Institutions in Misamis Occidental. It uses purposive snowball sampling to identify the potential participants. An interview guide was used as the instrument of the study. Moustakas' method of data analysis was used in analyzing the data gathered. Results yielded three themes: having negative and mixed emotions, with subthemes: being disappointed with oneself after knowing the result of the examination and the consequences of heedlessness and procrastination; embracing support, self-belief, and perseverance with subthemes: receiving support from family and friends, being prepared and believe in oneself, pushing oneself to continue and never-give-up; and being optimistic in life with subthemes: having trust in God and divine timing, and embracing change and personal growth. The repeaters' failure in the board examination several times caused delays in achieving their goals in life, and they were unable to meet their desired job due to this failure. Therefore, the school and its administration need to plan for programs and activities in the department, like enhancement/enrichment programs, to address the challenges the examinees encounter in dealing with the board examinations.

Keywords: challenges, coping mechanism, Criminologist, optimistic, strategies

INTRODUCTION

The significance of licensure examinations cannot be overstated in validating the competency and proficiency of professionals across various fields. These examinations serve as gatekeepers, ensuring that individuals possess the necessary knowledge and skills to practice their professions legally and effectively (Powers et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond, 2019). Professionals, such as those in medicine, law, engineering, and accounting, must obtain licensure to legally offer their services to the public, underscoring the pivotal role of these examinations in shaping career opportunities and income potential (Grover et al., 2020; Zhang, 2020; Loganathan et al., 2019).

Moreover, a professional license symbolizes dedication to integrity, hard work, and creativity, signifying that individuals have surpassed a minimum threshold of competence (Raj et al., 2022). Active licensure or registration in good standing assures that professionals possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to fulfill their duties while adhering to the pertinent laws and regulations governing their respective professions (Gupit & Cuevas, 2023; Litvinenko, 2022).

Licensure examinations, standardized tests administered worldwide, evaluate individuals seeking to practice professions requiring licensure. These examinations, conducted by government agencies or professional organizations, aim to ascertain that professionals meet the minimum standards of competence necessary to deliver safe and proficient services to the public (Apgar, 2021; van Der Vleuten & Schuwirth, 2019). The format

and requirements of licensure examinations vary globally, ranging from multiple-choice tests to practical exams, tailored to specific professions and jurisdictions (Johnson & Kleiner, 2020).

However, despite the significance of licensure examinations, concerns persist regarding examinees' performance consistency, particularly in crucial subjects. Studies indicate various factors influencing performance, including goal setting, effective study habits, and institutional support (Barreda, 2022; Albite, 2020). In the Philippines, licensure examinations, administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), are mandatory for numerous professions, including criminology, emphasizing the country's commitment to ensuring professional competence and public safety (Angeles, 2019; Navarro, 2020; Castillo, 2018).

While extensive literature exists on licensure examination performance predictors globally, research specific to the Philippines, particularly in criminology, remains limited (Albina et al., 2022). Notably, performance predictors encompass various factors, including demographic data, academic scores, and institutional support (Barrera et al., 2013). The significance of performance in licensure examinations extends beyond individual achievement, impacting educational institutions' reputation and accreditation (PRC, 2022).

In light of persisting concerns regarding licensure examination performance, particularly among repeaters, this study delves into the experiences of criminology licensure examination repeaters in Misamis Occidental. By exploring their challenges, coping mechanisms, and preparation strategies, this research aims to inform effective interventions to enhance examination performance and institutional support. Theoretical frameworks, including Attribution Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Experiential Learning Theory, guide this study, providing insights into the multifaceted factors influencing examination outcomes and educational practices (Weiner, 1970; Bandura, 1991; Kolb, 1984).

Thus, this study contributes to the discourse on licensure examination performance and educational practices, offering valuable insights to stakeholders in academia, regulatory bodies, and professional organizations. Through a comprehensive understanding of examinees' experiences and challenges, this research endeavors to foster an environment conducive to professional growth, competence, and public trust.

METHOD

This qualitative phenomenological study, utilizing Moustakas' transcendental phenomenology approach, aimed to uncover the experiences of repeaters in the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) to gain insights into their academic development and reasons for exam failure. Conducted in a private higher educational institution in Misamis Occidental, Philippines, the study included 12 criminology graduates who had failed the licensure examination multiple times. Purposive snowball sampling identified participants willing to share their experiences. Data were collected through interviews conducted in the vernacular language using open-ended questions, ensuring a narrative-style exploration of participants' perspectives. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Moustakas' data analysis techniques, allowing for the identification of emerging themes.

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study, with participants' voluntary participation and anonymity rigorously maintained. Preventive measures and health protocols were followed during interviews to prioritize participants' welfare, aligning with university ethical protocols and data privacy regulations (Cuevas, 2020). The study aimed not only to understand the challenges faced by CLE repeaters but also to contribute new knowledge to the field of criminology education and assessment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The 12 individuals, comprising eight males and four females, voluntarily contributed to this study. Through analysis of their responses, three overarching themes emerged: the experience of negative and mixed emotions, the journey towards acceptance and letting go, and the cultivation of optimism in life. Each main theme encompasses various subthemes, shedding light on the complexity and diversity of participants' perspectives.

1. Having Negative and Mixed Emotions

This theme highlights the intrinsic part of human experiences. It ranges from sadness and frustration to moments of conflicting emotions simultaneously. Negative emotions encompass feelings like sadness, anger, fear, and frustration, while mixed emotions commonly occur when they simultaneously experience opposing or contrasting feelings. This complexity of emotional state is a natural aspect of being a repeater in the criminologist licensure examination. The failure they experienced exposed them to various negative emotions (Boddice & Smith, 2020; Phillips, 2022).

This main theme was developed from the two subthemes: these are *disappointed with oneself after knowing the result of the examination* and *the consequences of heedlessness and procrastination*. The two subthemes emerged from the participants' responses as they experienced failure in the licensure examination.

1.1 Disappointed With Oneself after Knowing the Result of the Examination. This theme emerged from the feeling of dissatisfaction that an individual experienced upon knowing the result of the licensure examination. This sentiment arises from a sense of personal letdown or unmet expectations with one's performance. This theme suggests that the participant had hoped for a better outcome and feels a sense of self-blame or regret for not achieving the desired result (Cherkowski et al., 2020; Heathco, 2023; Pang & Seah, 2021; Schiuma et al., 2022). This feeling is common among individuals who had higher expectations of themselves or were aiming for a particular level of success (Kirtchuk et al., 2022; Klok et al., 2023; Phillips, 2022). In essence, this theme encapsulates the emotional response of someone who has evaluated their performance in an exam and feels a sense of sadness, regret, or disappointment because it did not meet their standards or aspirations (Kohn, 2017; Tan, 2022; Zuo & Wang, 2023).

These are the shared statements of participants with sadness on their faces:

"I felt like I was down. I feel depressed and disappointed in myself. I feel dejected, not because I failed the exam but because I failed my parents' expectations. I let my parents down, and I felt guilty that they provided me with everything, and I could not even stand up to their expectations!" (P1)

"I felt I disappointed my family because they expected me a lot. They expected me to pass the board exam and have a better job. Since I am the eldest child, they expected much of me." (P4)

"Disappointment is a common feeling. I disappointed myself and others, particularly my close family members. I felt much internal or external pressure to pass the board exam. And not passing the exam dashed my hopes and led to a feeling of great disappointment." (P11)

"Being failed in the examination caused me to feel depressed and even envious of some of my batchmates who passed the exam. I cannot help myself asking why I did not pass. This failure of mine affects much of my future. Since it causes a delay in achieving my life dreams, which are to be part of the BFP or even in the PNP organization and be a servant to the country." (P6)

Although disappointments are unavoidable among the participants, this feeling was rooted in the expectations of their families, friends, and batchmates. Participants 1, 4, and 11 expressed disappointments because they needed to meet the expectations of their families. Participant 6 feels disappointed because he envies his batchmates and compares himself to others' achievements.

It often signifies a personal struggle with inadequacy or a perceived failure to meet their standards. Although all of their experiences were similar, they differ in how they cope with their feelings and experiences; some individuals try to prevent it by underachieving (by keeping their expectations low), while others try to avoid it by overachieving (by keeping their expectations too high) (Davis & Lohmann, 2018).

Whichever way a person tends to lean, the following may be beneficial: learning to respond healthily to disappointment by adopting a coping style that seeks to understand what happened, checks to see if expectations were reasonable, re-evaluates perceptions and behaviors and seeks solutions that are positive rather than dwelling

on the past. Rumination is frequently useless, but introspection can be. Discouragement is always a choice, even though disappointment is unavoidable (Kets de Vries, 2018; Tunc et al., 2019).

It indicates that disappointment is among common experiences of not achieving goals. It is normal for an individual to feel it is part of life. To feel disappointed is what the study participants experienced since they did not hit the target instantly. Though it dashes their hope, they still have another chance or opportunity to grab by not giving up easily in this situation (Laput et al., 2023; Woolly, 2022; Kets de Vries, 2018).

1.2 Consequences of Heedlessness and Procrastination. The theme underscores the detrimental outcomes of neglecting important tasks and delaying responsibilities. There are two negative characteristics mentioned in this theme. First, heedlessness, characterized by a lack of attention or care, can lead to missed opportunities and a decline in overall performance. It can result in overlooking crucial details, ultimately impeding progress and success. Second, procrastination exacerbates this by compressing available time, often resulting in rushed, subpar work and heightened stress levels. The combination of heedlessness and procrastination can strain the participants' preparation for licensure examinations (Reeves, 2023; Tiwari & Singh, 2022).

The participants of the study experienced panic during the examination, which led them to not concentrate on the examination. They also feel nervous and, at the same time, have doubts about their answers due to a lack of preparation and confidence. They also experienced mental stress and pressure in studying due to their laziness. Lack of reading comprehension hinders the participants from taking the board examination (Albina et al., 2022; Chen, 2020; Odutayo & Ramsaroop, 2023). Furthermore, they said various topics in the new curriculum should have been discussed during their time using the old curriculum; this is why they failed the examination.

These are their responses during the interview:

"This unpreparedness causes me to panic during the exam and not take the examination seriously. I always doubt my choice and have erasures, which is not good. I feel like I was having fun on this examination because I did not take it seriously. Stressed out about what would be the right answer for every question. However, I am grateful it went well, and I finished it ahead of time." (P3)

"As I took the board examination, I felt nervous, and at the same time, I was doubtful of what I should choose to get the right answer due to lack of preparation physically, mentally, and financially." (P9)

"For me, it is the lack of preparation, and I am not sure of my answers in the board examination. Another thing is I do not have enough confidence during the exam." (P2)

"There are so many challenges I encountered mental pressure in studying due to laziness and nervousness. I also lack a study plan and strategy. Without a clear plan of attack, I struggle to know exactly what to do. This results in procrastination, feelings of anxiousness, and a lack of preparation, which may lead to under-performance on the big day, the board examination day." (P6)

These two negative characteristics are interrelated, meaning they frequently coexist, and some may contribute to or exacerbate others (Oscarsson et al., 2022; Sarathi et al., 2022; Shatz, 2022). As an implication, procrastination hinders many takers from passing the licensure examination. It clearly shows that lack of preparation may result in anxiety and pressure, which lead to choosing the wrong answers.

This theme remains the participants' failure of not taking their education seriously. The four years or more in college are the foundation of their education and preparation for the licensure examination. Since the participants failed the examination, it indicates that they need more knowledge of the basic education foundation of the program (Aithal & Aithal, 2020; Swanson & Roberts, 2016).

2. Embracing Support, Self-Belief, and Perseverance

In journey to become registered criminologist, the licensure examination is one of challenges that needs determination. This theme developed from the following themes emerged from the responses of the participants,

these are: *receiving support from family and friends, being prepared, and believing in oneself, and pushing oneself to continue and never give up.* Those who believe in their capabilities are a beacon of hope and reinforce their purpose in the licensure examination. This theme served as their foundation, allowing the participants to face adversity with newfound strengths, knowing they are not alone in their journey (Albina et al., 2022; Laput et al., 2023).

Coupled with support, self-belief lays the foundation for resilience. Regardless of the obstacles, it is the unshakable faith in their potential and capabilities. When they believe in themselves, they unlock a wellspring of inner strength that propels them to move forward. This self-assurance protects against doubt and fear, allowing them to confront challenges head-on with confidence and determination (Levasseur, 2023; Ford, 2023).

2.1 Receiving Support from Family and Friends. Support is essential to human existence and survival; the support derived from one's family and friends is among the most important and indispensable threads. It is an enduring truth that individuals are not meant to navigate life's complexities in isolation. Instead, they find fortification in the bonds shared with those closest to them. This theme emphasizes the profound impact that the pillars of family and friendship have on one's journey, offering a sanctuary of understanding, encouragement, and unwavering belief. Within this circle of trust, individuals discover solace, wisdom, and a wellspring of strength that transcends the trials and tribulations encountered (Albina et al., 2022; Laput et al., 2023). This exploration delves into the profound significance of receiving support from family and friends, illuminating how it shapes the narrative of one's life, providing both a foundation and a compass for personal growth and resilience.

These are the responses of the participants:

"Taking the board examination will cost you not just your sanity but also your finances. And I am very thankful for the moral and especially the financial help from my family. They also supported me through their prayers and motivated me to be positive always." (P1)

"Much support I received from both of them. To my family, they supported me financially, spiritually, and emotionally. To my school and instructors, they motivated us well to pursue our dreams in life." (P4)

"My family is always supportive of me. That is why handling the unpleasant situation was not hard enough for me; " I remembered what my friend Richard had told me: "I know you feel powerless right now due to this failure of yours, but you are going to rock the world when you get strong." Whenever I deal with adversity, I remind myself to keep rocking." (P5)

"I ask assistance from my family and relatives to support me financially and morally. (P7)

"My family supported me morally and financially. They always cheer me up and keep me motivated even though we face trials in life. Though we are poor financially, they always find ways to provide my needs in taking the board examination." (P8)

"Through the help of my family, I was able to accept it and move on forward to face a new challenge. And I believe more in God, so I will never give up." (P10)

"My family also supported me financially and emotionally. They gave me the courage to pursue my dreams in life by not surrendering easily." (P2)

"All of them helped me a lot in my preparation for the board examination. All aspects of support I gained from them. Financially, morally, spiritually and encouragement too." (P12)

These shared statements illustrate the unwavering support that families provide during the challenging journey of preparing for board examinations. For P1, the gravity of the situation is palpable, acknowledging the toll it takes on both mental well-being and financial stability. The gratitude expressed towards their family for providing not only financial aid, but also moral support and encouragement through prayers, showcases the

invaluable role that familial backing plays in bolstering one's resolve (Chang et al., 2020; Mizel& Abrams, 2019; Ocloo et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2020).

In essence, these shared statements collectively underscore the profound impact of familial and social support on an individual's ability to navigate the demanding process of preparing for board examinations. The combination of financial backing, unwavering moral support, and motivation creates a powerful support system that fortifies individuals, enabling them to face challenges with determination and emerge victorious. It's a testament to the transformative power of familial and social bonds in the pursuit of educational and professional goals (Albina et al., 2022; Laput et al., 2023; Mizel& Abrams, 2019; Ocloo et al., 2021).

2.2 Being Prepared and Believe in Oneself. Preparing for a licensure examination requires substantial time, effort, and resources. It necessitates a thorough understanding of the subject matter and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. While believing in oneself is equally crucial in the lead-up to a licensure examination. Self-confidence is a powerful motivator, allowing individuals to confront doubts and overcome obstacles. It empowers them to tackle complex questions and scenarios with conviction (Albina et al., 2022; Okesola, 2020; Torres, 2023; Vural, 2023). This theme shows their coping mechanism for passing the licensure examination in the next schedule. Being prepared and believing in oneself provides a mental framework for clear thinking and decision-making under pressure, vital skills in licensure examinations. It serves as a reminder that even the most formidable challenges can be overcome with the right mindset and dedication.

These are the shared statements of the participants with positive outlook:

"For future takers, believe in yourself, focus on reading, and be well prepared. Review your least favorite college subject. It greatly aids. Each of us struggled in a certain subject in college, so now is the time to pay attention to those areas and reenergize." (P7)

"Do not let negativity pull you down. Regardless of all possibilities, make yourself believe that you will take your board exam and see your name on the list of the passers. Believing in yourself is the start of your success." (P7)

"Always believe in yourself and bring all your knowledge as much as possible. Do not doubt your answer; believe and trust the process. Do not forget to pray to God and do not stop aiming to reach your dreams and to become a Registered Criminologist" (P1)

"They must also exert more effort in preparing for the board examination. Just be a disciplined individual, be a hardworking one, be patient, and believe in yourself. Do not forget to pray to God and ask for guidance, for without Him, we are nothing". (P4)

The responses from the participants all emphasize the importance of self-belief, hard work, and spiritual guidance in preparing for the board examination. It encourages future takers to have confidence in themselves and underscores the significance of focusing on reading and thorough preparation. Additionally, they recommend revisiting their least favorite college subjects, recognizing their potential to aid in their preparation significantly (Eryong& Li, 2021; Karunaratne & Perera, 2019).

The participants' sentiment emphasizes self-belief and the need to bring forth all accumulated knowledge. Their message underscores the idea that success depends on personal effort and spiritual support. Furthermore, they suggest incorporating prayer into the preparation process, highlighting the spiritual aspect as a source of strength and guidance. These responses collectively highlight the participants' unwavering belief in the power of self-confidence and hard work. They view faith in oneself as the cornerstone of success in passing the board examination. Additionally, including spiritual guidance and prayer in their advice reflects a broader belief in the importance of a holistic approach to preparation, acknowledging both personal and spiritual dimensions (Karabacak et al., 2019; Lee Cunningham, 2021).

The implications of these responses for future takers are profound. They serve as a reminder that success in any endeavor, particularly one as significant as a board examination, hinges on a combination of self-belief, hard

work, and spiritual grounding. By internalizing these messages, future takers can approach their preparations with renewed determination and purpose. They are encouraged to invest in their academic pursuits, personal development, and spiritual well-being, recognizing that these elements contribute to a well-rounded and ultimately successful approach to achieving their goals (Lee Cunningham, 2021; Karunaratne & Perera, 2019).

2.3 Pushing Oneself to Continue and Never Give-up. This sub-theme resonates deeply with participants due to its universal relevance. It speaks to the inherent human spirit that seeks to triumph over adversity, showcasing the power of resilience and determination. Characters embodying this sub-theme often face daunting physical, emotional, or societal obstacles. Their refusal to succumb to discouragement or setbacks becomes a driving force that propels the narrative forward. This determination to persevere is a powerful source of inspiration, demonstrating that even in the most challenging circumstances, individuals can summon inner strength and forge ahead (Al Issa, 2020; Zhao et al., 2023).

It highlights the transformative journey that individuals undertake when confronted with adversity. Pushing oneself to continue is not merely a matter of stubbornness but a catalyst for growth and self-discovery. Characters learn to adapt, develop new skills, and better understand themselves and their world. In doing so, they demonstrate that pursuing one's goals, even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, can lead to profound personal development (Vosniadou et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021).

Furthermore, narratives that delve into this sub-theme also emphasize the importance of tenacity in achieving long-term success. The story teaches the endurance required to reach one's objectives by showcasing characters who refuse to give up. It dismantles the notion of instant gratification and underscores that meaningful achievements often demand sustained effort and perseverance (García-Pérez et al., 2021; Ihor & Ruslana, 2021; Nunez et al., 2022). This sub-theme is a beacon of hope, reminding audiences they can forge ahead despite their challenges and ultimately triumph.

These are shared responses of the participants:

"But despite this challenge, I will strive hard for my family's future. I will not be disappointed by the negative feedback of my neighbors and even my relatives about me. Instead, I will make their criticism of me as my way to fight still and exert more effort to achieve my goals in life as a registered criminologist (P1)

"In this regard, I was challenged to do more and exert more effort in order to pass the board examination and be able to achieve my goals in life." (P2)

"Despite this failure, I will never give up because I still dream of becoming a police officer. Even though I have spent a lot of time, money, and effort, I am still eager to pursue my dreams for a better future." (P3)

"Despite this, I will still strive hard to accomplish this dream of mine in God's perfect time." (P6)

The shared responses from the participants vividly illustrate the theme of resolute determination and unwavering commitment to personal goals, even in the face of daunting challenges and setbacks. These individuals face various obstacles, ranging from negative feedback to perceived failures, yet their resolve remains unshaken. Instead of succumbing to disappointment or surrendering to self-doubt, they use criticism and adversity to prop themselves forward. This underscores the profound power of the human spirit, showcasing how adversity can be transformed into a catalyst for self-improvement and relentless pursuit of one's dreams.

Furthermore, these narratives emphasize the profound significance of personal aspirations, and the lengths individuals are willing to go to achieve them. The participants demonstrate a deep sense of purpose grounded in familial responsibilities, professional ambitions, and a yearning for a better future. (Vosniadou et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2021). This highlights the universal drive for self-improvement and the willingness to invest significant time, effort, and resources toward realizing one's goals. Their stories are a testament to the resilience of the

human spirit and serve as an inspiring reminder that setbacks are not the end but a part of the journey toward success.

Additionally, the participants' shared responses underscore the importance of faith and patience in pursuing one's dreams. In one of the responses, a reference to "God's perfect time" speaks to a broader perspective on the journey toward personal fulfillment. It suggests a belief in divine timing and a willingness to persistently work towards one's goals while trusting in the greater plan. This dimension adds a layer of spiritual or philosophical depth to the theme, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of human resilience and the various sources of strength individuals draw upon when facing adversity perseverance (García-Pérez et al., 2021; Ihor & Ruslana, 2021; Nunez et al., 2022).

In summary, the shared responses collectively embody the theme of unwavering determination and the refusal to give up on one's dreams, even in the face of significant challenges. They showcase the transformative power of criticism and setbacks, highlighting the indomitable spirit of human experience. These narratives are powerful reminders that setbacks are not roadblocks but opportunities for growth and self-improvement in achieving one's goals.

3. Being Optimistic in Life

This theme is particular to the idea of always being positive and always staying positive. The main theme was developed from the emerged sub-themes, namely, *Having Trust in God and divine Timing*, and *Embracing Change and Personal Growth*. To be optimistic in life means having a positive outlook and expecting good things to happen. Optimism can be a powerful tool for improving mental and emotional well-being and overall quality of life. Optimistic people tend to have a more positive attitude towards challenges and setbacks and are more likely to see them as opportunities for growth and learning. They also tend to be more resilient in adversity and can better cope with stress and difficult situations (Arslan, 2022; Niazi, 2022; Patnaik, 2021).

A positive mindset is scientifically proven to boost happiness and motivate you to achieve your goals. If you are actively working to recognize the positive aspects of your life, you will naturally start to see silver linings in challenging situations. Health benefits of positive thinking and optimism include reduced stress, better psychological and physical well-being, and better coping skills during stressful times (Career Advice Inspiration, 2020).

3.1 Having Trust in God and Divine Timing. This sub-theme further explains an individual's belief in God and divine timing. Everything happens in divine timing, but knowing versus trusting and believing that it does can make a big difference. Luckily, spiritual practices can help a person trust more in divine timing and solidify the belief that the Universe and everything is working in their favor. It is the belief that everything happens at the right moment (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Roberto et al., 2020; Walsh, 2020). Though things or events may seem tough, unusual, or not make sense, divine timing assures that the Universe places people, things, challenges, and more into life when to handle them (Lorenz, 2021). Trust in God is what every individual does, for it is believed in the spiritual well-being of a person. The participants shared their experiences in trusting God and believing in divine timing for them to pass the board examination.

These are the responses of the participants:

Taking licensure examinations takes much work. To be prepared in all aspects is much better than only a few of preparedness to be done. Most importantly, do not always forget God. For in Him, we are nothing! (P7)

"I read until I understand, and most importantly, I prepare myself by praying to God and believing that I can. If others can, why can't I?" (P2)

"I also pray to God for guidance and protection in this undertaking." (P6)

"Aside from this, I also went to church regularly to pray. Asking for God's guidance and protection all the time. To give me enough knowledge and wisdom in facing this undertaking of my life as preparation for my better future." (P10)

"Moreover, I do not know if I will pass this examination because of the difficulties I encountered this time. I will trust all of this unto God." (P11)

"Above all, I pray. I asked God to give me the license I have been working so hard for a long time and asked for guidance and protection." (P1)

"Most importantly, it is having faith and trust in the Lord. For all of us is nothing without God." (P12)

"Despite it, I will still fight until I claim my PRC license soon in God's perfect time." (P9)

The participants' responses collectively highlight the profound influence of faith and spirituality in their approach to preparing for licensure examinations. This underscores the significant role that belief in a higher power play in providing them with the strength, guidance, and confidence needed to face such a formidable challenge. The recurring theme of seeking God's guidance and protection demonstrates a deep reliance on a spiritual foundation, which provides comfort and motivation throughout their preparations.

The participants' emphasis on prayer as a preparatory tool speaks to intertwining their spiritual beliefs with their academic pursuits. They view prayer not only as a means of seeking divine intervention but also as a way to foster a mindset of self-belief and determination. By expressing their belief in their capabilities, they draw parallels to the potential they see in others who have succeeded, thus fortifying their resolve to excel in their examinations (Drew & Sosnowski, 2019; Roberto et al., 2020; Walsh, 2020).

Moreover, the participants' acknowledgment of their human limitations and reliance on God reflects a sense of humility and gratitude. They recognize that their achievements are not solely the result of their efforts but are also influenced by external factors, including spiritual guidance. This recognition fosters a sense of gratitude and reverence, instilling a deeper sense of purpose and meaning into their academic pursuits.

These responses highlight the integral role of faith and spirituality in preparing for licensure examinations. Their reliance on prayer and belief in God's guidance demonstrates a profound connection between their spiritual beliefs and academic endeavors. This fusion of faith and preparation underscores the multifaceted nature of human motivation and the various sources of strength individuals draw upon in their pursuit of success.

3.2 Embracing Change and Personal Growth. The sub-theme delves into the transformative journey of individuals as they navigate through shifts in circumstances, perspectives, and self-awareness. It underscores the fundamental truth that change is an inevitable and often necessary part of life, offering opportunities for individuals to evolve and develop into better versions of themselves. Embracing change requires a mindset open to new experiences, even if they initially seem daunting or uncomfortable. Characters embodying this sub-theme demonstrate a willingness to step out of their comfort zones, showing resilience in uncertainty. By doing so, they acknowledge that resisting change may lead to stagnation, while embracing it can lead to newfound wisdom, skills, and personal strength (Cheng et al., 2021; Rege et al., 2021; Vongkulluksn et al., 2021).

This transformative process results from personal growth and is intricately linked with embracing change. It encompasses the continuous journey of self-improvement, self-discovery, and self-actualization. Characters experiencing personal growth often undergo a profound shift in their understanding of themselves and their place in the world. They confront challenges, learn from experiences, and, in the process, uncover hidden strengths and latent potential. This sub-theme highlights that growth is not a destination but a lifelong expedition. It emphasizes that each experience, whether positive or negative, contributes to the ever-evolving tapestry of an individual's identity and personal development (Jachimowicz, 2018). Ultimately, it encourages readers to view change as an opportunity for self-reflection, adaptation, and the continuous pursuit of becoming the best version of oneself.

These are the shared statements of the participants:

"By embracing change and making the best out of a bad situation, you are strengthening your resilience and ability to adapt and choosing to be the master — and not the victim — of the situation." (P5)

"I embrace the essence of change. I do not wait for opportunities to arise. I act. Since we are the masters of our decisions, we can still pursue our dreams." (P3)

"I only focus on what I gained. I develop new plans and identify possible changes in preparing for the board exam. I also focus on what I have. Focus on what I have achieved, who I am, and the people I share life with. This might be difficult, but it is important to remember that whatever you focus your attention on expands." (P2)

"This is quite normal — but be aware that you prolong your mental and physical suffering when you resist change. You put your energy into resistance instead of directing it towards potential. You cannot control and influence everything in life, and there will always be some situations that are 'out of your hands.'" (P1)

"These feelings went on for weeks until one morning, I woke up and knew I had to move on from this traumatic event. I decided to prepare for the board exam again. I re-examined my previous notes and realized how little I had before. So, I threw them out, and I decided to start fresh. I enrolled myself in a review class again and swallowed my pride." (P4)

"In this experience of failure in my life, I will move forward rather than dwelling on it. I cannot focus on achieving my dreams if I dwell on them" (P11)

"I also encountered negative feedback from my neighbors who discouraged me, but I did not listen to them; I went on with my dream: to pass the exam and be a future law enforcer in the country." (P9)

The participants' responses vividly illustrate the theme. Each account reflects a unique journey of facing adversity, acknowledging the need for change, and demonstrating remarkable resilience and personal development (Jachimowicz et al., 2018). One notable implication of this study is the profound impact of mindset in navigating change and adversity. Participants like P5, P3, and P2 showcase a proactive approach toward change, emphasizing the importance of taking charge of one's decisions and actions. This highlights the significance of an empowered mindset in adapting to change and actively seeking growth opportunities. The participants' narratives testify to the transformative power of a positive outlook and a proactive approach toward life's challenges (Albina et al., 2022; Valente, 2023).

Furthermore, the study underscores the crucial role of self-reflection and letting go of the past in personal growth. Participants like P4 demonstrate the importance of recognizing when a fresh start is needed. By discarding old notes and enrolling in a review class again, this participant exemplifies the willingness to let go of what no longer serves them and to embrace change as an opportunity for a new beginning. This implies that personal growth often requires a degree of self-awareness and a capacity to release attachments to previous approaches or mindsets (Hejjawi, 2023; Yang et al., 2022).

Additionally, the study highlights the impact of external influences, both positive and negative, on an individual's journey towards embracing change and personal growth. Participants like P9 and P11 faced discouragement from neighbors and experienced the emotional weight of failure. However, their determination to persevere in pursuit of their goals showcases the power of inner resilience in the face of external adversity. This suggests that while external factors can influence one's path, ultimately, the decision to embrace change and pursue personal growth lies within the individual's agency (Yang et al., 2022).

All of these indicate that the participants' responses provide a rich tapestry of experiences highlighting the importance of mindset, self-reflection, and inner resilience in embracing change and achieving personal growth. The study's implications underscore the transformative potential of a proactive and empowered mindset, the

significance of letting go of the past, and the influential role of internal and external factors in an individual's journey toward self-improvement.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is evident that participants traversed complex emotional landscapes, acknowledging feelings of disappointment and introspection while striving for personal growth and resilience. Their journey was supported by robust networks of support, unwavering self-confidence, and perseverance, highlighting the transformative power of belief in oneself and a strong support system. Moreover, maintaining an optimistic outlook emerged as a crucial coping mechanism, fostering resilience, reducing stress, and promoting personal development. Collectively, these conclusions underscore human adaptability, inner strength, and the potential for positive transformation in the face of adversity.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions and licensure examination bodies prioritize the holistic support and well-being of candidates preparing for licensure exams. Implementing programs aimed at addressing emotional resilience, fostering strong support networks, and promoting optimism can significantly benefit candidates in navigating the challenges associated with licensure examination preparation. Additionally, institutions should consider offering mentorship programs, counseling services, and workshops focused on building self-confidence and coping strategies to empower candidates in their pursuit of professional success. By recognizing the importance of emotional well-being and providing comprehensive support systems, institutions can enhance the overall readiness and resilience of individuals preparing for licensure examinations.

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