



FROM NOTHING TO SOMETHING: TALE OF UNRAVELING THE SECRET TO SUCCESS OF A NEOPHYTE CRIMINOLOGIST IN TAKING LICENSURE EXAM

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Abstract:

This phenomenological study aimed to fathom the tale of unravelling the secret to the success of neophyte criminologists in passing the licensure examination. The study utilized a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach, with 18 criminologists from Ramon Magsaysay Memorial College, General Santos City, chosen through purposive sampling. Thematic analysis was used as a data analysis tool. In light of this, results revealed the themes developed wherein this also discovered that the secret to the success of criminologists in taking and passing the CLE where they experienced mixed emotions, very challenging, stressful phenomena, feelings of nervousness, lack of preparation, frustrating events, remaining hopeful and positivism helps. In addition, criminologists experienced challenges like time constraints, financial problems, no face-to-face review, sleepless nights, anxiety situations and restrictions during the pandemic. On the coping mechanisms, criminologists pray harder, seek help, manage time well, rest when necessary, study hard, boost self-esteem, enrol in a review centre and practice the elimination methods. Furthermore, criminologists' insights or realization revealed that preparation is necessary: take the review seriously, join a group study, give your best shot, surpass trials, increase faith and prioritize well-being. Taking a criminologist licensure exam requires extensive preparation and perseverance as they will encounter many challenges before they pass it. The insights learned by the neophyte criminologists make them more competent as professionals in their field of specialization.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

“Success seems to be connected with action. Successful people keep moving. They make mistakes, but they do not quit” (Conrad Hilton)

The above-quoted phrase implies that the key to your success is to keep pushing forward and working hard rather than quitting or giving up. We should make the best decisions we can. Failure is inevitable along the way; we should not give up. We will frequently come with puddles of failure and adversity, but we must remember that failure is a passing phase of life and a stepping stone to success. Although the road to success is difficult, maintaining a positive attitude and outlook in life is significant.

In connection with this, the licensure exam is frequently viewed as the ultimate standard for aspiring professionals. Students’ failure to take the licensure exam in different parts of the world can have a terrible emotional impact, lowering their confidence and increasing self-doubt (Webster, 2020). In addition, Ozcan *et al.* (2022) stressed that board exams seemed more difficult, primarily due to COVID-19 in 2020, as numerous European Boards postponed their formal exams or switched to online models. The travel restrictions had an impact on exam organizations. Moreover, the evolution of exam models into completely online versions is unquestionably more difficult.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Criminology is a multidisciplinary discipline and a dynamic field of work. Unfortunately, many are called, but few are chosen to practice such a noble profession. The Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) records showed that the passing percentage has been deteriorating since 1995, peaking at 60%, and for almost ten years, the average rating of the criminologist licensure examination (CLE) in general is approximately 34.5%. According to the available data on the national passing percentage, there is a low passing percentage in the Criminology Board Examination (Manwong, 2020).

Concerning this, one of the takers of the recent board exam expressed her disappointment after failing to become a registered criminologist; she could not even believe that she did not pass the board exam despite having a 75% rating, wherein she revealed that she failed in three areas. This proved how challenging the new curriculum is following Section 17, the last part of Republic Act 11131, which states that any examinee who fails three (3) or more board subjects shall be deemed to have failed the board examination. The pain is indescribable for those who have gone through the agony of failing a board exam. Their dreams are severely wounded by this awful discovery (Blink, 2023).

Despite efforts to improve education standards, tertiary education in the country, specifically in General Santos City, continues to face significant challenges due to the widespread graduation of underqualified college graduates, as this is reflected in the national passing rate of the most recent licensure exam results. It was revealed that some of the schools are performing inadequately in the licensure examinations, and there is an array of reasons connected to performance in the licensure examination (Cahapay, 2021).

Despite an increase in board takers, the passing rate is declining, and the ramifications of current preparations may be too significant to ignore. I can attest to it as during the time of my licensure review; I experienced difficulties in my preparation to pass the exam. The challenges caused by the pandemic exacerbated the situations of the examinees, and the ambiguity of the situation added to their stress. Through this study, we can discover their coping mechanisms and how they successfully pass the exam despite their arduous experiences.

Contextually, there is an urgent need to pursue this research because passing the Criminology Licensure Exam has become more difficult since the implementation of RA 11131, which requires a higher passing rate. Furthermore, everything is uncertain because we do not know if something like the COVID-19 pandemic will strike again in our lifetime, disrupting the preparation of future examinees.

This study aimed to find out how the Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges-General Santos City (RMMC-Gensan) criminologists experience passing the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE) and how they attain their goal of becoming licensed criminologists. Paramount to this, I will unravel their secret to success in passing the said examination despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. As a Criminology educator, the outcome of this study is significant because it will allow me to be more strategic in my profession. The findings of this study are helpful to my students because they can provide insight into future licensure exam preparation and how to achieve their goal of becoming criminologists.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to unravel the secret to the success of the new criminologists in passing the licensure examination by exploring their experiences during their preparation for it. Moreover, participants in this study are free to discuss how they coped with the hurdles they encountered during their review during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they passed the licensure exam.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to attain the purpose of this qualitative phenomenology. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) How do neophyte criminologists describe their experiences in taking the Criminologists Licensure Examination (CLE)?
 - 1.1) What are the participants' experiences in taking the Criminologists Licensure Examination (CLE)?

- 1.2) What challenges have they experienced, and how do they cope with these experiences?
- 1.3) What insights or realizations can the participants share with the future takers of CLE?

1.4 Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored on four theories and concepts. The theoretical lens of this study is grounded on Self-directed Learning Theory (SDL), which is a process in which individuals take the initiative to determine their learning needs, set learning goals and material resources, choose and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes (Binayao & Dales, 2020). Taking the licensure exams is a time-consuming and complex task regardless of its anchored challenge; passing the licensure exam is one of the assurances to ensure the quality of professionals and the quality of learning they attain. The Criminology graduates of Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges of General Santos City learnt how to establish challenging goals and stay committed to achieving them.

In addition, the Theory of Professionalism states that criminologists must achieve educational and competency standards to ensure the quality of their work. As a result, criminologists must get rigorous and comprehensive training in both the theoretical and practical parts of the work, which culminates in an examination or certification when the ultimate professional degree is obtained (Camarin *et al.*, 2018).

1.5 Delimitations and Limitations

This study desired to discover the secret to the success of the new criminologists in passing the licensure examination amidst their limited academic preparation during their college years, which was exacerbated by the problems they faced during the pandemic. This study was conducted in General Santos City, specifically at Ramon Magsaysay Memorial College.

Paramount to this, the study involved eight (8) for the in-depth interview (IDI) and ten (10) participants for the focus group discussion (FGD). The researcher utilized purposive sampling to choose the study's participants. The participants of this study delimited the licensed criminologists that will come from RMMC-Gensan. Next, the said participants took the Criminology Licensure Exam during the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically in the December 2021 licensure exam. At the same time, they passed it despite the challenges of the pandemic. The study relied on the participants' abilities to articulate their experiences and respond to interview questions, and in-depth interviews were used to collect the data.

2. Review of Related Literature

This section presented the relevant literature related to the study's topic. It emphasized the foreign and local literature that provided significant insights for the study's development.

2.1 From Nothing to Something in Taking Licensure Exam

Anyone who came from nothing can be something, and passing a licensure exam can make someone become something. Board exams are often regarded as one of the most important phases in a student's academic career. A licensed criminologist is referred to as a generalist since he can provide services in law enforcement and public safety administration, forensic sciences, security industries, training and education sectors, and other relevant fields. Becoming a criminologist is something, but the road to achieve is not easy. A well-rounded criminologist whose standards of professional practice and service shall be excellent, qualitative, world-class, and globally competitive and to become this one, you must pass the Criminologists Licensure Examination (Haryani, 2021; Manwong, 2020; Musico, 2018).

Passing the licensure Examination in Criminology is the sole way to obtain a license to practice as a criminologist in the Philippines. This is stipulated by Republic Act No. 6506, which established the Board of Criminology of the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Licensure Examination in Criminology is supported by Republic Act No. 6506; these concentration areas are also the topics that are stressed in every Criminology Review Center. Criminal Jurisprudence and Procedure (20%), Law Enforcement Administration (20%), Criminalistics (20%), Criminal Detection and Investigation (15%), Criminal Sociology (15%), and Correctional Administration and Probation (10%) are the areas of concentration, with their respective relative weights. Licensure examinations are a significant stage in a student's academic path since they assess their intellectual potential, which is why they are difficult. Exam preparations need much effort (Manwong, 2020; Parinas & Obrero, 2012; Singh, 2022).

2.1.1 Tale of Challenges Experienced by the Criminologist

The pandemic's complications aggravated the difficulties experienced by the examinees. As a result, education has altered considerably, with the notable rise of e-learning. Likewise, it was stated that major educational boards nationwide had cancelled licensure exams. When deciding on licensure examinations, there are two factors to consider: the danger of the pandemic and the consequences of not holding the tests. Cancelling licensure exams without considering the long-term consequences implies that the country's education system will be winging it for at least the following year, if not longer. The challenging licensing exam makes it crucial for reviewers to have resources other than their own notes, which makes independent or group study necessary. They must acquire self-discipline and time management skills that can call for monitoring (Li & Lalani, 2020; Samrat, 2021; Webster, 2020).

Furthermore, an article published by India Today's electronic site resonated that licensure examinations have evolved into a life-or-death situation for students, causing great worry and anxiety. If left unchecked, this can lead to serious mental health problems. Planning an early review can help to handle licensure exam anxiety. Similarly, it was revealed that Iligan City Representative Frederick Siao advocated for the resumption of the PRC licensure exams, wherein he emphasized that *"two years without licensure exams would have a negative impact on the workforce, businesses, and the economy."* The PRC suspended the licensure examinations this year, indicating that they may resume in the second half of 2021 stress (Araja, 2020; Mangilik, 2019; Tan, Chua, Vu & Chang, 2021).

2.1.2 Anxiety Experienced by Criminologists

Aside from the unpredictability of the scenario because of the pandemic, examinees frequently experience exam anxiety. Exam anxiety can be divided into two types: rational anxiety, which emerges as a result of poor study practices, and irrational anxiety; it was asserted that the uncertainty regarding the date of the Board Exams distresses the students. Students appear to be concerned about the postponement of the licensure exams. This may impact their health and capacity to do well on licensure exams. Nevertheless, test anxiety or stress occurs when this distress becomes so severe that it interferes with exam performance. Ensure that you are ready; this includes studying for the exam early on until you are comfortable with the topic (India Today, 2022; Sabharwal, 2019; Sanduja, 2021).

2.2 Coping Mechanism to Exam Anxiety

In such harrowing situations during preparation for the licensure exam, getting help from an adult or a friend is critical. Sharing your worries with family and friends can help you cope with your stress. Another one is to learn the skill of surrender by writing it down in a journal. List things beyond our control to help us overcome anxieties outside our bubble. Also, the following are some of the coping strategies for exam anxiety: prepare ahead of time by working on chunks of the topic each day, use practice exam papers to alleviate nervousness, and practice focusing your attention on the work at hand. In addition, we must remember the proper self-care: pay attention to sleep, nutrition, exercise, and relaxation routines, and reach out for social support (Grove, 2016; Mapoy & Labordo, 2021; Vijay, 2020).

2.2.1 Unraveling the Secret to Success of Neophyte Criminologist

It was emphasized that the participants discussed the standard variables utilized throughout the review. Goal setting and knowing oneself were among these factors. Several examinees stressed the importance of 'understanding oneself'. In addition, it suggests the following on how to ace the exam even if you are not genius; first, focus on long-term study. Once the exam mentioned above is done and you begin preparing for the subsequent set, keep the result in mind. Second, research from various sources. Third,

do old papers. Doing past papers can assist you in filling up any knowledge gaps and improve your understanding of the subject and specific themes. Fourth, although it is hard to focus, you should pay attention in class. Your time is valuable at every moment (Albite, 2019; Dasu, 2020; Flores, 2020).

2.2.2 Managing Time Well

One of the keys to success in taking the licensure exams during the pandemic is time management. The statement applies more to licensure exams because the board establishes each component to be fair to all students. Allow more time for review of the essential subjects of the board test. Organize lectures for students on how to succeed in academic studies. Choose a qualified and relevant licensure examination review centre prudently. Strictly enforce disciplinary actions against students who cannot perform well in the class that requires supervision. Motivate Criminology students to conduct comprehensive research and review to prepare for the licensure examination. They must prioritize what is important and balance the time they spend reviewing. The most excellent way to improve speed and accuracy is to set a timer each time a student prepares a question or takes a mock exam (Bhatt, 2019; Takahashi, 2018; Vijay, 2020).

2.2.3 Enroll in Review Center

Attending a review program and engaging in final coaching are some of the secrets to passing the licensure exam. It was also discussed in a personal blog. One of the tips to pass the licensure exam is to enrol in a review centre course. It is then suggested that all graduates be encouraged to enrol in review classes to gain more knowledge and improve stock knowledge; that the Criminology department provides coaching and review classes to repeaters before they take the exam; develop an intervention program to address the problem of untracked examinees. They might collaborate with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to obtain a list of names of persons who have applied for the licensure examination (Albite, 2019; Lafadchan, 2018; Matt, 2021).

Regarding this, Orlanda-Ventayen (2020), Rebyouhub (2020) and Tinna (2019) emphasized that graduates frequently enrol in review centres as part of their preparation because they think doing so will boost their chances of passing the board exam. In a review centre, you will adhere to a specified schedule for exam preparation in a particular physical location or online chat room. They can guide you through your course, offer recommendations based on previous exam trends, and already know the best exam preparation techniques. Additionally, they design your schedule, organize your review procedures, and provide a conducive environment for studying. Taking the review seriously by focusing solely on the curriculum can give confidence to the examinee and increase their chances of passing the licensure exam.

2.2.4 Group Study

Another one is that establishing an ideal study group can increase the chance of passing the board exam. Surround yourself with good, hardworking individuals who will inspire

you to accomplish your best. Also, you must "*study smart, not hard.*" The benefits of studying with a group include increased preparation and material review, the ability to acquire effective study techniques, mnemonics, and specifically relevant study resources. Creating study groups is a highly successful approach for improving learning and preparing for the licensure exam. This is because groups share unique perspectives and learn from one another. Study groups are beneficial for finishing projects, making presentations, and studying for tests. Study groups effectively allow students to discuss notes from class lectures (Gloria, 2018; Krasuski, 2022; Loveless, 2023).

2.2.5 Develop Study Techniques

It sheds light on the fact that no magic recipe guarantees test success; however, here are some pointers or study techniques to assist students in performing well in the licensure exams of 2021. Along with a student's awareness and knowledge of the chapter, the speed and accuracy with which he or she answers or solves a question matters. The next step is to create a steady and tranquil study environment. Another point to consider is that good health and exercise are vital. One of the techniques used because some of the participants passed their licensure exam is the elimination method when taking tests. Improving comprehension drills at lower year levels to scaffold/establish students' test-taking skills and techniques, such as elimination methods, can help them increase their chances of passing the licensure exam. Also, a time management program for education students for their weekly academic/review schedule is necessary (Bhatt, 2021; Briones & Romero, 2020; Vijay, 2020).

2.3 Insights or Realization in Taking Criminologist Licensure Exam

During the uncertain time of the pandemic, our faith may be questioned, and it may be difficult to grasp how God fits into our lives. Personal elements such as good study habits along with solid trust in God, academic consistency, and a happy attitude toward life, for the most part, reflect the internal environment that plays a significant role in the attainment of passing the licensure exam. The reviewers became more appreciative of the value of life, glad for the Lord's protection, blessed for the support of family, and still thankful for everything. In difficult times, praying harder is more crucial than ever. When faced with a challenging circumstance, your best course of action is to find ways to surpass every trial. Do not be afraid of the issue itself. Consider it a chance to expand your knowledge while also honing your skills and wit. That is not always possible with deadlines and pressure, but maintaining a positive attitude will help each problem seem less overwhelming (Butler & Jaffe, 2021; Moldoff, 2022; Pattaguan, 2018).

It was discovered that home and family factors strongly influence achievement on the Criminologist Licensure Examination. Furthermore, among the difficulties associated with preparing for and taking the CLE are the following: the exam is challenging to answer, some exam items were not taught in school, financial and moral support from parents, adequacy of classrooms, laboratory equipment, and physical infrastructure, and the availability of qualified and dedicated faculty members. Additionally, failure in a

college course has significant repercussions. Exam pressure is unbearable regardless of the test. Students who excel at functioning under pressure find it harder to deal with academic disappointments. They must plan ahead of time, allocate timeframes for daily activities, and create a study checklist (Albina *et al.*, 2022; Akkannavar, 2023; Lucier, 2020).

The above collection of both foreign and local literature provides significant information that this proposed study has similarities with other widely used systems. It is significant to pass a licensure exam because a professional is identified by his or her license. It is a recognized standard by the government and the public to introduce standards of excellence and measures for their promotion. It guarantees high dedication, a sense of responsibility and quality toward oneself. Indeed, passing a Criminology Licensing Examination does not guarantee a successful life. However, it will be a criminologist's ticket to many opportunities and privileges, like becoming a professor, instructor, and law enforcer.

There are several factors why some Criminology examinees fail their licensure exam. Thorough exam preparation is significant as this provides examinees with a sense of control and mastery while avoiding test anxiety. Furthermore, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic added to the difficulties of the examinees as this brought unprecedented disruptions to their lives.

3. Method

This section discussed the research design employed in this study. This chapter includes the role of the researcher, research participants, data collection, data analysis approach, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed the qualitative phenomenological method. Qualitative research is a type of social study whose meaning is derived from non-numerical data. It is used to better understand social life by focusing on specific groups or areas. Examples include diary entries, open-ended questionnaires, unstructured interviews, and unstructured observations. Individual investigations and in-depth learning of how people think or feel about case studies require qualitative research (Crossman, 2021; Jamshed, 2014).

Additionally, qualitative research systematically explores social phenomena in unstructured situations. These phenomena can include, but are not limited to, how individuals perceive various aspects of their lives, how individuals and groups act, how organizations function, and how interactions shape interpersonal relationships. In this study, the researcher investigates why things happen, what happens, and what those things mean to the people under investigation. We will learn how these neophyte criminologists passed the licensure examination despite inadequate preparation and the challenges of the pandemic (Teherani *et al.*, 2015).

As the study of phenomena's nature, qualitative research is particularly suitable for addressing the reasons why certain phenomena are observed (or not), evaluating intricate multi-component treatments, and concentrating on the enhancement of intervention (Busseto *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, qualitative research design is likely the most adaptable of the numerous experimental methodologies, embracing a wide range of acceptable procedures and frameworks. Researchers must always ensure that they use a bias-free, open-ended technique and are aware of potential causes of mistakes. This usually entails being aware of bias and being extremely sensitive to the phenomenon in question (Shuttleworth & Wilson, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2012).

3.2 Role of the Researcher

Significantly, I ensured the integrity of the study and respect for our participants by anticipating ethical difficulties at all stages of our research design. It is critical to follow ethical norms in the study to support the goals of the research study, the values that are vital in collaborative work, social and moral values, and a good relationship between the participant and the researcher (Creswell, 2014).

As an inquirer, I worked well with others to get access to the site and potential study participants. I ensured that the participants possessed experiences and stories relevant to the study being conducted, and they must be selected based on the criteria given in this research (Bailey, 2008).

As an interviewer, I asked permission and issued consent letters to the participants to obtain their permission to serve as the researcher's informants. All participants were provided with a copy of their consent during the interview. I assure you that interviews were organized according to an interview guide describing the topics to be discussed. I elucidated the study's goal to the participants. I gained their consent to record their responses, analysis, and interpretation, assuring them that their responses would be kept totally personal and private following the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The interview is held in the most convenient and suitable place for the participants, considering ethical issues and demonstrating the trustworthiness of the research (DeJonkheere & Vaughn, 2018).

As an observer, I removed prejudice, bias, and personal disposition to ensure the study's accuracy. I listened to the participants' shared experiences and closely adhered to ethical considerations when conducting the study. In addition, I made it apparent that participants could refuse to participate in the study at any point, emphasizing that participation is entirely voluntary. Using pseudonyms, the researcher could keep the participants' identities private and protect them from public thought (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020).

As a transcriber, I transcribed the raw data gathered during the study. Transcription entails close observation of data via repeated careful listening, which is an important first step in data analysis. This familiarity with data, as well as paying attention to what is present rather than what is expected, can aid in developing realizations or ideas

that emerge during analysis. In connection with this, the researcher will convert the recorded audio data into text format (Bailey, 2008).

As an advocate, I had a fundamental purpose to solve local problems and provide a voice to people who do not have one. In other words, the goal of this qualitative study is for the researcher to act as an advocate for this study's participants. I subscribed to the notion that this qualitative study is not complete unless it advocates for the research participants or the communities that they represent. The advocacy of this study is to inform the readers about the necessary preparation and strategies they must adopt to pass the criminologist licensure examination (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020).

3.3 Research Participants

Purposive sampling was utilized in this study to determine the participants. Purposive sampling is a type of qualitative sampling in which people are picked based on their qualities. It is a non-random technique that does not need any underlying concepts or a group of people (Etikan *et al.*, 2020).

3.4 Analysis of Data

Cresswell's idea outlined the six phases in this qualitative data analysis. The first and very important part is wherein I organized and arranged the data collected. This was based on the information from the source. This process also includes taking notes, transcribing interviews, and scanning materials (Creswell, 2013).

The next step was to read and examine the data. This aided the analysis of the participants' general views based on tone, general ideas, credibility, and their experiences on the issue, and an explanation can be generated from this.

The third phase was coding. Coding is the process of labelling and organizing qualitative data to identify distinct themes and their relationships to their phenomenological experiences (Medelyan, 2022).

Moreover, the fourth step I utilized was coding to develop a description of categories/themes for analysis. This stage is significant since it is often used as a heading in the findings part of the study. Another phase was the fifth phase, where I examined how the study's description and ideas were expressed. It explores sub-themes, specific illustrations, and arguments with interconnected themes chronologically. As in case studies and ethnographies, it presents a process model or delivers descriptive information about each participant in a table (Cresswell, 2013; France *et al.*, 2019).

The final step in data analysis was interpreting the findings. Interpretation could also be a meaning created by comparing the data to information from literature or hypotheses. The data were read and analyzed individually and carefully. Each narrative response was analyzed according to each scenario of the questionnaires. The researcher attempted to extract various responses by elucidating questions to answer the questions under the research questions section (Cresswell, 2013; Grossi *et al.*, 2019).

4. Results

4.1 Description of Individuals in the Study

This study's participants were neophytes' criminologists at Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges, General Santos City. The study aimed to gather information regarding the participants' experiences and challenges during their licensure examination during the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcomes of the participants' interviews were also included in this study.

The code was assigned to the participants to maintain confidentiality. I opted to have a name code such as "Passer" for my eighth (8) informants in in-depth interview and "NC" short for neophyte criminologists for my ten (10) informants in focus group discussion.

4.2 Analysis of Themes

This part merged the themes that describe the tale of unravelling the secret to the success of neophyte criminologists in taking the criminologist licensure examination. These are the main findings of this research: mixed emotion, very challenging, stressful phenomena, feelings of nervousness, lack of preparation, frustrating events, remaining hopeful and positivism helps, time constraints, financial problems, no face-to-face review, sleepless nights, anxiety situation, restrictions during the pandemic, pray harder, seek help, managing time, rest when necessary, study hard, enrol in a review centre, practice elimination method, preparation is necessary, taking the review seriously, join a group study, give your best shot, surpassing trials, increased faith and prioritizing well-being.

Table 1: Experiences of the participants in taking the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE)

Clustered Themes	Emergent Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roller coaster emotions are like excitement but involve doubting oneself, thrills, and anxiety. • Happy but also sad due to lack of preparation. • Felt different emotions such as nervousness, stress, and positivity all at the same time. • Emotions like happiness but also sadness due to lack of preparation. 	Mixed Emotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family problems were encountered before taking the exam. • Financial problems occurred. • Struggle with poor internet connection • The pandemic became a hassle and a challenge. • Difficult to review due to not having enough money for expenses. • It is hard to get review materials, and the connection is unstable. • Online review is very difficult. 	Very Challenging

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressured if they can pass the exam. • Pressured because of pandemic. • Got stress with financial problems. • Run out of time to process the requirements. • Unable to manage time properly because of work, which adds stress. 	Stressful Phenomena
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervous due to lack of self-esteem. • Nervous due to the exam preparations. • Nervous because of being uncertain about the questions that will come out. • Felt so nervous upon answering the exam. 	Feeling of Nervousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unprepared because there is no face-to-face review. • Very short time of preparation. • Only two months were allotted for the review. • Unprepared due to many workloads. 	Lack of Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The series of difficult board questions in the exam was frustrating. • Got frustrated due to online review. • The questions in the review did not come out in the exam, which is frustrating. 	Frustrating Events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the worry, trust oneself and become hopeful. • They did not feel scared because they were ready for the exam, which gave them hope to pass. • Thankful for the teachers who inspired them. • I sought inspiration to study harder and remain hopeful of passing the exam. 	Remaining Hopeful
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid negative thoughts. • Stay positive and believe that they can pass the exam. • Positive because of the support family. • Remain optimistic against all odds. • Focus on the goal and cut bad hobbies. • Find solutions for every problem. • Strive hard to surpass the difficulties. • Overcome being sleepy and never forget to study hard. 	Positivism Helps

Table 2: The challenges and coping of the participants on their lived experiences in taking the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE)

Clustered Themes	Emergent Ideas
I. Challenges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less time to review. • Time is divided between work and study. • Lack of time to spend on reviewing. • Very hard to balance time. 	Time Constraint
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No money to pay for review. • Find it challenging to earn money. • Lack of finances due to being quarantined. • Inability to continue review due to lack of money. 	Financial Problem
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is hard to understand the lessons because of the absence of face-to-face. • Online review was complex. • Difficult to review online because of no connection. • Inability to focus in online review. 	No Face-to-Face Review

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Got a headache due to sleepless nights. • Lack of sleep because of feeling pressured to take the exam. • Lack of sleep because of overthinking negativities. • Felt tired and weak for not sleeping properly. • Felt sleepy while reading the questions due to sleepless nights. 	Sleepless Nights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became stressed and got a fever. • Stress eating happened due to depression. • Encountered anxiety attack during review. • Mentally tired due to stress. 	Anxiety Situation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Way of living is difficult due to the pandemic. • They got worried because they might be cheerful about COVID-19. • Everything is limited, especially travelling to the review centre. • It is difficult to process exam applications due to the pandemic. 	Restrictions During Pandemic
II. Coping Mechanisms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray consistently and fervently. • Ask for guidance from God and rely on Him. • Prayer helped overcome difficulties. • Always pray no matter how difficult the situation is. • Pray and believe that they can pass the exam. 	Pray Harder
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Became more open with the family. • Able to listen to the advice of others. • Ask for assistance from others and help them as well. • Ask for advice to those who have already taken the board exam. 	Seek Help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage time in order to focus. • Set aside time for work and study, and do not get distracted by online games. • Discipline oneself in doing time management. • Focus on the goal and keep on managing time properly. • Make schedule of activities. 	Managing Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find time to relax. • Rest to avoid being frustrated. • Take a rest and do not overdo it. • Take time to stay calm and refresh the brain. 	Rest when Necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diligently do self-study. • Understand the lesson more. • Participated in the review enhancement program. • Memorize the lecture and take the review seriously. • Read handouts and do not be lazy. • Wrote drop-down notes and even on Manila paper. 	Study Had
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make an effort to enrol in review centres. • Review centres offered a lot of help and assistance. • Gained techniques and strategies on how to answer the exam. • Learned a lot and was provided with review materials. 	Enroll in Review Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn the technique of elimination. • Practice eliminating other answers. • Applied eliminating strategies. • Trained oneself on how to eliminate answers. • Elimination reduces time in reading. 	Practice Elimination Method

Table 3: The insights or realizations of the participants that can be shared with the future takers of Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE)

Clustered Themes	Emergent Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being prepared is much better. • Early preparation is the most significant factor. • Prepare all the notes and compile them. • Prepare even when you are in college. • Have enough preparation so that you will find the exam easy. • Have a long period of time to review. • Study hard during the four years in college. • You need to be prepared physically, emotionally, mentally and also financially. 	Preparation is Necessary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study well during the review. • Enroll on a review centre before taking the review. • Listen to the lecturers properly. • Have a full-time review if possible. • Be motivated to study in a review center. • Do not take the materials in the review for granted; study them. 	Taking the Review Seriously
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surround yourself with friends who love to study and participate in group study • Ask friends to join in a group study. • Techniques can be learned in group study. • Joining group study increases the chance to pass the board exam. 	Join a Group Stud
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exert effort to study hard. • Do your best to be ready for the exam. • Everything is possible as long as you study. • Pressure can be conquered as long as you give your best shot. 	Give Your Best Shot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the problems brought by COVID-19, think positively that you can pass • Try harder even if it is tiring. • Look for motivation and encouragement and ask for support from family. • Apply strategies to conquer problems. • Take away all the negative vibes, pursue your future, and do the act. 	Surpassing Trials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust in the Lord, ask for His help and pray continually. • Do your best, and God will do the rest. • Accompany your prayers with faith. • You can overcome everything if you have faith in God. • You can do it as long as you trust the Lord. 	Increased Faith
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat healthy foods. • Eat foods that are healthy for the brain. • If you feel tired, take a break. • Leave all your vices. • Sleep well to avoid fatigue. • Do exercise to keep healthy. 	Prioritizing Well-being

5. Summary

I have investigated the themes brought up because of the in-depth interview and focus group discussion that was undertaken. The following themes emerged in conjunction with each study question:

Research question 1 deals with the participants' experiences taking the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE). The following themes emerged: mixed emotions, very challenging, stressful phenomena, feelings of nervousness, lack of preparation, frustrating events, remaining hopeful and positivism helps.

Research question 2 deals with challenges experienced by the participants and how they cope with these experiences. The following themes emerged from the challenges they experienced: time constraints, financial problems, no face-to-face review, sleepless nights, anxiety situations, and restrictions during a pandemic. The themes that emerged for their coping mechanisms are praying harder, seeking help, managing time, resting when necessary, studying hard, enrolling in a review centre and practising the elimination method.

Research question 3 contracts with the insights or realization of the participants that they can share with the future takers of C.L.E. The following themes emerged: preparation is necessary, taking the review seriously, joining a group study, giving your best shot, finding ways to surpass trials, increasing faith and prioritizing well-being. These themes came from a thorough analysis of the interviews and were done to the best of my abilities to ensure that the result of this research is without prejudice.

6. Discussion

This chapter discusses the data analysis themes. The purpose of this qualitative study was to unravel the secret to the success of neophyte criminologists in taking the criminologist licensure examination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 18 neophyte Criminologists participated in this qualitative study. The participants in the in-depth interview were Passer 1, Passer 2, Passer 3, Passer 4, Passer 5, Passer 6, Passer 7, and Passer 8. The participants in the forum-group discussion were NC1, NC2, NC3, NC4, NC5, NC6, NC7, NC8, NC9, and NC10 (all were pseudonyms). All of them were licensed criminologists of Ramon Magsay Memorial Colleges, General Santos City, who took their examination and passed during the pandemic.

I chose the qualitative research method, particularly phenomenology since my study involved human perceptions based on their experiences. The phenomenological approach illuminates the specific, identifying phenomena through how the actors see them in a situation. In the human realm, this typically translates into acquiring 'deep' knowledge and perspectives through inductive, qualitative procedures such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation and expressing it from the study participant's point of view. All 18 informants were requested to participate and share their challenges and experiences as neophyte Criminologists and their perspectives and impressions of their experiences. Everyone who took part graduated from Ramon Magsaysay Memorial Colleges General Santos City. This study's findings were based on their experiences and secrets to success in passing the criminologist licensure examination during the pandemic. The following themes have emerged:

6.1 Mixed Emotion

Participants experience both positive and negative emotions at the same time, such as feelings of excitement, nervousness, exhaustion, and mental anxiety, but they are still hopeful and thankful. In connection with this, Schelhorn *et al.* (2020) elucidated that numerous studies conducted since the start of the pandemic revealed a concerning rise in depression and anxiety disorders, general distress, and sleep disorders, as well as a worsening of the already-present symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and eating disorders. Positive and negative affective states, which are defined here as the superordinate categories for those states, are pertinent because people experience balanced emotional states, emotional episodes, moods, and dispositional states in response to a pandemic.

6.2 Very Challenging

Participants faced a very challenging situation in terms of preparing for the board exam during the pandemic, including limited engagement and adopting a new review mode. According to Greenstone and Nigam's (2020) research, the tremendous scope of the crisis and its impact inevitably produces a lot of dread, uncertainty, and anxiety worldwide. The pandemic situation is particularly stressful since it is difficult to forecast how things will unfold, and our circumstances are fast changing. Furthermore, due to the spread of the virus, physical separation and wearing face masks at public and private college schools is mandatory once classes resume or begin. Global governments have created regulations and instructions for physical separation to flatten the pandemic curve. Furthermore, wearing facemasks or even personal protective equipment (PPE) as a public health intervention would most likely intercept the transmission link and prevent infectious diseases.

6.3 Stressful Phenomena

The participants experienced stressful circumstances like an epidemic of an infectious disease and licensure exams. All kinds of emotions are typical. Participants may feel unsure of themselves, which causes them to develop test anxiety. Also, being financially unstable during their preparation for their licensure exam and lack of time were contributing factors to their increased anxiety. According to a study by Umucu and Lee (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic is a global public health emergency that is hurting people's physical and mental health. As a result, this aggravated the stress of the reviewee during their preparation for the board exam. They are struggling with stress, worry, sadness, poor sleep, mood swings and depression.

6.4 Feeling of Nervousness

Nervousness arises when participants have test anxiety and fear of failure. Their situation was exacerbated as they took the exam during the time of the pandemic. On the same note, Varma (2020) accentuated that exam season always causes a ton of stress for participants as many of them become prone to anxiety attacks that can occasionally

progress to panic disorders, phobias, and melancholy. Focusing on strategies to get through this difficult phase becomes essential. It was added that when a student complains of sleeplessness, palpitations, extreme anxiety, panic attacks, or blanking out, he needs low-dose medication for the exam period. Parents must not put too much pressure on their children and positively deal with the issue by telling them success tales of how people have managed to overcome pressure by doing the right things as the issue begins with children's fears of falling short of their parent's expectations, which are frequently unfounded.

6.5 Lack of Preparation

Participants are unprepared due to changes in the modality of learning and insufficient time for preparation for their review. This is supported by Writer (2020), who mentioned that being unprepared is one of the reasons why several Criminology students failed their licensure exams. In connection with this, academic failure impacts future academic pursuits, such as passing a licensure exam, and occasionally jeopardizes professional prospects as well. Students who perform below their peers' norms have social difficulties because of their bad academics, which worsen issues like low self-esteem. Poor grades have far-reaching effects, regardless of whether they result from immediate or long-term problems. While outside pressures and events cause some grade failures, others result from internal concerns. A variety of factors, including drug addiction and poor self-confidence, influence academic performance.

6.6 Frustrating Events

The impact of the pandemic is that most of the participants feel frustrated because the adjustment is not so easy due to the sudden shift of mode of their preparation for the licensure exam from the face-to-face review they need to adjust to online review. Also, the lack of time and finances exacerbate the examinees' difficult situation during the pandemic. Similarly, Forshaw *et al.* (2020) highlighted that there is a depressing sense of hopelessness that nothing will ever change or return to how it was before the pandemic. The pandemic's prevalence frustrates people, and the reviewer was not exempted from this. Being positive during times of uncertainty will make them avoid frustration.

6.7 Remaining Hopeful

The participants kept their hope alive despite the difficulties they encountered. They remain hopeful amidst the pandemic that they can overcome all the challenges. Dodzo (2020) asserted that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted people's lives worldwide. The illness and its alterations to daily life have made many people fearful and uncertain. Nobody knows when the pandemic outbreak will end, where the next epicentre will be, or how much longer they will have to deal with its negative consequences, such as social isolation and job losses. Maintaining hope also requires doing our part to prevent the disease from spreading to others and ourselves.

6.8 Positivism Helps

The participants remained positive despite the difficulties they had undertaken, which helped them to become more aware of the situation, more receptive to opportunities, continued to pray for survival, became more resourceful and became accustomed to the adjustment. According to the research done by Soklaridis *et al.* (2020), to believe in such opportunities, one must also have a positive outlook and see the bright side of these trying circumstances. Calls have been made to address the public crisis of mental illness that is associated with the catastrophe global health disaster as it continues to spread across the globe. By considering the role that beneficial psychological factors can play in preventing mental illness, promoting mental health during difficult times, and more, the current paper aims to expand these calls.

6.9 Time Constraints

The participants who do not have enough time to study for exams or review course materials experience test anxiety. Students who struggle with test anxiety usually have trouble studying and get distracted during exams. Long study periods, higher university dropout rates, exam failures, as well as physical and psychological problems are a few outcomes of test anxiety. In the study of Yusefzadeh *et al.* (2019), they revealed that various things influence test anxiety. Some research on test anxiety has focused on gender differences and has frequently reported that female students experience higher levels of test anxiety than their male counterparts. The inability of students to improve their learning and their perception of their knowledge have been identified as factors affecting their achievement and stress levels.

6.10 Financial Problem

The financial problem brought on by the pandemic aggravates the difficulties experienced by the participants in preparing for their licensure exams. According to Llego (2022), one of the reasons why takers fail the licensure exam is having financial problems. Sometimes, test takers cannot afford to purchase study materials to help them succeed on the exam. A proper diet, excellent review materials, and gadgets can make studying more comfortable, but the chances of passing are compromised due to a lack of funds. It is also crucial to evaluate the variables that lead most Licensure Examination candidates to fail. However, these factors should never be used as an excuse for failing an exam. These causes are only highlighted to raise test takers' awareness and motivate them to avoid them.

6.11 No Face-to-face Review

The lockdown went into effect in March of 2020. Schools all around the world have closed and transitioned to an online style of instruction. Along with the movement to alternate learning modalities, review centres and schools have also shifted to online review to evaluate the reviewees' performance and readiness for the licensure exam. On the same note, Sanduja (2021) asserts that online education is a temporary substitute for in-person

classroom learning, but it is not a substitute. Students are experiencing what is known as screen fatigue. They are finding it challenging to maintain their interest and concentration—uncertainty regarding the date of the board exams nags in the students' minds. There is also uncertainty over whether the exams will take place. If the tests go forward, it will take at least three months to finish the cycle. As a result, most pupils are concerned about the high-stakes board exams. The future will then begin to unravel by September or October, which is too late for a conventional school year.

6.12 Sleepless Nights

Some of the participants experienced sleepless nights, which resulted in their test anxiety as their bodies didn't feel lively, and their minds didn't feel fresh as they deprived themselves of sleep. On the same note, Maheshwari and Shaukat (2019) reveal in their study that you must attempt to get enough sleep to improve your student's academic performance. Poor nighttime sleep, coupled with daytime sleepiness, has a severe impact on examinees' physical and mental well-being as well as their academic performance. Examinees need to get enough sleep each day to be refreshed and aid in learning and memory processing. Medical students should know how sleep deprivation affects their academic performance and take appropriate action.

6.13 Anxiety Situation

Anxiety is one of the key issues that examinees face because of the negative effects they have on their mental health and academic performance. Similarly, in the study of Bashir *et al.* (2019), they stressed that evidence from Sudan has revealed a significant prevalence of teenage mental health disorders such as sadness and anxiety. Exam stress and schoolwork are seen as key stressors in the lives of adolescents, particularly when they function as a barrier to their future aspirations. Stressors such as inefficient study before an exam, lack of review of study materials, negative, irrational concerns about exams, study nights, and other socio-emotional factors may be causatively or indirectly correlated with other psychological factors, whether it is an interim form of anxiety before critical final exams time or a daily hassles students experience throughout their schooling time.

6.14 Restrictions during Pandemic

The rapid change away from the classroom caused by the pandemic in many parts of the world impacts the global education system, including licensure exams. Lalani and Li (2020) highlight that the COVID-19 pandemic has forced school cancellations all around the world. As a result, education has undergone significant change, with the remarkable rise of e-learning, in which instruction is delivered remotely and via digital platforms such as online classrooms.

6.15 Pray Harder

Amidst the adversities of the pandemic and the difficulties encountered by the participants, one of the copes is to pray harder as God has a plan for each of us, and if we listen to His words and trust in His will, we will achieve great things someday. If the burden becomes too great, pray to God for strength to carry on, and tell those who care about you that they are ready to accept and support you regardless of what happens. On the same note, Albite (2019) accentuated that all the participants believed faith had contributed to their success. 'Faith (in God) can move mountains,' as was mentioned. This is a finding worthy to be highlighted as it was not an identified factor by some reviewed research. Supporting this idea, it was revealed that being spiritual is one of the characteristics that the participants possess that helps them pass the board exam. Praying harder makes them more positive about the result of the licensure exam.

6.16 Seek Help

Seeking help from others is one of the secrets to the participants' success. Becoming more open with the family and asking for assistance eased the difficulty the participants experienced. In addition to this, asking those who have already taken and passed the exam will give them an idea of what preparation they must do before taking the exam. Mapoy & Labordo, (2021) asserts that sharing your worries with family and friends can help you cope with your stress. As the pandemic unfolded, we knew some things were beyond our control. The reviewees seek help from their family and friends to ease their nervousness and have a high morale toward the licensure exam. Seeking support helps them to let go of their anxieties and negative thoughts.

6.17 Managing Time

Managing the time well can make a huge difference. Participants can feel more confident about their lives if they schedule ahead of time, assign timeframes for everyday activities, and develop a checklist of important topics to study. It would be best if you stuck to your strategy or a suitable study schedule. Similarly, Narayanan and Campuz (2021) shed light on the fact that students are unsure how to spend the extra time they have now that the licensure exams have been postponed. The only thing that students and parents do in this situation where ambiguity reigns supreme is to maintain the momentum. The licensure exam entails thoroughly and wisely utilizing the days' notice that the board has pledged to provide before beginning the exams. So, by studying and preparing for exams wisely, children can be successful with less stress and relieve much burden from their parents as well.

6.18 Rest When Necessary

When you can no longer bear the burden of academic load, you should rest and sleep. Resting from prolonged study periods will help you improve your attention and absorb information more effectively. Rest throughout your study session may be more beneficial than breaks without, as scheduling time to rest at regular intervals will help you retain

your attention. Rest can be beneficial in allowing your body to heal. Bautista (2020) stressed that it has been demonstrated that repeated learning sessions with rests improve concentration and aid in memorising new information. When we focus all of our attention on one task, it is expected to feel drained of energy. Rest and sleep have been shown to impact your immune system positively. It also reduces inflammation and the risk of cardiovascular disease. As a result, take advantage of weekends when you may have more time to exercise and catch up on sleep.

6.19 Study Hard

Studying hard can improve confidence and self-esteem. Also, this will increase the chances of passing the exam. Studying hard implies increasing the amount of time you devote to reviewing for the board test relative to the amount of time you devote to college education. Dasu (2020) recommends the following on how to ace the exam even if you are not genius; first, focus on long-term study. Once the exam mentioned above is done and you begin preparing for the subsequent set, keep the result in mind. Second, research from various sources. Third, do old papers. Doing past papers can assist you in filling up any knowledge gaps and improve your understanding of the subject and specific themes. Fourth, although it is hard to focus, you should pay attention in class. Your time is valuable at every moment. Fifth, develop your independent study skills. Finally, it is a good idea to keep ahead of your class, especially in areas you understand strongly. Teach yourself how to read, reread, and comprehend what is written in the textbook; it is essential to get ahead, especially with the topics you are difficult with.

6.20 Enroll in Review Center

When preparing for the licensure exam, enrolling in a review centre is the finest move you can make. Your review preparation will be greatly facilitated by the complete program offered by the review center. On the same note, Lafadchan (2018) suggested that all graduates be encouraged to enrol in review classes to gain more knowledge and improve stock knowledge; that the Criminology Department provide coaching and review classes to repeaters before they take the exam; and that the Criminology Department, in collaboration with the institution, develop an intervention program to address the problem of untracked examinees. They might form a collaboration with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) to obtain a list of names of persons who have applied for the licensure examination.

6.21 Practice Elimination Method

Participants utilized various techniques and strategies in taking the licensure exam, and one of these was the elimination of choices method since the type of questions in the licensure exam was multiple choice. Albite (2019) emphasized in his study that participants used deductive strategies in taking the licensure exam such as eliminating methods and using content information from the stem or any other information provided in the test. The above statement demonstrates test-wiseness. Managing and strategizing

on each item aided the examination participants. Similarly, another participant benefited from a clear understanding of test constructors' governing philosophy in writing situational test items.

6.22 Preparation is Necessary

Preparation is necessary as this boosts the self-esteem of the examinee. Knowing you have prepared as much as possible is the best way to feel confident during the examination time. Haryani (2021) elucidated that even though each student has a distinct learning style and capability, preparation is necessary for licensure exams. However, there is a basic method that every student should take to prepare for the exam. With the outbreak of the epidemic, the entire country fell into lockdown. Schools and other educational institutions did as well. As a result, schools did not have a good foundation for launching online education. Licensure exams are often regarded as one of the most essential phases in a student's academic career, which is why preparation is necessary to increase their chance of passing the said exam.

6.23 Taking the Review Seriously

The participants realized that taking the review seriously is significant for passing the licensure exam. Aside from this, taking the review seriously gave you confidence and the feeling that you would pass the licensure exam. According to Nipas (2016), in the world of review, there are many review materials you can study per subject to prepare for the licensure exam, and there is no way you can study them all in time for the exam. However, you do not need to pass all of them; you only need to read well and understand the concepts and logic behind each lesson. Understanding is distinct from knowing in that understanding allows you to correctly apply concepts and ideas to answer even newly encountered problems. After reading, practice the application by answering selected materials. However, because some exam items are recycled, exposure is also essential in acquiring a competitive advantage over others.

6.24 Join a Group Study

Joining a group study is a very effective strategy for the participants to improve their learning, allowing them to compare class lecture notes. Moreover, joining group study allows them to focus on more topics because multiple people can review more material than just one. This strategy allows them to learn much more in less time than if they studied each topic individually. In connection with this, Marcy (2022) pointed out that studying alone can be difficult at times, especially with the heavy workload of medical school. A good study group comprises people with similar goals and can collaborate in a relaxed setting. This means that there are no interruptions or competition from other students, which is especially important when working on material together. Group members must be supportive of one another and understand if an issue arises, as well as maintain track to verify that each member is keeping up.

6.25 Give your Best Shot

To pass the licensure exam, you must give it your best shot. You work three times as hard in your preparation; it indicates that you should devote more time to licensure test preparation than you do to college studies. Gloria (2018) reveals how the recent UPLB test toppers passed the licensure exam with flying colors wherein he discussed the following board exam techniques. First and foremost, embrace your studies. "Take as much learning as possible during your undergraduate years, and "Do not rely solely on manuals offered by review centres. Read through old notes, handouts, and slides from your undergraduate years. Next, keep a study schedule wherein you must review in advance, not cram. Another one is to surround yourself with good, hardworking individuals who will inspire you to accomplish your studies and learn the most efficient technique to remember things without spending too much time and effort.

6.26 Surpassing Trials

Aside from the unpredictability of the scenario caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, participants frequently experience exam anxiety, which can interfere with their ability to concentrate while studying. Despite these hindrances, they still find ways to surpass their trials. Mapoy & Labordo (2021) wrote that even before the pandemic, exam anxiety was a common concern. The additional stressor generated by the ambiguity of the situation, as well as the economic and financial implications, made it more difficult for students to manage anxiety. First, you must recognize your distress. Recognizing one's suffering is a key step toward reducing anxiety. Sharing your worries with family and friends can help you cope with your stress. Another one is, learn the skill of surrender by writing it down in a journal. As the pandemic unfolded, there were some things beyond our control. Despite this, we must find ways to surpass every trial we encounter to succeed.

6.27 Increased Faith

Even while under lockdown, participants have found methods to demonstrate their oneness and togetherness by declaring their beliefs. They stay positive because of their faith and spirituality. People prefer to hold on to their faith as a long-term source of hope during challenging times. It was evident in the study of Canete (2020) that Filipinos are recognized for their strong religious beliefs. Even during the most trying times in their history, their faith remains unwavering. The COVID-19 pandemic's isolation did not prevent the Filipino Catholic faithful from expressing their faith but rather strengthened it. The huge lockdown began in the first quarter of 2020 because of the increasing incidence of pandemic infection. People's lives in all countries were never the same again. The retreat from the human being's natural inclination to participate in social life and express himself in the process has a profound psychological impact, leading to feelings of depression and anxiety. The typical reaction to the pandemic's worries is the most common reaction to the pandemic's fears, which is maintaining one's spirituality and confidence in a heavenly being. Faith in God has been discovered to be advantageous in

maintaining mental stability since it provides meaning and the very reason to expect anything good to come out of the current chaos.

6.8 Prioritizing Well-Being

Well-being is a decision that calls for prioritization, deciding to take care of oneself and realizing what has to be done to safeguard and enhance well-being. Nolen (2020) endeavored to explain that well-being has never been more necessary or, arguably, more challenging to prioritize plans, routines, and entire lives have been paused indefinitely while the globe focuses on combating the spread of the deadly COVID-19 virus. Experts say people are correct to be concerned about their health, their family and friends' health, and their financial well-being. However, care must be taken not to let such concerns become excessive. Stress manifests itself in various ways, both obvious and subtle, and should not be overlooked. Another approach for surviving the COVID-19 storm is to stay active, such as walking. The COVID-19 pandemic is a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence that has drastically altered our lives, replacing routine with uncertainty. The key is keeping equilibrium and drinking water.

6.29 Implications for Practice

As a researcher, I believe that unraveling the secret to success of neophytes criminologists on how they passed the licensure exam in the time of COVID-19 pandemic is significant to my practice as through with this I can prepare my students for their future licensure exam because through the results of this study I can foresee potential impediments in review preparation wherein I can devise solutions to address them. In regard of this, I can give them an advise on what technique in review they will utilized and coping strategies they will adopt if they encountered an unexpected challenges.

Paramount to this, the following are the themes generated from this study with a recommendation as an implication to practice.

6.30 Mixed Emotion

A reviewee may feel tired, happy, anxious, or stressed while experiencing both positive and negative emotions during the time of their review especially it was during the time of pandemic. They may also be excited to grab their license at the same time, they felt nervous for the licensure exam. Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and visualizing a positive outcome like having a complacent that they can passed the licensure exam can help them to stay calm and confident both before and during the test.

6.31 Very Challenging

Licensure exams are an important phase in a student's academic journey since they measure their intellectual aptitude, that's why it is very challenging. A lot of effort is put into exam preparations. An examinee may seek strong support systems from their family and friends as this is indispensable to conquer the challenge of the licensure exam. Also, the support system from their school is also important. Regarding this, initiating

programs like review enhancement programs to supplement the preparation of the reviewee can be beneficial to increase the chances their chances to pass the said exam.

6.32 Stressful Phenomena

Many reviewees experience stress before an exam, and this test anxiety can become so severe that it may interfere with their exam performance. They need to take a break during their study time and discover their stress-relieving activities, such as exercise or sports.

6.33 Feeling Nervous

Reviewee may experience nervousness right before or during an exam. An examinee must prepare well for the board exam through mastery of every subject as this will give them confidence and have a good night's sleep before the test because this can help alleviate anxiety and control their nervousness. Examinees may plan ahead of time, allocate timeframes for daily activities, and create a study checklist to feel more confident to pass the licensure exam and avoid nervousness.

6.34 Lack of Preparation

Lack of preparation for the licensure exam can decrease the chance of passing it. As early as possible, find out what topics will be included in your exam, determine the type of exam, and determine the study time during which you are naturally attentive and concentrated. These approaches help you prepare well for the licensure exam.

6.35 Frustrating Events

Since the licensure exam is during the pandemic, most participants are frustrated because adapting is difficult. The mode of review was changed from face-to-face to online class. Consequently, participants must cope with the fact that sometimes there are things that we cannot change, and the only thing that we can do is accept and visualize a positive perspective like they can pass the board exam.

6.36 Remaining Hopeful

Preparing for the licensure exam is stressful. For this reason, participants may adopt the character of being hopeful, as this can reduce stress and improve the quality of their lives. Being hopeful means having an optimist attitude that they can pass the licensure exam no matter how difficult it is, and they are focused on attaining their goal.

6.37 Positivism Helps

Every examinee is under pressure during their preparation for the board exam, and being positive can help them ease the anxiety they feel. In connection with this, they will be more positive if they surround themselves with positive and supportive people, have early preparation for the licensure exam, learn how to study efficiently and effectively,

learn relaxation techniques while studying and get plenty of sleep. Being positive in life will help you grow stronger and emerge victorious.

6.38 Time Constraint

One of the problems the participants encountered during their review was the time constraint or short preparation in a review. Before you take a major exam, you get used to reading many months before it as it also helps you understand faster. Remember that some parts of the exam demand reading passages that are rather long, so it is best.

6.39 Financial Problem

Due to a lack of funds, examinees' chances of passing the licensure exam are jeopardized. Sometimes, test takers cannot afford to purchase study materials that will help them succeed on the exam. The right food, quality review materials and gadgets can make studying more comfortable. They can access free review material onsite and watch online review lectures if they are guided by the table of specification (TOS) of the criminologist licensure exam while studying.

6.40 No Face-to-Face Review

The prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused educational institutions to reconsider face-to-face learning and shift to online learning. Like many schools, many review centres shifted to an online review, and these changes caused difficulties for the examinees. They must embrace the changes and take the online review as this offers advantages like it will be convenient for the examinee to review anywhere and anytime they want.

6.41 Sleepless Nights

The participants experience sleepless nights during their review, which adversely impacts their health, including stress, headache, and fatigue. Sleep deprivation has far-reaching consequences for health and performance and increases susceptibility to the common cold and depression. Examinees must learn to take a break and get enough sleep, as this is beneficial to their health and performance in answering difficult questions.

6.42 Anxiety Situation

The level of anxiety and stress among the participants was evident during their preparation for the licensure exam during the pandemic, and it impacted their daily living and exam preparation. Government and schools collaborate to tackle this problem so that school students can obtain high-quality, crisis-oriented psychological care on time. In addition, assistance and support from their family is greatly needed to overcome depression.

6.43 Restrictions during Pandemic

The COVID-19 restrictions changed the way these examinees studied. They may now attend online classes with review centers and discuss tough subjects with friends via social messaging apps. On top of that, they must confront the common worry of every examiner: Someone must assist them. A person can get through a tough situation if they have someone to help them, and sufficient support from family and friends is a must.

6.44 Pray Harder

Everything was uncertain during the participants' preparation for their licensure exam during the pandemic, and their faith was tested. It is difficult for them to determine where God fits in their lives. An examinee must become more appreciative of the value of life, glad for the Lord's protection, blessed for family support, and still thankful for everything, as praying harder is more important than ever in difficult times. Praying harder can help us manage our destructive emotions, cope with unpleasant circumstances, and feel better by praying harder.

6.45 Seek Help

Another factor that helped participants pass their exams was the support system from their family and friends. They should seek help from the people who love and care for them, as this can decrease their test anxiety. In addition, the financial, moral, and spiritual assistance they can get from their support system can enhance their confidence and self-efficacy. Furthermore, complete school support is also regarded as one of the factors that can help them pass the exam.

6.46 Managing Time

Time management is a must for the participants. Taking the licensure exams is a time-consuming and difficult task, and it will be even more difficult if the examinee does not have adequate academic preparation. It is needed to balance their time in reviewing and prioritize what is important. Setting a timer every time a student practices a question or takes a mock test is the best approach to increasing speed and accuracy.

6.47 Rest when Necessary

The participants experienced burnout from their sleepless nights of reviewing, and one of their coping mechanisms is taking a rest. Examinees may take a rest from studying. Taking a break from a study routine can improve their attention abilities, allow their bodies to replenish energy in the short term, and prevent long-term burnout.

6.48 Study Hard

It takes much effort to pass the licensure examination, so studying hard is necessary. There are days when you feel pumped and ready to take on the world, but most days, you feel so overwhelmed and anxious that you lose all your energy and cannot even read a single lesson. Examinees must study hard since licensure exams are difficult.

Concerning this, they must have a peaceful and tidy study area where they can concentrate on their studies. Additionally, putting out their goals and the reasons why they may study hard can inspire and motivate them more.

6.50 Enroll in Review Center

Enrolling in a review center determines why the participants passed their licensure exam. One of the preparations the examinees must make is to enroll in a review centre, as this can increase their chance of passing the board exam. The review center had a predetermined method of exam preparation. In addition to this, reviewing facilities with respectable performance on licensure tests can make preparation efficient, effective, and successful. Furthermore, this can provide them with the most up-to-date resources, set their schedule and plan their review routines.

6.51 Practice Elimination Method

One of the techniques used because some of the participants passed their licensure exam is the elimination method when taking tests. Future examinees must adopt this technique as this can improve or scaffold their test-taking skills and can help them to increase their chances of passing the licensure exam. Aside from this, they must also plan how they will take the exam within the time given.

6.52 Preparation is Necessary

In preparing for the licensure exam, you may put everything, including your heart and mind. They may plan to study the courses as well as study and prepare for exams wisely; examinees can be successful with less stress and relieve many burdens. In connection with this, they may know what study time suits them as this is effective for mastering every subject.

6.53 Taking the Review Seriously

One of the secrets to success as to why the participants passed their licensure exam was taking their review seriously. Examinees may take their review seriously by spending more time in review and minimizing the time in leisure activities like playing online games. Additionally, they must focus solely on the table of specifications of the criminologist licensure exam. Also, taking the review seriously can give confidence to the examinee and increase their chances of passing the licensure exam.

6.54 Join a Group Study

Creating study groups is a highly successful approach to improving learning for the licensure exam preparation. An examinee may join a group study, as groups share unique perspectives and learn from one another. Group members can also teach other members who are confused about things they understand. Study groups are also an effective way to discuss notes from class lectures.

6.55 Give your Best Shot

The participants give their best shot while preparing to ensure they will pass the licensure exam. We may give our best shot at everything we are doing, like preparing for the board exam. Giving our best shot may include utilizing various techniques in preparing for licensure exams, more time in review, and making this more effective; when we study, we may not mix up the subjects and not strive to finish them all in the last hour. We may learn how to concentrate on everything we read to understand it and naturally enjoy what we can learn.

6.56 Surpassing Trials

In the participants' experiences, finding ways to surpass trials appears insurmountable and impossible, especially during the time of uncertainty. To surpass trials, the future examiner may try to change their perspective into a positive outlook wherein they may try new things and reach new heights like trying new techniques in studying. When we cannot bear the burden of trials, we learn to ask for help from the people we trust, as their support can make the problem less overwhelming.

6.57 Increased Faith

During the uncertain time of preparation of board exams during the pandemic, our faith may be questioned, and it may be difficult to grasp how God fits into our lives. Future takers may increase their faith and trust God despite their difficult situation. Sometimes, these may appear harsh, yet God's saving presence can always meet our needs. Personal elements such as good study habits, strong trust in God, academic consistency, tenacity, and a happy attitude toward life, for the most part, reflect the internal environment that plays a big role in the attainment of passing the licensure exam.

6.58 Prioritizing Well-Being

The prevalence of the pandemic poses a risk to everyone's health. Staying healthy is a must for the participants, as becoming ill can affect their preparation and performance in exams. Future examinees may have a balanced diet, such as consuming nutritious foods and avoiding vices. Also, regular exercise is beneficial to their physical and mental aspects.

7. Implications for Future Research

For future research on how to pass the criminologist licensure exam, being well-prepared is a must, and a strong support system from the people around you is necessary. From the start, I recognized that a study like this needs generalizability so that other researchers can provide broader perspectives. I believe there is another secret to passing the licensure exam that needs to unravel.

For instance, through the result of this study, the administration can create policies and programs, and they may allocate funding that can be used to support the

examination takers and faculty behind the review. Also, future takers of the Criminology Licensure Exam can use the findings of this study to determine what type of review preparation and techniques they will adopt to increase their chances of passing the board exam. Additionally, the findings of this study will give them an idea about the possible challenges they will encounter during review preparation and what solutions they may devise to address such challenges.

In addition, future research may be done to interview those neophyte criminologists who experienced blended learning modalities of review to determine their views, feelings, and perceived effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in their preparation for the licensure exam and to determine the extent of the problem and to provide solution and intervention to address it.

8. Concluding Remarks

The licensure exam, specifically the Criminologist Licensure Examination, is one of the significant and challenging phases in every Criminology graduate's life. Regarding this, it is evident in this study that the pandemic's prevalence, the suspension of licensure examinations, and the sudden shift to online learning modalities hurt the participants. Restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the participant's conundrums. Aside from the unpredictability of the circumstances, participants frequently suffer from depression, which makes it difficult for them to concentrate while preparing. Most participants experienced financial difficulties, followed by test anxiety and time constraints.

Based on the study, being a Criminology faculty and in charge of our review enhancement program, I have noticed that some takers during the time of pandemic experienced different difficulties, such as financial issues, time constraints and test anxiety and each one was forced to adjust and cope to the challenges of the new normal. They view their lives as uncertain of everything during that time, but despite their challenges, they can cope with it. Based on the findings of this study, I discovered that the secret to the success of the participants passing the licensure exam was that they learned to accept the hardships they faced, and they remained positive in the face of adversity, which helped them to become stronger. Knowing the various experiences of taking exams during the time of pandemic to each examinee has given us a broad perspective on how these challenges affected their life.

Paramount to this study, I learned that if the burden becomes too much to bear, pray to God for strength. You need firm support systems from those who care for you, as this boosts your morale and confidence in accomplishing your goals. In this time of pandemic, the best lesson we have learnt from this disaster was that we should serve it as the basis for us to continue moving forward in the future. While we cannot escape the predicament of the pandemic, we might choose to cope with its effects and prepare for future challenges. I also realized from the participants' insights that we need to rest when

we can no longer withstand the weight of our academic load and stressors, as rest can aid in the healing process of our mind and body.

Finally, this research opened my ideas and strengthened my advocacies to champion the cause not just to help the students pass but to top-notch the licensure examination. Moreover, this study of the tale of unravelling the secret to the success of neophyte criminologists in passing the licensure examination provides Criminology educators with the opportunity to improve their skills in preparing their students for licensure exams. In addition, for Criminology graduates and students, it gives them insights about how to be strategic in their licensure exam preparation while implementing the conclusions from this timely research, and they can also learn that it is possible *From Nothing* you can get *Something* as long as you believe in yourself, whatever quandary you will face.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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