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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Thorns of Failures: Views of Non-Passers of Criminology Board Examination

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### ABSTRACT

Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) records show that the national passing percentage in the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) is deteriorating. The number of unlicensed Criminology graduates throughout the country is increasing. This study explored the lived experiences of non-passers of the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) through a qualitative research method. The informants of this study were 10 board exam flunkers throughout the Province of Cebu. Four informants were used for the in-depth interview, and six were used for the focus group discussion. Eight (8) emergent themes described the positive and negative experiences of the informants before, during, and after the board exam. For the positive experiences, four (4) themes were developed, namely: *Take a Trip Down Memory Lane*, *Licensure Examination: The Main Event*, *Acceptance and Moving Forward* and *Contingency Plan: Look for a Job*. For the negative experiences, four (4) themes were formulated, namely: *The Chronicles of Review*, *Test Anxiety: The Feeling of Taking the Licensure Examination*, *Board Exam Result: A Flunker's Nightmare* and *Mission Unsuccessful*. For the plights of the informants before, during, and after taking the licensure examination, eight (8) emergent themes were formulated, namely: *Procrastination and Idleness*, *Indiscretion of Reviewees*, *Financial Struggle: A Dilemma to Board Exam Takers*, *Family Problems: A Heavy Load to Carry*, *The Answer Sheet: A Fragile Piece of Paper*, *Bad Luck: In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time*, *Examinee's Inability to Comprehend Questions: A Tough Assignment*, *The Fallen Leaves*, and *Disappointments and Failure to Meet Expectations: Adding Insult to Injury*. For the reasons of the informants for not retaking the exam, two (2) themes were developed, namely: *Age Limit in the Tri-Bureau: Crashing the Flunker's Aspirations* and *Making a Fresh Start*.

### KEYWORDS

Non-passers, Criminology, Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE), RA 11131.

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### 1. Introduction

Passing the board examination in Criminology, known as the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE), is the only way to get a license to practice the profession of criminologist in the Philippines. This is mandated under Republic Act 11131, otherwise known as The Philippine Criminology Profession Act 2018, which effectively repeals RA 6506, which created the Board of Examiners for Criminologists in the country. Criminology is one of the most abundant courses, along with nursing and teacher education, in the Philippines. This is due to the demands of government agencies such as the tri-bureau and other government agencies in need of registered criminologists.

However, the Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) records show that the national passing percentage has been deteriorating since 1995. In 2003, the Philippine Regulation Commission (PRC) started to conduct the Criminology Board Examination twice a year. However, the succeeding eight (8) examination schedules from March 2003 to October 2006 recorded an average National Passing Percentage of 32.82%, which is lower than the previous eleven (11) examination schedules. The last six (6) examination schedules given from May 2007 up to September 2009 reveal a more alarming result: an average of thirty-one percent (31%) National Passing Percentage, which is almost half from 1995, hit the highest point of sixty percent (60%). Likewise, it presents that among all the schedules, the lowest passing percentage is 27%, recorded in March 2008.

Recently, Republic Act 11131, otherwise known as The Philippine Criminology Profession Act 2018, was signed into law. A provision of the abovementioned law makes the board examination more difficult to pass. Section 17 of Republic Act 11131 increased the rating that the examiner must attain in any given subject from the previous fifty percent (50%) to sixty percent (60%). To pass the licensure examination for criminologists, a candidate must obtain a weighted average rating of seventy-five percent (75%) with no grade less than sixty percent (60%) in any given subject. In case the examinee obtains a weighted average rating of seventy-five percent (75%) but has a grade below sixty percent (60%) in any of the subjects, the result of the examinee shall be deferred and be required to retake that particular subject/s. The deferred examinee shall only be allowed to retake once within two (2) years from the date of the examination and shall be required to obtain a grade not lower than eighty percent (80%) on the subject to be considered to have passed the licensure examination. If the examinee fails to retake after the lapse of two (2) years or fails to get the passing mark of eighty percent (80%), the examinee shall retake all the board subjects. Any examinee who failed three (3) or more board subjects shall be deemed to have failed the board examination.

From 2015 to 2019, with two examinations each year, the country produced a total of 95,884 licensed criminologists out of 280,323 takers, with an average national passing rate of 32.87% (PRC, 2015a; PRC, 2015b; PRC, 2016a; PRC, 2016b; PRC, 2017a, PRC, 2017b, PRC, 2018a, PRC, 2018b, PRC, 2019a; PRC, 2019b). Specifically, Region VII, which includes the provinces of Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor, had produced a total of 3,076 out of 17,013 takers with an average regional passing rate of 32.21%.

Board examinations are all about preparing the right way, and to prepare for board exams properly, the examinee needs to be focused. Preparing the study area and reviewing notes, choosing a learning style, creating a study strategy, finding time to de-stress, enhancing analytical skills, and improving vocabulary and reading comprehension are just some of the critical factors that board exam takers need to hurdle to successfully pass the 3-day Criminologist Licensure Examination.

## 2. Literature Review

This study is primarily anchored on the following theories, namely Bernard Weiner's Attribution Theory, Generalized Expectancies for Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement (Locus of Control Scale) by Julian B. Rotter, and Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory.

Weiner (1972) developed the attribution theory, which deals with how individuals perceive the causes of everyday experience as being either external or internal. External attribution, also called situational attribution, refers to interpreting someone's behavior as being caused by the individual's environment. For example, if one's car tyre is punctured, it may be attributed to a hole in the road; by making attributions to the poor condition of the highway, one can make sense of the event without any discomfort that it may have been the result of their bad driving. Individuals are more likely to associate unfortunate events with external factors than with internal factors. Internal attribution, or dispositional attribution, refers to the process of assigning the cause of behavior to some internal characteristic, likeability, and motivation rather than to outside forces. This concept has overlapped with the Locus of control, in which individuals feel they are personally responsible for everything that happens to them.

Weiner (1972) focused his attribution theory on achievement. He identified ability, effort, task difficulty, and luck as the most important factors affecting attributions for achievement. Attributions are classified along three causal dimensions: locus of control, stability, and controllability. The locus of control dimension has two poles: internal versus external locus of control. The stability dimension captures whether it causes change over time or not. For instance, the ability can be classified as a stable, internal cause, and the effort classified as unstable and internal. Controllability contrasts cause one can control, such as skill/efficacy, with causes one cannot control, such as aptitude, mood, others' actions, and luck (Weiner, 1986).

Lewis & Daltroy (1990) discuss applications of attribution theory to health care. An interesting example of attribution theory applied to career development is provided by Daly (1996), who examined the attributions that employees held as to why they failed to receive promotions. Attribution theory has been used to explain the difference in motivation between high and low achievers. According to attribution theory, high achievers will approach rather than avoid tasks related to succeeding because they believe success is due to high ability and effort in which they are confident. Failure is thought to be caused by bad luck or a poor exam, i.e., not their fault. Thus, failure doesn't affect their self-esteem, but success builds pride and confidence. On the other hand, low

achievers avoid success-related chores because they tend to (a) doubt their ability and/or (b) assume success is related to luck or to “who you know” or to other factors beyond their control. Thus, even when successful, it isn’t as rewarding to the low achiever because he/she doesn’t feel responsible, i.e., it doesn’t increase his/her pride and confidence. Attribution is a three-stage process: behavior is observed, behavior is determined to be deliberate, and behavior is attributed to internal or external causes. Achievement can be attributed to effort, ability, level of task difficulty, or luck. Causal dimensions of behavior are the locus of control, stability, and controllability.

Rotter (1966) defines locus of control as the degree to which a person perceives an outcome as being contingent on their actions or those of external forces, existing along a continuum from a more internalized orientation to a more externalized orientation. Individuals who hold the belief that outcomes are dependent on their behavior or personal characteristics are said to have an internal locus of control. In contrast, those with an external locus of control believe that life outcomes are determined by forces outside of their control (e.g., independent of their actions or because of fate, luck, or chance), are dependent on powerful others, or are unpredictable due to the complex nature of the social environment.

The development of locus of control orientation is described within the context of social learning theory, where future outcome expectancies for specific or seemingly related events are strengthened through reinforcement. Individuals’ own experiences and reinforcement history are hypothesized to be related to the extent to which they attribute outcomes to their actions (i.e., a more internalized or more externalized orientation). Thus, attitudes, beliefs, and expectancies associated with an individual’s locus of control orientation are suggested to develop, be reinforced, and strengthen through their interactions with others, the environment, as well as individual differences (e.g., cognitive development, feelings of alienation or powerlessness, need for autonomy or active mastery of the environment, and need for achievement). The theory of locus of control has proved highly popular in psychological literature, attracting much attention from researchers. Locus of control is of interest to forensic practitioners due to its relationship with well-supported risk correlates for offending behavior and factors associated with treatment success (Rotter, 1966).

Vroom (1964), in his expectancy theory, says that individuals act when they expect positive results from their actions. Without the hope of a reward, it is less likely that individuals will exert the highest level of effort. As such, individuals choose their actions based on the expected outcome of those actions. Expectancy theory contributes to the understanding of motivation. An individual’s expectations are affected by the certainty they feel that their actions will result in their expected reward or goal. There is an immediate relationship between exertion and accomplishment. Furthermore, it assumes that behavior results from conscious choices among alternatives whose purpose is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. The theory suggests that although individuals may have different sets of goals, they can be motivated if they believe that there is a positive correlation between efforts and performance: favorable performance will result in a desirable reward, the reward will satisfy an important need, and the desire to satisfy the need is strong enough to make an effort worthwhile.

Vroom’s expectancy theory is based upon the following beliefs, namely: valence, expectancy, and instrumentality. Valence is the unique value an individual place on a particular outcome. Factors associated with the individual’s valence are needs, goals, preferences, values, sources of motivation, and the strength of an individual’s preference for a particular outcome. An outcome that one employee finds motivating and desirable, such as a bonus or pay raise, may not be motivating and desirable to another (who may, for example, prefer greater recognition or more flexible working hours). Expectancy is the belief that increased effort put into a task will result in the desired outcome. This may be influenced by the individual’s confidence and the perceived difficulty of the desired goal. Expectancy is the belief that if you raise your efforts, your rewards will increase as well. Instrumentality is the belief that a person will receive the desired outcome if the performance expectation is met. The desired outcome may come in the form of a pay increase, promotion, recognition, or a sense of accomplishment. Having clear policies in place, preferably spelled out in a contract, guarantees that the reward will be delivered if the agreed-upon performance is met. Instrumentality is low when the outcome is vague or uncertain or if the outcome is the same for all possible levels of performance (Vroom, 1964).

Vroom (1964) proposed that a person decides to behave in a certain way based on the expected result of the chosen behavior. For example, people will be willing to work harder if they think the extra effort will be rewarded (Mulder, 2018). Expectancy theory, when properly followed, can help managers understand how individuals are motivated to choose among various behavioral alternatives. To enhance the connection between performance and outcomes, managers should use systems that tie rewards very closely to performance. They can also use training to help employees improve their abilities, and they believe that added effort will lead to better performance (Mulder, 2018).

As defined under Republic Act 11131 (2018), a registered criminologist refers to a natural person who holds a valid certificate of registration and an updated professional identification card as a criminologist issued by the Board and the Commission. Criminologists typically earn a four (4) year bachelor’s degree followed by a 2-year master’s degree in criminology. Those who

teach at universities or conduct professional research are often required to earn a Doctor of Philosophy in Criminology or a closely related discipline. An advanced degree is also a prerequisite to achieving career advancement opportunities within the field of criminology (Criminal Justice Profiles, 2015). Furthermore, Section 15 of Republic Act 11131 (2018) provides the following subjects included in the Criminologist Board Exam (CLE) and its equivalent percentage, to wit: Criminal Jurisprudence and Procedure with 20%, Law Enforcement Administration with 20%, Correctional Administration with 15%, Criminalistics with 20%, Criminal Sociology with 15% and Ethics and Human Relations with 10%.

As published by Asuncion (2020), passing the licensure examination given by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) is one of the greatest achievements in one's career. This examination is intended to prove the graduates' progress, knowledge, qualifications, and skills in a particular profession. It takes a hard time to study to have patience, self-discipline, and determination, and this will not be possible without prayers, encouragement, and support. Teachers have long been looking at the performance of students as they enter college or tertiary because unsuccessful students waste personal and social time and resources of the educational institution (Buckingham and Clifton, 2001). Furthermore, students who are recognised as "at-risk" for failure early in their academic careers can be targeted for interventions to help them learn or increase the likelihood of success.

Some schools and universities in the Philippines have experienced the closure of some programs off springs ordered by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) because of the poor performance of their takers in the licensure examinations. However, a college in Eastern Visayas State University is also experiencing a low percentage of passers on the Licensure Examination, yet if this finding will continuously result in the same manner, thus this course program will be ended. Most of them do not meet the national passing rate for consecutive years or cannot even produce board passers in the licensure examinations for teachers. Moreover, this problem may be making plans and formulating solutions (Cadiente, 2019).

According to Achebe (2001), feeling feared before or during an examination is normal, and it can, to certain limits, build up the student's performance. Without any encouragement or fear of failure to perform well on the test, a student is unlikely to put sufficient effort into preparation or be adequately motivated when taking the test. Therefore, he may not perform well to his fullest potential. By denying test importance, the student may take an avoidant approach to the test, failing to arrive for the test itself, failing to prepare adequately, or missing preparation lessons. Furthermore, if before or during a test, the student's level of fear is above the proper level, he may also fail to express his true abilities and capabilities. Under this situation, fear of the actual test may disrupt their preparation and cause sufficient anxiety during the test to impair performance. Fear causes the amygdala, one region of the brain, to put the body on alert and alive, quickly shutting down higher-order thinking skills, long-term memory, and our capacity to perform a certain task. As a result, sometimes students happen to know the answers after the test but not while taking it.

As stated by Thompson (1993), those failure-avoidant strategies are often recognized by students. These strategies include self-handicapping, self-worth protection, procrastination, impostor fears, and defensive pessimism. The term self-worth protection means that students often avoid continuing a learning task because they fear that failure could reduce their self-esteem. A similar method is self-handicapping. Some learners claim to have a handicap that prevents them from being responsible for a potential failure. They may even aggravate the injury to themselves before an important test. Therefore, in the case of their failure, it is not accurate whether their failure is due to low ability or the inconvenience provoked by their injury. Learners being impatient with their failure may use the strategy of procrastination, meaning that they may delay undertaking a learning task. Impostor fears refer to learners who are frightened of people losing respect for them because of low achievements.

According to Geemiz (2011), a mock board examination is a simulation of the actual board examination. Any school or organization can conduct a mock board exam without notice and consultation with the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Moreover, it is a helpful tool as a learning activity to help students gain knowledge of the question formats and the performance needed as a whole. This simulation motivates the students to prepare and study well for the national board experience. It can be an effective and valid addition to board preparation activities. Some graduating education students who passed the mock board examination, unfortunately, failed the actual board examination because they underestimated the board examination itself (Montemayor et al., 2009).

In a study conducted by Riney et al. (2006), respondents gained positive impact performance in the mock board examination. It has been suggested that comprehensive tests or mock board examinations for education graduates should be continually conducted before taking the licensure examination so that teachers can increase their probability of passing the board examination. On the other hand, higher education institutions are presently giving much attention to the licensure examination performance of their graduates. Methodical review materials are carefully prepared, and the best reviewers are selected. Additionally, most of the institutions conducting the review focus less on the result of the mock board examination. No feedback or support was given to the reviewers after taking the exam.

Cababarras et al. (2006) conducted a research study concerning the factors affecting the academic performance of criminology students. It was found that in the past few years, the students in the criminology department had good academic performance. Mostly, graduates passed the board exams, but in recent years, the image of being high in performance has been declining. The new trend of education of the students and the instructors in the criminology department had been a significant factor in the deterioration of the quality of education.

The dismal passing rate among criminologist licensure examinees might be due to the poor foundation of students. The first two years in college are the most important/critical years because it is during this period that the student chooses his course. Then, a review for about six months to one year is needed when he takes the board exam. Only graduates of prestigious schools perhaps have a bigger chance of passing the PRC licensure examination because they most likely prepared well for the said tests. Meanwhile, those who pass the board are most likely those who were serious with their studies, regardless of the school they came from. It also helps if the school they attended has a high passing rate. Some people attend less prominent schools but end up doing well because they are serious about their studies from the onset.

The researcher came up with the conclusion that lack of preparation, procrastination, indolence, low comprehension, test anxiety, and errors in answer sheets are factors in the informants' poor performance in the licensure examination. In addition, financial struggle, lack of family support, family conflict, and failure to meet expectations affected the focus and mindset of the informants concerning the board examination. The informants addressed the issues through acceptance, moving forward, and looking for a job. The age requirement and limit in the tri-bureau, acceptance of failure, and focusing on their current job are major reasons for not retaking the licensure examination.

Taking the board examination is a tough task. Passing it would be a very satisfying feeling. As these non-passers of the board examination share their experiences, we would be amazed and touched on how they deal with and address the negative experiences and plights they encountered after failing to pass the licensure examination for criminologists.

### **3. Methodology**

The researcher introduced himself and explained the nature and objectives of the study to the participants and, therefore, asked for their participation. Informed consent forms were given to the participants to obtain their agreement to participate in the said research study. Upon receiving permission, the researcher informed the chosen participants in this study, and appointments were made regarding the schedule for the interview and focus group discussion (*refer to Appendix A for the Informed Consent Form*).

The researcher decided to have ten informants who are non-passers of the board examination and who took the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) at least three (3) times or more but unfortunately did not pass and never took the board examination again within the province of Cebu. Before the interview, the participants signed the informed consent form to have a wider variety of data and better accuracy.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

#### ***4.1 Lived Experiences of Non-passers of Criminologist Licensure Examination Before, During, and After the Board Examination***

##### ***4.1.1 Experiences Before the Licensure Examination***

###### ***4.1.1.1 Take a Trip Down Memory Lane.***

The participants recalled their positive experiences before the licensure examination. One emergent theme recalled the participants' positive experiences before taking the board examination: *Take a Trip Down Memory Lane*. Specifically, the reasons for taking the Criminology course and the journey of being a criminology student.

*(The criminology uniform attracted me including the exercises. I was curious about their experiences, and I thought to myself, it may be fun. Also, I want to learn about the nature of laws). (Participant 1)*

*(Since elementary, it is my ultimate dream to become either a policeman, fireman, or any uniformed personnel of the government. That's why I chose criminology course so that I can apply in these jobs). (Participant 2)*

*(My friend encouraged me to take criminology, that is why I took the course. He told me to take the course so I can be a police officer someday. When it comes to agility test, it's fine with me because it's just part of the training, and that is also one of the reasons why I entered this course). (Participant 3)*

*(For me, the most fun experience I had is when I joined the Criminology Training Unit as an officer. That is my best experience). (Participant 4)*

*(My most memorable experience happened during OJT internship. We were deployed in Lapu-Lapu City. I got to experience the feeling of being a police officer). (Participant 5)*

This theme reflected the good memories of the participants while they were still studying the criminology course—specifically, the reasons for taking the criminology course and the journey of being a criminology student. Several informants pursued studies in Criminology, motivated by the goal of becoming part of the tri-bureau, encompassing the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), and Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP). Section 34 of the Philippine Criminology Profession Act of 2018, known as Republic Act 11131, outlines the benefits for Registered Criminologists. These professionals are granted an exemption from taking further entrance or qualifying exams for government or civil service, effectively making them eligible for various government roles, including, but not limited to Dactylographer, Ballistician, Questioned Document Examiner, Forensic Photographer, Polygraph Examiner, Probation Officer, Parole Officer, Special Investigator, Special Agent, Investigative Agent, Intelligence Agent, Law Enforcement Evaluation Officer, Inspector for the National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), Traffic Operation Officer, Associate Graft Investigation Officer, Special Police Officer, Safekeeping Officer, Sheriff, Security Officer, Criminal Investigator, Warden, Reformation Officer, Firefighter, Fire Marshall, Jail Officer up to the rank of Jail Superintendent; Police Officer up to the rank of Police Superintendent, among positions in other law enforcement and Criminal Justice System agencies.

#### **4.1.1.2 The Chronicles of Review.**

All the participants enrolled in a review center. They shared their individual experiences during the preparation for the board exam. Some participants need help attending the review classes because they work simultaneously.

*(During the review, I only attended the morning session because I have work in the afternoon. I need to earn money to pay the bills. That's all). (Participant 3)*

*(I attend the review, but sometimes, I can't finish the whole session because I'm so sleepy. I go straight at the review center after my work). (Participant 4)*

*I told myself that it is very exhausting to be working while having the review. Sometimes, you will not understand and comprehend what you're studying. It is really draining if you are in that situation. You work at night and study while on duty. Sometimes, out of 100, maybe you'll just understand 50 percent of what you read. That's how hard it is when you're sleepy). (Participant 1)*

*(When I was reviewing for the board exam at home, I must babysit a child. I will be able to focus on the review if the child is already asleep. That is the time where I can study. Because if the child is awake, the child will just keep on disturbing me, and it's very hard to focus if the child is there). (Participant 3)*

*(I study. But I anticipated my failure because it seems like it is not destined for me because everytime I study, my mind will have a mental blackout). (Participant 8)*

*(I will go home then read a little. But I lacked the motivation to study, so I will go to my girlfriend. I have a girlfriend that time, and we lived together. That is why I get distracted). (Participant 8)*

*(I was only able to study if there is a scheduled review session. That is the only time I study. Because when I'm at home, I have other things to do like babysitting. I rarely study when I arrived home). (Participant 9)*

*(I enrolled in Beltcap review center. But it is very hard because I couldn't attend the review most of the time. I just asked handouts from my classmates. I did not read and understand everything. That is why when I took the exam, the knowledge I learned is not enough. There was a time that I self-review. But I was not able to focus because I have nephews at home who are very noisy. You will not be able to focus on what you're studying). (Participant 6)*

*(You can't finish studying everything. You will have a headache understanding the topics, especially those related to crime causation. I think I understand 60 percent of the topics because as much as I want to understand everything, I easily forget some of the topics). (Participant 7)*

*(You need to read and read. If I read it once and still not understand the topics, I need to read again so you'll be able to comprehend. However, I always have headache, and I'm always sleepy. When I'm done reading one subject, I'll proceed to the next one. But, I had trouble in understanding the topics in LEA. It gives me headache. There is something in my mind that keeps on telling me that it is*

*not the answer, especially in Criminal Sociology. I put shadings in my notes, but unfortunately, I couldn't study everything). (Participant 7)*

This emergent theme revealed the participants' negative experiences during the whole preparation for the board exam. Some of the informants have trouble attending the review classes because they are working at the same time. Due to indolence and procrastination, participants need help with studying and understanding the topics for the board exam. This resulted in a lack of preparation for the incoming licensure examination. Some reviewers need to think about their future, making studying not a serious thing to accomplish. They always think about how this should be fun to the point of not being academic anymore. According to Richardson (2010), research suggested that students and reviewers have average attention spans of just 10 minutes. Then they are to sleep or do something else they do not know, and they are already distracting the whole class. One example is gossiping with others about what happened to each other.

#### **4.1.2 Experiences During the Licensure Examination.**

Digging out the participants' responses about their lived experiences during the licensure examination, the researcher formulated one emergent theme for the positive experiences and one emergent theme for the negative experiences, respectively.

##### **4.1.2.1 Licensure Examination: The Main Event.**

The participants narrated their individual experiences on the day of the licensure examination.

*(During the first day, I was so early at the examination venue because they told us to be there as early as 6 am. But I was at the venue at 4 am. I was so excited when I arrived because it was my first time to take the exam. Later, examinees continue to arrive. Some of them were busy scanning their notes. That is the time I started feeling nervous. I was anxious, especially when we entered the examination room, and the proctor called our names one by one. He requested us to go outside and put our bags in one place because bags are not allowed inside the room. When we returned, the proctor started the roll call, and I was nervous because the proctor was very strict. The proctor warned us not to put paper in our pocket that we should have pencil and an extra one. Then, the proctor gave us instructions. I was nervous when the proctor reminded us to shade properly the answer to avoid errors. The proctor told us that if we commit mistakes in the shading, it might be the reason for our failure. The proctor was very strict. The room was cold because it is located in the third floor, but I was sweating so badly. The proctor noticed me and told me I am sweating. Those are my experiences from the 1<sup>st</sup> take up to the last exam). (Participant 4)*

*(When I entered the examination room, I did the sign of the cross and I prayed. I was very nervous. I was sweating so badly even by just holding the pen. Reviewing of notes was not allowed. I was anxious and told myself that my future is in the hands of this chair and this pencil). (Participant 5)*

*(I read the questions. I tried to remember the topics that were discussed in the review. Then, I noticed that the questions are not familiar, and it took me minutes to answer. It was almost time, so I just passed my answer sheet). (Participant 6)*

*(I waited for the proctor to arrive. I listen to the instructions on what to do with the questionnaire and fill out the forms given by the PRC including the PDS (Personal Data Sheet). The proctor told us to shade the answer sheet properly and avoid making obliterations because the machine will not count the scores if there are blots and smears. And then we waited until the examination started). (Participant 7)*

*(The first thing I did was to look for my examination room. When I found the room, we stayed outside. Then, I prayed in silence for minutes. Hours passed; our proctor arrived. The proctor called our names. We were requested to go inside one by one and sit. When I read the questions in number 50, I did not understand the questions, so I left it blank. I tried and tried to understand the questions, but I was not able to do so). (Participant 8)*

In this emergent theme, participants narrated their individual experiences during the day of the licensure examination. Preparing for a licensure examination can be challenging and time-consuming, yet mastering time management is crucial for exam preparation and life skills beyond. Planning and implementing the schedule leads to more effective utilization of available time. Time management allows us to spare time for both studies and physical activities. Therefore, preparing for the exam should be a perfect blend of learning and revising the syllabus with sufficient time to attempt sample papers successfully (Khandari, 2020).

##### **4.1.2.2 Test Anxiety: The Feeling of Taking the Licensure Examination.**

The participants in this research study recalled their feelings and emotions during the licensure examination. Many of them were very nervous and anxious during the exam.

*(When the proctor discussed the instructions, I was very nervous because it was my first time in taking the exam. The proctor was so strict, and my heart was pounding. Every time I write something in my scratch paper, my body was shaking, but I need to control it because I might commit mistakes in shading. I was nervous). (Participant 2)*

*(Nervous. You cannot explain what you're feeling. It seems like your soul was not there. That's what I felt. The board exam is nerve-racking). (Participant 3)*

*(I was nervous. There were times that my hands are sweating and shaking at the same time because I was scared to commit errors in the answer sheet. The proctor will not allow us to put a handkerchief in our hands). (Participant 6)*

*(Nervous. The proctor confronted me many times and told me to put my test questionnaire properly. She asked me not to hang my answer sheet because it might fall, and the machine will probably not accept and invalidate my answers. The proctor scolded me). (Participant 7)*

*(I was very nervous. I am scared that there might be part of the answer sheet I might skip and forget to put the answer. I have many things running in my mind regarding the exam and whether I will pass). (Participant 10)*

In this emergent theme, the participants in this research study recalled their feelings and emotions during the licensure examination. Most of them were very nervous and anxious during the exam. According to Spielberger and Vagg (1995), test anxiety is viewed as a trait that varies from person to person, reflecting the degree to which individuals perceive exams as threatening. Within this general conceptualization, there are broad and narrow definitions. Narrow definitions focus on the fear of failure (emphasizing how performance is judged) or evaluation anxiety (emphasizing how test anxiety can be located with other, so-called subclinical anxieties, including sports performance, public speaking, and so forth). These highlight a societal aspect in which others assess performance. The concept of 'ego threat' introduced by Spielberger in 1966 provides a more expansive understanding by encompassing threats to one's self-esteem, the outcomes of either succeeding or failing at a performance and the possibility of negative evaluation by others.

Test anxiety refers to the sensations of concern, unease, discomfort, and apprehension that an individual encounters about examinations. These feelings encompass the emotional reactions one experiences in the context of test-taking. It is the reaction to stimuli linked with a person's test-taking experience. Our mind recognizes a nearing examination as a threat and then establishes a cascade of hormones that readies the body for a fast response in the face of this threat, the "fight" or "flight" response. Anxiety is a normal experience during examinations; it encompasses feelings of worry, tension, or uneasiness that occur before, during, or after an exam (Hanoski, 2002), but too much anxiety may be harmful to exam performance (Dantoft, 2014). In some ways, test takers may find the experience of test anxiety helpful as it can motivate them to stay focused during the exam. However, in some cases, test anxiety can become so overwhelming and extremely upsetting that it leads to a negative influence on one's performance on a test (Hanoski, 2002).

#### **4.1.3 Experiences After the Licensure Examination.**

At this juncture, the participants shared their individual experiences after taking the licensure examination.

##### **4.1.3.1 Acceptance and Moving Forward.**

Failing the licensure examination is surely heartbreaking. The number of failed expectations is too much to handle. However, participants disclosed that they accepted their fate and decided to move forward.

*(I just accepted my failure. I knew that what I did is not enough for me to pass. I just accepted it. If I will not accept my failure, I will be depressed. I will be discouraged even more. I will lose my motivation. I didn't mind it, so it will not hurt anymore. I just keep myself busy on other things). (Participant 1)*

*(For me, I just accepted my failure. I accepted it so I can move on with the problem). (Participant 2)*

*(I accepted my failure. My family also accepted my failure). (Participant 3)*

*(I just accepted the fact that I failed. I'm unlucky. That is what I told myself. Whatever I will do, I will still fail). (Participant 8)*

In this emergent theme, the participants addressed the issues related to taking the board examination. Failing the licensure examination is surely heartbreaking. The number of failed expectations is too much to handle. However, participants disclosed that they accepted their fate and decided to move forward. In this stage, negative interpretations of past behavior may be transformed, and the person may begin to understand the reasons for this behavior and see a path to a more successful future



(Fisher, 2012). The student begins to take steps toward preparing for the exam again. This phase may take longer to appear if the new graduate spends much time in the guilt and depression phases. A renewed sense of self emerges in this stage, and the person begins to act with more integrity, in harmony with inner convictions, and confidence in making correct choices (Fisher, 2012).

**4.1.3.2 Contingency Plan: Look for a Job.**

Most of the participants revealed that after failing the licensure examinations for three (3) or more, they decided to look for a job and find a source of income to support their needs.

*(What I did is to look for ways to earn money so that my mind will not keep remembering my failure. I focused myself on other things. I worked. I am also a "habal-habal driver." There are times also that I will go to the motorcycle shop and work as a mechanic or a cashier). (Participant 1)*

*(I don't have a choice but to work so I can help my family and my incoming family. My parents are not supporting me anymore, and they told me to look for a job. They are hopeful that I will find a decent job, and they advised me to do well in the job so that I will be a regular employee). (Participant 4)*

*(I immediately applied for work because people looked down on me. I did not stay at home. I worked so that people will see that I persevere). (Participant 5)*

*(I told myself to look for a job. Maybe being a licensed criminologist is not destined for me. So, I decided to work). (Participant 7)*

*(I applied for work. I applied in ERUF emergency response team). (Participant 10)*

In this emergent theme, most participants revealed that after failing the licensure examinations for three (3) or more, they decided to look for a job and find a source of income to support their needs. Here, the individual learns to accept change (Fisher, 2012). He or she develops a rational framework for events and allows the change to become part of a new reality. The examinee accepts failure on the licensure examination. The flunker will now seek more work hours or other part-time jobs to compensate for the failure to pass and obtain a license. The graduate begins to work many hours to meet financial demands and may only have the time to prepare for the test again weeks, months, or even years later, further decreasing his or her chances of passing the exam. The graduate abandons old studying plans and fails to develop and follow new studying plans (Fisher, 2012).

**4.1.3.3 Board Exam Result: A Flunker's Nightmare.**

*(I found the result in Google because my classmate shared the link of the lists of successful passers to me. So, what I did is I search my name. But my name was not included in the lists, and I realized that I failed). (Participant 6)*

*(I updated the PRC website if they released already the list of successful examinees. But when I searched my name, I am not included in the lists. Days and weeks passed; I did not look at my board rating. Then, I decided to check my scores to confirm, and I saw that my board rating was low). (Participant 7)*

*(I did not personally look for my name. There was a code number given to us to check our ratings. My classmates searched the results. Then, they found they passed, but my name was not included, so I decided not to look for my average rating. I told myself it's obvious already that I failed because I was not included in the list). (Participant 8)*

*(I found the result in the group chat. They arranged the names of passers in every school, but my name is not included, so it's apparent that I failed). (Participant 9)*

This emergent theme narrated how the participants found out the licensure examination results. Failing the board examination is a nightmare. On the other hand, passing the licensure examinations given by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) can be one of the greatest achievements in a college graduate's life. The examination is intended to prove the graduates' knowledge, progress, skills, and qualifications in a particular profession. Moreover, the performance of the graduates in an institution who take the licensure examination determines the quality of education the school provides, which eventually guarantees the efficiency and effectiveness of its graduate's application of the things he or she has learned in his or her chosen profession or career. A higher standard of performance in the instructional system and, consequently, the performance of the students in the licensure examinations reflects the institution's efficiency as well as the intellectual capacity of the students that the school has cultivated in the period that the students have remained in its portals (Baang, 2016).

#### **4.1.3.4 Mission Unsuccessful.**

After failing the licensure examination, the participants expressed their realizations, dismay, and disappointments.

*(I was lost in thought. Because I really prepared for licensure examination, but in the end, the results are negative. Failed. I blamed myself for my failure. It is really sad to be in that situation). (Participant 4)*

*(I was so down. Really down. I was very disappointed with myself, and I don't have the guts to show myself anymore to my parents, who supported me. So I decided to leave the house and be with my girlfriend. I was so embarrassed, not only to my family but also to my neighbors. I realized the negative impact it brought me because of my negligence). (Participant 5)*

*(I was down and sad knowing I didn't pass because the years are put into waste). (Participant 7)*

*(I realized that it's tough to take the board examination. You need to prepare because it is not easy. You need to prepare allocate time in your study and the course you have chosen. Because it is really tough, especially when you fail and a lot of people looked down on you). (Participant 8)*

*(I am disappointed because I didn't give everything. There were times that I'm angry because my family blamed me and told me that I did not give my all in the exam). (Participant 9)*

After failing the licensure examination, this emergent exposed the participants' realizations, dismay, and disappointments. In the 2015 study conducted by Graybow on the emotional responses to exam outcomes, it was discovered that the majority of participants felt sadness and exhibited signs of mild depression for a duration of one to two days after failing an exam. Notably, only a single participant reported enduring or severe emotional issues (intense anxiety) as a consequence of failing the exam. The bulk of the data presented in this section indicates a common response pattern. Right after getting their exam scores, participants often showed signs of distress, including crying and feelings of confusion, surprise, and shock. These initial reactions gradually shifted to mild or moderate shame and sadness during the one to two days following the exam. Generally, these emotional states dissipated after a few days (Graybow, 2015).

#### **4.2 Plights of the Informants Before, During, and After the Licensure Examination**

Participants in this research study encountered difficult or otherwise unfortunate situations before, during, and after taking the Criminologist Licensure Examination. These unfortunate events and struggles affected the participants' lives and dreams of becoming registered Criminologists.

##### **4.2.1 Plights of the Informants Before the Licensure Examination**

###### **4.2.1.1 Procrastination and Idleness: Indiscretion of Reviewees.**

Procrastination is a thief of time. It is delaying or postponing a task or set of tasks. So, whether you refer to it as procrastination *akrasia* or something else, it is the force that prevents you from following through on what you set out to do. When procrastination and idleness combine, reviewers tend to do other things or not focus on the main goal: preparing and studying for the board examination.

*(I was sure of my failure because of my indolence. I only attend half a day of the review sessions every Saturday and Sunday. I only check my attendance. I looked down on myself because I anticipated my failure. I was idle. I rarely attend the review lectures during weekends. Also, I have a lot of bad influences during the review, like my peers my girlfriend). (Participant 8)*

*(I stayed at my girlfriend's house. I was not able to focus on the review. I am always absent because of my girlfriend. Every weekend, they will ask me to join them in their drinking session. And I can't say no to them. That's why I was not able to attend the review). (Participant 8)*

This emergent theme revealed the lapses committed by the participants during their preparation for the licensure examination. Procrastination is a thief of time. It is delaying or postponing a task or set of tasks. So, whether you refer to it as procrastination *akrasia*, or something else, it is the force that prevents you from following through on what you set out to do. When procrastination and idleness combine, reviewers tend to do other things or not focus on the main goal: preparing and studying for the board examination. Beswick and Mann (1994) describe procrastination as postponing the start or completion of a planned activity. Most definitions of procrastination have a postponing, delaying, or putting off of a task or decision in common. Academic procrastination is the expression of procrastination in an academic situation. *Academic procrastination* is failing to perform an academic activity within the desired timeframe or postponing until the last 21-minute activities one needs to complete (Wolters,

2003). An alternative definition includes postponing academic goals to the point where optimal performance becomes highly unlikely (Ellis & Knaus, 2002).

#### **4.2.1.2 Financial Struggle: A Dilemma to Board Exam Takers.**

Another emergent theme in the plights of participants before taking the licensure examination is the lack of money to support their review and payment of the requirements for the board examination. Participants shared their struggles in finding money to enroll in a review center and pay for the documents needed before taking the exam.

*(My main problem is money. I have little time reviewing the notes because I am working. I need to work to have money to pay the review fees and to have allowance). 9Participant 1)*

*(Money is my only problem. I need money to support my review). (Participant 2)*

*(If I will not work, I will be hungry. And if you're hungry and you attend the review, it will just be useless. You will not learn anything if you're hungry. I just balanced work and review). (Participant 4)*

*(I asked money from my parents because I need it to pay the review fees payment for the photocopies, but they did not give me. So, I find a way. I worked as a "habal-habal" driver so I can photocopy the run-ons and the handouts of the other subjects that I don't have). (Participant 6)*

Another emergent theme in the plights of participants before taking the licensure examination is the lack of money to support their review and payment of the requirements for the board examination. Participants shared their struggles in finding money to enroll in a review center and pay for the documents needed before taking the exam. Self-efficacy is a key component of social cognitive theory. Academic self-efficacy is an individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully achieve an academic goal (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy is defined as people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances. Self-efficacy has been linked to motivational constructs like persistence and goal setting, self-regulated learning, achievement, and affective behaviors such as stress, distress, and anxiety (Bandura, 1986). Financial struggle affects the board taker's belief in his or her ability to successfully achieve the goal of passing the licensure examination.

#### **4.2.1.3 Family Problems: A Heavy Load to Carry.**

The researcher noticed from the responses of the participants that they experienced family problems during their review, which somehow affected their mindset, feelings, and, most of all, their preparation for the board examination.

*(I am really affected because there was a time when the exam is fast approaching, we had a quarrel with my sibling, and I always think of what happened. I was not able to focus on the exam). (Participant 2)*

*(What affected me is my mother's lack of support. I asked her that I want to resign in my work because I want to take the exam. But she told me not take again. Instead, she wanted me to work so I can help them). (Participant 3)*

*(My mother is a drug user. She was already arrested. I am not ashamed of my mother, even if she has a vice. I did everything to change her. I told her that her vice will do no good. But even how much I scold her, she will not listen to me because it is her life). (Participant 5)*

*(During my preparation, my mother always reprimanded me. I was not able to understand the topic. My mind did not learn anything. I don't know what to do because our family is always fighting. Bad words came out from the mouth of my parents. They lambasted me. I was really hurt because I'm not young anymore. It is really hard to hear harsh words from your parents while your neighbors are listening. I lost motivation. I told myself that I may not be able to continue because there are a lot of negative thoughts in my mind). (Participant 6)*

*(As I could remember, our family always argue with one another. We argue about water and electric bills. In addition, my brother impregnated her girlfriend. There was also a time when my mother was punched by my older brother. She lost two of her teeth in front). (Participant 8)*

In this emergent theme, the researcher noticed from the participants' responses that they experienced family problems during their review, which somehow affected their mindset, feelings, and preparation for the board examination. Factors such as class attendance, the income of the family, the educational background of both the mother and the father, the ratio of teachers to

students, whether there is a trained teacher present in the school, the gender of the student, and how far the school is have also influenced the academic outcomes of students, as noted by Mushtaq & Khan (2012).

#### **4.2.2 Plights of the Informants During the Licensure Examination.**

Transcribing and coding the significant statements and responses of the participants, the researcher came up with three (3) emergent themes with regard to the plights of the participants during the licensure examination. These include *Answer Sheet: A Fragile Piece of Paper*, *Bad Luck: In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time*, and *Examinee's Inability to Comprehend Questions: A Tough Assignment*.

##### **4.2.2.1 Answer Sheet: A Fragile Piece of Paper.**

Participants shared their plights when they were answering the examination and while shading their answer sheets.

*(At first, I sneezed, and I noticed that my answer sheet got wet. I was worried.) (Participant 6)*

*(When I took the exam, it was raining, and we are having the exam at the gym since there are classes in some of the classrooms. Unfortunately, I and some of the examinees' answer sheets were wet because of the rain. The proctor told us to cover our answer sheet. I tried to cover my answer sheet with an envelope, but it's still wet. And when I was done, I passed it immediately without reviewing. Then, the proctor reprimanded us because it's becoming noisy in the gym and there are still people who are still answering. So, the proctor requested us to pull out from the gym. After that, the proctor asked me why I passed my answer sheet right away. I told him that I have no other option but to pass it since the answer sheet is wet. I expected that I will fail in CLJ already because my answer sheet was crumpled, wet and dirty). (Participant 7)*

*(My answer sheet was dirty. When I'm nervous, my hands are sweating so there were smears and blots on my answer sheets. In my mind, I knew already that I will fail because of what happened to my answer sheet. And then the result came. As expected, I failed CLJ, and I got 62 percent in that subject). (Participant 7)*

In this emergent theme, participants shared their negative experiences while answering the examination and shading their answer sheets. Nobody wants to make errors in a situation that counts. The consequences of committing such errors in the licensure examination can be devastating. It could be assumed that to prevent mistakes in the crucial test, it is essential to avoid errors throughout the learning process. In this view, committing errors should make them more salient and entrench them into the memory and operating procedures of the person who makes them. Exercising the errors should make the errors themselves stronger, thus increasing their probability of recurrence. This perspective, aligning with many of the traditional and most respected theories on learning and memory (Bandura, 1986), posits that mistakes are detrimental and must be prevented at any cost.

##### **4.2.2.2 Bad Luck: In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time.**

Some participants shared that unfortunate things happened to them during the licensure examination.

*(My answer sheet got wet during the examination. Worse thing is when the proctor confiscated our notes because we put in front of us. They asked the examinees as to who the owner of the notes is, but no one answered. I never admitted that I'm the owner of the notes. However, one of the notes has a name written "Kabataan." And as expected she failed in the exam. The proctor warned us that if no one admit as the owner of the other notes, they will send it to PRC and investigate our names. So, I was worried because I'm one of the owners of the notes which were confiscated). (Participant 7)*

*(A lot of bad things happened when I took the board exam. During my last examination, I had dengue. I thought of not taking the exam because I was not able to study properly, but my mother insisted and told me to take the exam because I already paid all the requirements. During the final coaching, I did not attend because I have dengue. My platelet count is only 27. I told my mother that I might not be able to take the exam because of my situation, but she insisted. So, I forced myself to take the exam despite suffering from dengue. I was so sick while riding the jeepney just to arrive at the venue. It just made my situation worse because I couldn't concentrate). (Participant 7)*

This emergent theme revealed the unfortunate things that happened to the participants during the licensure examination. One participant said the proctor confiscated his notes during the examination. Another participant indicated that he suffered from dengue and was sick when he took the licensure examination. In his foundational examination of this process in 1958, Heider pinpointed four key perceived reasons for failure: skill, exertion, fortune, and the challenge level of the task. Subsequent researchers augmented this list, finding that students' causal interpretations tend to be extensive, structured, and, in many cases, motivated by the need to sustain their self-image. In a study conducted by Elig & Frieze in 1979, which examined how individuals attributed their success and failure in a lab task, it was observed that a significant number of participants attributed their performance to their ability and the difficulty of the task. However, they also mentioned other factors, including luck, inherent

motivation, consistent and inconsistent effort, mood, and personality traits, as influencing their results. Similarly, Van Overwalle (1989) worked with a 10-item list of causes (intelligence, interest, desire, effort, habits, knowledge, help, bias, teaching, difficulty, and luck). Lunt (1988), for example, asked participants to identify the links between a few possible causes of failure (e.g., biased teaching, rare studies, little intelligence, poor concentration, poor time allotment, unluckily, and physical sickness).

#### **4.2.2.3 Examinee's Inability to Comprehend Questions: A Tough Assignment.**

Analyzing the responses, the researcher discovered that the participants had trouble comprehending and understanding the questions asked in the licensure examination.

*(Yes, sir. I have low comprehension, especially in the English language. I have trouble understanding deep English words). (Participant 1)*

*(I have trouble in understanding English words. There are also questions that I did not encounter and read during the review. My problem really is how to understand the English words. I have a low comprehension with regards to the English language. I need to read it again and again just to understand it. I only understand a little). (Participant 4)*

In this emergent theme, by analyzing the responses, the researcher discovered that the participants needed help comprehending and understanding the questions asked in the licensure examination. Ling et al. (2003), using a different method for assessing network connections, found that inhibiting factors, rarely studying and little intelligence, formed a causal chain. In the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey on reading comprehension conducted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Philippines ranked at the bottom among 79 countries. The country scored 340 points, significantly lower than the average score of 487 points.

#### **4.2.3 Plights of the Informants After Taking the Licensure Examination.**

After taking the licensure examination, the participants revealed their hardships and struggles, especially after knowing they had failed the exam. The researcher came up with two (2) emergent themes, namely: *The Fallen Leaves* and *Disappointments and Failure to Meet Expectations: Adding Insult to Injury*.

##### **4.2.3.1 The Fallen Leaves.**

Out of the thousands of Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) takers, the participants are a few of the many board exam flunkers or the fallen leaves who did not successfully pass the exam. The participants shared their emotions and feelings after the results came out.

*(When the results came out, my classmate told me that I am not included in the lists. I was shocked, so I checked the results. I tried to search my name many times, but it was not included in the list. I don't what I felt that time. I was shaking. I wanted to shout. I wanted to release my frustrations and punch someone). (Participant 1)*

*(When I found out that I failed in the exam, I cried in tears. It took me so long to recover. I was so down. I really cried when I found the results. I lost motivation do adventure. I don't want to have fun). (Participant 3)*

*(I was so down. I was very disappointed with myself, and I don't have the guts to show my face to my parent and to the people who supported me. So, I decided to leave our house. I stayed at my girlfriend. I did not return home. I was so embarrassed, not only to my family but also my neighbors. I realized the impact of my negligence). (Participant 6)*

*(I was so down, so I decided to stop working because of what happened. I stayed at my girlfriend's place. And then one time, we were both arrested in Pasil, and we were detained. The place we are staying was pointed out by someone who was arrested. The police asked him regarding the owner of the drug items. Then, the person pointed our house. The police arrested both of us except the child of my girlfriend. We were detained. I really believe in police brutality because I am also a victim of police abuse. I am traumatized). (Participant 6)*

Out of the thousands of Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) takers, the participants are a few of the many board exam flunkers or the fallen leaves who did not successfully pass the exam. The participants shared their emotions and feelings after the results came out. In this stage, the individual may find that their perception of self is undergoing a shift. The shift may lead to exploring past behavior and self-perception and searching for alternative explanations of one's behavior. The student who has failed the licensure examination may develop shame and guilt and find it difficult to talk about this negative view of self. The student may get stuck in this stage of guilt, which affects their ability to be motivated to prepare for the test again, resulting in more failures. In this case, the student graduates to the next stage, depression (Fisher, 2012).

#### **4.2.3.2 Disappointments and Failure to Meet Expectations: Adding Insult to Injury.**

Passing the board examination in Criminology, known as the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE), is the only way to get a license to practice as a criminologist in the Philippines. The burden of passing the licensure examination also comes with the expectations from your family, who supported your education, and the people surrounding you. Failure to meet expectations will surely have a negative impact not only on you but also on your family and the people surrounding you. The participants confirmed this based on their responses.

*(People looked down on me, especially my relatives. They talked about my failure. They always asked if I am already a police officer. They asked me when I will become a police officer). (Participant 1)*

*(They scolded me. They blamed me for my failure because I did not study I did not give my best. They forced me to pass the exam even though they knew I am not intelligent. They are disappointed. I was lonely. My neighbors are making gossips about me regarding my failure in the licensure examination). (Participant 2)*

*(I feel sad for my failure. Especially when my neighbors tell me that I am a police officer, even though it's not true. It seems that they are bullying me for my failure, adding insult to my injury. They kept on saying that I am a police officer, and for me it seems like they are making fun of me). (Participant 3)*

*(I feel embarrassed, especially when people talk behind my back, saying that I failed the exam. Worse, they always asked me about the exam. So, I just changed the topic because they knew I failed in the board examination, but they still keep on asking me. A lot of people asked me about the result and sometimes, I will just shut my mouth and feel like I did not hear anything). (Participant 4)*

*(My grandmother and aunt looked down on me and said that I will not pass. It gives me problem because I already graduated but I don't have work. They told my parents that I am a burden because I already graduated, but I'm still not able to support them). (Participant 6)*

*(After the exam, I don't want to go out especially when people already knew about my failure in the licensure examination. If I go out, I see to it that my neighbors will not see me, so they they will not be able to ask me). (Participant 7)*

*(Every time I go out, people will keep telling me about my failure. According to them, the examination for police officers is very easy. My neighbor even compared me to her nephew, who passed the exam). (Participant 8)*

*(I looked down on myself because I failed in the board exam. Someone I know told me to retake the exam. I feel embarrassed, especially when I hear people talking about my failure. I was really affected, especially when a lot of people knew about my failure). (Participant 9)*

*(It is very hard. People will keep on talking about your failure. They blamed me for my failure. I just walk out because I don't want to hear the things they say about me). (Participant 10)*

Passing the board examination in Criminology, known as the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE), is the only way to get a license to practice as a criminologist in the Philippines. The burden of passing the licensure examination also comes with the expectations from your family, who supported your education, and the people surrounding you. Failure to meet expectations will surely have a negative impact not only on you but also on your family and the people surrounding you. The participants confirmed this based on their responses to this emergent theme. Here, the individual may believe that past events are a sign that they are "not good enough." The examinee who has failed the licensure examination can become very critical of self, and the resultant undermining of a core sense of self leaves the individual adrift with no sense of identity and no clear vision of how to prepare for the exam again. This may cause a student to remain in this stage for a long time, making it more difficult to begin the preparatory process again. This stage reflects the belief that one's behavior will not lead to success and is unacceptable to others (Fisher, 2012). The flunker never moved past the guilt, disappointment, and depression phases and may become unmotivated, unfocused, increasingly dissatisfied, and gradually withdraw from his dreams. The student may either give up on the exam or go for the test without preparing well and may fail again.

#### **4.3 Reasons of the Informants for not Retaking the Licensure Examination**

The researcher transcribed and analyzed the individual reasons of the participants for not retaking the exam. Thus, the former formulated the following two (2) emergent themes, namely: *Age Limit in the Tri-Bureau: Crashing the Flunker's Aspirations* and *Making a Fresh Start*.

#### **4.3.1 Age limit in the Tri-Bureau: Crashing the Flunker's Aspirations.**

Most of the participants expressed interest in applying to the collective group known as the tri-bureau, which includes the Philippine National Police (PNP), the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). However, there is an age requirement and limit for new applicants in the tri-bureau as provided under Section 4 of Republic Act No. 9263 and Section 14 of Republic Act Number 8551. With this, the flunker's hopes crashed.

*(The main reason for not retaking the licensure examination is my age. It is hard to apply in the tri-bureau because I'm already 35 years old. My age passed already the number of days in the calendar. I am discouraged to take again). (Participant 1)*

*(One thing is my age. I'm 36 years old already, and it's hard for me to take again. And if I take the exam again and pass, I'm not qualified to apply anymore in the tri-bureau because of my age). (Participant 2)*

*(My reason for not retaking the exam again is my age. Also, I am scared to fail again and feel the again pain of failing the exam). (Participant 4)*

*(For me, the reasons for not retaking the examination again is my age and also the financial aspect needed for the exam). (Participant 5)*

*(For me, sir, I will not take again because of my age and the Covid situation. The examination schedule last June was postponed. And then, they also cancelled the examination schedule last December. I already forgot the things I learned. It is very hard to familiarize the topics when you are just having a self-review. No one will handle a face-to-face review because of Covid). (Participant 8)*

The emerging theme revealed that the majority of participants were interested in applying to the tri-bureau, comprising the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). However, there is an age requirement and limit for new applicants in the tri-bureau as provided under Section 4 of Republic Act No. 9263 (2004) and Section 14 of Republic Act Number 8551 (1998), as shown below, which crashed the flunker's aspirations:

Section 4. Enhancing Qualification Standards for Uniformed Personnel in the BFP and BJMP. A person must meet the following criteria to be appointed as uniformed staff of the BFP and BJMP: A candidate must be at least twenty-one (21) years old but at most thirty (30) years, except for this specific requirement. The qualifications listed are to be maintained continuously, and the lack of any of these qualifications at any time will result in separation or retirement from service.

SEC. 30. Essential Criteria for Recruitment. An individual must meet the following criteria to be eligible for a position as an officer or member of the PNP: A candidate must be at least twenty-one (21) years old but at most thirty (30) years at the time of applying. Except for the final requirement, the qualifications listed must be maintained continuously, and failing to meet any of them at any time will result in dismissal or forced retirement from the service.

It should also be noted that the stipulations regarding age, height, weight, and educational achievements required for initial entry into the PNP may be overlooked if the number of eligible candidates fails to meet the minimum yearly requirement. However, a candidate must be at most twenty (20) or older than thirty-five (35) years of age (Republic Act 8551, 1998).

#### **4.3.2 They were making a Fresh Start.**

Some participants expressed that they already accepted their failure in the licensure examination and decided to work or look for a job rather than chasing their dreams of becoming licensed criminologists.

*(I am already discouraged. It is better for me not to take the examination again. I already have a decent job that will support my family needs). (Participant 1)*

*(I just focused on my work. I don't have time anymore to take the examination again). (Participant 5)*

*(For me, the biggest reason for taking the examination again is because I want to focus on my work so I can help my parents in looking for money. I want to help them. That is my only reason). (Participant 6)*

*(I came up with the decision that instead of wasting my money on taking the exam, I rather use it for my family. They will not say that I'm just wasting money and also to help them with the expenses in the house. I will be able to help with the groceries like rice). (Participant 8)*

*(My friends told me not to take the examination gain because it is just a waste of money. And I realized that they're right. I rather use my money to help my family so that they will not say that I'm just wasting money. Especially now with the pandemic, and my focus is my work. I already forgot the things I studied). (Participant 9)*

*(I lost hope already for always failing in the exam. I told myself that it is not destined for me and it is time for me to stop chasing my dream. My mind set now is to continue working. I will not force myself again to retake the exam. I already lost my motivation). (Participant 10)*

In this emergent theme, some participants expressed that they already accepted their failure in the licensure examination and decided to work or look for a job rather than chasing their dreams of becoming a licensed criminologist. The flunker will now seek more work hours or other part-time jobs to compensate for the failure to pass and obtain a license. The graduate begins to work many hours to meet financial demands and may only have the time to prepare for the test again weeks, months, or even years later, further decreasing their chances of passing the exam. The graduate abandons old studying plans and fails to develop and follow new studying plans (Fisher, 2012).

## 5. Conclusion

This study identified eighteen (18) emergent themes that explored the lived experiences of non-passers of the Criminology Board Examination. Board examinations are all about preparing the right way, and to prepare for board exams properly, the examinee needs to be focused. Preparing the study area and reviewing notes, choosing a learning style, creating a study strategy, finding time to de-stress, enhancing analytical skills, and improving vocabulary and reading comprehension are just some of the critical factors that board exam takers need to hurdle to successfully pass the 3-day Criminologist Licensure Examination.

With this, a seminar on the Criminologist Licensure Examination, including techniques for answering multiple-choice questions, must be done by the College of Criminal Justice to thoroughly brief the students about the licensure examination. The College of Criminal Justice of every higher educational institution offering criminology courses should continue to offer review enhancement subjects and administer mock board examinations per subject per year level to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the students.

Meanwhile, quality education must be accorded to criminology students because the results and performance of graduates in their Licensure Examinations given by the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) are indicators of the school's proficiency and competence as a higher learning institution. To achieve this, instructors must follow a standardized grading system, curriculum, and PRC questioning format. In addition, instructors, including the family, must encourage the criminology students to attain their goals by studying well while in college with a positive attitude, a curriculum that serves as a guide to achieving the objectives of the criminology course, and faculty members who use good teaching strategies and who provide a more comprehensive examination. Instructors should be responsible for providing improved classroom management that would help in the development of the students' knowledge, skills, and values towards a better future and should assist the students in developing study habits by giving activities, assignments, or projects that will utilize their capability as leaders and self-confidence in expressing their thoughts and feelings. All of these help in the academic grade achievement of criminology graduates.

Finally, an intervention program must be provided to non-passers of the Criminologist Licensure Examination. The university where they graduated must track these non-passers and extend help by creating a program that will help them improve their performance and successfully hurdle the licensure examination. As provided in Republic Act 11131 (2018), those who failed five (5) times, whether consecutive or cumulative in the criminologist licensure examination must present a certification issued by a reputable institution duly recognized by the CHED that such applicant has satisfactorily completed a refresher course in criminology. The university where the non-passers graduated must find a way to be one of the reputable institutions with CHED recognition that will provide the refresher course. In this way, the university will be able to keep track of the performance of the non-passers.

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