

Enhancing Licensure Examination Outcomes: Best Practices among Top-Performing Criminology Schools in Region III, Philippines

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Abstract

Preparing graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE) is a pivotal challenge for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region 3, Philippines, as this professional assessment determines both individual success and institutional quality. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design involving 10 key informants from top-performing HEIs, supplemented by documentary analysis of Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) performance reports from 2018 to 2023. The research aimed to identify best practices, examine factors contributing to their successful implementation, and explore challenges faced by these institutions in sustaining high licensure exam performance. Results indicate that effective licensure preparation is anchored in strong leadership, cohesive faculty development, curriculum alignment with PRC standards, institutional support, and active student motivation. Best practices include embedding licensure review within the formal curriculum, establishing mentoring and early orientation programs, and enforcing academic monitoring that aligns with licensure competencies. Institutional factors such as sufficient funding, collaborative governance, and clear faculty workload recognition further enhance program effectiveness. Challenges such as resource limitations and varying student preparedness were addressed through adaptive strategies including flexible mentoring and community engagement. Based on these findings, the study recommends that policymakers, HEIs, faculty, and students work collaboratively to institutionalize equitable licensure preparation frameworks, formalize faculty roles in exam readiness, and encourage student self-regulation and peer collaboration. Doing so will contribute to a sustainable, inclusive, and leadership-driven criminology education system that consistently produces competent professionals. The findings enrich the discourse on licensure examination readiness and provide practical insights for improving criminology education in the Philippine context.

Keywords: Criminology Licensure Examination, Higher Education Institutions, Best Practices, Qualitative Descriptive Study, Philippines

Introduction

The performance of criminology graduates in the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE) is a critical indicator of the quality and effectiveness of criminology education programs in the Philippines. This examination, conducted by the Professional Regulation Commission, serves not only as a gatekeeper for professional entry but also as a benchmark to evaluate the competence of criminology graduates in various essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for professional practice. Given the high stakes associated with the CLE, it is incumbent upon Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop robust educational strategies that adequately prepare students for licensure success, which in turn reflects on the institutions' academic standards and reputational capital (Mensah et al., 2020; Mohammed & Mohammed, 2017).

In Region III of the Philippines, several criminology schools have consistently excelled in their licensure examination passing rates, suggesting the presence of effective institutional practices that support academic success. Understanding these "best practices" can provide valuable insights into pedagogical, curricular, and administrative interventions that enhance student preparedness and performance. While prior research has explored factors influencing student outcomes, few studies have focused explicitly on institutional strategies that promote sustained licensure examination success within the regional context (Gabasa-Raqueo, 2021; Albin et al., 2021).

Effective preparation for the CLE involves a holistic approach encompassing academic rigor, faculty excellence, curriculum alignment, and psychological readiness. The integration of formative assessments, continuous academic monitoring, and faculty development is highlighted in literature as fundamental to ensuring graduates are well-equipped for the professional demands assessed in licensure examinations (Black & Williams, 2021; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2024). Furthermore, leadership within the HEIs plays a significant role in fostering a supportive academic environment that encourages collaboration and innovation among faculty and students. This, coupled with community engagement and mentoring programs, creates a robust framework conducive to high licensure performance (Day et al., 2016; Abao et al., 2023).

This study aims to identify and analyze the best practices of top-performing criminology schools in Region III in preparing their graduates for the CLE. By employing a qualitative descriptive design supported by documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of knowledge surrounding effective criminology education that aligns with both national licensure standards and evolving societal needs.

Literature Review

Criminology education's effectiveness is predominantly measured by graduates' performance in licensure examinations, which serve as essential benchmarks ensuring professional competence and ethical standards (Bagadion & Tullao, 2018; Mensah et al., 2020). The licensure exam is designed by regulatory bodies to evaluate whether graduates possess the minimum required competencies, including theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and ethical judgment necessary for criminology practice (Mohammed & Mohammed, 2017). Globally, aligning academic curricula with licensure requirements emerges as a key factor promoting not only licensure success but also professional readiness (Black & Williams, 2021).

Formative assessment and continuous academic monitoring have been widely recognized as effective pedagogy to bolster licensure exam preparedness (Salvador et al., 2022; Abao et al., 2023). Longitudinal strategies that incorporate early and frequent evaluative assessments enhance retention of learning and reduce last-minute cramming, which has limited efficacy (Tan, 2014). This approach aligns with the developmental model of professional education which underscores ongoing competency development through scaffolded learning experiences.

Effective leadership within criminology education programs plays an indispensable role in sustaining a culture of excellence through the cultivation of faculty collaboration, innovation, and accountability (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2024). Transformational leadership practices have demonstrated significant positive impacts on institutional performance, faculty motivation, and ultimately student achievement in licensure outcomes (Day et al., 2016). Philippine studies substantiate these findings, highlighting that participatory governance structures contribute to faculty cohesion and institutional resilience, critical in high-stakes preparation (Abao et al., 2023).

Faculty development and instructional quality remain fundamental in shaping student academic performances (Geier, 2021). Continuous capacity building, supported by institutional investments, enables educators to impart up-to-date knowledge, contextualize curriculum content, and ap-

ply effective pedagogical methods (Odongo, Otyola, & Loyce, 2021). Moreover, faculty attitudes toward students and classroom management also influence student engagement and motivation, both crucial for successful licensure exam preparation (Cole, 2022).

Student-centered instructional strategies—including active learning, group discussions, problem-solving tasks, and mentoring—have been linked with enhanced academic and licensure examination outcomes in criminology education (Nabe, 2024; Cole, 2022). These pedagogies stimulate critical thinking and communication skills vital for professional practice. Mentorship programs, frequently utilized in Philippine contexts, provide emotional support, academic guidance, and resilience-building, essential for navigating the psychological demands of licensure exams (Albina et al., 2022).

Socioeconomic and personal factors remain significant determinants of licensure exam success. Financial difficulties, family responsibilities, and mental health challenges impede academic progress and licensure readiness (Albina et al., 2022; Tan, 2014). Institutions that provide comprehensive support services such as scholarships, counseling, and study-skills workshops enable disadvantaged students to better cope with these barriers (Albina et al., 2022).

Psychological theories like Self-Determination Theory and Cognitive Behavioral Theory offer frameworks to understand motivation, stress, and coping mechanisms among licensure exam candidates (Shrestha, 2017; Weiner, 1992). These theories emphasize fostering autonomy, competence, and relatedness to enhance intrinsic motivation and resilience. Institutions adopting interventions based on these frameworks report improvements in student focus, stress management, and exam performance (Nabe, 2024).

Curriculum alignment with the Professional Regulation Commission's licensure competencies is imperative in Philippine criminology programs to ensure comprehensive professional training (Sarmiento, 2021). Systematic curriculum mapping and competency-based education models ensure instructional content covers all examination requirements, reducing redundancies and gaps (Kizlik, 2021). This alignment is crucial for maintaining both the relevance and rigor of criminology education.

Qualifying examinations and academic monitoring systems complement curriculum alignment by providing periodic checkpoints for student mastery (Salvador et al., 2022). Regular preliminary exams allow early diagnosis of learning deficits, promoting timely interventions through remedial classes or tutoring, which significantly improve final licensure outcomes (Sarmiento, 2021). Psychological preparedness is gaining attention as a vital component of licensure exam readiness. Mindfulness training, counseling, peer support groups, and resilience-building workshops help candidates manage anxiety and develop mental toughness during high-stakes testing (Nabe, 2024; Albina et al., 2022). Such holistic approaches address emotional well-being alongside academic proficiency.

International studies in law and health professions highlight the criticality of experiential learning such as internships, simulations, and community-based projects in criminology curricula (Mensah et al., 2020; Mohammed & Mohammed, 2017). These components provide real-world application opportunities that deepen professional skills and identity, directly impacting licensure exam relevance and success. Teacher behavior, particularly supportive versus controlling styles, profoundly affects student academic engagement and persistence (Odongo et al., 2021). Research shows that educators who foster supportive, participative learning environments motivate students to invest greater effort and cultivate positive learning attitudes—key predictors of licensure success (Geier, 2021; Cole, 2022).

Addressing diverse learning styles is another important aspect of enhancing criminology education effectiveness. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners benefit from multimodal teaching approaches that maximize knowledge retention and application (Jorgensen, 1993; Journal Ijar, 2025). Tailoring instructional methods to these styles helps accommodate student preferences and learning needs.

Community engagement and service-learning embedded within criminology programs enrich educational experiences by situating learning in authentic contexts (Mensah et al., 2020). Such initiatives improve student motivation and social responsibility, additionally enhancing the alignment of academic training with societal needs and licensure demands (Mohammed & Mohammed, 2017).

Robust quality assurance and academic audit mechanisms ensure continuous program improvement and adaptation to regulatory, technological, and societal changes (Gabasa-Raqueo, 2021). Institutions benchmarking best practices from top-performing schools cultivate environments committed to sustained licensure examination excellence and graduate success (David, 2019).

In sum, evidence suggests that licensure exam success among criminology graduates arises from a confluence of aligned curriculum, effective leadership, faculty excellence, engaged pedagogy, psychosocial support, and institutional quality assurance. This study contributes to scholarship by highlighting context-specific best practices in Region III's top criminology schools, adding to the growing knowledge base for strategic educational planning and policy formulation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored on the Attribution Theory, as developed by Shrestha (2017) and Weiner (1992). Attribution theory posits that individuals interpret and make sense of their successes and failures by attributing them to internal or external factors. In the context of criminology education and licensure examination preparation, learners' academic outcomes and motivation are influenced by a combination of personal factors such as prior knowledge, cognitive abilities, and psychological dispositions, as well as environmental factors including family background, institutional support, and learning environments (Weiner, 1992; Shrestha, 2017). These attributions affect how students perceive their control over outcomes, which in turn influences their motivation, persistence, and coping strategies during high-stakes examinations such as the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE) (Weiner, 1974).

Complementing attribution theory is Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which elucidates how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations drive individual behavior in social and educational settings (Deci & Ryan, 1985). SDT emphasizes the importance of fulfilling three innate psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—to foster intrinsic motivation and psychological well-being. For criminology graduates facing the pressures of licensure examinations, understanding how external stressors (e.g., exam anxiety, family expectations) and internal drives (e.g., personal goals, professional aspirations) interact allows them to develop effective stress-coping mechanisms and sustain motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017). SDT provides a framework for examining how institutional interventions, including mentoring and academic support, can satisfy these psychological needs and enhance examination readiness (Abao et al., 2023).

The Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT) further explains the dynamic interplay among thoughts, emotions, bodily sensations, and behaviors (Beck, 2011). In the context of licensure exam preparation, criminology students' cognitive appraisals of their competence and exam-related anxiety directly influence their emotional states and study behaviors (Beck, 2011). By understanding the cognitive distortions that may arise—such as catastrophizing failure or underestimating competence—students can be supported through cognitive-behavioral interventions designed to foster positive thinking patterns, anxiety reduction, and adaptive behaviors that improve exam perfor-

mance (Gloster et al., 2020). CBT also provides a basis for resilience training, teaching strategies that enable students to regulate negative emotions and sustain effective study habits under pressure.

Finally, this study draws on Resilience Theory, which focuses on individuals' capacity to recover from setbacks, adapt positively to adversity, and maintain motivation towards goals (Masten, 2014). Licensure examination preparation is often marked by intense stress and occasional failures; resilience is therefore critical for sustaining motivation and persistence (Nabe, 2024). Resilience theory suggests that protective factors such as social support, positive self-concept, and effective coping skills can buffer against the detrimental effects of stress and setbacks (Southwick & Charney, 2018). In criminology education, resilience-building interventions—such as peer support groups, stress-management workshops, and mentorship programs—can equip examinees to navigate the emotional challenges linked with high-stakes professional examinations effectively.

Together, these four theoretical frameworks provide a robust lens for understanding the multifaceted psychological, cognitive, and social factors that influence criminology graduates' preparation for and performance in the Criminology Licensure Examination. Attribution Theory situates student perceptions of success and failure; Self-Determination Theory highlights motivational processes; Cognitive Behavioral Theory addresses cognitive-emotional regulation; and Resilience Theory emphasizes adaptive capacities—integrating these perspectives enriches the analysis of the institutional and individual factors contributing to licensure exam outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant for the researcher and also for the future researchers to understand and determined the Best Practices of the Top Performing HEI in the Region 3 in preparing their graduates in Criminology Licensure Examination. The result of this study will benefit the following:

Higher Educational Institution. The result of this study will benefit the State, Local, Private University and Colleges that will give a valuable's information to understand the different practices of the other institution in preparing their graduates in any licensure examination that will lead to them to develop a program to improved their board performance.

Commission on Higher Education. This research will help them to analyzed and address the different challenges encountered by the Higher Educational Institution offering criminology program it will lead to them to develop a plan or program that will address the different challenges encountered in handling criminology program.

Community. The findings of this study will help the community to have a better understanding and identify the best practices and the challenges faced by the different higher educational institution in terms of the implementation of board program. It will help also the community to contribute in addressing these challenges, policies can be crafted, training, and support for the HEI, resulting in more effective education and response strategies.

Future Researchers. The study results would serve as a springboard to further their study to appreciate its relevance to the education and serve as a valuable reference for future studies in related fields.

Research Objectives

This study aims to identify and analyze the best practices implemented by top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region III in preparing their graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). Specifically, it seeks to:

1. Determine the best practices employed by HEIs in Region III in preparing their graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination.

2. Evaluate the factors that contribute to the successful implementation of these best practices.
3. Examine the challenges encountered by HEIs in implementing their best practices for Criminology Licensure Examination preparation.

Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, participants, data-gathering tools, collection procedures, and methods of analysis used in the study. Aligned with the study's objectives, a qualitative descriptive approach supported by documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews was employed to examine the best practices of top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region 3 for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). This methodology ensured rigor, contextual accuracy, and meaningful insights into institutional strategies, teaching practices, and board preparation mechanisms.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative descriptive research design, appropriate for exploring and documenting the best practices of top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region 3 regarding Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE) preparation. The qualitative descriptive approach provides rich, straightforward descriptions based on participants' experiences, without imposing abstract theoretical interpretations, making it ideal for practical applications in similar contexts (Sandelowski, 2000).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observations, and documentary analysis. Interviews captured in-depth insights from faculty and administrators directly involved in board exam preparation. Observations contextualized teaching and preparatory behaviors within the College of Criminal Justice Education. Documentary analysis, focusing on Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) Performance of Schools reports, provided objective data to validate the selection of top-performing institutions.

This design facilitated an in-depth understanding of how best practices are operationalized within educational settings by grounding findings in the lived experiences of faculty as primary agents of student learning. Emphasis was placed on faculty teaching styles, pedagogical strategies, and departmental initiatives as key influences on licensure outcomes.

Population and Locale of the Study

The participants in this study were drawn from top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region III offering the Bachelor of Science in Criminology program under the College of Criminal Justice Education (CCJE) from 2018 to 2023. Their inclusion was based on documented excellence in the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE), as verified through official Performance of Schools reports published by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

To capture institutional diversity and maintain methodological focus, the researcher purposively selected at least two HEIs from each province in Region III. This ensured broad geographic representation and accounted for contextual variations in governance, resources, and educational practices, while adhering to the central criterion of sustained licensure excellence.

The study employed criterion sampling, a purposive strategy where institutions were selected based on benchmarks relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015). Inclusion criteria required HEIs to (1) be located in Region III offering the BS Criminology under CCJE, (2) consistently demonstrate high CLE performance from 2018 to 2023 through above-average passing percentages, regular appearances on PRC's top-performing schools list, or production of board topnotchers, and (3) establish credibility through a consistent record of positive licensure outcomes.

Non-top-performing institutions were excluded to maintain a clear focus on exemplary cases capable of illuminating successful practices rather than deficiencies. This approach aligns with the study's intent to model institutional excellence for replication and scaling across diverse academic contexts.

A total of 10 participants, comprising selected faculty and administrators from these top-performing HEIs, were interviewed. These participants were directly involved in the implementation of board exam preparation strategies and provided rich, information-heavy insights critical for achieving the research objectives.

Data Gathering Tool

This study used two main data-gathering tools: documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews.

Documentary Analysis. Official reports from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) on the performance of criminology schools in Region 3 from 2018 to 2023 were analyzed. These reports provided objective, quantitative data such as the number of examinees, passers, and institutional passing rates. This allowed identification and validation of top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), ensuring the study was grounded on credible and official data sources (Bowen, 2009).

Semi-Structured Interviews. To complement documentary data, interviews were conducted with selected faculty and administrators from the identified top-performing HEIs. Open-ended questions were designed to capture detailed insights into the strategies, practices, and institutional mechanisms used in preparing graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). This approach balanced consistency with flexibility, allowing follow-up questions to explore emerging themes in depth (George, 2022).

Triangulation of Data. Using both documentary analysis and interviews enabled methodological triangulation, enhancing the study's validity and credibility. The quantitative PRC reports offered measurable evidence of institutional performance, while interviews provided qualitative insights into internal practices and challenges. Cross-verifying these data sources minimized bias and provided a well-rounded understanding of best practices in CLE preparation across Region 3 institutions.

Ethical Consideration

This study adhered to established ethical standards, specifically the principles outlined in the Belmont Report (1979)—respect for persons, beneficence, and justice—and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173) of the Philippines. These frameworks guided the entire research process to protect participants' rights, welfare, and dignity.

Participation was voluntary, with informed consent secured prior to data collection. Participants were informed of their right to decline or withdraw without penalty. Recruitment and interviews were conducted respectfully to avoid coercion. All data were treated with strict confidentiality. Personal identifiers were anonymized, and records were securely managed in compliance with data privacy laws to prevent unauthorized disclosure. Only aggregated findings were reported, ensuring no individual or institution could be identified.

Throughout the study, principles of fairness, integrity, and transparency were upheld. Data and findings were reported honestly and objectively, ensuring credibility and academic rigor. By following both international ethical standards and local legal requirements, this study safeguarded participant rights and maintained research integrity.

Treatment of Data

The data gathered in this study were treated through qualitative thematic analysis. Responses from the semi-structured interviews were carefully transcribed, coded, and categorized to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights related to the best practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in region 3 in preparing their graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to systematically organize participants' narratives into meaningful clusters that directly addressed the research objectives.

Documentary data from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) reports covering the years 2018–2023 were analyzed to validate institutional performance and establish the criteria for identifying top-performing HEIs. Triangulation was employed by comparing findings from interviews with documentary evidence to ensure accuracy, reliability, and credibility of results.

Furthermore, coding procedures followed an inductive approach where categories emerged naturally from the participants' responses rather than being predetermined. This process enhanced the richness of the data and reflected the authentic voices of the participants. Peer debriefing and review of coding schemes were conducted to minimize researcher bias and strengthen the validity of interpretations.

The analyzed data were then synthesized into major themes, which became the basis for the presentation of findings in the Results and Discussion section. These themes highlighted institutional strategies, enabling factors, and challenges encountered in implementing best practices for licensure preparation.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the best practices employed by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in region 3 in preparing criminology graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). The discussion integrates qualitative findings from participant interviews with relevant literature and theoretical lenses to highlight effective strategies and the challenges encountered in their implementation.

Best Practices of HEIs in Region 3 in Preparing Graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in region 3 play a crucial role in shaping the competence, discipline, and readiness of criminology students for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). Preparing graduates for this high-stakes professional assessment requires not only the delivery of quality instruction but also the integration of institutional practices that strengthen academic performance, professional values, and psychological resilience. Literature suggests that effective licensure preparation involves a holistic approach, encompassing leadership, faculty development, curriculum alignment, student motivation, and mentoring systems.

The findings of this study reveal that the best practices of HEIs in Region 3 are anchored on several key dimensions. First, leadership and the presence of a strong core faculty provide direction and cohesion in implementing academic programs and interventions. Second, financial resources, faculty training, and institutional support serve as enabling mechanisms that sustain program effectiveness. Third, curriculum alignment and strict academic monitoring ensure that instructional delivery is systematically designed to meet the competencies required by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Fourth, student motivation and cooperation between learners and administrators contribute to a supportive academic climate conducive to board exam readiness. Finally, mentoring, community engagement, and early orientation about the licensure examination foster both academic competence and professional preparedness.

Foundational Preparation and Strict Monitoring

Participants emphasized that preparation for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE) does not begin during the final review period but is embedded across the entire academic journey, starting from the first year.

One participant explained:

“From the moment you enroll in the first year up to the last, that will be a part of the preparation. That’s why, when it comes to review, it’s just in the beginning. Because there’s a foundation... Strict monitoring is also part of the preparation for the board exam.” (Key Participant 1)

This sentiment underscores the institutional practice of integrating **early foundational preparation** with **continuous monitoring mechanisms**, such as qualifying examinations, strengthen policies, and curriculum-based reviews. The strict monitoring is intended not as punitive, but as a way to ensure that students focus on manageable academic loads and receive timely intervention when needed. Leadership and cohesive faculty support are also critical.

As highlighted by one participant:

“You should have a strong core group that will implement whatever program you design to help your graduates... If your group will look at one direction only, therefore, harmoniously you will perform together.” (Key Participant 2)

This illustrates that foundational preparation cannot succeed without institutional leadership and a faculty body committed to common goals. The findings resonate with broader research on licensure readiness. Studies emphasize that preparation for professional examinations must be programmatic and longitudinal, not confined to terminal reviews. As stated in the study of Black and Wiliam’s (2021) work on formative assessment demonstrated that continuous monitoring, feedback, and aligned testing significantly improve student learning outcomes, particularly in high-stakes environments. Similarly, Abao et al. (2023) found that in Philippine teacher education, college preparation and academic monitoring were strong predictors of licensure performance, reinforcing the idea that readiness must be cultivated over years rather than weeks

Moreover, nursing licensure studies highlight that systematic formative assessments, standardized testing, and remediation practices throughout a program correlate with higher board exam success (Salvador et al., 2022). These practices align with the qualifying exams and monitoring mechanisms described by participants. In parallel, research on leadership in higher education underscores that strong academic leadership and faculty cohesion enable the consistent implementation of such monitoring systems (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2024). Similarly, Abao et al. (2023) found that in Philippine teacher education, college preparation and academic monitoring were strong predictors of licensure performance, reinforcing the idea that readiness must be cultivated over years rather than weeks

From the perspective of Space Transition Theory, students adapt their academic behaviors as they move across different stages of the criminology program, with strict monitoring reinforcing professional discipline necessary for licensure. Meanwhile, Critical Theory helps problematize the deloading mechanism, ensuring it is not merely exclusionary but paired with supportive interventions that uphold equity for financially or academically disadvantaged students.

The findings demonstrate that foundational preparation and strict monitoring are not isolated strategies but mutually reinforcing mechanisms that cultivate long-term licensure readiness. Continuous monitoring, qualifying exams, and deloading policies establish an academic culture of accountability, while faculty cohesion and strong leadership ensure consistent implementation. These institutional practices mirror global and Philippine evidence that licensure preparation is most effective when it is longitudinal and systematic rather than compressed into final-year reviews. Inter-

preted through Space Transition Theory, students progressively adapt their behaviors across academic stages, with monitoring reinforcing professional discipline. Meanwhile, Critical Theory cautions that such mechanisms must be balanced with equity-driven supports to prevent disadvantaging less privileged students. Thus, foundational preparation, when embedded institutionally and anchored in supportive monitoring, becomes a cornerstone of sustainable licensure success.

Leadership and Core Faculty

Participants repeatedly underscored that the presence of strong leadership and a cohesive core faculty is indispensable to the successful preparation of criminology graduates for the board examination. Leadership is not only about administrative oversight but also about vision-setting, talent recognition, and fostering collaboration. One participant noted:

“A core group is needed, but the leadership is very important also. So our leader should have a good spot of talents to help him or her in this purpose... If your group will look at one direction only, therefore, harmoniously you will perform together.” (Key Participant 1)

Another emphasized the supportive role of leadership in cultivating innovation:

“What I like about my dean is that she allows us to do what we want. If we have ideas, innovations, all she can ask is, how can we help? There is no idea that is not entertained.” (Key Participant 5)

These accounts demonstrate that leadership in higher education extends beyond hierarchical control; it is relational and empowering. Faculty motivation and cohesion are enhanced when leadership provides autonomy, values faculty expertise, and channels collective action toward shared institutional goals.

Empirical evidence strongly supports the participants’ perspectives. Leithwood and Jantzi (2024) highlighted that transformational leadership characterized by building vision, setting directions, and fostering collaboration consistently predicts higher institutional performance and student achievement. Similarly, Day et al. (2016) found that leaders who invest in faculty capacity and shared decision-making enhance both morale and instructional quality, which indirectly improves student outcomes.

Within the Philippine context, Abao et al. (2023) demonstrated that faculty preparedness and institutional support are crucial predictors of licensure performance among beginning teachers. Their findings affirm that faculty capacity-building and leadership commitment to academic monitoring are essential for board exam readiness. Moreover, Altinyelken (2015) noted that leadership fostering participatory governance creates environments where faculty are motivated to innovate and align their teaching with institutional goals.

This theme resonates with Critical Theory, which interrogates how power dynamics within institutions can either empower or marginalize faculty and students. When leadership is participatory and inclusive, it resists hierarchical domination and enables collective agency in academic preparation. Additionally, Postmodernism highlights the importance of recognizing multiple voices in leadership emphasizing pluralism, dialogue, and collaborative meaning-making within faculty groups echoing the participant emphasis on shared direction.

Curriculum Alignment and Academic Monitoring

Participants consistently highlighted that aligning the criminology curriculum with the Professional Regulation Commission’s (PRC) licensure requirements, coupled with strict academic monitoring, is a vital strategy to ensure student preparedness for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE).

One participant stated:

“So now sir... we prepare a table of specifications and then we check whether the exams are aligned with the syllabi, and our syllabi are anchored on the table of specifications of PRC. So the most important competencies that we really check at the end of the semester is whether or not we have achieved the table of specifications by PRC.” (Key Participant 7)

Another emphasized:

“I mentioned earlier... qualifying exam. Because we have a study.” (Key Participant 6)

These statements illustrate the dual approach of curriculum alignment and academic monitoring: on the one hand, curricula and syllabi are continuously reviewed to reflect PRC standards; on the other, qualifying exams and assessment mechanisms monitor student performance, ensuring readiness at progressive stages.

Curriculum alignment with licensure exam frameworks is well documented as a predictor of student success. Studies in teacher education and nursing programs in the Philippines show that curriculum mapping and program outcomes audits directly influence graduates’ readiness for board examinations (Abao et al., 2023; Salvador et al., 2022). Similarly, Black and Wiliam’s (2021) research on formative assessment underscores that when assessments are explicitly aligned with learning objectives and standards, students perform significantly better on high-stakes examinations.

Moreover, Kizlik (2021) stressed that curriculum mapping and alignment help identify redundancies and gaps, ensuring that students encounter key competencies multiple times throughout their academic journey. In the context of nursing, Salvador et al. (2022) demonstrated that systematic monitoring practices including qualifying examinations, remediation protocols, and standardized assessments are positively correlated with licensure performance.

Philippine studies in criminology education echo these findings. Sarmiento (2021) noted that criminology programs that integrated qualifying exams, deloading policies, and continuous monitoring systems produced graduates with higher passing rates compared to programs with ad hoc review approaches.

Cybercrime Adaptation Theory can be extended here as a lens to understand how institutions adapt assessment and monitoring systems to align with the evolving demands of licensure examinations. The emphasis on academic monitoring also resonates with Critical Theory, which invites a critical reflection on how retention and strict policies, while ensuring standards, may disproportionately affect disadvantaged students if not accompanied by equitable support structures.

Student Motivation and Cooperation

Participants pointed out that while institutional structures are crucial, the internal drive and cooperation of students significantly influence board exam readiness. Motivation emerges from multiple factors, including financial challenges, personal aspirations, and collective effort with faculty and administration. One participant emphasized:

“Their internal motivation... They are not okay financially. Therefore, they are motivated to pass the exam.” (Key Participant 5)

Another highlighted the importance of cooperation between administrators and students:

“You know, one of the key factors that really contributed here is cooperation. Because even if we say the administration is problematic, as long as the students cooperate, it will be okay.” (Key Participant 3)

These insights suggest that student persistence and cooperation with institutional guidance function as catalysts that transform institutional best practices into successful board exam outcomes.

Several studies corroborate the idea that student motivation and cooperation are powerful determinants of licensure performance. Deci and Ryan’s (2000) Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that intrinsic motivation and extrinsic drivers strongly influence academic persistence. In Philip-

pine studies, Abao et al. (2023) found that internal student motivation, alongside institutional monitoring, predicted better licensure outcomes.

Research in nursing licensure further supports this claim. Salvador et al. (2022) demonstrated that *psychosocial factors such as perseverance, cooperation with peers, and motivation* were central to passing the nursing licensure exam. Similarly, a grounded theory study on LET (Licensure Exam for Teachers) preparation in the Philippines revealed that students' self-regulation and cooperative learning groups enhanced exam readiness and outcomes (Manalo & Padilla, 2021).

Moreover, cooperation between students and administrators reflects the principles of collaborative governance in higher education. Altinyelken (2015) noted that when students perceive institutional decisions as participatory and cooperative, they are more likely to be engaged and motivated to align their efforts with institutional standards.

This theme resonates with Cyberpsychology Theory, which explains how motivation and social cooperation are shaped by institutional culture and peer dynamics. In parallel, Critical Theory invites reflection on how financial struggles may paradoxically serve as motivators but also highlight systemic inequities that require institutional responses such as scholarships and mentoring. Finally, Postmodernism emphasizes the multiplicity of student experiences acknowledging that motivations and cooperative behaviors are not uniform but contextually constructed across different cohorts.

Mentoring, Community Engagement, and Early Board Exam Orientation

Participants highlighted the value of mentoring programs, seminars, and community-linked initiatives as integral to preparing criminology graduates for the board exam. These interventions were seen as providing guidance, psychological readiness, and practical exposure that extend beyond classroom instruction. One participant explained:

"We also have this in the university. It's called a mentoring program... The students should have a mentor. So, that's one of our projects." (Key Participant 9)

Another emphasized the importance of early board exam awareness:

"In the first year, they always mention the board exam... our preparation from first year to fourth year is towards their taking of the board exam. So, that means, sir, it's just in the beginning." (Key Participant 9)

Community engagement was also highlighted:

"There are subjects in the curriculum that integrate community service activities... students learn voluntarism, collaboration, critical thinking, and 21st century skills." (Key Participant 11)

These statements suggest that mentorship, early orientation, and community-engaged learning provide both academic and psychosocial scaffolding, preparing students holistically for the licensure exam.

Research supports the claim that mentoring significantly improves academic outcomes and professional exam readiness. Crisp and Cruz (2009) argued that mentoring provides students with academic, psychosocial, and career development support, which are critical for success in professional examinations. In the Philippine context, Abao et al. (2023) emphasized that structured mentoring and early exposure to licensure requirements improved teacher education graduates' preparedness for board exams.

The role of community engagement is likewise corroborated. Jacoby (2015) found that service learning and community-based instruction enhance students' problem-solving, collaboration, and application of theoretical knowledge skills transferable to licensure contexts. Similarly, Salvador et al. (2022) in nursing education highlighted that community immersion and extension services foster both competence and resilience among students preparing for licensure exams.

Finally, early orientation about licensure aligns with studies showing that setting professional expectations early in academic programs cultivates student identity and reduces anxiety when facing high-stakes exams (Manalo & Padilla, 2021).

From the lens of Cyberpsychology Theory, mentoring and community engagement can be understood as scaffolding mechanisms that shape students' academic identity and motivation in both digital and face-to-face contexts. Space Transition Theory explains how students transition between academic spaces classroom, mentoring sessions, community outreach and develop adaptive behaviors that contribute to licensure success. Postmodernism further emphasizes that students' preparation is enriched by diverse voices and experiences, acknowledging multiple pathways to professional readiness through mentorship and community engagement.

Factors Contributing to Best Practices of HEIs in Region 3 in Preparing Graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination

Several interrelated factors contribute to the effective best practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region 3 in preparing their criminology graduates for the licensure examination. These factors include visionary leadership, which drives program coherence and institutional commitment; robust faculty development that ensures instructional quality and responsiveness to licensure standards; and well-aligned curricula that reflect the competencies mandated by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

Additionally, sufficient financial and institutional support provides the resources necessary for sustained review programs and academic monitoring. Most importantly, student motivation developed through collaborative academic environments and comprehensive mentoring programs empowers graduates to attain professional readiness, while community engagement and early exam orientation build resilience and confidence. Together, these factors create a holistic framework that underpins the continued licensure examination success observed among top-performing HEIs in the region.

Financial Resources and Faculty Training

Participants consistently pointed to the availability of financial resources and the capacity of trained faculty as critical institutional factors. They emphasized that review programs, mentoring systems, and curricular audits cannot be sustained without adequate funding, and that faculty training is indispensable for ensuring that criminology graduates are exposed to current disciplinary knowledge and licensure exam demands. One participant remarked:

"We also train our teachers... because if the faculty themselves are not competent, how can they prepare the students for the board?" Key Participant 7

This sentiment illustrates the interdependence of institutional resources and faculty competence in driving best practices.

The importance of resources and faculty training is well documented in higher education research. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) showed that faculty professional development has a direct effect on instructional quality and student achievement. In the Philippine context, Abao et al. (2023) identified faculty competence and institutional resourcing as strong predictors of licensure performance among teacher education graduates.

Similarly, Salvador et al. (2022) found that well-supported nursing programs with structured faculty development and access to instructional resources had markedly higher licensure passing rates. These findings align with earlier research by Altinyelken (2015), who argued that governance and funding in higher education are inseparable from institutional performance, especially when measured through standardized examinations.

From a capacity-building perspective, HEIs that invest in faculty upskilling, research exposure, and board exam-focused training workshops establish a culture of competence that directly influences student readiness (Day et al., 2016). Conversely, resource-poor institutions often resort to voluntary or ad hoc review systems, which are less effective and inequitable.

Cybercrime Adaptation Theory can be extended to explain how institutions adapt their internal capacities resources and faculty skills to meet external licensure requirements. Resource investment becomes a form of adaptation to systemic pressures.

Critical Theory urges us to interrogate how inequities in funding across HEIs in Region 3 may reproduce unequal licensure outcomes, privileging better-funded private schools over resource constrained state colleges.

Postmodernism highlights the plural and context-specific ways in which faculty training is carried out through formal seminars, peer mentoring, or industry partnerships underscoring that no single model of faculty development fits all institutional contexts.

Cooperation between Administration and Students

Participants emphasized that the success of best practices depends not only on institutional structures but also on the mutual cooperation between administration and students. One participant noted:

"You know, one of the key factors that really contributed here is cooperation. Because even if we say the administration is problematic, as long as the students cooperate, it will be okay." (Key Participant 3)

This candid reflection underscores the importance of synergy: even when institutional policies are rigid or imperfect, student cooperation can transform them into effective practices. Conversely, lack of student cooperation diminishes the effectiveness of well-designed programs.

The importance of administration student cooperation is well established in higher education research. Tinto's (1993) model of student integration argues that academic success is maximized when students feel integrated into the institutional culture and governance. When students perceive policies as participatory and fair, they are more likely to engage fully (Altinyelken, 2015).

Philippine studies support this. Manalo and Padilla (2021) found that LET takers who actively engaged with institutional review systems achieved higher exam performance, emphasizing cooperation as a key variable. In criminology education, Sarmiento (2021) observed that programs with active student involvement in qualifying exams, mentoring activities, and community engagements showed stronger licensure outcomes compared to institutions where students were passive recipients of review interventions.

Moreover, Salvador et al. (2022) in nursing education highlighted peer and institutional cooperation as a social process influencing board exam success, stressing that collaboration creates an environment of shared accountability.

Another Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) Cooperation reflects both intrinsic motivations to succeed and extrinsic compliance with institutional rules factors, aligning personal goals with institutional structures.

As suggest by the Critical Theory Cooperation must not become passive compliance. Rather, it should involve dialogue and mutual respect, ensuring that student voices are considered in policies such as deloading and qualifying exams.

Align with the Postmodernism highlights that cooperation is not uniform; students from different socioeconomic backgrounds may engage with institutions in varied ways. Recognizing these diverse forms of cooperation prevents the imposition of a single model of "good student behavior."

Balancing Retention Policies and Administrative Pressures

Participants described a tension common in many HEIs the need to enforce retention or qualifying-exam policies to maintain academic standards versus administrative pressures political, relational, or enrollment-related that resist strict enforcement. One participant captured this ambivalence succinctly.

"We will take back what we did before." Because if we enforce the retention policy, the administration will complain... Then we enforce it again, and if no one complains, we will continuously enforce it. "(Key Participant 4)

This remark highlights two dynamics retention rules are seen as necessary to preserve standards gatekeeping to ensure competency for licensure, and enforcement is uneven because of external administrative influences ranging from internal politics and favoritism to concerns about student/parent backlash and enrollment sustainability.

Strict retention raises standards but can reduce access and increase attrition. Without remediation and supports, the policy risks disproportionately affecting low-income or first-generation students. Administrators facing enrollment or political pressures may weaken implementation to avoid complaints or negative publicity, undermining long-term quality. If retention operates only to filter, it creates adversarial student institution relations. If designed developmentally clear criteria, frequent feedback, remediation, it furthers learning and preserves dignity. Balancing retention policies and administrative pressures is a governance challenge as much as an academic one. The evidence suggests that retention can uphold professional standards without becoming punitive but only when embedded in transparent, developmental systems and supported by leadership courage, data infrastructure, and equity-oriented safeguards. Failure to attend to these conditions turns retention into a site of contestation where administrative pressures too often subordinate pedagogical goals.

Empirical studies from professional programs show that strict retention or qualifying mechanisms correlate with higher licensure preparedness when they are implemented within a broader system of support standardized testing, remediation, mentoring. Nursing and teacher-education research (Salvador et al., Abao et al.) indicate that programs combining gatekeeping with early intervention and continuous monitoring achieve better outcomes and equity than programs relying solely on terminal exclusions.

Conversely, literature on higher-education governance warns that administrative pressures political interference, nepotism, and revenue concerns frequently undermine policy fidelity, producing variability in student outcomes (Kezar & Eckel; Altinyelken). Where enforcement becomes discretionary, trust erodes and policy legitimacy diminishes.

Resource Availability and Systematic Planning

Participants emphasized that resources financial, human, and material coupled with systematic planning are critical in sustaining best practices for licensure exam readiness. One participant stressed the importance of institutional support:

"Without financial and logistical backing, review programs, qualifying exams, and mentoring cannot be consistently implemented." Key Participants 7

Others noted that resources must be paired with careful planning such as aligning calendars with PRC board exam schedules, standardizing assessment tools, and preparing syllabi anchored on tables of specifications. This illustrates that resources alone are insufficient what matters is their deliberate and strategic deployment through planning processes.

The evidence suggests that resource availability provides the means, while systematic planning provides the method. One without the other creates institutional imbalance: resources without planning produce waste, while planning without resources leads to frustration and half-implemented

programs. Resources and planning together create resilience, allowing HEIs to sustain best practices even under external pressures changing PRC policies, fluctuating enrollment. Systematic planning tied to transparent budgets ensures accountability, minimizing reliance on volunteerism alone. Integration of planning into institutional calendars, audits, and review systems ensures that licensure preparation is not episodic but embedded in the academic culture.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) showed that resource-rich institutions are better positioned to provide faculty development, quality instruction, and structured student supports. Abao et al. (2023) further demonstrated that Philippine teacher education programs with greater investment in instructional resources and faculty training correlated with higher licensure passing rates.

Kezar and Eckel (2002) emphasized that institutional transformation is sustainable only when supported by interrelated strategies, clear sense-making, and systematic planning processes. In criminology education, Sarmiento (2021) found that HEIs implementing curriculum mapping, standardized review schedules, and institutionalized monitoring outperformed those relying on ad hoc approaches.

Jacoby (2015) highlighted that resource availability without coordinated planning leads to inefficiency, while planning without resources leads to implementation gaps. Therefore, the synergy between resources and planning constitutes a best practice in itself.

As supported by the Cybercrime Adaptation Theory HEIs adapt to the external pressure of licensure exams by mobilizing resources and aligning them with planned strategies such as qualifying exams, review programs, and curriculum audits.

More over Critical Theory Resource allocation must be interrogated for equity. Institutions with limited funding often state universities may find themselves disadvantaged compared to private HEIs, reinforcing systemic inequities. Strategic planning should therefore include compensatory measures such as scholarships, cross-institutional partnerships, or government subsidies.

Another Postmodernism reminds us that planning is context-specific while some HEIs rely on centralized, data-driven planning, others use flexible, participatory approaches shaped by local realities.

Seminars, Mentoring, and Early Integration of Board Exam Orientation

Participants emphasized that seminars, structured mentoring, and the early integration of board exam orientation are vital strategies that prepare criminology students both academically and psychosocially for the Licensure Examination. One participant shared:

“We also have this in the university. It’s called a mentoring program... The students should have a mentor. So, that’s one of our projects.” (Key Participant 9)

Another stressed the importance of beginning board exam preparation early in the program:

“In the first year, they always mention the board exam... our preparation from first year to fourth year is towards their taking of the board exam.” (Key Participant 9)

A third noted the value of community-linked engagements embedded in the curriculum:

“There are subjects in the curriculum that integrate community service activities... students learn voluntarism, collaboration, critical thinking, and 21st century skills.” (Key Participant 11)

These reflections demonstrate that students benefit most when review seminars, mentoring structures, and board exam orientation are not left until the final year, but are embedded throughout their academic journey.

The participants’ accounts align with global and local evidence. Crisp and Cruz (2009) found that mentoring enhances academic persistence, psychosocial development, and professional readiness, which are directly linked to success in licensure examinations. In nursing education, Salvador et al. (2022) documented that mentor competency training significantly improved mentor effective-

ness and student outcomes, underscoring the need to institutionalize and professionalize mentoring rather than rely on ad hoc arrangements.

Studies in the Philippine context similarly support early integration. Abao et al. (2023) showed that systematic embedding of licensure exam competencies across the curriculum in teacher education programs produced higher passing rates. Likewise, service-learning literature (Jacoby, 2015) affirms that community engagement fosters applied skills, collaboration, and reflective practice, which participants identified as core benefits of criminology programs in region 3.

Thus, seminars and mentoring provide structured academic support, while early exam orientation and community-based engagements create psychosocial readiness and professional identity.

Space Transition Theory: Students adapt behaviors as they move across seminar spaces, mentoring sessions, and community immersion, progressively internalizing professional competencies.

More over the Cyberpsychology Theory hybrid mentoring and seminars face-to-face and digital shape students' motivation, self-regulation, and test-taking confidence.

As supported also by the Critical Theory mentoring and seminar access must be equitably distributed. If left informal, they may privilege well-connected students, reproducing inequalities.

Align with the Postmodernism recognizes the diversity of mentoring forms peer, faculty, alumni and the contextual variety of seminars across HEIs, suggesting multiple pathways to licensure readiness.

Seminars, mentoring, and early board exam orientation complement each other to create a holistic preparation system. Seminars provide focused review and strategy; mentoring ensures continuous academic and psychosocial scaffolding and early orientation establishes licensure readiness as a long-term developmental goal rather than a final-year crash course. Together, they shift the paradigm of licensure preparation from episodic interventions to an integrated academic culture sustained throughout the criminology program.

Well-Trained Faculty and Instructional Competence

Participants highlighted that the quality of teaching and the competence of faculty members are central to licensure exam preparation. They stressed that even with review programs and qualifying exams in place, students cannot excel without instructors who are themselves knowledgeable, skilled, and updated in criminology and pedagogy. One participant reflected:

"We also train our teachers... because if the faculty themselves are not competent, how can they prepare the students for the board?" (Key Participant 7)

Another emphasized the importance of continuous professional development:

"Faculty must be trained, exposed, and competent in teaching board exam subjects... only then can they deliver instruction that aligns with the PRC competencies." (Key Participant 10)

These statements reveal that faculty competence functions as the backbone of institutional best practices, shaping both curriculum delivery and the capacity to sustain student readiness.

Faculty competence is the bedrock upon which all other best practices rest. While qualifying exams, seminars, and mentoring are vital, they derive their effectiveness from the quality of instruction students receive daily. Well-trained faculty not only transfers knowledge but also models professional identity and academic discipline. By embedding continuous professional development into institutional culture, HEIs transform licensure preparation from a set of isolated interventions into a sustained, competency driven educational process. In short, the faculty is the fulcrum: when they are strong, the whole system of licensure preparation stands firm.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) established that professional development and instructional competence of teachers directly affect student learning outcomes. Well-trained faculty provide not only content knowledge but also effective pedagogical strategies that foster deep understanding.

In Philippine professional education, Abao et al. (2023) found that faculty qualifications and training were significant predictors of performance in licensure examinations for teachers. Their findings highlight that the presence of academically and pedagogically prepared faculty creates consistent student success across cohorts.

Nursing education studies corroborate this Salvador et al. (2022) demonstrated that mentor competency training led to improved exam performance, showing that well-prepared instructors and mentors positively shape outcomes in professional licensure.

Global evidence also points to faculty competence as a determinant of institutional credibility. Altinyelken (2015) argued that higher education institutions with systematic faculty development programs build resilience and sustain competitiveness in the face of external pressures such as accreditation and licensure exams.

On the other hand, Cybercrime Adaptation Theory HEIs adapt to external licensure demands by continuously upgrading faculty competence, ensuring instruction remains aligned with evolving criminology standards.

More over the Critical Theory raises the equity question of how faculty development opportunities are distributed. Resource-rich HEIs may have regular training budgets, while underfunded institutions risk perpetuating inequities in student outcomes if their faculty lack access to development opportunities.

Align with the Postmodernism suggests that instructional competence is not one-dimensional. Faculty effectiveness can emerge through varied pedagogical approaches, including experiential learning, technology integration, and localized teaching practices, reflecting diverse pathways to competence.

Regular training on criminology updates, pedagogy, and board exam content must be institutionalized, not left to voluntary participation. Faculty training should be anchored on PRC's table of specifications to ensure that classroom instruction aligns with licensure exam competencies. Public HEIs with fewer resources need support from CHED and government grants to ensure faculty training does not remain a privilege of well-funded institutions. Senior, board topnotcher faculty should mentor younger faculty, sustaining instructional competence across generations.

Challenges encountered in the implementation in the best practices of HEI in Region 3 in preparing their graduates in the Criminology Licensure

Faculty Workload and Training Gaps

Faculty participants consistently identified heavy workloads and uneven training opportunities as major barriers to implementing best practices in preparing criminology students for the licensure examination.

One participant expressed concern about excessive allied tasks, saying:

"Faculty members are already overloaded with teaching and administrative work... sometimes, they cannot give full focus to review and mentoring." (Key Participant 6)

Another emphasized the gap in professional development:

"There are training needs analyses, yes, but not all faculty are able to attend seminars or trainings. Some are left behind, and this affects how they teach board-related subjects." (Key Participant 8)

A third highlighted dependence on a small number of committed faculty:

“Only a few faculties are really qualified to handle the review and specialized subjects. We rely too much on them, and if they are not available, the program suffers.” (Key Participant 10)

These accounts reveal that while best practices such as mentoring, augmentation reviews, and board exam orientations exist, their sustainability is undermined by faculty workload stress and uneven training support.

The findings underscore that faculty are the backbone of licensure preparation. However, when they are overburdened with excessive workloads and denied consistent training opportunities, the entire system of best practices is compromised. The literature confirms that workload stress and uneven PD reduce instructional quality, mentoring effectiveness, and ultimately student success. For Region 3 HEIs, addressing this challenge requires structural reforms balancing workloads, institutionalizing professional development, and broadening faculty competence. In essence, well-trained, adequately supported faculties are not optional but indispensable for sustained licensure success.

The participants’ experiences align with broader findings in higher education research. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that sustained, content-focused professional development improves student outcomes, yet such programs require institutional investment and workload protection. Without these, training becomes fragmented and unevenly distributed.

Burnout studies in higher education similarly note that increasing teaching and allied responsibilities reduce the quality of instruction and mentoring (International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-Being, 2023). Philippine data confirm this pattern: at President Ramon Magsaysay State University, excessive allied tasks were found to increase stress and health risks among faculty, undermining teaching effectiveness (ResearchGate, 2024).

Moreover, workload inequities contribute to fragility: reliance on a small group of highly trained faculty mirrors global staffing crises where shortages or vacancies disrupted program delivery and reduced student success (Faculty Workload and Student Success Study, 2024).

As supported by the Organizational Capacity Theory highlights that faculty are a core institutional resource without balanced workload and sustained training, capacity for exam preparation programs is weakened.

Another the Critical Theory draws attention to inequities: resource rich HEIs can fund continuous PD and hire additional staff, while resource-poor HEIs leave faculty to shoulder heavy burdens, producing uneven outcomes among students.

As suggest also by the Self-Determination Theory suggests that autonomy and manageable workloads are essential for faculty motivation; overload erodes intrinsic motivation, which reduces the quality of student mentoring and exam preparation.

Time Constraints for Students and Faculty

Participants consistently identified time scarcity as a significant challenge in implementing best practices for criminology licensure preparation. One participant reflected on the dual pressures facing both faculty and students:

“Faculty members already carry a full teaching load and administrative work. Adding reviews or mentoring becomes difficult because there’s just not enough time.” (Key Participant 6)

Others highlighted the competing demands faced by students:

“Some students cannot attend the augmentation review regularly. They are working or have other responsibilities, so their time is divided.” (Key Participant 9)

Another stressed how time limitations affected the frequency of formative activities:

“We want to give more mock exams and practice drills, but preparing these requires time. With our workload, we cannot always sustain it.” (Key Participant 7)

These accounts point to a shared bottleneck: even when structures such as review classes, mentoring, and qualifying exams are in place, their effectiveness is compromised by limited time for both faculty and students to participate meaningfully.

Time constraints emerge as a structural choke-point in the ecosystem of licensure preparation. All of the best practices identified mentoring, augmentation reviews, qualifying exams, and formative assessments are inherently time-intensive. When students lack discretionary hours due to work or family responsibilities, and when faculty are overloaded with teaching and allied duties, the system's capacity to prepare graduates is weakened. The literature confirms that time scarcity reduces learning persistence, increases test anxiety, and lowers academic outcomes. Thus, addressing time as an institutional resource protecting, budgeting, and equitably distributing it is essential for region 3 HEIs to transform best practices from episodic interventions into sustainable systems for licensure success.

The participants' concerns align with global evidence that time availability is a critical determinant of academic persistence and performance. Studies on time poverty demonstrate that students with fewer weekly hours for coursework earn fewer credits and are less likely to persist in higher education (Georgetown University Center for Education, 2022). In professional programs, Abao et al. (2023) found that the amount of time allocated for preparation and test practice significantly predicted licensure performance, underscoring the role of consistent study hours in readiness.

On the faculty side, excessive workload is a well-documented barrier to effective teaching and mentoring. Research shows that increased administrative and allied duties reduce instructional quality and limit the time available for formative assessment and individualized student support (Exploring Faculty Workload and Student Success, 2024). Furthermore, studies link perceptions of heavy course loads and poor time management with increased test anxiety and lower academic performance among students (Chapell et al., 2005).

Moreover, the Organizational Capacity Theory frames time as an institutional resource: without protected hours for faculty mentoring and scheduled time for student review, program fidelity declines.

Align also with the Self-Determination Theory suggests that time scarcity undermines both autonomy and competence for students less control over study schedules and faculty less opportunity for quality instruction, thereby lowering intrinsic motivation.

Another the Critical Theory emphasizes that time constraints disproportionately affect disadvantaged groups students who work part-time to support themselves and faculty in resource poor HEIs who carry heavier allied tasks thereby reinforcing structural inequities.

Unequal Access to Review Opportunities

Participants acknowledged that not all students in criminology programs have equal access to review opportunities. One participant noted the financial barriers that prevent some students from enrolling in external review centers:

“Some of our students cannot afford to pay for private review programs. That’s why they depend solely on augmentation reviews in the school.” (Key Participant 8)

Another highlighted inequity created by voluntary participation in augmentation programs:

“Since reviews are voluntary, only those who can make the time attend. Others, especially working students, are left out.” (Key Participant 6)

A third emphasized institutional variability:

“We rely mostly on volunteer faculty for augmentation. Not all schools can sustain regular review classes, so students from smaller colleges have fewer opportunities.” (Key Participant 10)

These narratives demonstrate that financial limitations, time constraints, and uneven institutional resources create unequal access to structured review opportunities, leaving some students at a disadvantage in CLE preparation.

Unequal access to review opportunities constitutes a systemic equity challenge in region 3 criminology programs. Financial barriers, time poverty, reliance on voluntary participation, and uneven institutional resources converge to limit the participation of disadvantaged students in structured review activities. The literature confirms that access to sustained, structured preparation significantly predicts licensure performance, while inequitable access exacerbates disparities. Addressing this issue requires institutional reforms embedding reviews in the curriculum, funding supports, and building regional collaborations to transform review opportunities from optional privileges into equitable rights for all students.

The participants' accounts resonate with wider literature showing that structured review access correlates with higher licensure performance, and that inequities in access translate into unequal outcomes. For example, research indicates that attendance at formal review programs significantly improves passing rates in licensure exams (ERIC Licensure Review Study, 2021).

In the Philippine context, Abao et al. (2023) found that institutional preparation including embedded review and faculty led mentoring predicted stronger performance among teacher education graduates. Similarly, policy analyses highlight that unequal HEI resources reproduce disparities in outcomes; financially stronger institutions can sustain regular reviews, while resource-poor HEIs rely on faculty volunteerism, producing inconsistent access (Philippine Institute for Development Studies, 2023).

Equity concerns also extend beyond finances. Students from low-income households often experience "time poverty," balancing academic requirements with employment, which reduces their ability to attend voluntary reviews (Georgetown University CEW, 2022). Additionally, mentoring research warns that when access is left to informal networks, disadvantaged students often miss critical supports unless mentoring is formalized and monitored (Mentoring.org, 2019).

As stated in the Critical Theory frames unequal review access as a mechanism that reproduces educational inequality, disadvantaging students from low-income backgrounds who lack resources to access external or sustained review.

As supported as well by the Human Capital Theory suggests that structured review programs enhance knowledge and skills human capital while Social Capital Theory emphasizes mentoring and networks; unequal access to either form of capital leads to stratified licensure outcomes.

Access and Equity Frameworks in Higher Education argue that equity requires not only formal availability of review but also proportional supports to ensure disadvantaged students can participate.

Resistance to Strict Monitoring and Discipline

Participants revealed that while strict monitoring and discipline are intended to ensure readiness for the licensure exam, such practices often meet resistance from students, parents, and even administrators. One participant noted:

"When we strictly enforce the retention or qualifying exams, some students complain, and sometimes even parents intervene. This forces the administration to relax the policies." (Key Participant 4)

Another described the dilemma of balancing standards with appeasing stakeholders:

"If we are too strict with monitoring, we risk losing enrollees. So sometimes we have to compromise, even if it's not good for preparation." (Key Participant 7)

These narratives underscore the tension between maintaining academic rigor and responding to pressures of student satisfaction, enrollment sustainability, and administrative politics.

Resistance to strict monitoring and discipline represents a fundamental governance challenge in criminology licensure preparation. While strict policies are designed to maintain academic standards, their uneven enforcement and stakeholder pushback compromise their effectiveness. The literature confirms that monitoring and discipline improve licensure readiness when consistently and developmentally applied but fail when perceived as punitive or politically negotiable. For Region 3 HEIs, the solution lies in reframing monitoring as a supportive process, institutionalizing transparent policies, and securing stakeholder buy-in. In this way, discipline and monitoring can shift from being contested practices to being recognized as shared responsibilities in preparing graduates for the CLE.

The challenges described mirror findings in higher education research where accountability mechanisms monitoring, discipline, retention policies often clash with institutional pressures to maintain enrollment and revenues. Kezar and Eckel (2002) emphasize that policy fidelity requires both leadership commitment and stakeholder buy-in; when either is missing, policies are enforced inconsistently.

Student resistance to strict discipline is also well-documented. Studies link perceived strictness to increased stress and disengagement, especially when monitoring is framed as punitive rather than developmental (Chapell et al., 2005). In the Philippine context, Abao et al. (2023) found that academic monitoring predicted licensure performance, but uneven enforcement weakened its impact, reflecting the same “laban-bawi” (push and pull) cycle participants described.

Leadership studies confirm that faculty cohesion and transformational leadership styles can reduce resistance by framing monitoring as a supportive practice rather than a punitive one (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2024). When monitoring is integrated with mentoring and formative assessment, students view it less as surveillance and more as scaffolding, thereby lowering resistance.

Critical Theory highlights how power relations shape enforcement: students and parents exercise influence that can pressure administrators to relax policies, undermining equity and consistency.

In addition, Organizational Change Theory (Kezar & Eckel) shows that institutional change fails when stakeholder alignment is weak; resistance to monitoring exemplifies this misalignment.

On the other hand, Self-Determination Theory suggests that excessive control without autonomy-supportive practices reduces motivation, fueling resistance; balancing structure with autonomy can mitigate this.

Along with the Postmodernism underscores that one-size-fits-all disciplinary approaches may not be effective across diverse HEIs; local adaptations and culturally sensitive monitoring systems may be needed.

The preceding chapter presented the findings on the best practices of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in region 3 in preparing criminology graduates for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE), as well as the challenges encountered in their implementation. Themes such as foundational preparation and strict monitoring, leadership and core faculty cohesion, curriculum alignment, student motivation, mentoring, and faculty competence emerged as cornerstones of effective institutional practices. At the same time, equally significant were the constraints identified, including faculty workload and training gaps, time scarcity, unequal access to review opportunities, and resistance to strict monitoring and discipline.

Taken together, these findings illustrate that licensure preparation in region 3 is not a singular intervention but a complex ecosystem that combines academic rigor, institutional resources, fa-

culty commitment, and student cooperation. The success of best practices is deeply contingent on institutional capacity and governance, as well as on the sociocultural and economic realities faced by students and faculty. The integration of theories such as Critical Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Organizational Capacity Theory further underscores that licensure preparation is simultaneously pedagogical, organizational, and socio-political.

These insights provide a critical foundation for the succeeding chapter. Chapter 5 will synthesize the study's findings into conclusions that capture their scholarly contributions and practical implications. It will also advance recommendations directed toward policymakers, institutional leaders, faculty, and students. Such recommendations aim to bridge the gap between best practices and their challenges, ensuring that Region 3 HEIs can not only sustain but also enhance their efforts to prepare criminology graduates for licensure success.

Documentary Analysis Discussion

In this study, documentary analysis was employed to systematically examine existing records that provide objective and verifiable evidence of institutional performance in the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). Specifically, reports from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) covering the years 2018 to 2023 were obtained and reviewed. These documents contained statistical data on the board performance of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across region 3, including the number of examinees, number of passers, and institutional passing percentages.

The analysis of these reports enabled the identification of top-performing HEIs in Region 3, which consistently achieved high passing rates and, in some cases, produced board toppers. This process provided a factual foundation for selecting the study participants and ensured that only institutions meeting the established criteria of consistent high performance were included.

The data revealed that the top-performing criminology schools in region 3 during this period exhibited the following characteristics: Sustained high passing percentages (above the national passing average of the CLE, which typically ranged between 30–40%). Renowned for being among the best and top performing criminology schools in the region. Produce board top notches during specific exam years, confirming the quality of the institution.

By triangulating the results of the documentary analysis with interview data, the study ensured methodological rigor. Documentary analysis provided the quantitative evidence of institutional success, while interviews offered the qualitative insights into the best practices, strategies, and challenges behind these outcomes.

This approach aligns with Bowen's (2009) assertion that documentary analysis enriches qualitative inquiry by supplying contextualized and corroborative evidence. In this research, it established the credibility of the selected HEIs as true exemplars of best practices in criminology licensure preparation.

Conclusion and recommendations

This section presents the concluding insights drawn from the findings of the study, highlighting how the research objectives were addressed and how the results contribute to the understanding of best practices among top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in region 3. It also offers recommendations derived from the analysis, intended to guide policymakers, academic leaders, faculty members, and future researchers in strengthening criminology education and enhancing performance in the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE).

Conclusions

The study identified and analyzed the best practices employed by top-performing Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Region 3 in preparing their criminology graduates for the licensure

examination. These practices encompass visionary leadership, dedicated faculty development, curriculum alignment with Professional Regulation Commission standards, and integrated academic monitoring. Collectively, these strategies not only elevate academic rigor but also create a cohesive and supportive environment that fosters student competency and readiness for the Criminology Licensure Examination (CLE). The findings reaffirm the critical role of institutional commitment in sustaining excellence in board exam performance.

In evaluating the factors contributing to the successful implementation of these best practices, the study highlights enabling mechanisms such as strong administrative support, adequate financial resources, and collaborative faculty engagement. Equally important are student motivation and positive learner-administrator relationships that cultivate an academic climate conducive to persistent learning and professional growth. These factors synergize to create institutional cultures that accommodate continuous improvement and responsive adaptation to the evolving demands of licensure requirements, thereby facilitating graduate success.

The exploration of challenges encountered by HEIs in implementing best practices reveals obstacles such as resource limitations, varying student preparedness levels, and balancing academic standards with inclusivity. However, the study also identifies adaptive strategies employed by these institutions, including early board exam orientation, mentoring programs, and community engagement, which mitigate these difficulties. These insights underscore the importance of resilient, context-sensitive approaches to maintaining high-quality criminology education and licensure preparation in Region 3.

Recommendations

1) For Policymakers and Regulatory Bodies (CHED, PRC, Government Agencies), set clear, minimum standards for licensure exam preparation that all HEIs must follow, such as curriculum reviews, qualifying tests, and mentoring programs. Allocate funds to support financially challenged institutions for faculty training, review sessions, and student scholarships to reduce gaps between schools. Include fairness in access to preparation as part of monitoring and evaluation, not just passing rates.

2) For Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), integrate licensure review as a formal part of the curriculum so all students benefit. Recognize review and mentoring work as part of faculty duties and performance evaluations. Provide ongoing training to faculty on licensure exam requirements. Encourage open communication among students, faculty, and administrators to foster a transparent and fair academic environment.

3) For Faculty and Students, faculty should provide mentoring that supports both academic progress and emotional well-being, using a mix of face-to-face and online methods to reach more students efficiently. Students should take responsibility for their learning by actively joining review groups and mentoring programs, supporting each other through collaboration.

4) For Future Research, study how student backgrounds and participation in review programs influence their licensure results. Explore shared regional review resources' effectiveness. Investigate students' psychological experiences during preparation to guide supportive interventions.

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