



Beyond Review: Assessing Preparedness and Barriers Faced by Criminology Graduates in the Licensure Examination

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

*Preparedness;
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A licensure examination is not merely a test of knowledge but a measure of preparation, confidence, and resilience. In the Philippines, the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) serves as a critical gateway for criminology graduates seeking professional entry into law enforcement and related fields. This study assessed the preparedness of criminology graduates for the CLE and examined the challenges they encounter during review. Using a descriptive quantitative design, the study surveyed 300 criminology graduates from various Luzon universities enrolled in a review center in Baguio City. A structured questionnaire measured self-assessed preparedness across six CLE subjects and identified both subject-specific and general challenges. Results revealed that students felt most prepared in technical subjects such as Forensics and Criminal Detection and Investigation (CDI), while Criminology and Jurisprudence posed greater difficulty. Psychological pressure emerged as the most significant barrier, followed by time management issues and lack of motivation. The findings underscore the need for enhanced theoretical instruction, mental health support, and targeted review strategies. This study provides data-driven insights relevant to curriculum enhancement, review program development, and institutional support systems aimed at improving CLE performance and fostering student success.



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Introduction

A licensure examination is not solely a measure of knowledge acquisition; it is a crucible of preparation, confidence, and resilience.¹ The Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) plays a pivotal role in shaping the professional trajectories of criminology graduates in the Philippines. As competition in the field intensifies, effective preparation becomes crucial to securing a passing grade, outcomes and entering professional criminology practice. Research has identified several factors influencing CLE performance, including academic preparation, personal competence, and external support systems. Academic readiness remains central. Student interest in criminology and strong faculty support significantly contribute to CLE outcomes, with engaged learners and experienced instructors demonstrating higher levels of preparedness in subjects such as Law Enforcement Administration and Criminal Jurisprudence.²

In addition to academic factors, examinees often face external challenges, such as balancing employment with study responsibilities, which may hinder consistent participation in review sessions. Married and working students report higher stress levels during preparation.³ Review centers help mitigate these

¹ D Nilendu, 'Enhancing Forensic Education: Exploring the Importance and Implementation of Evidence-Based Education System', *Egypt J Forensic Sci*, 14 (2024) <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1186/s41935-023-00375-w>>.

² A C Albina and others, 'Factors and Challenges Influencing the Criminologist Licensure Examination Performance through the Non-Passers' Lens', *European Journal of Educational Research*, 11.1 (2022), 365–80 <<https://doi.org/https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1329072>>.

³ Albina and others.

difficulties by offering structured schedules and expert instruction, while family support further enhances students' emotional and logistical stability.⁴ Globally, studies have emphasized the role of stress and academic self-efficacy in licensure exam performance.⁵ found that psychological stress diminishes academic self-efficacy, leading to poorer academic outcomes. Related research underscores the importance of self-regulated learning, effective study habits, and time management in improving exam readiness.⁶ Within the Asian context, especially the Philippines, CLE readiness continues to draw scholarly attention.⁷ For instance, found that procrastination, OJT performance, and cognitive preparedness significantly influence CLE readiness. Meanwhile, reported that students perceived themselves as mentally and physically prepared but acknowledged weaknesses in financial preparedness. Despite these emerging insights, there remains a shortage of large-scale studies focusing on perceived preparedness and subject-specific challenges among CLE reviewees in Luzon.⁸

Addressing this gap, the present study assesses criminology graduates' preparedness across CLE subjects, identifies their most and least challenging subject areas, and explores non-academic barriers they encounter during review.⁹ Guided by these insights, this study aims to provide evidence-based recommendations that can inform curriculum development, enhance review center programs, and strengthen institutional support services for future CLE examinees. The objectives of this study were to assess the level of preparedness of criminology graduates for the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) and to identify the challenges and strategies associated with their preparation. Specifically, the study aimed to determine respondents' self-perceived preparedness for the CLE, identify the CLE subjects respondents found most challenging, and explore other challenges encountered during their preparation.

Method

A descriptive-quantitative research design was employed to assess criminology graduates' preparedness, challenges, and strategies in preparing for the CLE. The study was conducted from January to June 2025 and involved 300 criminology graduates from universities across selected regions in Luzon, all enrolled in a Baguio City review center. Purposive sampling ensured that participants were genuinely preparing for the upcoming CLE. Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire composed of closed- and open-ended items. Preparedness in the six CLE subjects such as Jurisprudence, Law Enforcement Administration (LEA), Forensics, Criminal Detection and Investigation (CDI), Criminology, and Corrections, was measured using a 4-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean, median, and mode were used for quantitative data analysis, while thematic analysis was used for open-ended responses. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed.¹⁰

Results and Discussion

The Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) is a crucial assessment that determines the eligibility of criminology graduates to practice in the field of law enforcement and related professions in the Philippines. Understanding the level of preparedness of students across various major subjects provides insights into their confidence, academic readiness, and potential areas for instructional improvement. This section presents the self-assessed preparedness of criminology students in six core CLE subjects:

⁴ Albina and others.

⁵ X Liu and others, 'The Relationship between Stress and Academic Self-Efficacy among Students at Elite Colleges: A Longitudinal Analysis', *Behav Sci (Basel)*, 14,7 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14070537>>.

⁶ E Cabras, P Pozo and J C Suárez-Falcón, 'Stress and Academic Achievement among Distance University Students in Spain during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Age, Perceived Study Time, and the Mediating Role of Academic Self-Efficacy', *Eur J Psychol Educ*, 39 (2024), 4275–95 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-024-00871-0>>.

⁷ Ryan Christian Abonales, Noel Galabin and Cheryl Calibayan, 'Students' Perception of Academic Procrastination: Basis for Criminologist Licensure Examination Preparedness', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2025 <<https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5285590>>.

⁸ J A et al. Lumbo, 'Readiness Of The Criminology Graduates In Taking The Criminologist Licensure Examination', *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications*, 2023 <<https://www.ijarp.org/published-research-papers/jun2023/Readiness-Of-The-Criminology-Graduates-In-Taking-The-Criminologist-Licensure-Examination.pdf>>.

⁹ Henry Alwayne Mercado and others, 'Exploring the Barriers in Passing the Licensure Examinations Among Education Graduates', *International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope*, 06 (2025), 652–62 <<https://doi.org/10.47857/irjms.2025.v06i01.02819>>.

¹⁰ Liu and others.

Jurisprudence, Law Enforcement Administration (LEA), Forensics, Criminal Detection, and Investigation (CDI), Criminology, and Corrections.¹¹

Table 1. Students' Perceived Level of Preparedness per Subject (n=300)

Subject	1 (Less Prepared)	2 (Slightly Prepared)	3 (Prepared)	4 (Very Much Prepared)
Jurisprudence	5	67	177	51
LEA	3	60	189	48
Forensics	3	18	203	76
CDI	3	40	202	55
Criminology	3	80	191	26
Corrections	12	48	217	23

The findings reveal that most students considered themselves “Prepared” across subjects, with the highest confidence reported in Forensics and CDI. These subjects emphasize practical, investigative, and science-based competencies areas where students may have received extensive laboratory or hands-on exposure. Conversely, Criminology and Jurisprudence recorded higher proportions of “Slightly Prepared” and “Less Prepared” responses, indicating challenges in understanding theoretical, conceptual, and analytical content. Corrections showed mixed responses, with many students reporting adequate preparedness yet a notable number also indicating insufficient readiness. This inconsistency may reflect variations in instructional delivery across institutions. These results align with who found that while academic performance moderately correlates with CLE results, weaknesses in subjects such as Corrections persist regardless of academic averages.¹² The study suggested targeted interventions to strengthen students’ readiness in theoretical domains. The overall pattern underscores a need for curriculum redesign emphasizing interactive legal discussions, case-based learning, and mock examinations to reinforce learning in theory driven subjects.

This section examines which subjects criminology students find most challenging. Understanding these challenges can guide educators in prioritizing areas that need enhanced support and instructional reform.

Table 2. Subjects Most Challenged

Subject	Challenged
Jurisprudence	82
LEA	45
Forensics	40
CDI	103
Criminology	182
Corrections	108

Criminology emerged as the most challenging subject, followed by Corrections and CDI. Students’ difficulty with Criminology likely stems from its heavy emphasis on sociological and theoretical frameworks. In contrast, Forensics was identified as the least challenging due to its clear procedures and tangible application. These findings correspond with the ¹³study, which reported that students struggle with science-based subjects when technical content lacks scaffolding; however, when supported by hands-on activities, students' confidence improves. Springer Open (2024) similarly emphasized integrating real-world forensic applications to strengthen learning outcomes. Criminology, being abstract and theory-driven, requires enhanced instructional strategies that emphasize context, application, and conceptual clarity.

¹¹ C A Wolters, A C Brady and H J Lee, ‘Time Management and Achievement Motivation: A Review of What We Know and Directions for Where to Go’, *Educ Psychol Rev*, 37 (2025), 58 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-025-10032-4>>.

¹² M B Barreda, ‘Academic Performance of Criminology Graduates and Its Impact on the Licensure Examination for Criminologists’, *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 2022 <<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6614390>>.

¹³ RSIS International, ‘Breaking Barriers: Issues Encountered by Criminology Students in Science-Related Subjects’, *International Journal of Research in Interdisciplinary and Applied Studies*, 2025 <<https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijrias/articles/breaking-barriers-issues-encountered-by-criminology-students-in-science-related-subjects>>.

The journey toward passing the Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE) is demanding, often marked by a range of internal and external challenges that affect students' preparation. Identifying these specific difficulties is crucial for developing targeted interventions and support systems that address their needs. Building on the earlier discussion, it is important to examine these challenges more closely to understand their extent and impact. By determining which issues are most and least experienced, institutions and educators can better assess where students require the most support. The following presentation of findings provides a detailed analysis of these challenges, highlights prevailing trends, discusses their implications, and aligns the results with recent scholarly studies to inform evidence-based strategies for improving student outcomes.

Table 3: Challenges Encountered During CLE Preparation

Challenges	Number of Respondents
Pressure	205
Time Management	48
Laziness	31
Financial Needs	16

Psychological pressure ranked as the most prevalent challenge among students, followed by issues related to time management, motivation, and financial constraints. Pressure stemming from fear of failure, family expectations, and the high-stakes nature of the CLE aligns with Brodersen and Lorenz (2025), who found that exam stress negatively impacts performance. Time management and motivation issues reflect deficits in self-directed study habits. Wolters identified self-efficacy and time management as essential predictors of successful academic performance, further supporting the present findings.¹⁴ While financial needs were least cited, they remain a barrier for some students, as also noted by Panlaqui (2025), who reported that financial constraints affect students' ability to obtain review materials and other necessary resources. These findings call for holistic institutional support that integrates academic mentoring, mental health services, and financial aid mechanisms.¹⁵

Conclusion

The study provides a comprehensive assessment of criminology graduates' preparedness and challenges in reviewing for the Criminologist Licensure Examination. While students generally feel prepared particularly in practical subjects such as Forensics and CDI significant challenges persist in theoretical areas like Criminology and Jurisprudence. Criminology was identified as the most difficult subject, and psychological pressure emerged as the most prevalent barrier, followed by time management, motivation, and financial concerns. These insights highlight the necessity of strengthening theoretical instruction, enhancing mental health and counseling services, and providing targeted academic interventions. A holistic support system combining academic, psychological, and financial assistance is essential to improving CLE readiness and performance.

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The author affirms that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in the preparation of this manuscript was strictly limited to supportive functions, specifically for language editing, grammar checking, and enhancing clarity and readability. AI was not employed to generate core ideas, perform substantive analysis, interpret data, or formulate scholarly conclusions. The author assumes full responsibility for the originality,

¹⁴ Wolters, Brady and Lee.

¹⁵ P Manwong, 'Performance of Criminology Graduates in the Licensure Examination: A Decade Review', *International Journal of Advanced Research and Publications*, 4.3 (2020), 19–22 <<http://ijarp.org>>.

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Conflict of Interest

This section is a statement from the author that this article has a conflict of interest or not.

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