Psychological Preparedness and Test Anxiety Among Licensure Examination Takers: Towards A Proposed Support Program and Academic Intervention for a Philippine Higher Education Institution

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ABSTRACT:

Academic interventions are important component of the services of Higher Education Institutions which is critical to develop the future career skills of students particularly in the teacher education programs. This study endeavoured to examine the psychological preparedness and test anxiety among Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) takers, with the aim of informing better academic interventions and implications of programs that support these facets. The study employed descriptive quantitative research design with 104 respondents using psychological standardized research instruments such as the Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSE) and the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI). The study found out that psychological preparedness such as coping mechanisms, self-confidence, and test strategies played a crucial role on how LET takers cope with the pressures of the board examinations. Further, such test anxiety weakened concentration, downgraded performance, and affected outcomes, impeding professional and socio-economic growth. Findings of this research posited important insights for creating organized support programs, counselling sessions, and academic interventions that were tailored to the needs, especially for teacher education students particularly the Project CALM (Coping and Academic Learning Management Program) as an initiative.

Keywords: Psychological preparedness, test anxiety, LET takers, Support programs, academic interventions

1. Introduction

In a globally competitive educational setting, one of the leading psychological barriers is to that of text anxiety, which in turn distresses education students to perform well in their academic endeavors. In such manner, licensure examinations, such as but not limited to teachers are perceived as springboards for financial security, personal growth, and professional identity. Therefore, the psychological preparedness of the test takers appeared to be of a serious factor in reducing mental health issues and ensuring success in educational landscapes.

In the Philippine context, the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) is heavily determined as a pressured assessment and well-anticipated test for pre-service teachers to pass. In the study of Mendoza et al. (2018), Filipino students experience moderate to high levels of test anxiety, especially in licensure exams. This translated to the high struggling passing rate, as regard to compliance with higher level of accreditation in bringing up concerns about the preparedness and mental health of graduates. Psychological factors which include but not limited to test anxiety, self-efficacy, and emotional regulation significantly affect licensure outcomes. Moreover, Labrador (2017) identified time pressure, fear of failure, and parental expectations as main sources of test anxiety among Filipino examinees So far, few studies have broadly examined these scopes among LET takers within the local context, making a critical gap in research and practice.

This study intends to develop evidence-based interventions for teacher education students and LET takers, focusing on academic and psychological attributes. This study can likewise help students and teachers manage test anxiety and improve psychological preparedness. It shall provide a starting point for designing mental health programs and interventions for LET takers. Policymakers and educational sectors can use this study to enhance national and local policies on board exam preparation and mental health integration in the teacher education curriculum. This study will also contribute to the growing literature on psychological preparedness and test anxiety among Filipino pre-service teachers.

Test Anxiety and Academic Performance in High-Stakes Licensure Examinations

Test anxiety is both a multifaceted and multidimensional concepts which is characterized by cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions in evaluative situations. In high-pressured examinations like professional licensure tests, which perceived consequences of passing or failing have direct impact on career growth and professional identity, and lead to financial issues which intensify test anxiety and its potential to impair performance. In recent empirical studies there is a negative correlation between high levels of test anxiety and examination performance alongside with worry and cognitive interference. This in turn limits attentional resources and working memory, reducing the speed and accuracy in test-taking. Moreso, there is a significant impairment of text anxiety with regard to academic and professional examination performance, this translated to the study of (Nathaniel P. von der Embse et al., 2018) where a strong evidence correlated to the cognitive and emotional interference.

In addition to these facts, text anxiety indicated multiple dimensions that include physiological tension and cognitive worry (D. Putwain et al., 2021). The same is true in the study of (F. Schilinger et al., 2021) where interference and lack of confidence were contributory factors let alone worry and other aspects of test performances. Moreover, (Zarafshan Masood et al., 2025) extended that negative thought patterns and anxiety create a "vicious circle" that consumes working memory resources, and impeding focus and recall. In other words, the effect varies, the consistency of these findings in various body of literature translated to these corpus that high text anxiety correlate with the reduced performance and high-stakes of examinations that involved significant professional consequences.

1.2. Test Anxiety Among Philippine Teacher Licensure Examination

Anent to the study of (Martin L. Nobis Jr. et al., 2025; John Paul Belarmino et al., 2025) it reported that the text anxiety of examinees stemmed out from various interconnected factors such as time pressure, perceived academic insufficiency, and fear of failure. These stressors manifested to arrays of mental incapacities such as sleep disturbances, physiological symptoms, and ruminations that critically obscured success in licensure examinations. Subsequently, quantitative evidence from a study of 230 respondents found anxiety as the most prevalent mental health

concern among pre-service teachers (John Paul Belarmino et al., 2025). Notably, (Donnie M. Tulud et al., 2023) identified exam stress and memorization challenges as key performance predictors. This led to a potential mitigation strategies include mindfulness techniques, structured study plans, and peer support systems (Martin L. Nobis Jr. et al., 2025).

1.3. Psychological Preparedness, Self-Efficacy, and Emotion Regulation

In the same study by (Tobias Ringeisen et al., 2018) found that high self-efficacy reduces threat appraisals and anxiety, with a notable relationship between anxiety decline and performance. Moreover, (Mu-Hsuan Chou et al., 2019) confirmed that test performance and anxiety are strong predictors of self-efficacy. This supported the claim that psychological preparedness for high-stakes tests is significantly influenced by self-efficacy, emotion regulation, and targeted interventions. Multiple studies provide robust evidence supporting this claim

On the other hand, recent research intervention particularly on the studies of (C. Huntley et al., 2019) provide a promising contribution on the body of knowledge with provided a meta-analysis of 44 randomized controlled trials (n=2,209), demonstrating interventions were superior to control conditions in reducing test anxiety (effect size g = -0.76) and improving academic performance (g = 0.37). In the same manner, (Carolyn Mcleod et al., 2021) further supported this, showing significant increases in self-efficacy and decreased worry through social-emotional learning strategies.

1.4. Sources and Expressions of Test Anxiety in Philippine LET Context

In the Philippine educational context, local studies consistently validate the research question's identified sources of student anxiety, with robust evidence across multiple regional contexts. Various literature studies confirmed, that test anxiety emphasized parental expectations, peer-pressures, societal constructs. Moreover, (Anjali Desai et al., 2024; N. Mohamad et al., 2020), found academic progression significantly impacts anxiety levels. As highlighted in the study of (A. Latifah et al., 2024; Bushara Hafeez et al., 2023) parental pressure triggers anxiety, which elaborated on various factors such as self-doubt and fear of scrutiny. In a similar study, (T. Akinduyo et al., 2023) anxiety manifestations were observed as a fight and flight response that attributed to accelerated heartbeats, while (Bushra Hafeez et al., 2023) indicated that behavioral responses include avoidance and procrastination. These empirical pieces of evidence stretch out from multiple Asian countries, as such India, Malaysia, and Pakistan which involve thousands of student-participants, providing a widely-diverse, regionally sporadic, and statistically pertinent validation of the core questions and claims of this research.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to examine psychological preparedness and test anxiety among Bachelor in Elementary Education and Bachelor in Secondary Education Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) takers of Cagayan State University at Lasam, Cagayan, Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to: (1) Determine the profile of the graduates in terms of: demographic Information such as Age; Sex; Marital Status; General Weighted Average, Determine the level of psychological preparedness; Determine the main sources and expressions of test anxiety; Determine if there is a significant relationship in psychological preparedness and test anxiety; and Propose support programs and academic interventions to help reduce test anxiety and improve psychological preparedness.

2. Methodology

Research Design

Quantitative descriptive research design was utilized in the conduct of this study. As deemed appropriate, a quantitative design was used to collect measurable data using standardized instruments, allowing for an objective analysis through statistical procedures. The research was able to generate empirical evidence that supported valid and reliable conclusions through

a quantified levels of psychological preparedness and text anxiety.

2.2. Sampling

With the advent of technology, the researcher reached out to BEEd and BSED graduates, who took the LET examinations, and retakers through online platforms due to the sporadic and scattered workplaces and respective places of the respondents. A total number of 104 BEEd and BSED graduates from CSU Lasam who took the Licensure Examination for Teachers in 2023 to 2025 were taken as respondents, hence a total enumeration was the sampling technique of this study. Data privacy was observed in the conduct of the study.

2.3. Research Instruments and Data Analysis

The study utilized the Coping Self-Efficacy Scale (CSE) developed by Margaret A. Chesney and colleagues to assess participants' perceived capability to manage stress and challenging situations. The instrument evaluated coping behaviors in terms of emotional regulation, problem-solving skills, and the ability to seek social support, which served as primary indicators of psychological preparedness. To measure the level of test anxiety among LET takers, the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) created by Charles Spielbergerwas administered. This standardized assessment identified the principal sources and manifestations of test anxiety, providing a comprehensive evaluation of how anxiety influenced examinees' performance and overall experience. The data were analyzed using the mean and percentage to describe participants' responses.

3. Results and Findings

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic Information of the sampled respondents taken as to age, sex, Marital Status and General Weighted Average as important variables of the study. Finding showed that age distribution of the 104 respondents reveals a clear concentration in the 22-26 age range. Specifically, 93 respondents, or 89.42%, fall within this age group, making it the largest category. The next most numbered groups are the 27-31 age range, with 6 respondents (5.77%), and the 32-36 age range, with 4 respondents (3.85%). The smallest groups, with 1 respondent (.96%) is the 37-41 age range. This pattern indicates that the population is significantly skewed toward younger people in their mid-twenties, as evidenced by the decreasing representation of individuals as the age groups advance.

Table 1: Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	**Frequency (n)**	**Percent (%)**
Age	22–26	93	89.42
	27–31	6	5.77
	32–36	4	3.85
	37–41	1	0.96
Sex	Male	26	25.00
	Female	78	75.00
Civil Status	Single	90	86.54
	Married	14	13.46
General Weighted Average (GWA)	91–93	12	11.54
	88–90	66	63.46
	85–87	25	24.04
	82–84	1	0.96

As shown in Table 2, a total of 78 respondents, or 75%, are female, while 26 respondents (25%) are male. highlighting a clear gender imbalance with a higher representation of females compared to males in the teaching arena. The civil status distribution of the 104 respondents

shows that the vast majority are single, with 90 respondents, or 86.54 %. A smaller portion, 14 respondents (13.46%), are married. This indicates that the group is predominantly made up of single individuals, with a much smaller proportion being married. Based on the total number of respondents, the GWA of 88-90 has the higher percentage (63.46%), meaning a substantial portion of the graduates belong to the upper-average performance bracket, while 24.04% of the respondents achieved a GWA between 85-87. Meanwhile, 11.54% or 12 respondents obtained a GWA within the 91-93 range, and only 0.96% or 1 of the respondents fall within the 82-84 bracket. This suggested that majority of the respondents demonstrated strong academic standing, which may reflect adequate preparation and mastery of the competencies required in their teacher education program of the University.

The general findings imply that the teacher education program of the University is female dominated manifesting strong academic performance and good mastery of the competencies required for the programs. Majority are single and at the proper young age which may suggest high career mobility, flexibility, and greater opportunities for professional development. The academic performance indicates ay indicate good academic standards among the students translating it into better teaching opportunities of the graduates. Hence, a noticeable imbalance on the sex segregation of the respondents may need to design initiatives to encourage more male participation in the teaching profession which will provide a balance representation of male and female in the educational field.

3.2. 2. Level of Psychological Preparedness/ Level of Coping Self-Efficacy

The data in Table 2 indicated that the highest-rated coping strategy was "Pray or meditate" (M = 9.25), which indicated that many respondents strongly rely on spirituality and mindfulness as effective means of dealing with stress and challenges. This highlighted the cultural and personal significance of faith-based coping among the respondents. Similarly, "Try other solutions if the first does not work" (M = 8.15) and "Get emotional support from friends" (M = 7.19) also scored high, reflecting flexibility in problem-solving and the value of social support systems in overcoming difficulties. On the other hand, lower ratings were observed in "Keep from feeling sad" (M = 5.11) and "Get emotional support from community organizations or resources" (M = 5.65), which suggests that respondents may find it more challenging to regulate negative emotions independently or to seek help from formal community structures. These results imply that while personal coping mechanisms and close social networks are frequently utilized, institutional or community-level resources may be underutilized. Generally, the average coping self-efficacy score of 6.77 reflects that respondents possess a reasonably strong psychological preparedness to deal with stressors. However, strengthening emotional regulation skills and enhancing awareness or accessibility of external support systems could further improve their coping capacity.

Table 2: Level of Psychological Preparedness/ Level of Coping Self-Efficacy (n=104)

Test Item	M	Descriptive Interpretation
1. Keep from getting down in the dumps	6.34	Above average confidence
2. Talk positively to yourself	6.56	Above average confidence
3. Sort out what can and cannot be changed	6.36	Above average confidence
4. Get emotional support from friends and family	6.47	Above average confidence
5. Find solutions to difficult problems	6.39	Above average confidence

6. Break an upsetting problem into smaller parts	6.40	Above average confidence
7. Leave options open during stress	6.64	Above average confidence
8. Make and follow a plan of action	6.50	Above average confidence
9. Develop new hobbies or recreations	6.68	Above average confidence
10. Take mind off unpleasant thoughts	6.36	Above average confidence
11. Look for something good in a negative situation	7.11	Above average confidence
12. Keep from feeling sad	5.12	Moderate confidence
13. See other person's point of view	6.36	Above average confidence
14. Try other solutions if first fails	8.15	High confidence
15. Stop being upset by unpleasant thoughts	6.64	Above average confidence
16. Make new friends	6.39	Above average confidence
17. Get friends to help when needed	6.25	Above average confidence
18. Do something positive when discouraged	7.19	Above average confidence
19. Make unpleasant thoughts go away	7.04	Above average confidence
20. Think about one part of problem at a time	6.80	Above average confidence
21. Visualize a pleasant activity or place	6.99	Above average confidence
22. Keep from feeling lonely	5.90	Above average confidence
23. Pray or meditate	9.25	High confidence
24. Get support from community resources	5.65	Above average confidence
25. Stand your ground and fight for what you want	7.29	Above average confidence
26. Resist impulse under pressure	6.23	Above average confidence
Average Coping Self-Efficacy	6.77	Above average confidence

Legend: Scale interpretation: 0 = Cannot do at all; 1–2 = Very low confidence; 3–4 = Low confidence; 5 = Moderate confidence; 6–7 = Above average confidence; 8–9 = High confidence; 10 = Complete confidence.

As to the implications of the finding, the teacher education program of the university is nurturing future teachers who have above average self-efficacy in which they are capable to manage problems and stress with composure and confidence despite a slight uncertainty experience on some other emotional attributes. As a program implication, it calls for better psychological interventions of the college to better prepare them on their future profession with emphasis on mental health support and emotional regulation which can be embedded on the career guidance, in-service workshops and trainings. For the university, it may pave way to better enhancement of the student services program addressing psychological vulnerabilities of the students. Further, self-efficacy among emerging educators should have been addressed proactively with the goal of a better curriculum design for student services in the higher education of the Philippines.

3.2. 3. Level of Test Anxiety of the Prospective Educators

Table 3 presents the main sources of test anxiety among respondents. The data show that the highest source of anxiety stems from concern about how others will view them if they

perform poorly, with an average percentage of 77.77%. This finding highlighted the strong influence of social evaluation and external judgment on the respondents' test performance.

The second most prominent source is concern about one's self-image (72.25%), suggesting that many respondents experience internal pressure to meet their own standards and maintain a positive sense of self. Meanwhile, concern about not being prepared for a test (69.88%) and concern about future security (67.95%) were also significant factors, though slightly lower. These results indicated that academic preparedness and worries about long-term consequences contribute to anxiety but are not as dominant as the social and self-image concerns. The findings implied that test anxiety among respondents was largely driven by social and personal self-perception pressures, more than by pragmatic concerns like preparation or future outcomes. This underscored the importance of interventions that strengthen self-confidence and resilience against external judgment.

Table 3: Main Sources and Expressions of Test Anxiety (n = 104)

Category	Dimension	Average Number of YES Responses	%
Main Sources of Test Anxiety	Concern about how others will view you if you do poorly	88.88	77.77
	Concern about your own self-image	75.14	72.25
	Concern about your future security	70.67	67.95
	Concern about not being prepared for a test	72.67	69.88
Main Expressions of Test Anxiety	Bodily reactions	67	64.42
	Thought disruptions	78	75.00
	General test-taking anxiety	76	73.08

The general implications of the study showed that the major contributors of test anxiety among the prospective teachers are related to their views on how others look at them, their future security, and their self-image while the most common reaction is seen as their thought disruptions but not physical reactions. This finding may provide implications to the program by way of integrated and structured trainings on test-taking skills, self-confidence building, and performance tasks which will help mitigate their fears. Hence, the call for revitalized and structured guidance and counselling services which is student and career cantered may provide positive interventions on the early stage level of students and eventually on their careers in higher education setting.

4. Practical Implications Of The Study Towards A Proposed University Support Programs And Academic Intervention Coined As Project Calm (Coping And Academic Learning Management Program)

In respect to the results of the study, it showed a fairly strong level of psychological preparedness and demonstrated an average coping self-efficacy of the sampled respondents. They manifested significant test anxiety driven by social and self-perception pressures, alongside with cognitive, emotional, and physical symptoms indicated that there is a need for a targeted intervention. These support programs and academic strategies are recommended. These interventions must go beyond academic preparedness and prioritize building self-confidence, emotional regulation, and resilience against social and self-perception pressures. A holistic approach that integrates cognitive, emotional, physical, and social dimensions will better equip students to manage test anxiety and

enhance psychological preparedness is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Proposed University Support Programs and Academic Interventions Based on the Results of the Study

Program Category	Proposed Interventions
Psychoeducation and Awareness Programs	• Organize workshops and seminars to increase understanding of test anxiety, its causes, and its effects on performance. • Provide guidance on healthy coping strategies, normalize anxiety experiences, and encourage help-seeking behavior.
Peer Support Services and Counseling	• Offer accessible counseling sessions focusing on stress management, emotional regulation, and self-esteem enhancement. • Establish peer support groups to reduce feelings of isolation and fear of judgment through shared experiences and mutual encouragement.
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)-Based Programs	• Implement structured CBT interventions to address negative self-talk and thought disruptions affecting exam performance. • Teach mindfulness and relaxation techniques (e.g., deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation) to manage physiological anxiety responses.
Academic Skills Enhancement Programs	• Conduct review sessions and study skills workshops to improve preparedness and self-confidence. • Provide training in time management and effective test-taking strategies to reduce performance anxiety.
Teacher Training and Supportive Learning Environment	• Train faculty to recognize symptoms of test anxiety and apply constructive assessment practices. • Encourage feedback that emphasizes growth, effort, and improvement rather than purely performance outcomes.
Comprehensive Wellness Initiatives	• Implement campus-wide wellness programs promoting psychological resilience (e.g., mindfulness sessions, fitness activities, recreational programs). • Strengthen referral systems for professional mental health services and external support networks.

This proposed University Support Programs and Academic Interventions to address the level of anxiety of the future teachers can be named as Project CALM (Coping and Academic Learning Management Program) as an innovative project of the proponent. This proposed project is needing a multisystemic and dimensional approaches that should extend beyond academic

readiness. The need for integrated approach along the areas of career guidance, counselling services, students training and workshops, faculty and student development programs, and other university policies must be harmonized towards career-friendly model of student psychological services. It is hoped that this intervention project be proposed as activity of the college and later on in the bigger scale for the university wide. It hopes to create an intervention in which it is localized and contextualized with aspiring Filipino teachers and the activities should start at the level of in-service trainings and eventually be adopted and institutionalized as policy of the University. It is for this reason that the need to shift toward holistic student development should be a long-term initiatives of higher education institutions.

4. Conclusion

Test anxiety is still a major psychological and academic worry, even though the study revealed that the respondents had a comparatively high level of coping self-efficacy. The results also showed that social evaluative pressures, such as fear of being judged negatively and self-perception issues including low self-efficacy and self-image, were the main causes of test anxiety. Test anxiety among students appears to be a complex and comprehensive element of their academic and professional development, as evidenced by the emotional anguish, cognitive disturbances, and physical symptoms that accompany these intrinsic and external pressures. The interaction between test anxiety and psychological readiness highlighted the necessity of considering academic achievement as a psychosocial process impacted by emotional control, self-concept, and social context rather than just a cognitive activity. Students' confidence in handling academic pressures, their sense of control over assessment circumstances, and their capability to reframe worry as a positive rather than a negative factor all influenced their ability to deal well. Importantly, an integrative approach that addresses social connectivity, emotional resilience, and cognitive restructuring was necessary to increase students' coping mechanisms. Furthermore, institutional initiatives must acknowledge that psychological health is essential to learning success and efficacy. A holistic and comprehensive intervention model, anchored on cognitive-behavioral approaches, psychoeducation, counseling, and supportive pedagogy, should be included within the university's academic and student affairs programs to sustain short-term and long-term mental health programs and to better performance outcomes.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are provided to have a better framework for the creation of an institutional policymaking, development of programs and future academic pursuits: (1) For Philippine Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) may take the form of psychoeducational workshops, peer-mentoring initiatives, and structured cognitive-behavioral activities designed to strengthen coping self-efficacy and reinforce adaptive performance responses; (2) For Guidance and Counseling Centers to institutionalize sustained psychological support through individualized and group-based counseling that emphasizes stress regulation,

mindfulness, and self-esteem enhancement; (3) For Faculty Members and Academic Offices to Cultivate a supportive and inclusive learning environment that reduces fear of failure and discourages negative evaluative pressures; (4) For Students to encourage higher level of active participation in programs that improve academic skills, resilience-building exercises, and self-care routines. As they learn how to control their emotions and build healthy coping skills, students need to be encouraged to fully utilize counseling services, peer support systems, and wellness resources. Ultimately, the results highlighted the necessity of a holistic, multidisciplinary approach to test anxiety, one that offers and deviates from traditional academic remediation and carefully integrates pedagogical, psychological, and policy-driven strategies. Higher education institutions can enable students to turn anxiety into meaningful

motivation by implementing a complete policy that supports mental wellbeing.

6. Conflict of Interest, Acknowledgements, Etc.

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