

Research Article

Socio-Economic, Educational and Policy Determinants of Teachers' Licensure Examination Performance: A Sequential Explanatory Approach

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<https://doi.org/10.70847/739923>

Article history:

Received: 21 May 2026

Revised: 14 June 2026

Accepted: 12 July 2026



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Abstract

This study determines the extent of the socio-economic, educational, and policy determinants influencing the performance of Teacher Education graduates in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in South Cotabato and General Santos City. Anchored on the LET Performance Enhancement Three-Tiered Theory, Schema Theory, and Expectancy-Value Theory, the research employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were gathered from Bachelor of Secondary Education graduates who took the LET from 2020 to 2024 using a validated and highly reliable self-made questionnaire, while qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions to further explain the statistical results. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean analysis and Pearson's r , were used to determine the extent of influence and relationships among variables, followed by thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings revealed that socio-economic determinants, particularly access to review materials and supportive learning environments, exerted a high influence on LET performance. Educational determinants such as the quality of teacher preparation programs and pedagogy were likewise significant predictors, while policy determinants related to exam standards and regulatory frameworks also demonstrated substantial effects. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings highlighted the multidimensional nature of licensure performance and underscored the need for institutional, curricular, and policy-level interventions. The study proposes a comprehensive intervention program aimed at strengthening teacher preparation and improving licensure outcomes.

Keywords: Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), socio-economic determinants, educational determinants, policy determinants, sequential explanatory mixed-methods design

1. Introduction

Education has always been seen as a vital piece of the puzzle when it comes to society's growth and success. With teachers being at the forefront of those impacting the next generation by delivering quality instruction and guidance to students through their teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Typically, how well someone will teach is related to standards developed through the routes provided for those who are seeking to demonstrate the ability and readiness to enter the profession through a licensure system, which is considered a mechanism for the formal determination of teacher preparedness and competence. The ways in which teachers are credentialed (i.e., 'qualified') will vary from region to region; however, there are many educational components regarding formal education and the successful completion of certification to enter the classroom. For example, in the majority of European countries, completing a degree program that is 3-5 years is required to establish that someone has obtained a degree. This is not sufficient to establish your qualifications for teaching and certification. Additional requirements to complete certification include completing certification exams and accreditation. Also, in some places, there is a minimum number of hours that someone must complete in terms of a supervised teaching experience prior to becoming fully qualified (Algate, 2022). In addition to these examples, many countries in Asia require new teachers to obtain a teaching license before they can be considered fully qualified; this pathway requires completion of an undergraduate degree program (Abao, 2023).

Even with these established systems of documentation, there is still an inequity in terms of teacher qualified status. An estimated 85% of secondary school teachers worldwide are considered to hold the minimum qualification for teaching (UNESCO International Task Force on Teachers [2023]). Much of this inequity occurs in Sub-Saharan Africa and across many parts of the globe. Persistent achievement gaps highlight the ongoing challenges in providing an equitable system of access to qualified teachers and ensuring that teachers deliver high-quality instruction consistently throughout the education system. In the Philippines, to become a teacher, prospective teachers must obtain a Bachelor's degree in education and then pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), which is administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and the Board of Professional Teachers.

The Philippine Association for Teacher Educators (PAFTE) works in collaboration with the Philippine government to enhance teacher education through the development of policies and standards for admissions, curricula, and the professional development of teachers. However, based on national performance data, there is significant concern that the LET is not yielding acceptable levels of performance from teacher education graduates. Data reported by the PRC for the time period from September 2021 to September 2023 indicated that BEED graduates (n= 32,857 students) achieved an average LET passing rate of 50.45% while BSSED graduates (n=34,967 students) achieved an average LET passing rate of 51.12%. The consistently low LET passing rates signal a systemic problem in the quality of both teacher preparation and performance assessment. Research indicates that a variety of factors, including the examinee's perception of the exam, the quality of the institution where the

teacher was prepared, and the examinee's preparedness impact performance on a licensure exam. Additionally, researchers have reported that negative perceptions of licensure examinations lead to decreased motivation, elevated anxiety levels, and lower levels of performance among licensure examinees. Furthermore, the effectiveness of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) greatly contributes to licensure outcome.

Licensure exam success is positively correlated with academic indicators (e.g., grade point averages, admission test scores) (Cahapay, 2020; Sawey-Ognayon & Afalla, 2022). On the contrary, when instructional practices do not align with licensure competencies, graduates may not have received proper preparation to meet examination requirements (Amanonce & Maramag, 2020). Institutional standards and academic preparation are also strong indicators of beginning teachers' licensure performance (Abdulmajid, 2024; Cadosales, 2023). In addition to institutional and individual factors, larger systemic influences lead to performance disparities. Disparities occur in standardized test scores due to the socioeconomic status and structural inequalities that affect candidates' performance (Nettles et al., 2011; Shuls, 2017). These disparities affect overall quality and diversity in the teaching workforce as well as licensure success rates.

Further, at the local level, performance trends further illustrate the need for urgent action. Mean passing rates of first-time examinees for the Licensure Examination for the BSED program and for General Santos City and South Cotabato between September 2021 to September 2023, recorded significantly lower mean passing rates than the national mean passing rate among BSED graduates, with a nearly 30% difference (PRC, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2023a, 2023b). These results raise significant concerns about the effectiveness of teacher education programs to adequately prepare their graduates for professional licensure.

Given that teacher quality is directly correlates with licensure examinations, this study will examine the different factors that affect the performance of teacher education graduates on the Licensure Examination for Teachers with specific attention given to Teacher Education Institutions in South Cotabato. The goal of the study is to generate evidence-based recommendations through factor identification and analysis to enhance future educators' preparedness, competence, and overall performance.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

To investigate how various factors affected graduates' performance in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and to discover whether any of these factors interacted with each other, the present study utilised a mixed-methods research methodology that consisted of a sequential explanatory method. The sequential explanatory mixed-methods design provides a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in two phases; thus, allowing for both a quantitative analysis of the direct measurable relationships between variables as well as a qualitative explanation of the relationships between the variables based on the context in which they occurred (Rosyada & Sundary, 2021). In my

opinion, the sequential explanatory mixed-methods design is particularly suitable for this study, since it employs an initial phase that collects and analyses quantitative data followed by a qualitative phase that seeks to add further clarification and explanation to the quantitative phase's findings (Rosyada & Sundary, 2021).

2.2 Research Participants

The research respondents and participants were the BSED graduates from batch 2020 to 2023 from Teacher Education institutions who have the experience of taking the licensure examination whether successfully passed or not. Since the study utilized explanatory mixed-method design, the researcher used snowball sampling to determine the respondents of the study to gather the quantitative data needed to give each respondent in the list, given by every teacher education institution, an equal chance to be selected and be part of the research. The availability of the respondents was considered in conduct of the study at hand. For the qualitative data, the researcher used the purposeful sampling technique to determine the participants of the focus group discussion. Participants in this study must be a graduate between 2020 and 2023 and must have passed the licensure examination on or before September 2024. Their availability was considered for the conduct of the interview.

2.3 Research Instruments

A self-made questionnaire, which was used in the research to assess the factors that influence the performance in the licensure examination for teachers, is employed for collecting the quantitative data. An interview guide was used for the qualitative data. The questionnaire and interview guide were validated by three experts with doctorate degrees was done to ensure that the questionnaire is of good quality and is suitable for the objective of the study. In addition, the self-survey questionnaire was tested for reliability. Cronbach's alpha tells us how closely a given set of items is correlated as a group, measured as the proportion of the total variance that is attributed to the covariances among the test items. The internal consistency reliability of the three-part questionnaire measuring the socio-economic, educational, and policy determinants of Teacher Licensure Examination performance was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The results revealed exceptionally high reliability across all sections of the instrument. Specifically, Part 1, which focused on socio-economic determinants, obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9545, indicating excellent internal consistency and suggesting that the items coherently measure the same underlying construct. Part 2, addressing educational determinants, yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9471, likewise reflecting excellent reliability and strong interrelatedness among the items. Similarly, Part 3, which examined policy determinants, produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.9438, demonstrating a very high level of internal consistency. Overall, all alpha coefficients exceeded the accepted threshold for reliability, confirming that the questionnaire is a dependable and robust instrument for examining factors influencing Teacher Licensure Examination performance.

2.4 Data Collection

A step-by-step procedure was followed by the researcher in conducting the study. The researcher sought the approval of different teacher education

institutions through their focal persons. After the approval, the administration of the questionnaires commenced and responses were gathered. The researcher then gathered the answers in the questionnaires through Google Forms to determine precise frequency and other information necessary for statistical analysis. A statistician was requested to verify the correctness of the analyses and interpretation of results for the quantitative problems. After the conduct of the questionnaire, an interview guide questionnaire was conducted to gather information from the participants of the study with regards to their challenges in taking the licensure examination and their coping mechanisms to these challenges. The researcher wrote a letter to the selected participants of the study requesting their approval to conduct the study. In addition, the researcher also sent a letter of consent as permission to allow them to participate in the interview. Interviews were conducted following proper health protocols and used recording devices.

Before the conduct of the interview, the researcher collected the consent by the participants which contains the objective of the study, the methodology, confidentiality, and benefits including the contact number of the researcher. The interview proper consists of questions about the influence of their socio-economic, educational and policy determinants in taking the licensure examination for teachers. It was also included in the consent form that the participants can refuse to answer the question, or stop the interview in their own convenience. After the interview, transcribing followed. Data were transcribed and translated after the conduct of the interview with the participants and an English professional was requested to check and verify transcribed and translated analysis to ensure correctness of the analysis and interpretation.

2.5 Data Analysis

Creswell and Creswell (2018) said that in using explanatory sequential design, there will be two phase of data analysis where it starts with the quantitative data is collected and analyzed then it is followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data which leads to interpretation. Moreover, this helps determine what quantitative results needs further explanation of the study. In the first phase of data analysis that involves quantitative data, the analysis and interpretation of data used descriptive and inferential statistics. The determinants affect the BSED graduates performance in the licensure examination for teachers was identified using mean. The significant relationship between different factors that affect their LET performance was determined using Pearson-r Moment of Correlation coefficient. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Its results were investigated further by employing the next phase of the study. In the second phase of data analysis, this involved qualitative data wherein thematic analysis used to analyze data by systematically applying interview transcripts, observation notes, or non-textual materials that accumulated to increase the understanding of this phenomenon. The transcript interviews of each participant was coded and a modified matrix for analysis will be used. Formulation of meaning from the significant statement and from the formulated concepts will be developed that would further explain the quantitative data gathered in the first phase of the study. Specifically, the researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. It is a flexible and systematic qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns of meaning within data. It is not tied

to a specific theoretical framework, allowing researchers to apply it across disciplines and epistemological positions. The approach emphasizes active researcher engagement and reflexivity, recognizing that themes are constructed through analytic decisions rather than simply emerging from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Terry et al., 2017). The merging of two data strands ensured the validity of the study through triangulation, whereby the conclusions were reaffirmed by other sources of evidence. In addition, the design is consistent with the theoretical framework of the study, which concentrates on the relationship of structural, cognitive, and motivational dimensions that regulate licensure outcomes. Through the sequential explanatory mixed-methods, the research has produced findings that, from a methodological perspective, are valid and practical, especially when dealing with institutional actions, policy recommendations, and the development of programs requested by the LET.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations involved in the research are among its most important components. No harm of any kind should ever be done to research participants. Priority was given to treating research subjects with dignity, and full consent should be obtained before the study begins, particularly when dealing with the population and data, including but not limited to:

Informed Consent. Research participants thoroughly informed of the study's goals, procedures, and privileges within the confines of the study. Respondents' agreement to participate was entirely voluntary. They were informed in writing the outline of the steps of the survey and all pertinent information relating to this study. Responses were kept confidential and their identities were excluded from the survey forms. Participant were fully aware that they may not opt out of the study at any time. Before sharing any of the data collected, the researcher carefully adhered to an informed consent protocol. Participant felt more in control of their personal information to restrain apprehension of disclosure of any information from them.

Voluntary Participation. The freedom to participate was offered to the participants, and there was no expectation of consequences, compensation, or loss of benefits. As a result, after being informed of the goals and objectives of the study, the participant's rights to add to the body of knowledge were carefully assessed and anticipated. This study's subjects will not have compelled to take part. At any point during the study, they can decline participating in case of uncomfortable feeling.

Confidentiality of Data. Participants' privacy rights shall not be breached without their knowledge in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which protects the fundamental human right. Giving respondents the opportunity to omit their names from the survey questionnaire is one technique to safeguard their anonymity and privacy in this quantitative study. As a result, their identity was kept secret for their own safety even their responses to the items.

Communication of Results. Researcher will communicate the results of the study honestly and credibly by submitting the manuscript to plagiarism – detection tools like Grammarly. This will make sure that there will be no

indication of improper interpretation of someone else's work. Through this, the interpretation of the paradigm will be strengthened in order to generate legitimate research paper.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Extent of Socio-economic Determinant Influencing the Licensure Examination for Teachers

The perceived overall socio-economic determinants impacting the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) performance of Teacher Education Institution graduates in South Cotabato can be seen in Table 1. Table 1 indicates there is a statistically significant relationship between all socio-economic determinants and the preparation and performance of LET examinees since the grand mean of the data is 3.77 and the standard deviation is .74. Therefore, overall it shows there is a "High Extent - Determinant Significantly Affecting Exam Results."

Table 1. Extent of Socio-economic Determinant Influencing the Licensure Examination for Teachers

Indicator	Overall mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Access and Reviewer	4.00	0.82	High Extent
Actual Environment Influence	4.02	0.46	High Extent
Financial Constraints	3.29	0.95	Moderate Extent
Grand Mean	3.77	0.74	High Extent

The strong influence of socio-economic attributes as indicated in Table 1 support current studies that indicate economic background, resource availability, and environment where the examinee studied play a large role in determining the examination outcomes. According to Erling et al. (2020), economic background will affect examinees through both their academic performance and psychological well-being. Furthermore, Yeh (2020) supports that the performance gap resulted from socio-economic disparities related to resources available for learning as well as the preparation opportunities have a negative prolonged impact on performance. The World Bank (2022) asserts that socio-economic status provides substantial influence when taking the exam through the availability of resources to aid preparation and the ability of the examinee to effectively study in an environment conducive to learning and comfort. Therefore, results presented in Table 1 produce an average mean that represents a strong impact from socio-economic attributes impacting student performance of licensure examinations.

3.2. Extent of Educational Determinant Impacting the Licensure Examination for Teachers

As presented in Table 2, the impact of educational factors on the performance of graduates who have completed their Teacher Education Institution (TEI) and are seated for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in South Cotabato has a grand mean score of high influence (M=4.14 and

SD=0.64). Educational factors have a significant impact on the outcome of the exam and provide the TEI students with adequate preparation for taking the LET. Educational factors that were rated as significant contributors to LET success include: teacher preparation programs, teaching styles and pedagogy, and assistance and support during review for the LET.

Table 2. Extent of Educational Determinant Impacting the Licensure Examination for Teachers

Indicator	Overall mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
Quality of Teacher Preparation Program	4.20	0.63	High Extent
Teaching Methods and Pedagogy	4.36	0.53	High Extent
Support and Guidance during Preparation	3.84	0.77	High Extent
Grand Mean	4.14	0.64	High Extent

Based on the information in Table 2, the educational factors exhibited high overall influence on the actual performance of the students. Current literature supports this result; Amanonce and Maramag (2020) found that high-quality teacher preparation directly predicts successful performance on licensure examinations for teachers. Further, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) indicated that there is a direct relationship between successful performance on a licensure exams and an aligned teacher preparation program that incorporates conceptual knowledge and pedagogical applications, as well as prepares candidates to pass the licensure examination. In addition, OECD (2023) reported that graduates from a teacher preparation program that is adequately supported and well-structured are more likely to be successful on their licensing examinations. The support for the high grand mean in Table 2 is entirely consistent with this perspective.

3.3. Extent of Policy Determinant Affecting the Licensure Examination for Teachers

Table 3 explores the perceived level of the policy determinants' impact on the performance in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) from the perspective of the Teacher Education Institution graduates in South Cotabato. The grand mean of 4.43 and the standard deviation of 0.69, interpreted as a high extent, illustrate that the determinants related to policies can affect the LET performance to a considerable degree. The graduates believe that the set of policies encompassing the exam content, equity and diversity, and regulatory standards collectively contribute to the licensure examination readiness, competence, and confidence.

Table 3. Extent of Policy Determinant Affecting the Licensure Examination for Teachers

Indicator	Overall mean	Standard deviation	Interpretation
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Exam, Standard, and Content	4.45	0.47	High Extent
Equity and Diversity Policies	4.58	0.48	Very High Extent
Regulatory Standards	4.59	0.46	Very High Extent
Grand Mean	4.54	0.47	Very High Extent

Additionally, all policy determinants remained at a relatively high level, meaning that the graduates believe that defined, stringent, and inclusive policies improve LET performance. These findings confirm that policy frameworks are crucial to maintaining quality teacher preparation and licensure and allow for pedagogical competence and the development of future credible teachers. The results echo the modern research that links the high influence of the policy determinants on LET, implying that licensure examination outcomes are significantly regulated by the policy frameworks of assessment, equity, and regulation. In particular, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) discovered that licensure-related policies act as structures that allow for defining competency levels in teachers and shaping the difference in preparation among the educational institutions. Meanwhile, the OECD (2021) suggests that assessment policies that are aligned and well-defined lead to a better and more effective licensure examination. Schleicher (2023) also notes that a good alignment between the teacher education institutions and the licensure body results in better readiness of the graduates and thus the higher performance on the examination. The aforementioned perspectives prove the high grand mean observed in Table 3 that the policy determinants influence LET outcomes.

3.4. Licensure Examination Performance of BSED Graduates

Table 4 reveals data on 2021-2024 performance of public education institutions on the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET), the time periods and the percentage of first-time test-takers. Schools C through F experienced significant increases in the LET pass rates from 2023-2024 (where most pass rates exceeded 80-90%) compared to their passing percentage rates from 2021-2022 (the national average passing rate was approximately 41.72-58.78%).

The results from the previous periods (2021-2022) indicate that schools C through F were negatively impacted by loss of learning and inequities surrounding teacher education (due to being unable to conduct practicums) and other problems related to the assessment of teacher education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Flores & Gago, 2020; König et al., 2022).

Table 4. Licensure Examination Performance of BSED Graduates

LET Exam	School							National Passing Rate
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
2024 September	71.43%	87.50%	89.96%	94.17%	87.50%	70.27%	77.87%	56.89%
2024 March	0.00%	38.46%	66.67%	94.29%	100.00%	78.57%	37.50%	58.78%
2023 September	66.67%	75.00%	81.63%	85.71%	100.00%	87.10%	76.13%	56.26%

2023 March	30.77%	38.46%	53.85%	82.86%	75.00%	55.06%	53.85%	46.94%
2022 October	50.00%	55.93%	78.41%	77.21%	66.67%	65.32%	46.81%	50.94%
2022 January	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%	0.00%	53.77%
		%	%	%				
2021 September	20.00%	57.89%	70.21%	70.37%	84.67%	59.09%	63.64%	57.76%

3.5. Significant Relationship between variables

According to relaying results, all of the null hypothesis were rejected, as can be seen in Table 5, confirming significant relationships exist among social and economic, educational, and policy related determinants present in the study. The relationship between education and social/ economic determinants produced an R-square score equal to .16, while the relationship between social/economic and policy related determinants produced an R-square score equal to .19.

These two degrees of influence support the assertion that social/ economic influences have an impact on both education and policy related to educational success. The strongest relationship, by far, of the three relationships was established between education and policy, with an R-square score equal to .28.

Table 5. Significant Relationship between the Determinants

Variables	R Square	P-Value	Decision	Interpretation
Socio-Economic Determinants and Educational Determinants	0.16	2.25	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship
Socio-Economic Determinants and Policy Determinants	0.19	1.37	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship
Educational Determinants and Policy Determinants	0.28	6.34	Reject Ho	Significant Relationship

This finding supports the assertion that the relationship between education and policy strongly influences educational success, as higher levels of educational outcomes are achieved where policies support the delivery of educational services to students (Flores & Gago, 2020; König et al., 2022). Results further support the expectation that all three determinant categories interact with each other and, thus, all form a part of the totality of factors that impact educational outcome and success of the respondents in this study and, therefore, there is a significant degree of interaction among the various types of factors that together account for the educational success of this study's respondents (Flores & Gago, 2020; König et al., 2022).

3.6. The Influence of Different Determinants in the Performance of BSED Graduates in the Licensure Examination for Teachers

The qualitative data obtained through the study of socio-economic, educational and policy determinants and graduates of education in their Licensure Exam for Teaching (LET) is shared in the tables seen above. Semi-structured

interviews with five graduates of the Bachelor of Secondary Education were conducted as part of the qualitative aspect of this study. The interviews allowed for a rich and detailed examination of how socio-economic, educational and policy determinants impact a graduate's performance on the LET. Thematic analysis resulted in the identification of seven predominant themes among the qualitative data. Each of these domains was distinctly related to the three differential factors; moreover, the themes further exhibit the inter-connectedness of all three differential factors as they correlate with the performance of LET graduates.

Table 6. Structural Inequities Shaping Access to LET Preparation

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Financial Barriers to Formal Review	Structural Inequities Shaping Access to LET Preparation
Unequal Access to Materials and Resources	
Reliance on Informal or Alternative Supports	
Socioeconomic background shaping preparation	

The findings make clear that the participants' access to LET (Licensure Exam for Teachers) preparation and their performance on the examination itself has been greatly impacted by structural socio-economic inequity. Many of those in low income and single parent households or from geographic locations that have been historically disadvantaged, could not afford commercial review centre(s) or other learning materials. As a result, they used borrowed resources, free online materials and self-funding for their exam preparation.

These circumstances represent broader socio-economic disparities that restrict individuals' ability to access quality review opportunities and an adequate study environment (Darling-Hammond, 2017; OECD, 2019). The studies also indicate that working full-time while preparing for the LET created time poverty, fatigue, stress and an inability to adequately prepare, thereby negatively impacting academic performance and retention (Reyes & de Guzman, 2021; David et al., 2022). While self-regulated learning and personal motivation may play a role in helping some candidates to succeed despite the challenges associated with working, the findings suggest that performance on the LET is not only influenced by individual ability and effort, but significantly impacted by the lack of access to materials and resources and institutional support, and by the nature of the socio-economic status of candidates.

Table 7. Time Poverty and Burden While Preparing for Licensure

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Employment competing with review time	Time Poverty and Burden While Preparing for Licensure
Time scarcity and exhaustion	
Health consequences of over exhaustion	
Compromised quality of preparation	

Findings of this study confirm that participants' preparation for the Licensing Exam for Teachers was drastically impacted by time poverty and work-related burdens. Many participants engaged in full-time work, freelance jobs or family responsibilities while engaged in studying which led to fatigue and illness and also restricted study hours and lowered quality of their preparation. It is evident from their experience of preparation that socio-economic disadvantage impacts more than just the availability of resources; it also reduces the time and cognitive capacity necessary to be effective in reviewing for the exam. The literature suggests that pre-service teachers who work while preparing for an examination commonly experience overload from too much information, fragmentation of their study schedules, and exhaustion; all have negative effects on performance on high-stakes exams (Kalenkoski & Pabilonia, 2020; Nonis & Hudson, 2016). In particular to the Philippines, multiple studies show pre-service teachers with limited financial means are more likely to work while they are studying leading to irregularities in the preparation for the exam and lower retention caused by lack of institutional support (Malubay & Dela Cruz, 2018; Oducado & Estoque, 2021). Collectively, the findings within the study illustrate that performance on the Licensing Exam for Teachers is a representation of the larger structural inequities that are at play; when there are financial demands upon examinees as well as competing obligations for their time, the resulting performance on the Licensing Exam for Teachers is largely a function of those social structures rather than solely dependent upon individual competence and motivation.

Table 8. Institutional Preparation Amidst Uneven Quality and Pandemic Disruptions

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Disruption of instructional continuity	Institutional Preparation Amidst Uneven Quality and Pandemic Disruptions
Variability in institutional LET preparation	
Structured institutional review mechanisms	
Gaps in institutional assessment readiness	

Results of the study conducted by the LET and the Teachers Education Institutions (TEI) show considerable discrepancy among TEIs regarding the level of institutional preparation facilitated for LET. The majority of TEIs have offered comprehensive review programs, diagnostic testing, and preparation for LET, while many TEIs were unable to provide any level of preparation due to disruptions created by COVID-19. Additionally, as there was a transition to remote/hybrid learning, there was a disruption of instructional continuity, decreased retention of instructional materials, and decreased readiness to take the LET exam, particularly for TEIs that lacked adequate digital resources or prepared faculty (Tria, 2020; CHED, 2021). Therefore, the results of the study suggest that LET performance is impacted by individual ability as well as institutional readiness, resource availability, and responsiveness to crises. Previous research supports these findings, where TEIs that provide integrated review programs, have qualified faculty members, and provide formative assessment typically perform better on the LET as well as instill confidence in their students (Ballado et al., 2019; De Vera & Manalo, 2020). However, the pandemic has increased existing education disparities, particularly among TEIs

lacking adequate resources, indicating a pressing need to create equitable, resilient, and supportive licensure preparation systems in teacher education programs (Cleofas & Rocha, 2021).

Table 9. Social and Emotional Support

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Peer-based academic and emotional support	Social and Emotional Support
Family encouragement and moral support	
Emotional pressure and expectations	
Coping with anxiety and self-doubt	

Social and emotional support also played a major role in LET preparation, according to the participants in this study. They indicated that family and peers motivated them through encouragement, accountability, and learning resources, thus improving their confidence and motivation to study. However, those who received this support also felt tremendous pressure and had a high level of expectation to succeed, especially those who were honor graduates or were going to be the primary breadwinners in their families. Due to the pressure from their families and society, these students experienced great fear of not being successful in the LET. Thus, social support served as a double-edged sword, providing emotional stability while concurrently increasing performance-related anxiety and psychological burden. Additionally, social relationships and expectations were social influences affecting the manner in which students prepared for and performed on the LET, which supports the sociocultural theory of learning. Findings from studies conducted by De Guzman and Balagtas (2018) and Dela Peña and Guanzon (2021) related to the positive impact of familial and peer encouragement on strengthening students' motivation and confidence, particularly in collectivistic societies such as the Philippines. Conversely, Bernardo et al. (2018) and Alampay and Jocson (2020) supported the idea that too much involvement from the family or too high of expectations could lead to an increase in a student's psychological stress, fear of failure, and performance tension. Additionally, the emotional regulation and coping strategies identified by Putwain et al. (2015) and Pekrun and Perry (2014) were effective methods for students to use in order to mitigate test anxiety and cognitive overload, and the reflective self-assessment and resilience identified by Aquino (2019) and David et al. (2022) helped many exam takers successfully use the pressure placed on them as a mechanism for increasing their personal/professional growth and perseverance.

Table 10. Individual Coping and Learning Strategies

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Self-directed and adaptive review strategies	Individual Coping and Learning Strategies
Strategic review alignment	
Metacognitive awareness and learning style adjustment	
Personal discipline and motivation	

The results from the analysis illustrate that the LET examinees employed several personal and adapted strategies to cope with their examination experience. These approaches were seen as effective means of coping with both structural and institutional barriers encountered when studying for the LET. The participants relied on self-directed mechanisms of study from the TOS such as selectively reviewing items based on the TOS, utilizing freely available resources online, and developing individualized strategies for studying based on their perceived strengths, weaknesses and learning styles. The use of these strategies was indicative of their metacognitive awareness and self-regulated learning, both of which were viewed by the participants as necessary and sources of pride. The importance of self-directed learning, planning and metacognitive strategies are cited as significant predictors of success in high-stakes examinations (Panadero, 2017; Zimmerman & Schunk, 2019).

In the same vein, Balagtas et al. (2019) and David & Malilong (2021) noted that LET examinees in the Philippines often compensate for curricular and institutional deficiencies in their preparation for the LET by using TOS-based preparation, online learning platforms and materials obtained independently of the institution. The reliance on self-directed preparation is viewed as privatizing the success of licensure examinations by transferring the burden from the institution to the individual through resilience, adaptability and discipline. In addition, CHED (2017) and Morales et al. (2020) state that prior academic capital and developed metacognitive abilities create disparities among Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in their ability to employ such strategies. Moreover, studies conducted by De Mesa et al. (2022) and Dizon & Gador (2018) found that the ability to secure uninterrupted time for studying, access to review materials and obtain access to review centres is strongly influenced by socio-economic status and therefore provides advantages to examinees with superior financial and academic resources. While discipline, motivation, and faith were identified as sustaining persistence for LET examinees (Corpuz & Sarmiento, 2020), Morales and Roxas (2019) cautioned that emphasising resilience may act to obscure systemic inequities related to curriculum alignment, assessment preparation, and policy support. Therefore, personal coping strategies should be considered as adaptive responses to systemic social-economic, educational, and institutional constraints rather than as comprehensive solutions to examination preparation.

Table 11. Curriculum Gaps and Assessment Mismatch

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Misalignment between CHED curriculum and LET	Curriculum Gaps and Assessment Mismatch
Uncovered or underemphasized LET content	
Uneven assessment preparation	
Overemphasis on low-level cognition in LET	

Curriculum gaps and an assessment mismatch were found to be concerns for the LET exam takers. Participants noted inconsistencies between the prescribed CHED curriculum and what the LET assesses, especially with regard to General Education and major areas of study. There were incidents in which some of the topics that are assessed on the LET were not sufficiently covered

and/or absent from undergraduate studies. The LET relies heavily on questions that require recall rather than authentically assessing the pedagogical competencies of an individual who is being tested. As a result of this misalignment, even though graduates may have performed well academically, many of them may still struggle on the LET because they have been negatively affected by the misalignment of the curriculum and their associated license exam, and thus, unduly jeopardizing the reliability of the LET as a gatekeeping mechanism for the profession of teaching.

Additionally, the findings by Irene (2023) that found a significant relationship between curriculum-content misalignment and licensure performance shows that curriculum-content misalignment significantly affects the manner in which the graduate performs on the licensure exam, especially with regard to General Education and the academic specialization areas of the graduate. In a like manner, the findings of Banjal et al. (2025) also emphasized that there is no reasonable degree of constructively aligned curriculum, learning activities, or assessments in Teacher Education Programs (TEPs) which limits graduates' transfer of what they learned while in the classroom to what they will be assessed on during their licensure exam and raises questions about the reliability and validity of using the LET as an indicator of professional readiness. Participants cited as evidence of their findings with respect to uncovered LET topics, insufficient exposure to test-taking strategies, and overemphasis on recall or memorization-based questions the findings of Abao et al., (2023) which linked curriculum relevancy and instructional practices to the outcomes of licensure exams. The misalignment between and among curriculum, TEIs, and the licensure exam places the bulk of the burden of preparing for the exam on individual examinees and private review centers doing so only reinforces the inequities as it relates to TEIs capacity and their access to outside resources. Issues with both are found in the Joint Memorandum Circular (2025) from the Professional Regulation Commission and the Commission on Higher Education to strengthen curriculum-assessment alignment and provide cohesion between teacher education programs and licensure standards.

Table 12. Policy Awareness and Implementation Gaps

Clustered Themes	Emergent Theme
Inadequate dissemination of incentives and subsidies	Policy awareness and implementation gaps
Limited awareness of LET-Related policies	
Calls for systemic policy reform	
Perceived policy inconsistency and unfairness	

Researchers were able to say that most of the LET examinees did not have a large amount of knowledge about the policies associated with the exam; such as Republic Act No. 7836, which mentions the testing process, the review subsidies for exams, and post-exam incentives. Many did not realize there were policies that helped them until after they had taken or passed the LET. Because of administrative barriers to accessing help in their institutions and the financial benefits that were available to them, examinees may not have been aware of what they were entitled to even though they were eligible.

This information suggests that not only the type of policy design but also the way in which that policy is disseminated and carried out at TEIs determine what licensure outcomes will occur. In particular, the lack of a formal process was a disadvantage to those students from backgrounds that were uninformed or lacked resources; therefore, the distribution of information creates an asymmetry in access to that information to be considered a type of informational capital. The work of Ball, Maguire, and Braun (2016) and Walker and Musti-Rao (2016) support this theory because each discussed the important impact of awareness of licensure policy in helping examinees maximize all of the resources that are available to them in navigating the licensure process. Likewise, Balagtas, Avelino, and Limos (2019) and De Guzman, Edaña, and Umayam (2017) reported upon the existence of many future educators having just procedural knowledge regarding LET-related policies and very little understanding of eligibility criteria, incentives to take the licensure exam, or new opportunities that come after taking the licensure exam. Other studies conducted by the Commission on Higher Education or the Professional Regulation Commission have also recognized that there is weak institutional mediation of the licensure policy; therefore, students have generally been provided with either uncoordinated or insufficient orientations to the policies (CHED, 2020; PRC, 2018). In addition, research on Republic Act No. 10931, and the UNIFAST financial assistance program have documented continuing issues with delayed financial assistance, required paperwork, and inconsistent enforcement of the policy that impacts students who are not financially secure (Orbeta et al., 2019; UNESCO Bangkok, 2021). In other studies, while Review Subsidies, Mock Board Exams, and Academic Assistance received is positively correlated with improved LET scores, the distribution of these benefits is inconsistent across TEIs (Balagtas et al., 2019; Bernardo, 2021). Therefore, the findings suggest that unless there is equitable distribution, effective implementation, and mechanisms for accountability associated with LET-related policies, these policies may only serve to reinforce current economic and educational inequity, rather than decrease that inequity.

Implications for Future Research

The results of this mixed-methods investigation suggest several directions for future research. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine graduates' licensure preparation trajectories over time, from pre-review to post-examination stages, in order to establish clearer causal relationships among socio-economic, educational, and policy determinants. Such approaches may provide deeper insights into how various constraints and support mechanisms interact across different phases of LET preparation. Future research should also conduct comparative and multi-institutional studies across public and private Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), as well as across diverse geographic and socio-economic contexts, to identify institutional best practices and systemic gaps that may inform more targeted educational and policy interventions. Moreover, experimental or quasi-experimental studies are needed to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions identified in the present study, including institution-led free review programs, flexible review modalities, and curriculum-alignment initiatives. Assessing their effects on LET performance and passing rates may provide stronger empirical evidence for policy formulation and institutional practice. Given the significant influence of psychosocial factors in

the qualitative findings, future studies should likewise explore motivation, test anxiety, self-regulated learning, resilience, and emotional support using mixed-method or psychometric approaches. Additional investigations focusing on policy awareness, dissemination, and implementation fidelity are also recommended to better understand the gap between licensure policy intentions and their actual impact on examinees' preparation experiences and examination outcomes.

3.7. LET-READY Program

A school System to Provide Fair and Reconciled Teacher Preparation Licensure. The LET-READY (Licensure Education for Teachers – Readiness, Equity, Alignment, and Development for You) Program is proposed in response to empirical evidence showing that performance in the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) is shaped by interrelated socio-economic, educational, and policy determinants, rather than by academic competence alone. Quantitative findings indicate that socio-economic determinants influence LET performance at a high extent (Grand Mean = 3.77), particularly in terms of access to review resources (mean = 4.00) and learning environment and social support (mean = 4.02), while financial constraints (mean = 3.29) continue to limit consistent and focused preparation. These results suggest that although LET preparation resources are widely recognized as important, access to them remains uneven among education graduates.

Qualitative findings explain the mechanisms underlying these numerical trends. Graduates narrated experiences of exclusion from commercial review centers due to financial limitations, reliance on borrowed or free materials, and the need to work while preparing for the LET, which resulted in time poverty, fatigue, anxiety, illness, and fragmented study routines. These lived experiences demonstrate that financial constraints operate indirectly but persistently, shaping preparation quality and readiness.

As such, LET performance reflects not only effort and motivation but also structural access and institutional support, highlighting the need for a school-based, equity-oriented intervention. Educational determinants were also found to exert a high extent of influence on LET performance (Grand Mean = 4.14), with teaching methods and pedagogy (mean = 4.36) and quality of teacher preparation programs (mean = 4.20) emerging as the strongest contributors. Participants emphasized that LET-aligned instruction, mock examinations, and competent faculty increased their confidence and mastery of competencies. However, qualitative data revealed uneven institutional readiness, particularly during pandemic-related disruptions, indicating that strong curricula alone are insufficient without systematic and sustained implementation.

While LET policies were generally perceived as fair, standardized, and merit-based, qualitative narratives revealed a policy–practice gap, where fairness in examination design did not guarantee fairness in preparation opportunities. This disconnect underscores the need for an institutional mechanism that actively translates policy intent into equitable preparation practices. The LET-READY Program is therefore proposed as a reconciled school system that embeds licensure preparation within institutional structures, aligns curriculum with

licensure standards, and addresses socio-economic and psychosocial barriers affecting education graduates.

4. Conclusions

Findings suggest that factors affecting LET outcomes are a blend of three broad categories of determinants: effects of socio-economic conditions (affecting the number of available resources to be used for preparing and how much time will be allowed for preparation), educational conditions (provide the best opportunity for readiness), and policy conditions (particularly related to communication and implementation -lack thereof). Socioeconomic condition is the greatest influence on whether or not populations have access to prepared resources as well as time to prepare for the exam. Educational conditions are responsible for providing adequate education necessary for accountability; however, many universities and colleges do not provide criteria for adequate alignment between the campus curriculum and the program being taught locally. Additionally, many programs, while aligned with the state approved curriculum, including the state approved test, fail to align with effective implementation by various stakeholders. The significant correlational relationship between the three determinants shows that they interact with and positively influence the other two determinants, to produce license outcomes. Therefore, LET performance is a reflection of the larger systems in which teacher education takes place.

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), in collaboration with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), strengthen institutional support systems for LET preparation by providing free or subsidized review programs, including access to comprehensive learning materials, structured review sessions, and mock examinations. To ensure alignment between instruction and licensure requirements, TEIs should regularly review and map their curricula against LET standards and integrate board-oriented teaching strategies, such as higher-order thinking assessments and diagnostic evaluations, across courses. In response to the challenges of time poverty among working graduates, institutions are encouraged to adopt flexible and inclusive review modalities, including modular, blended, or asynchronous approaches that accommodate diverse learner needs.

Furthermore, there is a need to improve the dissemination and implementation of licensure-related policies by ensuring that graduates are well-informed about examination procedures, financial assistance, and available incentives through clear, timely, and accessible communication. Stakeholders should also provide targeted financial and academic support to economically disadvantaged graduates to reduce inequalities in access to preparation resources. In addition, TEIs should strengthen psychosocial support services, such as counseling, peer mentoring, and stress management programs, to help examinees cope with the pressures of licensure preparation. Finally, the institutionalization of structured preparation systems, such as the LET-READY Program, is highly recommended to integrate equity, curriculum alignment, and student support into

a unified framework, while future research should continue to explore interventions and variables that can further enhance LET performance.

Supplementary Details

Supplementary Materials & Data availability statement (If Applicable):

Not applicable

Author Contributions:

Two researchers collaborated on the creation of this paper; one researcher (Ms. Fajartin) was primarily responsible for developing the Introduction chapter, and another researcher (Dr. Ortizo) was responsible for reviewing and ensuring the overall quality of the paper. Ms. Fajartin was responsible for writing the Introduction chapter, interpreting the findings developed through quantitative analysis, creating a concise summary of the study, and for providing a detailed discussion of the overall study. In contrast, Dr. Ortizo was responsible for providing a detailed comprehensive review based on his knowledge, and he validated both the methods and results of the study through the process of peer review. Dr. Ortizo's validation of the methodology and results was critical in making the required refinements to the manuscript.

Funding:

This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for educational research. Necessary permissions were secured from the concerned educational authorities and participating schools prior to the conduct of the study.

Informed Consent Statement:

The study adhered to ethical standards in research involving human participants. Prior to data collection, participants were provided with a comprehensive informed consent form detailing the purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and their rights, including voluntary participation and the option to withdraw at any time without

Conflicts of Interest:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Disclosure Statement:

In the course of writing the study, the following AI tools were employed, along with their specific applications; such as: ChatGPT – helped in grammar correction, paraphrasing, formatting and structure of the text in the manuscript. Scite AI – helped in locating the relevant literature and referencing styles in the processes of reviewing related literature. All the AI-aided material underwent thorough validation and revision by the author to assess the accuracy, integrity, and correspondence with the findings of the study, and interpretations and conclusions are the prerogative of the author.

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Cite as: Fajartin, C. D., & Ortizo, G. (2026). Socio-Economic, Educational and Policy Determinants of Teachers' Licensure Examination Performance: A Sequential Explanatory Approach. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies in Higher Education*, 3(3), 51–76.
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