

# Triumph and Tenacity: Uncovering the Journey of BSSW Graduate Repeating the Social Work Licensure Examination

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**Abstract:** This qualitative narrative study explores the lived experiences of Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) graduates who passed the Social Work Licensure Examination (SWLE) as repeat examinees. Grounded in Garmezy's Resilience Theory, the study investigates the emotional, academic, and logistical challenges they encountered after failing their first attempt. It examines their coping mechanisms, support systems, and advice for future repeat takers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with BSSW graduates from South Cotabato who had failed the SWLE at least once and later passed. Findings reveal that participants experienced intense emotional distress, societal pressure, and systemic disadvantages, yet demonstrated resilience through spiritual grounding, family and peer support, and goal-setting strategies. Their insights emphasize the value of mental toughness, institutional support, and tailored review preparation. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of perseverance in professional licensure and informs educational institutions on how to better support their social work graduates.

**Keywords:** Triumph, Tenacity, Journey, Bssw Graduate, Licensure Examination.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ Rationale

Retaking the Social Work Licensure Examination (SWLE) presents numerous challenges for Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) graduates who do not pass on their first attempt. For these individuals, the exam can evoke feelings of stigma, defeat, and discouragement. The path to obtaining a professional license for many is often marked by setbacks and the daunting task of retaking an extensive examination. According to data from the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), in September 2023, a notable achievement in the field of social work was recorded, with 3,878 out of 6,833 takers—56.75%—successfully passing the SWLE. It is important to note that this figure includes repeat examinees, among whom 299 individuals nationwide participated, with 22 repeat examinees coming from educational institutions in the province of South Cotabato.

Witte et al. (2019) examined the experiences of social work students who had repeatedly failed the licensing exam. Their study revealed that the act of retaking the exam caused

significant emotional distress, as well as feelings of shame and embarrassment. Participants expressed doubts about their abilities as social workers, which further compounded their struggles. In addition, candidates may face financial and practical obstacles, such as the need to take time off from work or invest in additional study materials (Graybeal et al., 2018).

Apgar et al. (2022) found that graduates with a BSSW degree from accredited universities who participated in licensure exam review programs were more likely to pass the test. This qualitative study aims to understand the experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, support networks, and advice of BSSW graduates who have embarked on the rigorous journey to becoming licensed social workers. Specifically, it focuses on those who passed the SWLE as repeat examinees.

The preceding information and data have motivated the researcher to conduct this study. As a future social worker, I recognize the significance of this research in shedding light on the challenges and resilience of repeat examinees. The insights gained from this study can inform efforts to foster

perseverance and professional growth among graduates. Furthermore, the findings may serve as a valuable resource for Higher Education Institutions offering the social work program, enabling them to better support their graduates and positively influence their performance in licensure examinations.

#### ➤ *Research Objectives*

The purpose of this study was to uncover the journey of the BSSW repeat examinees in taking the Social Work Licensure Examination. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are their experiences taking the Social Work Licensure Examination for the first time?
- What are the challenges they encountered in taking the Social Work Licensure Examination for the first time?
- How do they cope with the challenges?
- What support system do they rely on in their journey to passing the Social Work Licensure Examination?
- What advice can they give to other repeat examinees for them to pass the Social Work Licensure Examination?

#### ➤ *Theoretical Lens*

This narrative study on the experiences of BSSW repeat examinees of the Social Work Licensure Examination is underpinned by the Resilience Theory of Dr. Norman Garmezy, a psychological framework that seeks to understand how individuals navigate adversity and achieve positive outcomes despite significant challenges. Although initially conceived within the realm of psychology, this theory has found applications across various fields, including social work (Zimmerman, 2013). According to Resilience Theory, a resilient individual is not necessarily someone who exhibits extreme bravery in the face of adversity; rather, resilience is demonstrated by someone who can maintain functional adequacy despite emotional turmoil (Romanciuc, 2022).

This theoretical perspective can be applied to investigate how BSSW graduates demonstrate resilience in their efforts to pass the licensure exam after failing. Resilience Theory posits that resilience is not merely the absence of psychological disorders but a dynamic process through which individuals demonstrate positive adaptation when confronted with adversity. It emphasizes that individuals possess the capacity for personal growth and development, even when faced with significant life challenges. In this context, resilience is seen as the result of a complex interplay between internal and external protective factors (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Garmezy's Resilience Theory provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding and exploring the experiences of BSSW repeat examinees as they navigate the challenges of obtaining social work licensure. This approach not only enhances our understanding of their experiences but also offers practical insights that can contribute to improvements in support mechanisms within social work education and licensure processes. Ultimately, it highlights the remarkable perseverance and tenacity displayed by these

individuals as they work towards achieving their professional goals, despite facing substantial obstacles.

#### ➤ *Significance of the Study*

This study explores the experiences of Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) graduates retaking the Social Work Licensure Examination, presenting valuable insights for various sectors. Higher education institutions can adjust their curricula and support systems to better prepare students for the exam, while the Licensure Examination Board Committee may use the findings to enhance policies and accommodations for repeat examinees. Social work teachers can alter their teaching tactics and study materials to address typical problems, enabling more effective exam preparation. Additionally, parents can have a deeper knowledge of the difficulties their children endure, enabling them to provide stronger emotional and logistical assistance. For social work students, the study serves as a resource to assist them navigate exam preparation more efficiently, supporting proactive learning practices and institutional support-seeking.

Finally, future researchers can build upon these findings to explore broader factors influencing licensure success, such as exam readiness programs and socioeconomic impacts, fostering continued improvements in the field. By highlighting the struggles and strategies of repeat examinees, this study contributes to educational, policy, and support structures, ultimately advancing professional standards in social work.

#### ➤ *Delimitations and Limitations*

The qualitative narrative study focuses on uncovering the journey of BSSW (Bachelor of Science in Social Work) graduates who retake the Social Work Licensure Examination. This study is delimited to five to seven participants who meet the following criteria: having a BSSW degree regardless of their graduation year, having enrolled in a review course to prepare for the Social Work Licensure Examination (SWLE), having attempted the SWLE once and failed, having retaken the SWLE and passed (regardless of the number of attempts), and currently working in a profession related to social work. These criteria limit the scope of the study, as the experiences and challenges of the participants may not fully represent the journey of other repeat examinees.

Moreover, the study employed intensive or in-depth interviews as the primary data collection tool. This approach may limit the depth of information gathered, as it relies on the participants' willingness to share their experiences and perspectives. Additionally, this study does not account for variations among different schools in South Cotabato, such as differences in curriculum, faculty, and resources, which could influence the participants' responses. The data analysis was based on qualitative interviews and an analysis of the interview data.

## II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### ➤ *Experiences of Repeat Examinees*

Capco and Escudro (2019) found that repeat examinees experienced high levels of stress and anxiety leading up to the exam, which negatively affected their performance. These individuals also faced challenges in motivation, time management, and comprehension of exam questions.

Villa (2019) noted that repeat examinees encountered financial difficulties in preparing for the exam. Many struggled to afford costly review courses and materials. Some had to work part-time jobs to support their exam preparation, further complicating their time management.

Melchor and Enriquez (2019), in their study on nursing licensure repeat examinees, found that these individuals often faced familial and societal pressures, as well as feelings of guilt and inadequacy. They also encountered difficulties integrating theoretical knowledge into practice and adapting to changes in exam formats.

In a study on physical therapy licensure, found that familiarity with the exam format and content led repeat examinees to be more focused and determined. These individuals also reported using more effective study strategies, such as creating study guides, taking notes, and practicing with sample questions (Marcolino et al., 2019).

Gunaydin, Turgut, and Garip (2020) explored the experiences of science pre-service teachers in Turkey retaking the Teacher's Qualification Exam (TQE). Their findings indicated that repeat examinees frequently dealt with stress, anxiety, and disappointment stemming from their previous failure. Many also faced financial burdens and time constraints, as they often needed to work while preparing for the exam.

The study that examined the experiences of nursing repeat examinees retaking the national licensure examination in South Korea revealed that examinees encountered intellectual, emotional, and social challenges. These included anxiety, frustration, disappointment, and lowered self-esteem due to previous failures. They also struggled to retain complex information and maintain concentration, while societal expectations and pressures from family and peers further intensified their emotional burden (Kim and Lee, 2018).

Shuman et al. (2018) found similar results in their study on U.S. medical licensing exam repeat takers. These individuals reported psychological, academic, and financial difficulties, including feelings of fear, embarrassment, and frustration. A lack of sufficient study resources and the high costs of testing, travel, and accommodation added to their challenges.

Lastly, a study by Ali (2020) on repeat examinees of the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) examination in the Philippines revealed that they faced academic, emotional,

and social barriers. Anxiety, difficulty keeping up with the exam's pace, and challenges in understanding core accounting principles were common. These struggles often led to procrastination and feelings of isolation and discouragement, reducing their motivation to persist.

### ➤ *Challenges Faced By Repeat Examinees*

In a study of Yorke and Thomas (2020), repeat takers of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) exam in the UK experienced a range of challenges, including lack of support, emotional stress, and financial hardship. Participants reported significant financial strain due to the costs of additional study materials, travel, and tuition. Common concerns included social isolation, feelings of shame, and the emotional burden of preparing for the exam. Furthermore, the absence of institutional or peer support exacerbated their anxiety about performance.

The struggles of social work graduates in passing the Philippine licensure examination. The study revealed that the most significant challenge was the breadth and depth of the exam content, which required extensive study and preparation (Castañeda, 2019).

Pardamean and Winarko (2019) found similar results in their study on repeat examinees of the Indonesian Chartered Accountancy Public Certification Exam. Participants struggled to meet the exam's knowledge demands, comprehend complex accounting concepts, and manage stress under pressure. Time management and heightened anxiety also emerged as major barriers.

It was further argued that gender and cultural background influence repeat examinees' experiences. For instance, in South Korea, male examinees felt increased pressure to succeed and financial responsibility, while female examinees experienced heightened emotional distress and anxiety (Cho, 2020).

Language barriers also emerged as a significant challenge. In a study by Jing and Li (2017), Chinese repeat examinees of the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN) in the United States identified language difficulties as a major factor affecting their exam performance.

Both academic and non-academic obstacles confront repeat examinees (Brown, 2018). Academic difficulties typically involve content mastery, such as the inability to recall or apply previously learned knowledge. Non-academic challenges include emotional distress, anxiety, low self-confidence, stigma, financial burdens, and lack of support from institutions, peers, and families (Lee, 2019).

### ➤ *Coping Strategies Of Repeat Examinees*

Repeat examinees may find it easier to manage the academic and non-academic challenges of passing licensure examinations by employing various coping strategies (Cho et al., 2018). According to Liu et al. (2019), academic strategies include hiring a personal tutor, engaging in extensive study

and preparation, and joining online communities that provide guidance and peer support for exam takers.

Additionally, visualization techniques and positive self-talk can improve self-esteem and reduce exam-related anxiety (Brown, 2018). Cho et al. (2018) also highlight that seeking professional support from coaches or counselors can aid in managing emotional distress and enhancing self-efficacy.

Establishing a peer support system with individuals who share similar experiences may help reduce feelings of isolation and provide emotional reinforcement (Nguyen et al., 2019). Taking breaks and practicing relaxation techniques can alleviate anxiety and contribute to improved academic performance (Toh et al., 2018).

In the study of Chiesa et al. (2019), engaging in relaxation practices such as yoga, meditation, or deep breathing exercises can foster a sense of calm and reduce anxiety. Moreover, regular physical activity has been shown to enhance memory retention and cognitive function (Hwang et al., 2020).

Viewing licensure exam preparation as part of a broader journey toward personal and professional growth, rather than simply a hurdle to overcome, can positively reframe the experience for repeat examinees. Lastly, support from friends and family remains a significant coping mechanism. Positive social support has been associated with lower anxiety levels and improved academic outcomes (Liu et al., 2019).

#### ➤ *Support System of Repeat Examinees*

It has been established that support networks play a critical role in the success of graduate repeat examinees in licensure examinations. Babatunde-Sowole et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive study and found that nursing students who did not initially pass the NCLEX-RN exam credited much of their subsequent exam preparation to the support they received from social networks. The study further emphasized the value of counseling and support groups in managing the stress and anxiety associated with exam retakes. Support groups composed of individuals who have previously retaken and passed the same licensure examination can offer valuable advice on effective study strategies and coping mechanisms (Davis et al., 2016). Moreover, social support has been shown to reduce anxiety and improve academic performance (Liu et al., 2019).

Technological tools and online resources have also been identified as beneficial support systems for repeat examinees. Online resources, such as practice tests and virtual study groups, enhance exam preparation by offering flexible and convenient learning options (Babatunde-Sowole et al., 2019). Similarly, maintaining a positive mindset and adopting healthy habits have been found to significantly reduce exam-related anxiety. Adequate sleep, a balanced diet, and regular physical activity are linked to reduced stress levels and improved cognitive functioning (Hoffman et al., 2018). Kang et al. (2019) further noted that focusing on

personal achievements and setting realistic goals can enhance motivation and self-confidence.

Pavela (2017) explored the importance of support networks in helping repeat examinees overcome the challenges of licensure exams. Peer support, particularly through discussion groups, proved especially beneficial for nursing repeat examinees preparing for the NCLEX-RN exam by fostering information exchange and emotional encouragement. Similarly, mentorship programs have been found effective in assisting social work repeat examinees. Mentors provided emotional support, academic guidance, and practical advice, contributing to examinees' improved performance (Curtis & Benshoff, 2017).

Family support has also emerged as a significant factor in managing exam-related stress. Chinawa et al. (2017) found a positive correlation between family support and exam performance among graduate medical students. Likewise, Dyess et al. (2005) reported that family support was instrumental in reducing anxiety and promoting a positive attitude toward the exam among nursing repeat examinees.

In addition, online forums and social media groups have become increasingly popular resources for graduate repeat examinees preparing for licensure exams. Research indicates that virtual communities offer valuable opportunities for networking, information sharing, and emotional support (Bohner, 2015).

#### ➤ *Advice of Repeat Examinees to Other Repeat Examinees*

In the education sector, various recommendations are frequently provided to repeat examinees—those who retake licensure examinations after one or more unsuccessful attempts—to help improve their chances of passing (Dhanasekaran, 2019). However, beyond receiving advice, it is also essential for repeat examinees to share their experiences and insights, which can serve as valuable guidance for others facing similar challenges (Lee, 2020).

One commonly offered piece of advice is to focus on identifying and strengthening weaker subject areas (Santhosh, 2018). This can be achieved through attending review courses or engaging in independent study (Hui, 2017). Repeat examinees are encouraged to reflect on their previous exam attempts to pinpoint common mistakes and address them effectively (Dhanasekaran, 2019). Lee (2020) emphasizes the importance of effective time management during the exam. This includes allocating appropriate time to each section and avoiding spending excessive time on difficult questions.

Taking practice exams under simulated testing conditions is another beneficial strategy for repeat examinees (Hui, 2017). Maintaining a positive mindset and not dwelling on previous failures is also critical (Santhosh, 2018). Believing in oneself and staying motivated can have a significant impact on exam performance (Dhanasekaran, 2019). Magtibay (2018) advocates for a deeper understanding of the underlying concepts and principles rather than relying solely on memorization. This approach



helps improve retention and comprehension while minimizing the risk of last-minute cramming.

Furthermore, Bernabe (2019) underscores the importance of both physical and mental preparation, including adequate sleep and regular exercise. Maintaining good physical and mental health enhances concentration, focus, and information retention during both the review process and the examination itself. To avoid becoming overwhelmed by the volume of review materials, Hui (2017) recommends setting realistic goals and continuously assessing progress. This approach helps maintain a manageable study pace and prevents burnout. Singh (2019) supports this by suggesting the creation of a structured study plan with achievable objectives to monitor progress and sustain motivation. This strategy allows repeat examinees to reduce unnecessary stress and optimize their review time.

In addition, Santhosh (2018) highlights the value of utilizing online resources such as study groups and academic forums, as well as practicing with previous exam questions. Collaboration with peers and experts can offer new perspectives and help examinees identify both strengths and areas for improvement. Khan (2017) stresses the importance of understanding the exam format and thoroughly reading the test instructions. He also advises repeat examinees to develop a strategic approach to answering multiple-choice questions, such as eliminating implausible options and reviewing answers before submission. Finally, Khan cautions against the use of stimulants, such as excessive caffeine, as they may heighten anxiety and impair cognitive performance.

### III. METHOD

#### ➤ *Research Design*

A qualitative narrative study on the experience of triumph and tenacity: Uncovering the journey of BSSW graduates repeating the Social Work Licensure Examination was intended to collect data from BSSW graduates who had taken the licensure examination more than once. The main source of data for this study was the Professional Regulation Commission's statistical information regarding the pass rates for the Social Work Licensure Exam (SWLE) in September 2023. Using a qualitative narrative approach, the study investigated the distinct experiences and challenges faced by Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) graduates who retaken the Social Work Licensure Examination (SWLE).

The primary method of data collection involved in-depth interviews, designed to collect rich, detailed personal narratives from participants. The analysis focused on identifying themes, storylines, and storytelling elements within the participants' stories in order to understand how these individuals constructed, understood, and made sense of their experiences and challenges when retaking the licensure examination. Narrative approaches include the sharing and hearing of personal struggles and experiences. By telling stories, people can create new realities and transform life events into stories of hope. Narratives allow individuals to make sense of the world around them, predict the future, and cope with life's obstacles (Ntinda, 2020).

#### ➤ *Role of the Researcher*

This study enabled the researcher, a student of social work, to progress in both understanding and expertise. The role of the researcher was to document and present the findings in a manner that would help readers understand the experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and support systems of repeat BSSW graduates as they prepared for and retaken the Social Work Licensure Examination. The researcher engaged participants in discussions on subjects that were personally meaningful to them in order to gather insights into their journeys.

The researcher was also responsible for ensuring the accuracy and trustworthiness of data collection, which included conducting interviews, gathering data, and analyzing it. Standardized data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, were used to minimize personal bias and ensure consistency in responses. Building rapport and trust with participants was crucial to ensure they felt comfortable sharing their experiences. A safe and welcoming environment was created for participants to openly discuss their feelings and ideas.

#### ➤ *Research Participants*

The narrative approach was used to explore the experiences of five (5) to seven (7) BSSW graduates who had retaken the Social Work Licensure Examination. The inclusion criteria for participants were as follows: they must have a BSSW degree (regardless of the year they graduated), have enrolled in a review center as part of their preparation, and have failed the SWLE at least once before passing. Additionally, participants must have been employed in a social work-related field to ensure relevance and the ability to provide informed perspectives. Social work-related employment could include positions such as those in the Crisis Intervention Unit (CIU), the Convergence Office of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), or local Social Welfare and Development Offices. These criteria ensured a diverse group of individuals with a range of experiences pertinent to the study's objectives.

#### ➤ *Locale of the Study*

The research was conducted in the province of South Cotabato, with a focus on its municipalities, including Lake Sebu, Banga, Koronadal City, and Polomolok. South Cotabato is a province known for its cultural diversity, where people from different backgrounds live in harmony despite varying traditions, customs, and dialects. According to the 2020 census, South Cotabato's population was 975,476, making it one of the country's most populous provinces. Polomolok, known as the most populous municipality in Mindanao, is a key hub between General Santos and Tupi, with a population of 172,605 as of 2020. Koronadal, the provincial capital, had a population of 195,398 in 2020. Other municipalities, such as Lake Sebu and Banga, also contribute to the region's demographic makeup, with populations of 81,221 and 89,164, respectively. The study aimed to examine the experiences of BSSW graduates in this province who had taken the licensure examination multiple times. Data collection took place in a variety of locations,

including the participants' residences, offices, schools, and community centers.

#### ➤ Research Instrument

The research utilized a semi-structured interview guide to collect qualitative, open-ended data from participants. The interview guide was designed to provide flexibility, allowing participants to share their personal narratives and perspectives in detail. According to DeJonckheere and Vaughn (2019), semi-structured interviews are the most common data source in qualitative research. This method involves a conversation between the researcher and participant, with the researcher using a flexible interview approach that adapts to responses and prompts follow-up questions. This technique allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences related to a specific topic. The semi-structured format helps ensure that key themes are adequately covered while providing the researcher with the flexibility to explore new directions as needed (Sybing, 2024).

The initial interview questions were broad, focusing on participants' backgrounds and experiences after completing their BSSW degree. As the interview progressed, the questions narrowed to focus specifically on participants' experiences with retaking the licensure exam, the challenges they faced, their coping mechanisms, the support they received, and any advice they had for other repeat examinees.

#### ➤ Data Collection

The data for this study were gathered using a semi-structured interview guide, which included five key questions addressing the participants' experiences retaking the licensure exam. The first step in data collection involved preparing various documents: a permission letter to the instructor, informed consent forms for participants, and participant agreement forms. Once permission was granted by the instructor, the researcher distributed consent forms and participant agreements to those willing to participate. In-person and online interviews were conducted, recorded, and documented through screen capture. After data collection, the researcher analyzed the responses to identify themes and insights.

#### ➤ Analysis of Data

Data analysis was conducted using Riessman's narrative approach, which is widely recognized for analyzing narrative texts and fostering deeper understanding of participants' experiences (Victor, 2016). This approach emphasizes the importance of transcription accuracy and consistency and provides guidance on how to minimize bias during the analysis process. The interviews were transcribed, and the data were coded and organized around the study's aims. The themes identified in the participants' stories were analyzed in relation to the literature to identify patterns or contradictions.

## IV. RESULTS

### A. What are their Experiences Taking the Social Work Licensure Examination for the First Time?

Table 1 The Experiences of Repeat Examinees taking the Social Work Licensure Examination for the first time.

Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
1.1 Mounting Pressure	Has felt pressure upon taking the examination Has felt pressure stemming from the reputation of the attended educational institution Has felt disappointment about the outcome of the examination Has experienced a sense of misguidance with the educational approach used in the institution Has felt pressure in the examination content
1.2 Acknowledging the feelings and reality of the situation	Has felt disappointment about the outcome of the examination
1.3 Accepting Reality	Has felt disappointment about the outcome of the examination

\*“Uhm...actually a lot of experiences during uhm...first time magtake of exam so the pressure is there and then uhm...syempre nervous because it was ah...my first time to take uhm...the licensu...the licensure examination of social worker that was ah...last 2019” (Whitebeard: P1/ 23-25).

*\*(Actually, a lot of experiences happened since first-time to take the exam so the pressure was there and then, of course, nervous because it was my first time to take the licensure examination of social worker last 2019)*

\*“Ang mga experiences is ah...first talaga is feeling pressure. Yan talaga...yan yong pinaka unang ma fe-feel mo once ah...you are going to take the licensure examination of Social Work” (Kaído: P3/ 22-24)

*\*(The experiences [are], at first the feeling of pressure. That is the first feeling you will feel once you are going to take the licensure examination of Social Work)*

\*“Ang feeling? Ah...grabe ang kwan e...kakulba e...ang kakulba gid. Grabe ang kakulba mo kay ang gina isip mo future mo nana e” (Luffy: P5/ 55-56)

*\*(The feeling? Immense pressure. The pressure is immense as you think this is your future.)*

\*“yong first na 2006 hindi ko nag review tapos to my...prior ako na...prior ako...na nag review doon may taga Miriam din na nag review na naka top. So parang na pressure ako doon.” (Blackbeard: P2/ 33-35)

*\*(In the first last 2006, I did not review and prior to my review, I was with [an examinee] from Miriam [College] who took the review also and later was a topnotcher. So, I was pressured by that)*

*\*\*“kasi kami yung maraming, kami yung third batch na maraming grumaduate sa social work” (Shanks: P4/ 78-79)*

*\*(Because we were the third batch with a number of graduates in social work)*

*\*\*“bagsak mundo e, bagsak mundo. Grabe yon.” (Blackbeard: P2/ 55)*

*\*(Your world had collapsed, the world collapsed. That was intense)*

*\*\*“Kasi ah...during my first exam ah...yong passing rate KO don is ah...69? Something. So the passing rate in Social Work exam is 70! So, mas mas na fu-frustrate ako don sa result ng ano ko...just one point...one point lang yon...hindi ko siya na ano...hindi ko alam kong saan ako nag...hindi ko alam kong saan ako nag kulang” (Kaido: P3/ 38-41)*

*\*(Because during my first exam, my passing rate was 69 something the passing rate in Social Work exam is 70. I was frustrated about the result of my..., just one point, I do not know where I lacked)*

*\*\*“ah baka hindi para saakin yong first take ko sa exam” kasi na bagsak ako” (Kaido: P3/ 77)*

*\*(‘maybe it was not for me the first time I took the exam because I failed)*

*\*\*“nasaktan ako nung hindi ko nakita yung aking pangalan tapos nakita ko yung...nakita...I was a bit ano...ah...tawag dyan...na...na nahiya ako sa sarili ko at the same time parang naingit ako sa mga kaklase” (Shanks: P4/ 116-118)*

*\*(I was hurt when I did not found my name and when I, I was a bit embarrassed with myself and at the same time felt envious to my classmates)*

*\*\*“Mas malulungkot, malulugmok ka pala pag na...na nalaman mo na pumasa ka na pero hindi...parang your...your good wasn’t good enough...your best wasn’t good enough no” (Shanks: P4/ 123-125)*

*\*(I will be sadder, you will be crashed when... you knew you passed by didn’t... it feels like your best wasn’t good enough)*

*\*\*“...hindi na ako nag-follow up ng mga...mga documents ko sa ...sa skwelahan. I even did not attend ah...ah...ano no ah...mga...mga gatherings sa skwelahan” (Shanks: P4/ 159-160)*

*\*(I did not follow up on... my documents... to the school... I even did not attended school gatherings)*

*\*\*“hindi namin alam ano yung, hindi kami NASWEI member. Ang aming skwela na hindi NASWEI member. Then, hindi namin mababalitaan ka agad kung ano yung TOS. yung table of specification for the...for the board exam.” (Shanks: P4/ 85-87)*

*\*(We did not know the, we [the school] are not a NASWEI member. Our school is not a NASWEI member. Then, we would not know the TOS. The table of specification for the board exam)*

*\*\*“ano, nung...ah...nung time namin na tinake sya, hindi naming na-anticipate na ah...time consuming pala yun siya kasi 30 minutes lang each method, no? So, nung nag-take kami maraming...maraming hindi na-anticipate yung ganong proseso” (Shanks: P4/ 43-45)*

*\*(During the time when we took the exam, we did not anticipate that it was time consuming because each method has only 30 minutes. So, when we took [the exam] there were many [things] we did not anticipate that process)*

*\*\*“ah...pagkabalo KO sang result that time na wala ko nakapasa syempre nahurt ko daw nadugangan lalo ang stress ko kay ang mga iban nga mga batch ko sa review like nakapasa sila tapos ikaw mabilin ka” (Whitebeard: P1/ 62-64)*

*\*(Ah, upon knowing the result that I did not pass, of course, I was hurt as it feels like it added to my stress because my other batchmates from the review have passed and you will be left)*

*\*\*“Yong result niya is ah...parang at first nawala...nawala talaga ako...parang na discourage na ako ba. Pag bagsak KO sa exam yon yong una kong na feel” (Kaido: P3/ 66-67)*

*\*(The result of it is... like at first [I was] .... I was really lost. When I failed the exam that was what I felt first)*

*\*\*“Pero it took me so long to realize na parang hindi saakin ang pag first take ko ng exam. So I used it, ah...instead na mag...ma frustrate ako o ano...I tried to work, I tried to apply and then I work here at MSWDO” (Kaido: P3/ 69-71)*

*\*(But it took me so long to realize that it wasn’t meant to be in the first take of exam. So, I used it instead of being frustrated I tried to work, applied and have worked here at MSWDO)*

*B. What were the Challenges they encountered in taking the Social Work Licensure Examination for the First Time?*

Table 2 The Challenges of the BSSW Graduate First-Time Takers of the Social Work Licensure Examination.

Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
2.1 Acknowledging the feelings and reality of the situation	Has felt pressure due to perceive expectations of others Has felt pressure upon taking the examination Has felt financial constraints towards achieving the goal
2.2 Individual desire to regain control and understand the situation	Has experienced difficulty due to educational deficiency
2.3 Academic Inadequacy	Has experienced difficulty due to educational deficiency
2.4 Inadequate Self-control	Has struggled to manage time effectively to achieve the goal due to lack of discipline
2.5 Seek first to understand, then to be understood	Has struggle with complying the demand in documents
2.6 Begin with the end in mind	Has struggled to manage learning process independently in a review center setting

\*“Uhm...being pressured sa family since ako ang first gid nga mag...ako ang first gid nga nag graduate sa family” (Whitebeard: P1/ 71-72)

*\*(Being pressure in the family since I am the first to... I am the first to graduate in the family)*

\*“peer pressure man kay syempre ang mga friends KO, mga batchmates KO, like naka pasa na sila” (Whitebeard: P1/ 74-75)

*\*(Peer pressured also, because my friends, batchmates had passed)*

\*“Uhm...family pressured na dapat maka pasa ka gid ha syempre with all the gastos and all the effort so...dapat ang give back mo is maka pasa ka gid sa exam” (Whitebeard: P1/ 79-80)

*\*(Family pressured that you have to pass, especially with all the expenses and exerted efforts, you must give back by passing the exam)*

\*“ah...unang una...unang-una mag...magtetake ka ba o hindi? Kasi ang...ang licensure examination ay na...na fafall siya on September. Tapos ako ay bilang...ay tayo bilang mga ano...gumagraduate tayo in the...in the year June or July something or June ba or May?” (Shanks: P4/ 167-169)

*\*(First and foremost, will you take the exam or not? Because the licensure examination falls [in] September. And, I...we as...we are graduating in the [month] June or July something or June or May?)*

\*“Amo gid to ang pinaka challenge gid e nga dapat maka pasa ka sa exam masagutan mo tanan nga question sa examination...” (Whitebeard: P1/93-94)

*\*(That was the primary challenge that you must pass the exam... you'd be able to answer the questions in the examination)*

\*“Burden na...hala ano man maka pasa ba ko muna like...sa amon ang term namon is kay agony of

waiting..kulbaan ka na, hindi mo na bal an kung ano ma feel mo” (Whitebeard: P1/ 117-119)

*\*(Burden like, “Will I pass this?”. We call it the agony of waiting, you'll feel nervous, and you cannot understand what you may feel)*

\*“Uhm...pag first timer ka kasi yong challenges mo talaga doon is yong...paano mo mapapasa yong exam mo, kasi nga since first taker ka, everyone is expecting” (Kaido: P3/ 82-83)

*\*(When you are a first timer, your challenges will be on how to pass the exam since you are a first timer, everyone is expecting)*

\*“dapat kamo maka...pakita mo gid saila' si sir balongoy nag hambal nga ‘dapat ipakita mo gid saila kong ano makaya niyo nga himuon nga pioneer batch’” (Luffy: P5/ 80-81)

*\*(‘All of you must, show to them’ Sir Balongoy had told that ‘you must show them what you can do as pioneering batch’)*

\*“So, pag exhausted ka na financially tapos here comes graduation na maraming...maraming bayarin no exhausted ka rin no it is... tapos...magdedesisyon ka ngayon kung magti-take ka or hindi kasi it will...it will add ah...cost din sa'yo no ah...na kung...kung magti-take ka ba” (Shanks: P4/ 188-191)

*\*(So, when you are exhausted financially and here comes the graduation with several expenses, you will be exhausted and you will decide whether to take [the exam] or not because it will cost you more if you will take)*

\*“Te hindi man pwede kay pandemic time man tong 2019, tapos ang kapigaduhon sato grabe man hindi makaya saamon nga batch nga mag take kami nga tanan” (Luffy: P5/ 87-89)

*\*(We are not able to because of the pandemic time last 2019, and the destitution during that time is extreme, our batch is not able to make everyone take)*



\*“So, hindi namon ma afford-afford ang mga books na gina pa required saamon kay sobra man ka mahal. Tapos hindi namon bal an kong diin namon kwaon to, ang mga books” (Luffy: P5/ 120-121)

*\*(So, we cannot afford the books that they require to us because it's too expensive. And, we do not know where to get the books)*

\*“Late kasi ako naka graduate. Octoberian ako. Kasi may tatlong subject's ako ma major na nabagsak. I'm not that...I'm not...hindi kasi ako knowledge--, kumbaga hindi ako matalinong tao, aminado naman ako don” (Blackbeard: P2/ 87-89)

*\*(I graduated late. I am an Octoberian. Because I have three failed major subjects. I'm not smart, I admit that)*

\*“Yong foundation, hindi masyado nag instill saakin yong mga pinag aralan ko, yong ano...lahat yon parang mas nakuha ko sa...although nag tuturo, nagtuturo naman” (Blackbeard: P2/ 114-115)

*\*(The foundation... the..., studied weren't instilled to me.... All of those, I feel like I got from.... Although, [they were] teaching...)*

\*“nag iinom ako sa area. Sinasabayan ko yong mga foster parents ko” Blackbeard: P2/ 121)

*\*(I drink in the area, I joined my foster parents.)*

\*“during ah...my review, parang hindi ko na alam saan ang priority ko since nag kasabay na yong mga nagyayari” (Kaido: P3/ 93-94)

*\*(During my review, it's like I do not know which my priority was since everything is happening at the same time)*

\*“documentary requirements Na...is your documentary requirements papasa ba siya Doon sa prescribed ng PRC? Kasi kadalasan no ah...this is a common mistake” (Shanks: P4/ 175-176)

*\*(Documentary requirements, is your documentary requirements can pass the prescribed of PRC? Because frequently this is a common mistake)*

\*“Ah I think isa...isa din sa mga challenges ay to look for...to look for ah...review center. I realize that there's no perfect review center because at the end of the day, you'll be the one to structure yourself in the review center” (Shanks: P4/ 193-195)

*\*(I think one of the challenges is to look for a review center. I realize that there's no perfect review center because at the end of the day, you'll be the one to [develop] yourself in the review center)*

### C. How do SWLE Repeat Examinees Cope with the Challenges?

Table 3 Coping Strategies of BSSW Graduates SWLE Repeat Examinees

Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
3.1 First things first	Has demonstrated the ability to be resilient in the face of significant difficulty
	Need to give priority on the conduct of review
3.2 Doubling Effort	Has shifted for flexible approach to create an upward change
3.3 Reevaluating and changing one's approach to coping and healing	Has shifted for flexible approach to create an upward change
3.4 Adopting effective strategies	Using of audio lectures for better understanding
	Structuring a preparation to be better equipped for the licensure examination
	Changing of strategies that would be more effective during review
3.5 Being proactive	Has demonstrated the ability to be resilient in the face of significant difficulty

\*“Uhm...for me...na cope ko ang mga challenges as a repeater is dapat you have to be strong enough no...na ihandle ang amuna na situation especially sa first take mo wala ka naka pasa” (Whitebeard: P1/ 127-129)

*\*(For me, I cope with the challenges as a repeater, you must be strong enough to handle situation especially in your first take...you failed)*

\*“I have to prioritize my review first sabi ko doon. Kasi pag hindi walang nay mangyayari saakin and then im still going fail the exam, kasi nga alam ko na everytime ah...iiwan ko yong pag rereview ko parang mawawala na ako doon sa focus ko.” (Kaido: P3/ 162-165)

*\*(I said that I have to prioritize first my review. Because if not, nothing will happen to me and Im still going to fail the exam, because I knew everytime I leave my... my review it seems like I lost my focus)*

\*“Uhm... my past experience uhmm.. So syempre damo ko na agyan before during sa 1<sup>st</sup> take ko, so.. During my 2<sup>nd</sup> take mas nag double time ako lalo even though my work ako” (Whitebeard: P1/ 144-145)

*\*(With my past experience, of course, I have plenty of experience before during my first take, so during my second take, I doubled my time even if I have a work)*

“dapat mo iprepare especially dapat mentally, physically, emotionally prepared ka gid ah...since 2<sup>nd</sup> take mo na dapat...ako sato nga time nag promise gid ko sa self ko na..dapat 2<sup>nd</sup> and last take ko nani siya hindi nako mag balik” (Whitebeard: P1/ 154-156)

*\*(You must prepare especially mentally, physically, emotionally since its your second take, I was that time I made a promise to myself that it should be my second take and last take, I will never go back)*

“Ah, ano Lang...yon nga. Nag aral ako na. Binaliktad KO yong orange book. Yon Lang talaga. From cover to cover. Pinagalaran ko talaga siya” (Blackbeard: P2/ 171-172)

*\*(I studied like I flipped the orange book. That's it. From cover to cover, I really studied it)*

“i have to think of a way kong paano ko ba ma susuloyonan yong...kong paano ba ako maka review at maka focus sa pag review ko na hindi ko na gagawin yong mag basa. So since ma's komportable ako doon while ah... using audio record.” (Kaido: P3/ 148-151)

*\*(I have to think of a way how to resolve, how I can review and focus in the review without reading. So since, I am much comfortable while using an audio record)*

“I really structure myself na I really...I will really commit this time ah...and I think during that time, mas... mas...mas nagging efficient ako on preparing...on preparing for the board exam.” (Shanks: P4/ 317-319)

*\*(I really structured myself I will really commit this time and I think during that time, I became much efficient on preparing for the board exam)*

“Ah... sa second take na? Ah... ging kwan ko nalang gid. Gin promise ko gid sa sarili ko nga... ang gi himo ko sang pag first take ko hindi na pwede maliwat sa ikaduha ko na take” (Luffy: P5/ 135-136)

*\*(On second take? I made a promise to myself that what I did in the first take will not be repeated again on my second take)*

“ah... upon... after realizing ganon na nag failure ako, parang ginamit ko nalang din yong failure na yon to motivate myself, of course.” (Kaido: P3/ 122-123)

*\*(Upon after realizing that I failed, I used that failure instead as a motivation to myself)*

#### D. What Support System Does Bssw Graduate Repeat Examinees Rely On In Their Journey To Passing The Social Work Licensure Examination?

Table 4 Presents the Support System the BSSW Graduate Rely On In Their Journey to Passing the Social Licensure Examination

Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
4.1 By God's grace	Importance of relying on spiritual direction and guidance
4.2 Backed-up by Family	Family support through and finances and by being present
4.3 Understanding Inner Circle	Workmates adjust to give more time to review for the examination
4.4 Teacher Encouragement	Teachers and mentors provide for positive encouragement and pep talks
4.5 Think Win-Win	Has felt a sense of belonging and connection in reaching one's goal
	Has acknowledge the importance of financial support

“Ang support system number 1 syempre si Lord no.. siya ang ang gina kwaan naton sang strength and everything sa iya gid ta first na ga palapit and then uhm...if will niya he will give it to us no and also, family...” (Whitebeard: P1/ 173-175)

*\*(The number one support system is Lord, He's the source of strength and everything, we come near to him first and if its His will, He will give it to us and also, family)*

“Ang sa family, support system syempre emotionally, financially support number one. So, without them hindi ko man ma, hindi ko maka enroll, hindi ko maka ano sa review center although my work ko pero lain gid ang family” (Whitebeard: P1/ 203-205)

*\*(The family, support system of course emotionally, financially number one support. So, without them, I cannot*

*be able to enroll, I cannot be in review center although I have work but it still family differs)*

“Ito talaga particular, family KO atsaka...family KO atsaka not only parents ha kasi pati mga sibling KO supportive, grabe talaga yong support system ko sa kanila, pati yong professor ko.” (Blackbeard: P2/ 185-187)

*\*(This for particular, my family and not only the parents because my siblings are supportive, my support system from them is immense even my professor)*

“Uhm...sa officemate naman na feel ko ang support nila kay like amu gani hambal ko kaina... nga gi allow nila ko nga ma... hati ahh.. masabay ko ang work ko kag ang review ko” (Whitebeard: P1/ 211-213)

*\*(I felt the support of my officemates because of what I said, they allow me to divide...to do my work and to do my review at the same time)*

*\*\*“Uhm... para saakon tong teacher ko, tong mga naging teachers ko uhm...last time sila gid...since nag kitaay kami sa review center so na acknowledge gid ko nila nga...na student ko nila” (Whitebeard: P1/ 223-225)*

*\*(For me my teacher, my teachers last time since we met in the review center so they acknowledged me as their student)*

*\*\*“Uhm.. so ah... ang support system ko is of course my family because they continue to believe in me despite the failure and pressure. (Kaido: P3/ 168-169)*

*\*(My support system is of course my family because they continue to believe in me despite of the failure and pressure)*

*\*\*“despite nga sa mga nangyari... i still have my parents who supported me, my bosses na parang naniniwala saakin na mapapasa ko yong exam. (Kaido: P3/ 204-205)*

*\*(Despite of what happened, I still have my parents who supported me, my bosses who believed that I can pass the exam)*

*\*\*“side man sing kay misis man, amu japon to siya, sa family. Bali alalay, kay siya nalang ga trabaho para maka... totally gani huya huya ko mo kay 2 ka bulan wala ko (Luffy: P5/ 195-196)*

*\*(In my wife's side also, just like that, in family. So I assist because she's the only one working so that...totally I am extremely embarrassed because I do not have in two months)*

*\*\*“financial kasi isa sa mga mag papamotivate sa'yo ay may budget ka ba? May...may pera ka bang paglalaanan for the board exam? (Shanks: P4/ 374-375)*

*\*(Financial because one of that will make you motivate is do you have a budget? Do you have money to be allocated for your board exam?)*

*E. What Advice Can The Bssw Graduate Repeat Examinees Give To Other Repeat Examinees For Them To Pass The Social Work Licensure Examination?*

Table 5 Presents the Advice of Bssw Graduate Repeat Examinees to Other Repeat Examinees for Them to Pass the Social Work Licensure Examination

Clustered Themes	Formulated Meaning
5.1 Being Proactive	Emphasizes the importance of developing resilience and mental toughness to overcome challenges and difficulties
5.2 Seek first to be understand then to be understood	Importance of relying on spiritual direction and guidance
5.3 Think win-win	Have a network of people who can provide support and guidance
5.4 Begin with the end in mind	Has acknowledge the importance of readiness in achieving success
5.5 Sharpen the saw	Acquire a comprehensive understanding and solid base of knowledge

*\*\*“maging strong and motivated. maging strong gid sila...despite sa mga challenges ng ana encounter nila, syempre pag di ka maka pasa, ma hurt ka gid, ma stress ka, daw feeling mo end of the world na daw something amuna kay grabe ang effort mo.” (Whitebeard: P1/ 240-242)*

*\*(Must be strong and motivated. They must be strong despite of the challenges they may encounter, of course if they don't pass, you will be hurt, be stressed, and it feels like it's the end of the world because of your exerted effort)*

*\*\*“Try and try until you succeed, walang sukoan. Yan talaga motivation ko sa buhay. Kong hindi mo makuha ngayon, may right time para saiyon.” (Blackbeard: P2/ 223-224)*

*\*(Try and try until you succeed, no one will surrender. That's my motivation in life, if you did not obtained it today, there is a right time for you)*

*\*\*“Uhm... number one, pray. Ask for guidance na ma uhm...ma overcome mo especially sa pag take sang exam lalo na sa on the day of examination na dapat iguide ka gid. (Whitebeard: P1/ 277-278)*

*\*(Number one, pray. Ask or guidance to overcome especially when you take the exam specifically on the day of exam for guidance)*

*\*\*“paningkamutan mo gid. Dapat pray ka gid. Amu gid nang number 1, pray ka gid.” (Luffy: P5/ 313)*

*\*(Work hard for it. Always pray. That's the number 1, always pray)*

*\*\*“Yong support system mo, totoong support system hindi nakaka distract sayo. Yon Lang. So kong lumalovelife ka, yong lovelife mo hindi dapat distracting sayo, dapat healthy” (Blackbeard: P2/ 238-239)*

*\*(Your support system must be a real support system it doesn't distract you. If you have love life, that love lie must not be distracting to you, it must be healthy)*

*\*\*“ah... wag kang mag take ng exam kong alam mong hindi ka ready. Kasi parang big... ah ano yon... parang nag tetake ka din ng risk na parang nasasayang lang yong time mo” (Kaido: P3/ 210-211)*

*\*(Do not take the exam if you know you are not ready, because it only because it seems you will take a risk which you are wasting your time)*

*\*“have to...ano talaga...you have to...sabihin mo na kagad sa sarili mo na ang goal mo ay mag top 1...mag top 2...mag top 3...hanggang top 10” (Shanks: P4/ 420-421)*

*\*(You have to tell to yourself that your goal is to be top 1...to be top 2...to be top 3...until top 10)*

*\*“kinakailangan you have to ano...you have to...ah magbasa ka talaga at least...at least...8 hours a day no, isa yan sa mga...or...or...kung pwede nga 8 hours a day kang magbabasa no kung...kung wala ka talagang natutunan during your college years” (Shanks: P4/ 397-399)*

*\*(You really need to read for at least... 8 hours a day. That's one of the things or if possible, read for 8 hours a day, especially if you didn't learn much during your college years.)*

*\*“you have to...to develop your critical thinking no...yung critical thinking is very important kasi ah... ah...ang board exam...ang board exam is not just...is not just objective type meron siyang situational. (Shanks: P4/ 405-407)*

*\*(You have to develop your critical thinking, critical thinking is very important because the board exam is not just objective type, it also has situational questions.)*

## V. DISCUSSION

This qualitative study on the journey of Bachelor of Science in Social Work (BSSW) graduates repeating the Social Work Licensure Examination concludes with key implications for educational institutions, support systems, and future research. The findings underscore the importance of evaluating interventions designed to reduce psychological stress and improve licensure outcomes. Further research should explore adaptive learning strategies and coping mechanisms—such as family support and spiritual guidance—which appear to strengthen resilience among graduates facing exam-related challenges.

There is a clear need for higher education institutions to establish personalized support systems that address the unique needs of BSSW graduates. This includes enhancing the social work curriculum, strengthening academic advising services, and building stronger affiliations with professional organizations such as the National Association for Social Work Education, Inc. (NASWEI), to ensure timely access to exam-related information and resources.

Additionally, this study highlights the importance of expanding the scope of future research to include the perspectives of individuals closely involved in the examinees' journey—such as family members, friends, instructors, and colleagues. Incorporating these viewpoints would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the

role support networks play in shaping the experiences and outcomes of repeat examinees.

Ultimately, the study emphasizes the vital role of cohesive support systems and collaborative efforts in helping BSSW graduates overcome licensure-related challenges and succeed in their professional endeavors. Educators, policymakers, and practitioners are encouraged to work together in creating an environment that empowers social work graduates as they prepare for and navigate the licensure process.

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