



Perseverance And Resilience: Lived Experiences of Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination Takers

Deeann Joy D. Dapiton¹, Geline L. Larupay², Romer M. Ponce³, Angela B. Casios⁴
^{1,2,3,4} College of Management, Capiz State University, Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines.

Article Info

Article History:

Published: 31 May 2026

Publication Issue:

Volume 3, Issue 5
May-2026

Page Number:

675-693

Corresponding Author:

Deeann Joy D. Dapiton

Abstract:

The Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE) is a grueling and transformative hurdle in the Philippines; however, the period following the release of results—whether pass or fail—presents a critical yet underexplored challenge for examinees. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of CPALE takers, focusing on their motivations, challenges, and sense-making processes after receiving the examination results. In-depth interviews were conducted with twelve (12) participants, including both passers and non-passers from 2023 to 2025. The data were analyzed using semantic thematic analysis. The findings revealed that participants' motivations were driven by a combination of financial stability (economic pragmatism) and familial obligation (filial piety and legacy). The core challenges centered on intense psychological struggles, such as self-doubt and anxiety, alongside physiological strain, particularly burnout, which was exacerbated by academic gaps stemming from the pandemic era. Post-result coping mechanisms involved emotional extremes, including numbness and grief, as well as a strong reliance on unconditional social support. Anchored in Attribution Theory, the findings indicate that participants sustained self-efficacy and persistence by attributing success to discipline, while rationalizing temporary failure through spiritual timing to preserve motivation and readiness for re-engagement. The CPALE journey necessitated a reconstruction of identity, disentangling self-worth from licensure outcomes and prompting strategic adjustments to professional timelines. Overall, the study concludes that the CPALE functions as a crucible that transforms examinees, redefining success through perseverance and resilience rather than mere achievement.

Keywords: CPALE, Lived Experiences, Phenomenology, Motivation, Stress and Coping, Sense-making, Resilience

1. Introduction

The accounting profession relies heavily on highly skilled Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) to maintain the integrity of the global economic infrastructure, providing essential services across auditing, financial reporting, and advisory functions (Micabalo & Cruspero, 2022). Consequently, the CPA Licensure Examination (CPALE) serves as a critical quality assurance mechanism and a rigorous barometer of a candidate's professional readiness (Lianza, 2016). The journey to this examination is notoriously arduous, beginning with strict retention policies during the undergraduate level (Philippines – ASEAN CPA Secretariat, n.d.) and culminating in a high-stakes professional vetting process characterized by historical severity, with national passing rates fluctuating between a restrictive 15% to 35% annually, that ultimately dictates a candidate's career trajectory.

The outcome of the CPALE creates a stark divide among aspiring accountants. Successful examinees transition immediately into licensed professionals, gaining the legal privilege to practice (PRC, n.d.). Conversely, those who do not pass face a distinct set of regulatory hurdles, ranging from conditional retakes to mandatory 24-unit refresher courses mandated by Republic Act No. 9298 for multiple failures (PRBOA Resolution No. 46, n.d.). This binary outcome—immediate professional entry versus prolonged remediation—transforms the CPALE into a highly

pressurized event that generates intense psychological and emotional experiences for candidates, regardless of the outcome.

While the legal and professional pathways for both passers and non-passers are clearly delineated, a significant gap remains in the literature regarding the human element of this process. Current understandings often overlook the deep, subjective meanings, challenges, and coping mechanisms experienced by the individuals undergoing this transformative journey. Therefore, this study aims to conduct an in-depth exploration of the subjective lived experiences of CPALE takers. By examining their initial motivations, the obstacles faced, and how they make sense of their exam results, this research provides vital insights into the licensure journey. Ultimately, the knowledge generated from this study will help educators, review centers, and policymakers develop more compassionate, responsive, and holistic support systems for future aspiring CPAs.

2. Literature Review

The professional pursuit of an aspiring Certified Public Accountant (CPA) is widely recognized as a grueling endeavor focused on passing the Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE). While institutional metrics treat performance as a static measure of academic readiness, preparation is a multi-stage, dynamic psychological journey evaluating candidate experiences through an integrated framework linking initial motivation, stress appraisal, and subsequent outcome attribution by combining Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2019), the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958). Candidates begin their journey with varying degrees of determination; some are driven by intrinsic motivators like professional calling and competence, while others are influenced by extrinsic practical rewards like financial improvement or bringing honor to their families (Santos & Arriola, 2023). In the Philippine context, where familial expectations and collective achievement are highly valued, examinees carry a heavy emotional and social responsibility, viewing success as a shared victory for the family (Santos & Arriola, 2023). To sustain this internal drive, institutional structures—including structured review programs, progress-tracking systems, and formal mock board examinations—serve as vital motivational anchors that reinforce self-efficacy throughout periods of prolonged uncertainty (Cavite State University, 2023; Gibbons et al., 2019).

However, translating these professional ambitions into practice forces candidates to confront severe psychological, physical, and social obstacles. Intensive preparation consistently results in acute curriculum overload, weak foundational knowledge, and mental burnout (Reyes et al., 2025). Because national passing rates remain low, a pervasive fear of failure frequently undermines examinee self-confidence, leading to chronic anxiety, depression, and a postponement of the exam (Aniceto et al., 2024; Micabalo & Cruspero, 2022). The physiological toll is also severe, with measurably elevated stress hormones directly impairing essential cognitive functions like memory and problem-solving skills (Heissel et al., 2019). Furthermore, demanding schedules force long study hours that trade off with rest, resulting in chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, and unhealthy habits like excessive caffeine consumption (Aniceto et al., 2024; Jirjees et al., 2024). This rigorous process forces candidates into academic isolation and social withdrawal, leaving them to struggle with deep feelings of shame, emotional numbness, and the persistent dread of social judgment from peers and relatives (Banay, 2024; Mercado et al., 2025). Stress throughout this journey is not inherent to the exam itself, but stems from how individuals subjectively appraise these external threats relative to their coping resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

To manage this immense pressure, candidates typically adopt a duality of coping mechanisms that directly impacts their performance. Examinees who utilize proactive, problem-focused coping strategies—such as methodical planning, active studying, and strict time management—consistently achieve better academic outcomes and higher test scores because these deliberate, instrumental actions enhance their sense of environmental control and self-efficacy (Al-Sukaini et al., 2025; Barbé et al., 2024; Waterhouse & Samra, 2025). Conversely, the role of emotion-focused coping is highly nuanced (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). While adaptive emotional strategies like seeking structured emotional support from family or engaging in positive cognitive reframing can regulate distress and prevent candidates from becoming completely overwhelmed, reliance on maladaptive strategies such as avoidance, denial, and behavioral disengagement frequently depletes cognitive resources, triggers procrastination, and ultimately results in lower exam scores (Al-Sukaini et al., 2025; Gaur & Gautam, 2025; Waterhouse & Samra, 2025).

The final phase of the examinee experience occurs in the aftermath of the examination, where meaning-making and causal attributions dictate the candidate's future professional trajectory (Heider, 1958). Successful examinees naturally reinforce their confidence and sense of agency by attributing their passing marks to controllable, internal factors such as dedication, discipline, and sustained effort (Rizvi et al., 2023). In contrast, the responses of unsuccessful takers vary significantly depending on their cognitive framing. Candidates who attribute failure to temporary, controllable shortcomings—such as ineffective study strategies—demonstrate higher psychological resilience, emotional stability, and a willingness to re-engage with renewed determination (Burgoyne et al., 2020; Papantoniou et al., 2019). However, those who externalize their results entirely to uncontrollable factors like exam bias, economic limitations, or permanent personal inadequacy tend to experience severe self-doubt, disengage from the process, and redirect their career paths away from the accounting profession (Daud & Guileña, 2024; Ilano, 2025). Ultimately, meaning-making in high-stakes licensure contexts operates as a social and emotional survival tool, demonstrating that final outcomes serve as profound catalysts for personal transformation and professional perseverance (Wilson et al., 2020).

3. Case and Methodology

This study employed an exploratory qualitative research design to investigate the subjective lived experiences of accountancy graduates navigating the Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE) cycle. This design is appropriate because exploring the psychological journey through high-stakes professional exams requires an interpretive approach to capture nuanced participant meaning (Salcedo et al., 2021). The setting for this inquiry was Roxas City, Capiz, Philippines. Through convenience sampling and peer referrals, an initial pool of twenty accountancy graduates was screened, resulting in a final sample of twelve participants who completed the CPALE between 2023 and 2025. The sample included a deliberate mix of both board exam passers and non-passers to ensure a comprehensive view of the examination experience, while individuals holding a "conditioned" status or those who had not yet taken the exam were excluded.

Data were systematically collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conceptually framed around Goal-Setting Theory (Locke & Latham, 2019), the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958). To accommodate availability, a mixed-modality approach was utilized: five participants (four passers, one non-passer) completed synchronous online video interviews lasting 45 to 60 minutes, while seven participants (two passers, five non-passers) completed asynchronous written interviews via Google Forms. All verbal data were transcribed verbatim, and subsequent member checking was conducted to ensure the transcripts faithfully represented the participants' intended meanings. The narratives were then analyzed using the six-step semantic thematic analysis framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final write-up.

To maintain phenomenological rigor and mitigate researcher bias stemming from the authors' own accounting backgrounds, several procedural safeguards were implemented. The primary researchers practiced bracketing to set aside personal preconceptions about the CPALE, and a neutral third-party interviewer was hired to conduct the sessions in a non-leading environment. In strict adherence to ethical principles governing human subject research, all participants provided formal informed consent, maintained total autonomy to withdraw without consequence, and interacted with an interviewer trained in emotional sensitivity regarding exam distress. To ensure absolute confidentiality, strict anonymity protocols were enforced, immediately scrubbing all names, specific universities, and review centers from the datasets before storing files in secure, password-protected cloud drives.

4. Results & Analysis

Motivations of CPALE Takers

The qualitative data analysis revealed three overarching themes dictating the motivations of Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE) takers: economic pragmatism, filial piety and legacy, and professional validation. These distinct themes served as the primary drivers propelling candidates toward the high-stakes examination, establishing the foundational psychological architecture of their licensure journey.

Economic Pragmatism

A predominant theme articulated across almost the entire participant cohort was the perception of the CPALE as an instrumental tool for achieving tangible, practical life milestones. Rather than stemming from a purely abstract academic ambition, the decision to pursue the license was a highly calculated trajectory rooted in economic realities and financial survival. Participants systematically framed the accounting credential as an indispensable mechanism to elevate their current living conditions, secure financial autonomy, and access highly remunerative employment. The underlying motivation was heavily transactional, positioning the grueling licensure process as a necessary input to yield long-term career security. As Participant 3 (Passer) observed:

"... the demand for our profession will never run out. So, if there is a business, an accountant is definitely needed."

Conversely, individuals who had not yet achieved passing status conceptualized the credential defensively, focusing on the acute occupational limitations imposed by the absence of the title. For instance, Participant 8 (Non-Passer) stated:

"I realized my efforts can only do so much, and opportunities are limited for me if I don't have the 'CPA' license... all I wanted was to land a good-paying job."

A more nuanced distinction emerged in how economic pragmatism was structurally framed between the two tracking groups. Passers conceptually operationalized the license as a form of "leverage" or "control" over their vocational destiny, viewing it as an instrument to command autonomy and force the corporate landscape to compete for their expertise. This proactive drive positioned the title as a gatekeeper to high-level, self-directed professional opportunities.

In contrast, non-passers viewed the license as an absolute "necessity" required to escape systemic professional stagnation and financial limitation. Driven primarily by socioeconomic anxiety rather than intrinsic academic passion, their resilience was anchored in a raw survival instinct and the belief that the license represented the only viable pathway for upward social mobility. This was particularly exemplified by Participant 12 (Non-Passer), whose focus was explicitly structured around the goal to "earn in foreign currency" to maximize lifetime income.

These findings strongly substantiate the core principles of Locke and Latham's Goal-Setting Theory, specifically regarding the psychological mechanisms of extrinsic incentives and high-magnitude targets. The target-driven commitment observed in this cohort confirms that highly specific, tangible rewards act as concrete anchors that sustain human effort and persistence through deeply grueling academic processes (Mbiti et al., 2024). This relationship also aligns with the observations of Aniceto et al. (2024), who noted that career success functions as a primary driver of commitment when students perceive an educational credential not as an end in itself, but as an indispensable instrument to secure the socioeconomic stability they previously lacked—effectively elevating the stakes of the examination from mere professional ambition to structural survival.

Filial Piety and Legacy

While economic stability provided the practical impetus for taking the exam, the emotional endurance required to navigate the preparation lifecycle was heavily drawn from deeply embedded familial expectations and collectivist values. The empirical data highlighted that the CPALE is rarely processed as an individual pursuit; instead, it is experienced as a collective family endeavor. This motivation was profoundly rooted in the traditional Filipino cultural script of *utang na loob* (debt of gratitude), wherein obtaining the CPA license was conceptualized as the ultimate reciprocal gift to parents who sacrificed to fund their undergraduate education. Expressing this intense sense of relational responsibility, Participant 7 (Non-Passer) shared:

"I only have my mom. So, as much as possible, I wanted to be financially stable right away so I could support my mother."

The narrative data indicated another structural divergence in how the family unit was internalized by the participants. Passers consistently framed familial influence as "continuing a legacy," utilizing successful family members as protective archetypes or behavioral blueprints for success. For example, Participant 6 (Passer) detailed how a generational connection consolidated his vocational commitment:

"... I heard the news that my two grandfathers were certified public accountants. So, that's where my connection with the course was thickened."

Non-passers, however, framed their familial motivations through the psychological lens of "debt repayment." Their drive was explicitly linked to the quantifiable sacrifices and financial hardships endured by their support systems, which generated a acute sense of psychological obligation. This group viewed the license as a necessary, symbolic receipt to validate the investments made on their behalf, as demonstrated by Participant 8 (Non-Passer), who emphasized the pressing need to "give value to the sacrifices" of her parents because they are "priceless."

Consequently, candidates carry the significant psychological burden of "collective success," wherein the individual examination outcome is interpreted as a direct reflection of familial honor. This validation of an interdependent self-construal substantiates the collectivist framework articulated by Santos and Arriola (2023), where an individual perceives a high-stakes exam not as an isolated academic hurdle, but as a shared victory or shared failure.

Furthermore, these dynamics confirm the findings of Micabalo and Cruspero (2022) regarding institutional family factors; parental financial and emotional investment establishes an implicit psychological contract. The fear of "betraying" or invalidating those sacrifices functions as a much more potent psychological driver than personalized, ego-driven ambitions.

Professional Validation

The final motivational theme centered on an intense internal need for professional validation and cognitive closure. Participants sought the credential to validate years of rigorous undergraduate labor and definitively secure their identities as legitimate professionals. Within this theme, the examination functioned as a crucial boundary-marking event required to reclaim self-respect and demonstrate personal capability. Reflecting on this internal transformation, Participant 4 (Passer) stated:

"For me, getting through the CPALE is the entryway to self-discovery... I knew the journey would shape me into someone I myself could respect."

Conversely, for other candidates, the motivation was driven by a simpler desire to confront the challenge directly to demystify the high-stakes environment, as expressed by Participant 7 (Non-Passer):

"So, yes, first, I really wanted to experience the board exam... As long as I experienced the board exam and at least for my second time, I would know what to expect."

When analyzing the internal frameworks of the tracking groups, passers primarily approached the examination as a mechanism for "self-mastery" and "prospective closure"—a defined academic chapter that had to be successfully concluded to grant them permission to advance into broader life phases. This was epitomized by Participant 1 (Passer), who asserted that the license effectively "validates your existence" and proves "you're capable." On the other hand, non-passers frequently processed the exam through a "defensive" framework as a necessary "proof of competence." Their motivation was heavily designed to justify the "sunk costs" of their education and prove that the grueling years spent obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSA) degree were not in vain (e.g., Participant 10).

This pattern implies that accountancy graduates frequently view their undergraduate degree as structurally incomplete without the accompanying license. This perspective leads to a highly rigid internalization of professional identity, where an individual's intrinsic self-worth becomes dangerously tethered to a binary examination outcome.

From a theoretical perspective, this intense intrinsic drive aligns with Goal-Setting Theory's mechanism of goal commitment, which posits that individuals actively seek out and commit to highly challenging goals for the explicit purpose of demonstrating personal competence and establishing self-efficacy. This finding closely supports the "personal-best" goal framework outlined by Mbiti et al. (2024), demonstrating that pursuing the CPA title allows candidates to reclaim a sense of agency and personal closure that the academic rigors of undergraduate training may have eroded.

Table 1. Motivations of CPALE Takers

Theme	Emerging Themes	Description
-------	-----------------	-------------

Economic Pragmatism	Living Condition, In Demand, High-Paying	Participants were driven by the need to improve their living conditions, achieve financial freedom, and secure high-paying jobs. The license is viewed as a tool for economic survival.
Filial Piety and Legacy	Continue, Favor, and Proud	A dominant motivation was to repay parents/guardians for their sacrifices, fulfill the dreams of parents who couldn't finish the degree, or honor those who supported them.
Professional Validation	Closure and Prove to Myself	The exam is seen as a necessary "closure" to years of study and a way to solidify credentials for specific career paths (e.g., working abroad or in top firms).

Source: Data from the Researchers

Challenges Experienced by CPALE Takers

The qualitative thematic analysis revealed four central themes regarding the challenges encountered by Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE) takers: psychological warfare, academic preparedness and foundational gaps, physiological constraints, and resource limitations. These core hurdles illustrate that the licensure trajectory presents a multi-dimensional crisis impacting candidates' mental, structural, somatic, and environmental frameworks.

Psychological Warfare

The empirical data strongly indicated that the primary obstacle encountered by candidates was not the technical complexity of the assessment items, but rather the destabilization of their own internal psychological states. Participants uniformly described the review lifecycle as a form of "psychological warfare," characterized by a relentless cycle of acute self-doubt, pervasive anxiety, and a paralyzing fear of failure. This internal turbulence frequently threatened to derail preparation independent of a candidate's actual cognitive capacity or objective knowledge base. Participant 4 (Passer) vividly articulated this psychological burden:

"... battling with doubt, fear, anxiety, feelings of worthlessness... I've always been someone who thinks too much, so every failing pre-board score, I took as a sign that I won't pass."

For candidates within the non-passing track, this internal pressure was experienced as an inescapable, draining routine. As Participant 10 (Non-Passer) recounted:

"Every day was a cycle of waking up early, studying until late, and constantly questioning if I was doing enough... I was mentally tired and anxious, which made it hard to focus."

A distinct divergence emerged in how the two tracking groups managed this internal warfare. Passers systematically employed "compartmentalization" to mitigate cognitive interference. While they fully acknowledged their fear and anxiety, they conceptually isolated these emotions, reasoning that their psychological distress was entirely separate from their functional capacity to perform. By cultivating strict self-composure, passers treated anxiety as background noise rather than a paralyzing barrier (e.g., Participant 3).

Conversely, non-passers were frequently consumed or paralyzed by these psychological stressors. They tended to adopt fatalistic reasoning, allowing affective distress to dictate their projected performance outcomes. This was exemplified by Participant 8 (Non-Passer), who described being so "drowned in it" that she became completely unable to study. For this cohort, anxiety evolved into a self-fulfilling prophecy that systematically eroded active cognitive focus and executive functioning.

These dynamics provide strong empirical validation for Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. Candidates evaluated the CPALE through a primary appraisal of profound threat. When a secondary appraisal occurred, they perceived that the demands of the examination severely outpaced their available coping resources, triggering an acute stress response that directly inhibited executive cognitive function.

This existential crisis mirrors the systemic mental health challenges observed by Jabeen et al. (2025) and Aniceto et al. (2024). Because the high-stakes nature of professional licensure inherently ties performance to a fear of public failure and social judgment (Banay, 2024), the academic task is transformed into an identity crisis that depletes the psychological energy required for deep learning.

Academic Preparedness and Foundational Gaps

The second major theme centered on a pervasive sense of academic inadequacy and structural culture shock. Upon entering the formal review phase, participants experienced a profound cognitive mismatch, realizing that their undergraduate training was insufficient to handle the comprehensive complexity of the board examination. This forced candidates to utilize the condensed review period not for polishing existing mastery, but for urgent remedial learning—scrambling to build foundational blocks that should have been secured during their undergraduate years. This structural deficit was explicitly linked to historical external factors, as Participant 9 (Non-Passer) explained:

"I am struggling also because my foundation is weak... Ours is not that strong because we began college during the pandemic."

Participant 6 (Passer) corroborated this reality, admitting that the board review often served as a first attempt at learning advanced accounting content:

"... almost three-fourths of the topic was first view... not everything was taught in the undergrad."

The analytical tracking revealed that passers processed this foundational gap as a quantifiable "logistical challenge." They reasoned that because their academic foundation was weak, they were required to increase their study volume to compensate. This calculated approach was demonstrated by Participant 2 (Passer), who strategically allocated eight hours a day for an entire year to bridge the deficit.

In contrast, non-passers internalized the gap as an immutable "structural deficit." They reasoned that the distance between their current knowledge base and the exam requirements was too wide to bridge within the available timeframe. This generated a persistent feeling of being permanently behind, as noted by Participant 7 (Non-Passer). By attributing this limitation directly to the onset of the pandemic, non-passers frequently viewed the deficit as a permanent handicap rather than a temporary, malleable hurdle.

This phenomenon aligns with imposter syndrome, where students perceive their undergraduate degrees as incomplete or artificial due to the disruptions of emergency remote education. This finding enriches the existing literature on accounting education by isolating a distinct, modern cohort barrier: the "pandemic learning gap."

While these results support the systematic review by Reyes et al. (2025), which identified weak foundational knowledge as a primary barrier to licensure success, this study explains the root cause for this specific generation. The rapid transition to online learning created a structural disconnect in learning depth, forcing contemporary candidates to condense four years of disrupted undergraduate education into a high-stakes, six-month remediation cycle—creating a severe disadvantage that sheer effort often cannot overcome.

Physiological Constraints

In their attempts to bridge these academic gaps within rigid institutional deadlines, candidates frequently engaged in unsustainable study behaviors that exacted a severe physical toll. The third theme highlighted the intense physiological constraints imposed by a pervasive "hustle culture." Participants systematically sacrificed basic biological needs—most notably sleep—viewing somatic neglect as a necessary trade-off to achieve comprehensive material coverage. This self-imposed physical deprivation resulted in severe somatic deterioration that often peaked during the actual examination days. Participant 6 (Passer) described the extreme physical cost of his preparation routine:

"I really have to study 14... 14 hours... My stomach hurt. I had a fever. So, my mind wasn't properly composed."

Similarly, Participant 10 (Non-Passer) recounted the exhausting nature of the review process:

"I spent countless sleepless nights just to study... There were days when I felt burned out... I barely had time to rest or clear my mind."

When navigating this somatic strain, passers demonstrated temporary physiological endurance. They pushed their bodies to the absolute brink but maintained just enough cognitive control to execute the task, such as Participant 6, who managed to complete the Taxation exam despite temporarily falling asleep due to exhaustion. Passers framed physical pain as a transient, external state to be outlasted.

Conversely, non-passers experienced this physiological strain as a functional collapse. For this group, physical exhaustion directly eroded active cognitive faculties during critical moments. This was illustrated by Participant 11 (Non-Passer), who recounted that by the second day of the examination, cumulative fatigue caused her to mentally surrender because her body was completely exhausted.

This pattern reveals a deep cultural inclination toward a "martyrdom complex," where candidates falsely equate physical suffering and somatic neglect with academic dedication and a higher probability of success. These findings empirically confirm the assertions of Mercado et al. (2025) regarding the capacity of prolonged psychological pressure to compromise physiological health.

The data show that this trade-off is frequently counterproductive to examination performance; by prioritizing sheer academic volume over essential biological recovery, candidates induce severe cognitive fatigue. This physiological depletion ultimately inhibits the brain's capacity to retrieve the very information they sacrificed their sleep to memorize.

Resource Limitations

The final theme addressed the environmental and logistical barriers that disrupted candidates' preparation. The licensure challenge was compounded by external factors, including financial constraints, forced social isolation, and study environments that were poorly suited for deep concentration. Participant 4 (Passer) highlighted the heavy emotional toll associated with the necessary social withdrawal:

"... commenced my 9-month-long 'isolation'... Emotionally, it was also hard because I have literally detached myself from the 'real world' to focus on my studying."

For non-passers, these external limitations frequently disrupted their study flow. As Participant 8 (Non-Passer) described:

"I was so distracted, I was not utilizing my time wisely. Long story short, I was drowning in it... I couldn't get a hold of myself to study."

The tracking groups exhibited distinct differences in how they responded to these environmental constraints. Passers actively endured these resource limitations, framing social detachment and suboptimal physical environments as necessary, temporary sacrifices required to achieve their overarching goal (e.g., Participant 1; Participant 4).

On the other hand, non-passers were frequently derailed by these environmental limitations. Suboptimal settings directly broke their focus, and personal or domestic challenges completely disrupted their study schedules. This was further observed in candidates who faced acute financial constraints (e.g., Participant 3); the inability to afford specialized in-person review centers forced them into isolated online modalities that increased their sense of social alienation.

This implies that the contemporary CPALE review process is structured around the assumption that candidates have access to a privileged, highly sterile environment. The severe isolation reported by the participants confirms the findings of Wallace (2024) regarding social withdrawal as a major educational stressor; removing social contact eliminates a candidate's primary emotional release valve.

Furthermore, these financial pressures support the resource frameworks of Micabalo and Cruspero (2022) through the mechanism of dual-task interference. Financial insecurity forces the brain to divide its finite cognitive capacity between processing complex accounting concepts and worrying about immediate economic survival—significantly reducing the cognitive bandwidth available for deep learning and retention.

Table 2. Challenges Experienced by the CPALE Takers

Theme	Emerging Themes	Description
Psychological Warfare	Self-Doubt, and Scared of Failing	Internal struggles with self-doubt, anxiety, and pressure often outweighed the academic difficulty of the exam itself.
Academic Preparedness and Foundational Gaps	Haven't Learned Anything Yet and Lack the Basic Foundation	Insufficient undergraduate foundations caused a "culture shock," forcing participants to relearn basic concepts while mastering advanced topics
Physiological Constraints	Fatigue and No Sleep	The intense review regimen exacted a severe physical toll, leading to sleep deprivation, sickness, and exhaustion.
Resource Limitations	Not Very Conducive and Sacrifice	Financial burdens and non-conducive study environments added significant logistical stress to the academic pressure.

Source: Data from researchers

Processing and Making Sense of the Results

The empirical data uncovered three core themes reflecting how Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination (CPALE) takers processed and made sense of their examination outcomes: immediate emotional responses, social coping, and attribution and rationalization. These themes detail the final phase of the examination lifecycle, highlighting the complex emotional, interpersonal, and cognitive mechanisms employed by candidates to navigate their results.

Immediate Emotional Response

The narrative data indicated that the release of the CPALE results was an intensely charged event characterized by extreme emotional states. Rather than experiencing predictable expressions of joy or sadness, participants encountered deeply complex, delayed, or distorted emotional processing. Passers experienced an acute sense of jarring numbness and relief rather than an immediate sense of celebration, while non-passers encountered visceral grief and disorientation. The deep psychological and physiological depletion induced by the preparation phase often delayed their emotional processing. Participant 6 (Passer) described how severe physical exhaustion left him emotionally detached when the results were announced:

... "When the result came out around 1:00 AM... I read... 'Ay, my name is on the list'. And then I slept right away... 'Okay, that's it.' I'm not happy, I'm not sad either. No emotions at all."

Candidates confronting non-passing status reported a highly intricate mixture of affective distress and philosophical acceptance. As Participant 12 (Non-Passer) explained:

"When I found out that I didn't pass the exam, I felt a mix of sadness and contentment... I didn't want to have any 'what ifs' or regrets."

For successful examinees, this post-examination phase was defined by "decompression" rather than standard triumph. The primary reaction was the sudden cessation of chronic suffering; the choice of passers to sleep immediately implies that the passing mark was processed as a permission to rest rather than a victory lap. This emotional lag was corroborated by Participant 1 (Passer), who noted that the positive reality initially failed to register, with profound numbness overshadowing active celebration.

In contrast, non-passers experienced extreme "grief and disorientation," frequently manifesting as a form of acute cognitive dissonance when their immense personal sacrifices failed to yield the anticipated professional returns. This was illustrated by Participant 10 (Non-Passer), who described staring at the online database in total disbelief. Other non-passers (e.g., Participant 7) described a profound heartbreak that felt as if their world had completely stopped.

These patterns indicate that the high-stakes licensure journey functions as a distinct traumatic stressor. The characteristic numbness reported by passers reveals severe emotional burnout, expanding upon the exhaustion frameworks identified by Mercado et al. (2025) and Reyes et al. (2025). These findings offer an explanation for why academic and professional success is not always accompanied by immediate positive affect. The physiological and psychological cost of the preparation period is so severe that the somatic system prioritizes biological recovery and homeostasis over psychological celebration.

For non-passers, the observed devastation occurs because they have heavily conflated their intrinsic human identity with the binary assessment outcome—transforming an academic setback into an acute existential crisis.

Social Coping

The second major theme highlighted the critical role of immediate social networks in regulating and processing examination outcomes. The data demonstrated that coping with the CPALE results is a collective social process rather than an isolated psychological event. The emotional stability of the candidates was heavily dependent on the baseline reactions of their primary reference groups—most notably their family units and close peers—which effectively functioned as an external stabilizer for their internal states. Expressing the validating nature of this shared experience, Participant 5 (Passer) observed:

"Sharing the news with family, friends, and colleagues can be deeply affirming... It feels so good that almost everyone is celebrating my win."

For unsuccessful candidates, non-judgmental social spaces served to reframe the structural failure. As Participant 12 (Non-Passer) emphasized:

"... my family, friends, and best friends were there for me... They reminded me that failure doesn't define who I am, it's just part of the journey toward something greater."

Within the successful tracking group, social support acted as essential external validation. Sharing the result made the victory concrete; passers frequently used the visible joy of their family members to calibrate and experience their own happiness (e.g., Participant 6).

For non-passers, however, the social support system provided vital "interpersonal absolution." The critical turning point for psychological recovery occurred when candidates realized their core family structure forgave their performance deficits. This was illustrated by Participant 7 (Non-Passer), who experienced immense cognitive relief

when her aunt reassured her that the outcome was acceptable. Relational reassurances that an exam failure did not alter their fundamental worth functioned as the primary catalyst enabling non-passers to resume forward momentum.

This reliance on relational networks suggests that a candidate's fear of failure is closely tied to an underlying fear of social rejection and exclusion. These findings provide strong empirical support for the adaptive, emotion-focused coping models outlined by Freire et al. (2020). When an objective stressor can no longer be modified or reversed, individuals must rely heavily on their social environments to successfully down-regulate emotional distress.

Furthermore, these dynamics confirm the assertions of Waterhouse and Samra (2025) regarding the psychological importance of an absence of blame within the family system. This non-punitive environment signals to the non-passer that their security and placement within the family structure remain fully intact despite the failure, establishing a necessary prerequisite for psychological recovery and future remediation.

Attribution and Rationalization

The final theme detailed the cognitive strategies utilized by candidates to construct explanatory narratives for their examination results. Candidates exhibited an intense psychological need to assign causal explanations to their outcomes, systematically attributing the results either to internal, controllable variables or to external, spiritual frameworks. Passers overwhelmingly operated from a highly stable, "internal locus of control," attributing their success directly to personal discipline, meticulous planning, and rigorous study schedules. This self-directed agency was exemplified by Participant 2 (Passer), who attributed his passing score to a structured study routine:

"I think I was adequately prepared... I studied eight hours a day for one year just to be at the competence that I want to be."

Conversely, non-passers systematically shifted toward "external and spiritual attributions" to rationalize their failure, surrendering the outcome to divine orchestration and external timelines. As Participant 9 (Non-Passer) explained:

"I've learned to trust in God's perfect timing... My timeline shouldn't be compared to my batch mates."

This externalization was further echoed by Participant 11 (Non-Passer), who maintained a fatalistic approach by asserting that desirable outcomes are only granted when they are divinely intended.

These findings are explained by the framework of Weiner's Attribution Theory, which evaluates how individuals interpret outcomes across the dimensions of locus, stability, and controllability. Passers validate their own agency and reinforce their professional self-efficacy by linking success to internal, controllable effort (e.g., Participant 5).

On the other hand, the distinct tendency of non-passers to attribute exam failure to external, uncontrollable, or unstable factors—such as "God's perfect timing"—functions as a vital cognitive survival strategy. By avoiding stable, internal attributions (such as a lack of inherent intelligence), unsuccessful candidates preserve their core self-esteem and protect their psychological well-being (Wilson et al., 2020).

This spiritual rationalization allows non-passers to accept the reality of the unfavorable result without accepting personal incompetence. Crucially, by framing the setback as temporary and unstable, candidates preserve the essential belief that success remains entirely possible on a future attempt, thereby maintaining the long-term motivation required to re-enter the licensure pipeline.

Table 3. Processing and Making Sense of Results

Theme	Emerging Themes	Description
-------	-----------------	-------------

Immediate Response	Emotional	Happy and Glad, and Disappointed	Reactions varied wildly, ranging from profound relief and joy to visceral heartbreak and disappointment.
Social Coping		Validation and Chances	Coping was heavily dependent on the reaction of loved ones. Validation from family (that they weren't disappointed) was crucial for emotional recovery.
Attribution and Rationalization	and	Plan and Discipline, and Accepted My Fate	Participants used attribution to make sense of the result—attributing it to "God's will," "lack of preparation," or simply accepting it was "not yet time."

Source: Data from researchers

Effects on Life and Future Views

The final data analysis cluster uncovered three overarching themes concerning CPALE takers' future outlooks and long-term perspectives following the receipt of their results: a professional reality check, the reconstruction of identity, and strategic adjustments. These themes capture how the termination of the examination lifecycle reshapes the participants' career assumptions, self-concepts, and structural life planning.

Professional Reality Check

The empirical data indicated that the release of the examination results served as a critical, grounding reality check regarding the structural nature of the accounting ecosystem. The post-examination environment forced participants to confront their highly idealized, academic assumptions about the profession against the practical, multifaceted demands of the actual labor market. Both tracking cohorts came to understand that while the CPA credential remains an exceptionally powerful asset, it is not the sole determinant of vocational viability or professional growth. Highlighting the linear acceleration experienced by successful candidates, Participant 5 (Passer) described how passing unlocked a forward-looking mindset:

"Suddenly, the future feels wide open. The CPA license becomes a passport to new opportunities. It's a moment where dreams start to feel like plans."

Conversely, those on the non-passing track experienced an unexpected normalization of alternative professional pathways, encountering a significant cognitive shift upon entering the workforce without the credential. As Participant 7 (Non-Passer) shared:

"I realized that I am learning a lot from the actual work... changed the way how I see the board exam... I learned that there are a lot of companies that accept non-CPAs."

The analytical tracking revealed a distinct divergence in how the corporate landscape was evaluated by the two groups. Passers viewed the license strictly as an "accelerator" and a validation of the traditional, binary view of industry entry, noting that passing immediately expanded their access to competitive, high-level corporate spaces (e.g., Participant 2).

In contrast, non-passers underwent a structural de-escalation of the exam's existential stakes. Entering the job market allowed them to shatter a pervasive scarcity mindset—often unintentionally fostered within rigid undergraduate

environments—that falsely equates a non-passing score with immediate unemployment. This realization was echoed by Participant 8 (Non-Passer), who chose to prioritize professional employment over immediate remediation, fundamentally altering her perception of the credential from an absolute baseline for survival to a flexible career target.

This pragmatic re-engagement with the profession strongly aligns with the attribution frameworks articulated by Burgoyne et al. (2020), which posit that adapting one's perspective of a barrier from an unmanageable threat to a controllable milestone increases baseline re-engagement.

By proving to themselves that professional survival and active learning are entirely accessible without the title, non-passers reduced their underlying existential dread. This cognitive shift transitions the CPA license from a desperate survival need to a structured professional goal, theoretically allowing candidates to approach subsequent examination attempts with significantly reduced levels of debilitating anxiety.

Reconstruction of Identity

The second theme centered on the profound, deep impact of the examination results on candidates' internal self-perception and ego structures. The assessment outcome functioned as a psychological mirror, either solidifying a performance-based self-concept or forcing a painful, necessary reconstruction of internal self-worth separate from external academic validation. Reflecting the immediate identity confirmation provided by passing, Participant 1 (Passer) stated:

"... it validates your existence, and it validates the fact that you're able to do that. That you're capable of doing that."

For unsuccessful candidates, the initial collapse of professional self-esteem ultimately catalyzed an extensive re-evaluation of their core identity. As Participant 10 (Non-Passer) recounted:

"Not passing the exam really affected how I saw myself at first, I felt disappointed and questioned my worth... But as time passed, I began to see it as a turning point rather than a setback."

The narrative data revealed that passers frequently derived an "external validation" from their success, where the professional title functioned almost as a psychological prosthetic for their self-esteem. For example, Participant 3 (Passer) observed that obtaining the title effectively cured long-standing internal pessimism, indicating a pattern where deep-seated internal doubts are masked by a singular external achievement. This rigid binding of one's existential validity to an educational metric was further highlighted by Participant 1's assertion that the license directly validates a candidate's very existence.

Conversely, non-passers were forced to engage in a profound "internal reconstruction" of their self-concept. Stripped of the immediate external validation they sought, these individuals had to generate internal frameworks of self-worth to survive the psychological weight of failure. This was exemplified by Participant 11 (Non-Passer), who consciously decoupled her human value from the binary result, asserting that a performance deficit did not make her a personal failure.

This implies that experiencing a non-passing outcome forces a structural psychological maturation and identity decoupling that successful candidates may not immediately undergo. This vital separation of the "core self" from the "professional title" supports the longitudinal resilience models outlined by Forsyth and McMillan (2019). Because non-passers are denied an immediate performance-based identity, they are forced to construct a more robust, character-based identity anchored in adaptive resilience, whereas passers remain highly vulnerable to maintaining a fragile, performance-dependent self-concept.

Strategic Adjustments

The final theme detailed how the examination outcomes necessitated an immediate structural overhaul of participants' career and life planning. The highly rigid, sequential "five-year plans" traditionally drilled into undergraduate accountancy students were either rapidly executed or completely disassembled based on the exam results. This forced candidates to confront the fragility of standardized professional roadmaps, shifting their operational mindset from a competitive race mentality to a philosophy of personal readiness. Participant 11 (Non-Passer) described the total disruption of her career trajectory:

"It had a very great impact, especially on my five-year plan... All of that plan was reconstructed after I failed the exam."

Faced with this structural disruption, candidates had to actively choose to delay immediate remediation to prioritize sustainable preparation, as Participant 7 (Non-Passer) discussed:

"I told myself, 'I think I need a longer preparation for the boards... a one-year preparation.'... Let's postpone it first."

The strategic frameworks of the tracking groups diverged into linear versus adaptive models. Passers maintained a linear and progressive timeline, moving immediately and rigidly toward their next pre-determined milestones, such as transitioning directly into international accounting roles (e.g., Participant 1). Their structural roadmaps remained intact and unyielding.

In contrast, non-passers adopted an "adaptive timeline" model. They consciously rejected peer-comparative pacing in favor of personalized, sustainable growth cycles, a shift exemplified by Participant 9 (Non-Passer), who recognized that her career timeline should not be measured against her undergraduate cohort. This transition from a race mentality to a readiness mentality allowed non-passers to step away from the counterproductive "hustle culture" that dominated their initial preparation.

This structural pattern implies that the traditional "five-year plan" culture pervasive within accounting education is inherently fragile and psychologically risky, as it fails to account for non-linear outcomes or structural setbacks. The capacity of non-passers to discard a disrupted timeline in favor of a flexible, readiness-based framework provides strong empirical validation for the cognitive reframing mechanisms identified by Papantoniou et al. (2019).

This adaptive re-anchoring is highly functional; by reframing a career delay as a strategic, controllable pause rather than an immutable roadblock, candidates prevent themselves from falling into learned helplessness—effectively safeguarding their long-term professional agency and maintaining their baseline readiness to re-enter the licensure pipeline when psychologically stable.

Table 4. Effect on Life and Future Views

Theme	Emerging Themes	Description
Professional Reality Check	More Opportunities, and Accept Non-CPAs	The results forced a re-evaluation of the license's utility; passers saw it as an accelerator, while non-passers realized the industry still values their degree.
Reconstruction of Identity	Validates Your Experience, and Turning Point	The exam served as a mirror for self-worth; passing provided external validation, while failure forced an internal rebuilding of confidence.
Strategic Adjustments	Reconstructed after I Failed, and Longer Preparation	The rigid "race" to success was replaced by personal timelines, with

		plans often overhauled to prioritize readiness over speed.
--	--	--

Source: Data from researchers

Insights from the Findings

The collective narratives reveal that the licensure journey functions as far more than an objective academic assessment; it serves as a period of profound personal testing and psychological transformation. By synthesizing the motivations, challenges, and post-result outcomes shared by the cohort, distinct patterns emerge regarding how candidates evaluate the nature of the examination, the boundaries of human effort, and the sustainability of their preparation methods. Across the data tracks, a consistent pattern appears where the definition of success undergoes a conceptual evolution, shifting from a purely outcome-based metric to a psychological framework. Initially focused on the external validation of the license, participants experience a clear perspective shift as they navigate the review lifecycle. For successful examinees, the core challenge is ultimately articulated not as a measure of academic readiness, but as the internal fortitude required to manage pervasive self-doubt. Similarly, unsuccessful examinees describe a progressive separation of their core self-concept from the binary exam result, actively recognizing that an institutional failure does not define their intrinsic worth. These parallel narratives suggest that as the review progresses, candidates stop viewing the examination as a test of absolute intelligence and begin to reconstruct it as a test of character, where resilience and emotional endurance become central themes of their personal identity.

Furthermore, a recurring phenomenon across the participants' accounts is the recognition of a definitive structural ceiling to traditional academic preparation. Confronted with the cumulative weight of intense psychological warfare and acute physiological constraints, many examinees describe reaching a critical tipping point where individual willpower and deliberate study feel entirely insufficient to bridge the remaining gaps. In these moments of exhaustion, the narratives exhibit a distinct pivot toward spiritual reliance and existential surrender. Successful examinees describe this transition as a conscious surrender of personal control, recognizing the necessity to rely on divine intervention, while unsuccessful candidates frame their delayed professional timelines through the protective lens of trust in a perfect, spiritual orchestration. Within the context of these lived experiences, faith functions as an essential, adaptive coping mechanism, providing psychological stability and cognitive grounding when the overwhelming variables of the examination cycle feel entirely beyond personal control.

Finally, the participants' retrospective reflections highlight a critical tension between the traditional, institutional demands of intensive board review and the somatic limitations of the human body. The narrative data expose a clear realization that a toxic adherence to "hustle culture" systematically induces physical illness and severe burnout, ultimately prompting candidates to prioritize physical well-being as a necessary component of active cognitive functioning. Rather than continuing to view chronic sleeplessness or health neglect as a symbolic badge of academic honor, participants retrospectively frame the licensure process as a marathon requiring careful pacing, sustainable balance, and consistency over sheer intensity.

Collectively, these insights demonstrate that the professional licensure journey operates as a complex developmental milestone rather than an isolated educational hurdle. The convergence of these empirical patterns—the transition from external performance validation to internal psychological resilience, the reliance on spiritual coping mechanisms when cognitive effort reaches its limits, and the explicit rejection of unsustainable operational intensity—presents a holistic portrait of the examination as a test of character. Ultimately, the data reveal that professional readiness is not achieved solely through technical or intellectual mastery, but through the deliberate cultivation of a disciplined, balanced, and spiritually grounded identity capable of enduring high-stakes systemic pressure. This systemic reliance on isolated, self-directed coping and informal peer networks unmask a critical institutional gap, signaling an urgent need for educational institutions, review centers, and policymakers to establish structured, non-clinical psychoeducational orientations that formally address emotional preparedness, anxiety management, and cognitive meaning-making throughout the licensure pipeline.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the pursuit of the Certified Public Accountant (CPA) title is primarily driven by pragmatic, external milestones—such as career stability, financial freedom, and deeply embedded familial obligations—rather than abstract academic mastery. This goal-directed behavior, while aligning with Goal-Setting Theory, exposes candidates to severe psychological and physical stressors during the licensure process. Viewed through the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, examinees appraise the examination as a profound threat that frequently exhausts their coping resources. This vulnerability was notably intensified for this specific cohort due to the physical toll of preparation and the unprecedented hurdle of weakened foundational knowledge caused by pandemic-era educational disruptions.

In the aftermath of the examination, navigating the results initiates a profound reconstruction of personal and professional identity. Grounded in Attribution Theory, candidates preserve their self-worth and maintain longitudinal motivation by framing setbacks through internal, controllable attributions, such as personal effort, or via spiritual rationalization. Ultimately, the licensure journey shatters the traditional binary perception of success and failure. It forces both passers and non-passers to reject a rigid, counterproductive "hustle culture" in favor of an adaptive, cyclical timeline that prioritizes mental sustainability and decouples intrinsic human worth from a professional credential.

Conclusively, the licensure experience serves as a transformative crucible where lessons in resilience and emotional fortitude heavily eclipse mere technical compliance. Because the psychological demands of the examination systematically outpace the current structural mechanisms of accounting education, purely academic preparation is insufficient. These insights underscore a critical systemic need for educational institutions, review centers, and policymakers to transition toward holistic psychoeducational support frameworks. Integrating proactive mental health interventions alongside rigorous academic training is essential to foster resilience, facilitate healthy coping, and safeguard the well-being of aspiring professionals throughout the high-stakes licensure lifecycle.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that this research was conducted in the absence of any commercial, financial, or personal relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest. No external funding or direct financial support was received for the execution of this study, and the primary data collection and analysis were conducted independently of any external institutional influence. All participants involved in the study provided voluntary informed consent, and all personal and institutional identifiers have been fully anonymized to maintain objective ethical and academic standards.

References

- [1] Ahmed, S. K. (2025). Sample size for saturation in qualitative research: Debates, definitions, and strategies. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*.
- [2] Akmal, S. Z., et al. (2017). Hope of Success and Fear of Failure Predicting Academic Procrastination: Students Working on a Thesis. *GUIDENA: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan, Psikologi, Bimbingan dan Konseling*, 7(1), 67-86.
- [3] Al-Sukaini, F. A. B., Karimi, F., Abdul Hussein, F. R., & Ghabanchi, Z. (2025). Navigating test success: An exploration of effective test-taking strategy use and coping mechanisms for test anxiety of intermediate Iraqi EFL learners. *Iranian Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 14(1), 50–67.
- [4] Aniceto, M. J. A., Gamozo, K. J. A., Palicdon, C. R. P., & Ollier, K. C. C. (2024). Influence of the Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination on Accounting Students' Attitudes. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*, 5(8), 3025–3038.
- [5] APA Dictionary of Psychology. (2018, April 19). APA Dictionary of Psychology.

- [6] Banay, K. I. (2024). From setbacks to success: The lived experiences of retakers of the Licensure Examination for Teachers. 11th ISC 2024 (Universitas Advent Indonesia, Indonesia), "Research and Education Sustainability: Unlocking Opportunities in Shaping Today's Generation Decision Making and Building Connections."
- [7] Barbé, A., González Casas, D., Ducca Cisneros, L. V., & Pérez Viejo, J. M. (2024). Impact of coping strategies on the academic satisfaction of university students and their association with socioeconomic variables. *Psicología Educativa*, 31(1), Article e-12.
- [8] Boylorn, R. M. (n.d.). *Lived Experience*. Sage Research Methods.
- [9] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- [10] Burgoyne, A. P., Hambrick, D. Z., & Macnamara, B. N. (2020). How firm are the foundations of mind-set theory? The claims appear stronger than the evidence. *Psychological Science*, 31(3), 258–267.
- [11] Cavite State University. (2023). Predictive validity of CPA mock board examinations. *Philippine Journal of Business and Accountancy*, 18(2), 75–89.
- [12] Coffee Table Book (part 1) – cpale review. (n.d.). cpale review.
- [13] Daud, N., & Guileña, J. (2024). Challenges and Coping Mechanisms Toward the Pre-board Performance of LET Takers. Zenodo.
- [14] Delgado, J. (n.d.). ▷What are expectations? The psychological meaning no one tells you about. Psychology Spot.
- [15] Ferrão, M., & Almeida, L. (2021). Persistence and academic expectations in higher-education students. *Psicothema*, 34(2), 111–118.
- [16] Forsyth, D. R., & McMillan, J. H. (2019). Attribution retraining and student recovery from failure. *Educational Psychology Review*, 31(4), 1067–1085.
- [17] Freire, C., Ferradás, M. del M., Regueiro, B., Rodríguez, S., Valle, A., & Núñez, J. C. (2020). Coping strategies and self-efficacy in university students: A person-centered approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, Article 841.
- [18] Gaur, M., & Gautam, S. K. (2025). Examination anxiety, academic performance and coping strategies among high school and graduating students. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(2), 296.
- [19] Gibbons, C., Dempster, M., & Moutray, M. (2019). Stress, coping, and satisfaction in nursing students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(8), 1482–1491.
- [20] Gottschlich, D., & Atapour, N. (2024). Experiences of academic stress and coping mechanisms in high-achieving students. *KMAN Counseling & Psychology Nexus*, 2(260)
- [21] Heider, F. (1958). *The psychology of interpersonal relations*. John Wiley & Sons.
- [22] Ilano, J. (2025). Lived experiences of successful Filipino licensure examination retakers: A phenomenological study. *Philippine Journal of Psychology and Education*, 47(1), 88–104.
- [23] Jabeen, F., Ruqia, & Bahar, L. (2025). Examine the effects of high-stakes testing on students' mental health at university level: A survey research. *Kashf Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 2(05), 1–19.
- [24] Jirjees, F., Odeh, M., Al-Haddad, A., Ass'ad, R., Hassanin, Y., Al-Obaidi, H., Kharaba, Z., Alfoteih, Y., & Alzoubi, K. H. (2024). Test anxiety and coping strategies among university students: An exploratory study in the UAE. *Scientific Reports*, 14, Article 25835.
- [25] Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*. Springer Publishing Company.

- [26] Lianza, T. S. (2016, January). Performance in the CPA Licensure Examinations of Bachelor of Science in Accountancy: Inputs to Developmental Activities for Undergraduate Students. ResearchGate.
- [27] Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2019). The development of goal-setting theory: A half-century retrospective. *Motivation Science*, 5(2), 93–105.
- [28] Mbiti, I., Manda, C., & Singh, P. (2024). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in exam preparation: Predictors of persistence and performance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 116(4), 721–739.
- [29] Mbiti, I., Muralidharan, K., Romero, M., Schipper, Y., Manda, C., & Rajani, R. (2024). The impact of personal-best goals on student learning: Evidence from Tanzania. *Journal of Human Resources*, 59(2), 295–330.
- [30] Mehdipour-Rabori, R., et al. (2021). Effect of classmate as peer-led education on clinical performance: A mixed-method study. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 11(10), 10.
- [31] Mercado, H. A. R., Aruta, M. G. H., Morante, L. M., Gervacio, B. H., Alfarero, J. A., & Palompon, R. B. (2025). Exploring the barriers in passing the licensure examinations among education graduates. *International Research Journal of Multidisciplinary Scope*, 6(1), 652–662.
- [32] Micabalo, K., & Cruspero, E. C., Jr. (2022). Factors affecting accountancy graduates' readiness for the Certified Public Accountant Licensure Examination. *International Journal of Research in Commerce and Management Studies*, 4(1), 1–10.
- [33] Obbarius, N., Fischer, F., Liegl, G., Obbarius, A., & Rose, M. (2021). A modified version of the transactional stress concept according to Lazarus and Folkman was confirmed in a psychosomatic inpatient sample. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 584333.
- [34] Papantoniou, G., Moraitou, D., & Efklides, A. (2019). Academic failure attributions and re-examination success in medical education. *Medical Education Online*, 24(1), 1624097.
- [35] Philippines – ASEAN CPA Secretariat. (n.d.). ASEAN CPA.
- [36] Predictive Validity of CPA Mock Board Examinations. (2023). Cavite State University Journal of Research and Extension, 15(2), 44–55.
- [37] PRC Frequently Asked Questions. (n.d.). Professional Regulation Commission.
- [38] Professional Regulatory Board of Accountancy Resolution No. 46. (n.d.). Professional Regulation Commission: Home.
- [39] Reyes, J. P. M., Cruz, M. S. M., & Eisma, J. A. (2025, September). A systematic review of CPA licensure exam performance and its determinants in the Philippine context [Thesis, PHINMA–Rizal College of Laguna]. Zenodo.
- [40] Rizvi, N., Khan, M. M., Hussain, M., & Qureshi, M. A. (2023). Causal attributions of failure among postgraduate medical residents in exit fellowship examination in Pakistan: A qualitative study. *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*, 39(5), 1472–1477.
- [41] Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness*. The Guilford Press.
- [42] Santos, D., & Arriola, M. (2023). Aspirations and motivation among Filipino CPA licensure examinees: A qualitative inquiry. *Philippine Journal of Education and Human Development*, 35(2), 56–74.
- [43] Segbenya, M., & Nyieku, I. E. (2022). Challenges and coping strategies among distance education learners: Implication for human resources managers. *Current Psychology*.
- [44] Tobin, J. M. (2025, May 21). CPA Certification Guide. Accounting.com.

- [45] Villegas, K. E., & Lianza, T. S. (2025). Performance in the CPA licensure examination and the impact of developmental activities in the undergraduate program [Manuscript]. Eastern Visayas State University.
- [46] Wallace, M. (2024, April 4). CPA exam stress advice: 8 tips to avoid burnout. Gleim.
- [47] Waterhouse, P., & Samra, R. (2025). University students' coping strategies to manage stress: A scoping review. *Educational Review*. Advance online publication.
- [48] Wilson, T. D., Damiani, M., & Shelton, N. (2020). Attribution retraining and persistence among college students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 112(3), 497–510.