

Criminology Graduates' Motivation and Mindset: Key Factors Driving Success in Board Examination

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ABSTRACT

Success in the criminology board examination is a significant milestone that reflects not only academic competence but also the determination, mindset, and motivation of aspiring criminologists. This study explored how motivation, mindset, and strategic preparation influenced criminology graduates in Lanao del Norte who initially failed but later passed the board examination. A transcendental phenomenological design was used to capture the lived experiences of participants, guided by Moustakas' framework. The research was conducted within Lanao del Norte, considering its diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews focused on personal motivations, coping strategies, and mindset shifts. Seven criminology graduates who previously failed the board exam and later passed were selected through snowball sampling. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically analyzed to extract key insights from the participants' narratives. Findings revealed four key themes: Fuelling Success through Motivation and Mindset: Strategic Study Habits as the Engine for Examination Perseverance, Transforming Challenges into Motivation through Mindset Shift and Goal-Driven Support, Using Aspirations for Professional Fulfilment and Stability, Building Exam Success through Growth Mindset, Resilience and Emotional Mastery. The study concluded that cultivating strong motivation, strategic preparation habits, resilience, and emotional regulation are crucial for overcoming board exam failures. The study recommended that educational institutions may enhance support systems by fostering mindset development, resilience training, and career-focused mentoring to improve board exam outcomes.

Keywords: Academic Motivation; Board Examination; Criminology; Emotional Regulation; Goal Orientation; Growth Mindset; Resilience; Self-Efficacy; Success Strategies; Support System.

1. Introduction

The board examination is a crucial benchmark for professionals, serving as a standardized assessment of their knowledge, skills, and readiness to enter the workforce. Success in these examinations not only enables professionals to gain licensure but also establishes their credibility in their respective industries (Acoba, 2024). Similarly, obtaining a license shows that a person is dedicated to maintaining professional standards and that they possess the knowledge and moral values needed to perform professionally. A professional's ability to provide high-quality services, accountability, and compliance with industry standards are all demonstrated by their current professional license (Labrague, 2024). According to Ayta et al. (2024), it ensures clients and stakeholders that the person has successfully fulfilled the demanding standards of their field and has made a commitment to ethical practice and ongoing education. The combination of theoretical and practical learning, together with access to top-notch learning resources and environments, has a major impact on criminology students' motivation to perform well on board exams (Hubahib & Walag, 2025). Success in these exams is frequently linked to examinees' motivation and academic preparation, with approaches such as peer learning and time management being crucial (Macalisang & Bonghawan, 2024). However, criminology graduates, particularly those who have previously failed board exams, frequently experience significant problems in preparing for exams. Financial constraints severely limit their capacity to access quality review centers and study materials, adding to the stress of preparation (Gina & Chua, 2023). While existing research on quantitative predictions of licensure success has been relatively focused on study habits and institutional support, paucity of in depth narrative based work exists to investigate

examinees' personal, cultural, and motivational aspects of preparation and coping, this study identified this gap primarily from a methodological gap in the sense that limited use of qualitative work was done to explore the lived experiences of Criminology graduates who already failed several Criminologist Licensure Examination (CLE).

1.1. Study Objectives

The following are the objectives of this study: (i) Determine how criminology graduates' motivation influence their preparation strategies for the board examination, (ii) Determine how criminology graduates' mindset affect their approach to overcoming challenges during the board exam preparation, (iii) Identify the key motivational factors that drives criminology graduates to succeed in the board examination, and (iv) Determine what role does mindset play in shaping criminology graduates' success in board examination.

2. Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach using the phenomenological design. The design aimed to explore and comprehend the meanings individuals or groups attributed to their lived experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It focused on capturing the personal reflections, emotions, and strategies of criminology graduates who had initially failed the licensure examination but later succeeded in passing the exam. A phenomenological approach was deemed particularly appropriate for this study as it facilitated a deeper understanding of the motivations, mindsets, and coping mechanisms that drove these individuals to persist in their pursuit of success.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Fuelling Success through Motivation and Mindset: Strategic Study Habits as the Engine for Examination Perseverance

Success in examinations is not solely determined by intelligence or knowledge, but also by the strength of one's motivation and mindset. It is the combination of internal motivation, purposeful goal-setting, and strategic study habits in synergy, all of which come together to perpetuate perseverance and success during examinations. The responses show that students draw strength from deep personal motivators such as family aspirations, financial challenges, professional dreams, and the desire to contribute to society, which inspire them to persist despite hardships. The main theme, in turn, led to two subthemes that further develop the factors influencing examination perseverance.

3.1.1. Using Motivators as the Driving Force for Perseverance and Success: This examines the different motivating factors that encourage individuals to persevere despite difficulties and succeed. Participants' responses demonstrate how both internal and external factors, including support from family, financial difficulties, professional goals, and the desire to contribute to society, encourage their drive to succeed. Many emphasize the importance of overcoming hardships to secure a better future for themselves and their loved ones. Several participants cited that their families as their primary source of motivation. These are the answers of the participants:

"My biggest motivation was my family and my dreams for them. I wanted to succeed so I could provide them with a better future." (P2)

"I wanted to repay my parents for their unconditional support and sacrifices, as well as set a good example for my younger siblings." (P3)

"My biggest motivation was poverty and my family. I wanted to break the cycle of financial struggle and provide a better life for my loved ones." (P6)

Career aspirations also serve as strong motivators, with P4 highlighting the goal of securing a permanent government job, while P5 and P7 focus on passing the Criminology Board Exam to establish a stable career in law enforcement. P1, on the other hand, is driven by the ambition to make a positive impact on society, reinforcing the idea that success is not just personal but can also be a means to help others. These are the answers of the participants:

"My biggest motivation was securing a permanent and stable government job." (P4)

"The desire to make a meaningful impact on people's lives and contribute to a safer, more just society fueled my perseverance." (P1)

"My biggest motivation was my dream of becoming a police officer. Passing the Criminology Board Exam was the key to applying to the PNP." (P7)

"I was determined to achieve my dream of becoming a Registered Criminologist and build a stable career in public service." (P5)

Perseverance and motivation are pivotal in achieving academic success, with various factors influencing students' ability to persist through challenges. Family support plays a crucial role in this context, as it significantly impacts students' educational outcomes. Family involvement in early education has a significant impact on student accomplishment and is a better indicator of literacy development than parental educational attainment or socioeconomic status (Wriston & Duchesneau, 2024). In addition, when students are genuinely interested in their studies, they are more likely to overcome obstacles and remain committed to their educational goals. This internal motivation enhances resilience and contributes to long-term academic success (Team, 2023). This implies that recognizing and fostering multiple sources of motivation particularly familial support, financial necessity, career goals, and a desire to contribute to society can dramatically improve students' academic perseverance and long-term success.

3.1.2. Implementing Strategic Study Habits and Mindset as Key to Examination Success: Participants emphasize the importance of consistency, planning, and active recall techniques in their study habits. Most of them emphasize the helpfulness of spaced repetition, time management, and prioritization of essential details to better recall information. Several participants reported using structured study routines to enhance focus and retention. P4 and P5 both stressed the importance of maintaining discipline and balance in their daily review schedules, while P3 focused on effective time management. These are the responses of the participants:

"I disciplined myself to stay consistent and keep my study materials fresh in my mind." (P4)

"I created a structured study plan, balancing my time between review sessions, self-study, and rest." (P5)

"I carefully scheduled my study hours and made sure to balance rest and preparation effectively." (P3)

Participants also incorporated specific learning techniques to enhance recall and understanding. P1 found success through spaced repetition, while P3 employed a strategic approach to filter out less essential content. P5 focused on active recall and prioritized difficult topics. These are their answers:

"One of the most effective strategies I used was spaced repetition or 'paulit-ulit.'" (P1)

"I applied a three-step strategy to improve my performance. Using the elimination method, prioritizing essential details, and discarding unnecessary information." (P3)

"I created a study schedule, focusing on difficult topics first and using active recall by testing myself regularly." (P5)

Mindset also played a crucial role in their preparation. Participants used internal and external pressure as fuel to perform better and leaned on spiritual practices to stay grounded and focused. P3 channeled emotional challenges into motivation. P2 and P7 found strength and clarity through prayer. These are the responses of the participants:

"I used stress, disappointment, and pressure as motivation to strengthen my preparation." (P3)

"I also relied on self-confidence and prayer to strengthen my mindset." (P2)

"Prayer played a big role in my journey, as it gave me strength and guidance." (P7)

Exam performance depends on cultivating efficient study techniques and a strategic mentality, which improves cognitive retention, lowers test anxiety, and fosters long-term academic success. Self-regulated learning techniques like goal-setting and time management, along with organized study regimens, greatly enhance academic achievement (Orosz et al., 2024). Furthermore, cultivating a development mindset improves adaptability and persistence, two qualities that are essential for conquering scholastic obstacles (Pearl & Baradillo, 2025). Lastly, a positive outlook and efficient cognitive techniques provide a solid basis for exam achievement (Yaroslava et al., 2024). For criminology students, cultivating effective study habits and strategic time management is crucial for academic success. Students who maintained high levels of study habits performed admirably academically, emphasizing the need of disciplined study routines in the area (Camal, 2023). These highlight how planned study tactics combined with good time management strategies can improve academic achievement and minimize stress among criminology students (Calonia et al., 2023). This implies the need of combining strategic study habits with a resilient and growth-oriented mindset to achieve exam success. For criminology graduates, the disciplined use of strategies like spaced repetition, time-blocking, and active recall, combined with self-regulation and rest, resulted in effective knowledge retention and reduced cognitive load.

3.2. Transforming Challenges into Motivation through Mindset Shifts and Goal-Driven Support

It is the process of personal challenges becoming motivation through positive mindset shifts and reinforcement of the support systems, goal-driven. It also explains that criminology graduates recognized that setbacks were learning, that they could reframe failures as positive learning experiences, learning that would help them to grow

and succeed. Some participants reinforced the fact that by hoping to grow up to be a better person, or to overcome difficulties, by staying focused on what they wanted to do, they were able to cope with hardships. Additionally, family, mentors, friends, as well as faith, helped to sustain their motivation and perseverance through the journey of preparing for the board exam. The ability to align their mindset with the long term goals and getting emotional and practical support was essential in facing obstacles. From which two subtheme was identified to specifically discuss further the participants' experiences.

3.2.1. Transforming Challenges into Motivation through Mindset Shifts: This focuses on how criminology graduates use mental adjustments to turn obstacles into inspiration. The participants reinterpret losses as chances for progress rather than being demoralized by them. They emphasize the power of resilience, self-belief, and faith in overcoming obstacles. They develop a resolute mindset that motivates them to persevere in the face of adversity by seeing failures as possibilities for learning. P3 described how their path was originally hampered by frustration and demotivation, but they eventually used failure as motivation to work harder in their studies and demonstrate their ability. P5 also underlined the need of self-improvement, stating that they decided to concentrate on bolstering their areas of weakness and retaining their resolve rather than letting failure define them. P4 emphasized the role of persistence, sharing how they held on to hope and continued pushing despite obstacles. These are their statements:

"Losing my motivation and drowning in frustration was one of the hardest moments of my journey... I turned my failure into motivation—I used my failure as fuel to study harder and prove to myself that I was capable of success." (P3)

"Instead of letting failure define me, I focused on improving my weak points, staying determined, and believing in my ability to succeed—and I did." (P5)

"I chose to continue studying and not lose hope because I believed that with persistence, I would eventually pass and obtain my criminologist license." (P4)

However, others focused on how they mentally reprogrammed their approach. P2 trained to see difficulties as growth opportunities. P1 credited a positive mindset for maintaining focus, while P7 found confidence in their faith, seeing several failed attempts as a sign that their intended moment had not yet come. By maintaining trust in divine timing, they remained motivated to persevere. Collectively, these illustrate how mindset transformation empowers graduates to remain steadfast and resilient in their pursuit of professional goals. These are their statements:

"I trained myself to shift my mindset—instead of focusing on difficulties, I reminded myself that challenges are opportunities for learning and growth." (P2)

"Mindset played a crucial role in keeping me focused, motivated, and resilient in the face of challenges. A positive outlook helped me stay on track and push through difficult moments." (P1)

"After failing my first and second attempts, I told myself that Allah had not yet given me the right time to pass. I held onto my faith and used every failure as a learning experience." (P7)

The experiences of criminology graduates who transform challenges into motivation through mindset shifts underscore the pivotal role of academic resilience in overcoming obstacles. Studies reveal that students who reframe setbacks as opportunities for progress have greater academic resilience, particularly in the post-pandemic environment (Bolo, 2024). This emphasizes the importance of the growth mindset in helping students stay motivated, focused, and resilient in challenging learning environments (Jiang et al., 2023). The narratives of criminology graduates transforming challenges into motivation through mindset shifts are substantiated by recent scholarly research emphasizing the pivotal roles of resilience, self-efficacy, and stress management in academic success. Galve-González et al. (2025) found that resilience acts as a mediating factor in academic engagement, emphasizing the importance of higher education institutions implementing strategies that promote resilience, social integration, and self-regulated learning to increase student engagement and retention rates. Criminology graduates can turn academic disappointment into sources of motivation and perseverance by developing a growth-oriented mindset. Participants revealed that they could overcome demotivation by redefining failure as a chance for resilience, self-improvement, and renewed resolve. This highlighted the mental toughness required to stay focused and optimistic, especially when preparing for significant board exams.

3.2.2. Using Support Systems and Goal-Oriented Mindset: This highlights how criminology graduates overcome challenges during board exam preparation by leaning on their support networks and goal-oriented mindset. They find strength in their faith, mentors, and families rather than letting failures depress them. Their experiences demonstrate how their resilience is strengthened by personal beliefs, emotional and financial support, and encouragement from loved ones. They overcome obstacles with perseverance by staying focused on their objectives, demonstrating that persistence—when paired with solid external assistance is an essential component to success. Participants described how support systems sustained their motivation. P5 cited their family's encouragement as a reminder that failure is a step toward success. P6 found renewed hope through prayer and family support, while P7, who fasted during Ramadan, drew strength from their faith in Allah. These are the responses of the participants:

"What kept me strong was my determination to achieve my goal and the unwavering support of my family and loved ones. Their encouragement reminded me that failure wasn't the end—it was a stepping stone to success."(P5)

"Prayers and encouragement from my family kept me from losing hope and motivated me to try again and succeed in my second attempt."(P6)

"Fasting during Ramadan while reviewing was challenging, but I believed that my faith in Allah would help me succeed."(P7)

Additionally, P2, P4, and P7 echoed the importance of emotional support from their families and they elaborated on the vital role their family members played. P2 and P4 described how moral support helped them stay grounded, while P7 reflected on their mother's silent sacrifices. These are their answers:

"My family was my biggest supporter throughout my journey. They were always there for me, providing emotional and moral support, even during the toughest times." (P2)

"My family and support system constantly encouraged me to keep going, reminding me that failure is not the end but a step toward success." (P4)

"My family, especially my mother, gave me the emotional support I needed. Even though they knew we were struggling financially, they never made me feel like a burden." (P7)

Furthermore, mentors and peer groups also played a key role. P1 and P5 found value in guidance from mentors and shared learning with friends. P6 emphasized the financial and moral support from a family member involved in the same field. These are their responses:

"My mentor provided strategic guidance that helped me stay focused, while group study sessions created a supportive environment where we could share struggles and celebrate small victories." (P1)

"My mentors guided me, and my friends reminded me that I wasn't alone. Their encouragement helped me stay motivated and succeed." (P5)

"My family, especially my uncle, played a significant role in my journey. They supported me financially and gave me insights into criminology and law enforcement." (P6)

Lastly, some participants pointed to their goals as a constant source of strength. P3 and P5 recalled how keeping their "why" in mind gave them a reason to keep moving. P4 acknowledged the mental challenge of balancing work and study but didn't let it stop him. These are the participants' responses:

"When I faced the challenge of failing my first board exam, I reminded myself why I started this journey—to fulfill my dream. This mindset gave me the strength to persevere." (P3)

"Balancing work and studying was exhausting, but I constantly reminded myself that there is always a second chance and that success comes to those who persevere." (P4)

"I held onto the thought that everything I was working hard for was not just for me but also for the people I love." (P5)

Criminology graduates' experiences preparing for board exams highlight the importance of external support structures and a goal-oriented mindset in developing academic resilience. According to research, family support enhances student engagement and reduces dropout rates by offering emotional and practical support (Gil et al., 2021). Moreover, peer mentorship has been demonstrated to boost academic performance and retention among underrepresented students, underlining the relevance of collaborative learning environments (Venegas-Muggli et al., 2021). Additionally, developing a growth mindset and setting realistic goals are important ways to cultivate resilience and overcome academic hurdles (Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

Criminology graduates' experiences demonstrate the remarkable synergy of strong support structures and a goal-oriented mindset in developing resilience and achievement throughout board exam preparation. Families, mentors, and peers provide emotional, spiritual, and practical support to students, which not only support their resilience but also reduce the emotional toll of academic problems.

3.3. Using Aspirations for Professional Fulfilment and Stability

It is important how criminology graduates prepare for the board exam by drawing on their goals of financial security and professional fulfillment. Many participants viewed passing the exam as a critical step toward achieving their dreams of becoming police officers or registered criminologists. Their determination was fueled by the desire to serve their communities, support their families, and secure a stable future. They stayed dedicated to conquering obstacles by keeping their long-term objectives in mind, knowing that passing the board exam would open doors to both career and personal fulfillment. Several participants expressed how their career aspirations pushed them to persevere. P2 and P7 emphasized that their ultimate goal was to join the police force, making the board exam a necessary milestone in their journey. Similarly, P3 and P5 were driven by the dream of becoming registered criminologists and bringing pride to their families. Similarly, P2 and P3 also shared their dream of becoming police officers. They saw passing the board exam as a gateway not just to employment, but also to supporting their families and communities. P5 also wanted to earn their criminologist license to make their family proud, while P7 saw it as essential for a career in the Philippine National Police. These are the responses of the participants:

"My ultimate goal is to become a police officer and serve my community. This dream has always driven me to work hard and stay committed to passing the board exam, no matter how difficult the journey was." (P2)

"My dream has always been to join the police force. I knew that passing the board exam was my key to entering the Tri-Bureau and securing financial stability to support my parents." (P3)

"My goal was to become a Registered Criminologist and make my family proud." (P5)

"My ultimate goal was to become a police officer and serve in the PNP. I knew that passing the board exam was the only way to achieve this dream." (P7)

For others, financial stability was a key motivator—P1, P4, and P6 recognized that passing the exam would provide them with a secure livelihood, allowing them to support their loved ones. They emphasized the importance of securing a steady job not just for themselves but also for the people who depended on them. These are the responses of the participants:

"Passing the board exam was a crucial step in achieving my dream job, securing a stable future for myself and my family." (P1)

"For me, passing the board exam meant securing a stable career that would allow me to earn a livelihood and support my family." (P4)

"Passing the board exam opened doors for me—it secured my career, improved my financial situation, and gave me the opportunity to help my family and others." (P6)

The participants' desire to become police officers or certified criminologists, motivated by professional fulfillment and financial stability. Ramirez et al. (2024) identified goal setting and a strong sense of purpose as key characteristics among top performance on the Criminologist Licensure Examination, underlining the need of

defined professional goals in motivating candidates. Giang and Nhung (2022) emphasized the importance of family support in professional decisions, stating that parental participation and cultural values significantly influence students' vocational choices. Collectively, these highlight the role of personal desire, familial support, and self-belief in reaching criminology professional aspirations.

3.4. Building Exam Success through Growth Mindset, Resilience and Emotional Mastery

The journey toward exam success through the cultivation of a growth mindset, resilience, and emotional self-regulation is given emphasis under this theme. It highlights how criminology graduates overcame challenges by treating setbacks as learning experiences, strengthening their perseverance, and enhancing their study strategies. The participants were able to successfully demonstrate that knowledge acquisition did not lead to success alone but there was a need of focus, discipline and a commitment to personal growth amidst challenges. Two sub themes were derived from this main theme, to enable further exploration of ways in which the participants approached board exam success.

3.4.1. Cultivating Growth Mindset through Resilience and Adaptation: Criminology graduates develop a growth mindset by embracing resilience and adaptability during board exam preparation. They perceive setbacks as teaching opportunities rather than obstacles, and they use them to improve their study techniques and strengthen their determination. By maintaining a positive outlook and focusing on progress over perfection, they equip themselves with the mental discipline needed to overcome challenges. Their flexibility, efficient time management, and dedication to their goals show how important a growth mindset is to their success. A number of participants discussed how they developed resilience in order to accomplish their goals. P1 emphasized that a success-oriented mindset involves learning from mistakes and continuously improving study techniques. P3 and P6 highlighted the importance of turning failures into motivation, using setbacks as fuel to work harder rather than becoming discouraged. These are the responses of the participants:

"A success-oriented mindset means viewing setbacks as learning opportunities, focusing on progress over perfection, and adapting study strategies while maintaining a positive attitude." (P1)

"I developed the habit of turning my failures into motivation. Instead of allowing frustration to consume me, I used it as fuel to study harder and push myself beyond my limits." (P3)

"I learned to focus on my goal and avoid negativity. I reminded myself that failures are just part of the process and that success comes to those who keep working hard." (P6)

P7 and P2 stressed the need for strong self-discipline and focus, eliminating distractions to maximize study efficiency. Additionally, P3 applied strict time management after an initial failure, showing how adaptability and perseverance are key to achieving success. These narratives illustrate that success in the board exam is not just about knowledge but also about mindset, embracing resilience, learning from failures, and staying committed to growth. These are their statements:

"After my first failed attempt, I eliminated unnecessary distractions, applied strict time management, and committed fully to my goal." (P3)

"A success-oriented mindset means being focused and strategic in preparing for the exam. It involves dedicating enough time for studying and having strong self-discipline." (P7)

"I trained myself to block out distractions and stay focused on my studies." (P2)

Criminology graduates emphasize on turning setbacks into opportunities and staying focused during obstacles aligns with the ideals of fostering a growth mindset through resilience and adaptation. Bolo (2024) explored students' academic resilience in the post-pandemic age, focusing on how students turned problems into chances for progress and emphasizing the importance of resilience in academic achievement. Similarly, Perez et al. (2023) explored the link between growth mindset practices and academic resilience among students and discovered a significant correlation, implying that cultivating a growth mindset improves students' ability to navigate academic challenges. The experiences of criminology graduates demonstrate the transforming potential of a growth mindset, backed by resilience and adaptation, in attaining success throughout board exam preparation. By viewing failures as opportunities for improvement and adapting their study strategies accordingly, students demonstrate that academic achievement is deeply tied to mental flexibility and persistence.

3.4.2. Building Confidence and Emotional Regulation for Exam Success: This emphasizes the vital role of confidence and emotional regulation in the success of criminology graduates in the board examination. By maintaining a positive mindset, staying composed under pressure, and trusting their preparation, they were able to navigate the exam with clarity and focus. Instead of succumbing to panic or self-doubt, they relied on their confidence and mental preparedness to tackle challenging questions logically and effectively. Their experiences demonstrate that success is not solely dependent on knowledge but also on the ability to regulate emotions and maintain self-belief during high-stakes situations. Several participants shared how their mindset influenced their performance on exam day. P4 and P5 emphasized that confidence and logical thinking allowed them to handle difficult questions without panic. P6 and P1 highlighted how self-belief and emotional control helped them remain composed and apply their knowledge effectively. These are the responses of the participants:

"By staying mentally prepared and confident, I was able to answer the questions logically and effectively." (P4)

"My positive mindset played a big role on exam day. Instead of panicking when I encountered difficult questions, I trusted my knowledge and did my best." (P5)

"During the board exam, I kept telling myself to stay focused and think positively. My mindset of confidence, determination, and self-belief helped me perform well under pressure." (P6)

"My preparation and strong belief in my abilities played a significant role in my performance. A calm, focused, and confident mindset allowed me to stay composed and apply what I had learned effectively." (P1)

Similarly, P3 and P7 credited their success to staying focused, calm, and trusting in their preparation. Their collective experiences reinforce the idea that a confident and well-regulated mindset is key to performing well under pressure, proving that mental preparedness is just as vital as academic readiness in achieving success. These are the responses of the participants:

"I knew this time that I had prepared to the best of my ability. My composure, focus, and confidence helped me successfully pass the August CLE." (P3)

"On exam day, I reminded myself to stay focused, remain calm, and trust in my preparation." (P7)

The experiences of criminology graduates highlight the critical importance of confidence and emotional regulation in obtaining success on high-pressure exams. Beyond essential mastery, students' capacity to remain calm, focused, and self-assured allowed them to apply their knowledge more successfully and manage problems more confidently. Emotional readiness, as demonstrated by self-belief, stress regulation, and mental calmness, was an important buffer against exam-related anxiety. These imply that academic programs should incorporate emotional intelligence development, such as stress management training and confidence-building exercises, into their preparation techniques. Institutions that promote students' emotional regulation and self-efficacy can improve academic success and psychological resilience, preparing students to excel in high-stakes environments.

4. Conclusions

The study concludes that motivation and disciplined preparation strategies are critical drivers of success among criminology graduates in the board examination, with time management, strategic study habits, and emotional resilience serving as essential tools in persevering through challenges and achieving their goals. A positive and resilient mindset significantly influences how criminology graduates overcome obstacles, enabling them to transform setbacks into sources of motivation through faith, personal determination, and the support of family, mentors, and peers. Clear professional aspirations, such as becoming a police officer or a Registered Criminologist, serve as powerful motivational factors that fuel the commitment, focus, and persistence of graduates during their board exam journey. Furthermore, a growth mindset, coupled with emotional mastery and resilience, plays a vital role in shaping board exam success, empowering criminology graduates to maintain discipline, adapt to challenges, and stay composed under pressure, ultimately leading to their professional achievement. In line with this, the following could be suggested:

1. Integrate Motivation and Mindset Workshops into Criminology Programs. Colleges should include regular seminars or modules focused on goal setting, career visualization, and developing a growth mind set to help students build strong intrinsic motivation for board exam preparation.
2. Offer Time Management and Study Strategy Training. Institutions can provide structured training on time-blocking, study scheduling, and effective learning techniques (e.g., spaced repetition, active recall) to equip students with disciplined preparation strategies.
3. Implement Emotional Resilience and Stress-Management Programs. Counselling units or student development offices should offer programs focused on emotional regulation, mindfulness, and coping strategies to build students' capacity to stay composed under pressure.
4. Strengthen Mentorship and Peer Support Systems. Schools should formalize mentoring programs where faculty, alumni, or board passers guide current students, fostering a supportive environment that enhances emotional and motivational stability.

5. Recommendations

Criminology graduates preparing for the board examination develop and maintain strong motivational foundations and disciplined study habits, such as effective time management, strategic review techniques, and emotional resilience practices. Educational institutions and review centers may design programs that not only enhance academic knowledge but also foster growth mindsets, emotional regulation, and resilience among students. Furthermore, building strong support systems involving family, mentors, and peer networks may be encouraged to help graduates stay motivated and focused despite challenges. Finally, graduates may be guided to set clear professional goals early on, as having specific aspirations for career fulfillment and stability can significantly strengthen their perseverance and commitment throughout their board exam preparation journey.

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The authors have not declared any conflict of interest.

Consent for publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this study.

Consent to participate

All participants in this study voluntarily gave their informed consent prior to their involvement in the research.

Authors' contributions

Both the authors took part in literature review, analysis, and manuscript writing equally.

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