

Factors Influencing Student Retention Rates at Universidad De Manila for Social Work Licensure Examination

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ABSTRACT: The Social Work program at Universidad de Manila's College of Arts and Sciences aims to develop individuals dedicated to social justice, peace, and integrity, empowering them to intervene in social problems and human systems. The department envisions a community of scholars acting as catalysts for social change. However, student retention rates for licensure examinations are influenced by various factors. This study examines these factors through a descriptive qualitative exploratory research approach. Non-probability convenience sampling was utilized from the Social Work Licensure Examination (SWLE) takers of 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2022. Data were collected through researcher-made questionnaires consisting of structured and unstructured interview guides, providing a brief description of the study's objectives. Exploratory data analysis (EDA) was employed for data analysis, utilizing thematic coding to identify patterns in responses. Findings reveal significant roles played by self-determination, self-discipline, and self-efficacy in retention. Moreover, school, personal, environmental, and financial factors significantly affect students' educational experiences. Recommendations include aligning professors with the field, providing personalized support, and enforcing policies to enhance retention rates and examination results. This comprehensive approach aims to create a supportive learning environment conducive to student success in social work education and practice.

Keywords - student retention, motivation, self-determination, social work program, academic policy, learning environment

1. INTRODUCTION

To attain the vision of UDM-College of Arts and Sciences, Social Work as a program is designed for the improvement of individuals dedicated to social justice, peace and integrity of creation, and the development of students who have the capability and confidence to intervene in social problems and multi-faceted human systems. The program is also intended to transform the students into a competent and committed professional in service and social transformation and to guide them in their quest for meaning, wisdom, and personal growth. In this regard, the Social Work Department envisions a community of scholars who will act as catalysts for social change. It is committed to gathering students who possess the twin characteristics of commitment and vocation in helping the people to adjust to any social strains of our society and; thus, become partners of sustainable development and international solidarity. A range of factors influence student retention rates for social work

licensure examinations. Hafford-Letchfield (2007) identified student organization and time-management skills, access to study skill support, relationships with tutors and peers, and affective factors as key determinants of success in social work education. Miller (2015) emphasized the importance of curricular initiatives in preparing students for licensure exams, reporting that a Licensing Preparation Initiative increased students' knowledge and confidence. Blosser (2010) highlighted the role of career development and employee satisfaction in retaining social work professionals, suggesting that these factors may also impact student retention. Cummings (2005) found that students' attitudes toward aging, gerontological knowledge, and rewarding interactions with older clients influenced their interest in working with older adults, which could potentially impact their retention in the field.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research-specific objectives are:

1. To identify the influencing retention factors of the research participants.
2. To analyze the factors that affect the retention of the research participants; and
3. To evaluate the impact of Student Retention in the Universidad de Manila to Social Work Licensure Examination (SWLE).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The foundation of this study are the following theories:

Urie Bronfenbrenner (Ecological Systems Theory) Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory views child development as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory has implications for the educational practice of the students most especially when it comes to the student's academic performance. This is the most immediate environmental setting containing the developing child, such as family and school.

A) In connection with Albert Bandura and Lev Simkhovich Vygotsky (Social Learning Theories) Social Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasizes the importance of observing, modeling, and imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. Social learning theory considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior.

In social learning theory, Albert Bandura (1977) agrees with the behaviorist learning theories of a: Mediating processes occur between stimuli & responses, b: Behavior is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning.

Vygotsky's theory of sociocultural views human development as a socially mediated process in which children acquire their cultural values, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through collaborative dialogues with more knowledgeable members of society. Vygotsky's theory is composed of concepts such as culture-specific tools, private speech, and the Zone of Proximal Development. Vygotsky's theories stress the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978), as he believed strongly that community plays a central role in the process of "making meaning."

B) Ivan Pavlov (Classical Conditioning) In his studies on the digestive systems of dogs, Pavlov noted that the animals salivated naturally upon the presentation of food.

This discovery had a reverberating influence on psychology. Pavlov was also able to demonstrate that the animals could be conditioned to salivate to the sound of a tone as well. Pavlov's discovery had a major influence on other thinkers including John B. Watson and contributed significantly to the development of the school of thought known as behaviorism.

Some of the educational implications of Pavlov's classical conditioning theory are as follows (educationsummary.com): reward and punishment; facilitates language learning; attitude development; facilitates creativity;

A) John Dewey (Experiential Learning) serves as a foundation piece of literature when discussing experiential learning. To facilitate a better understanding, a conceptual model was developed. In John Dewey's experiential learning theory, everything occurs within a social environment. Knowledge is socially constructed and based on experiences. This knowledge should be organized in real-life experiences that provide a context for the information. The teacher's role is to organize this content and to facilitate the actual experiences. The experiences are based on the capabilities and readiness of the learners.

The quality of the experience is the primary component of the theory. Upon completion of the experience, learners have the knowledge and ability to apply it to differing situations. Thus, they have created new knowledge and are at a different level of readiness for the continued acquisition and construction of new knowledge.

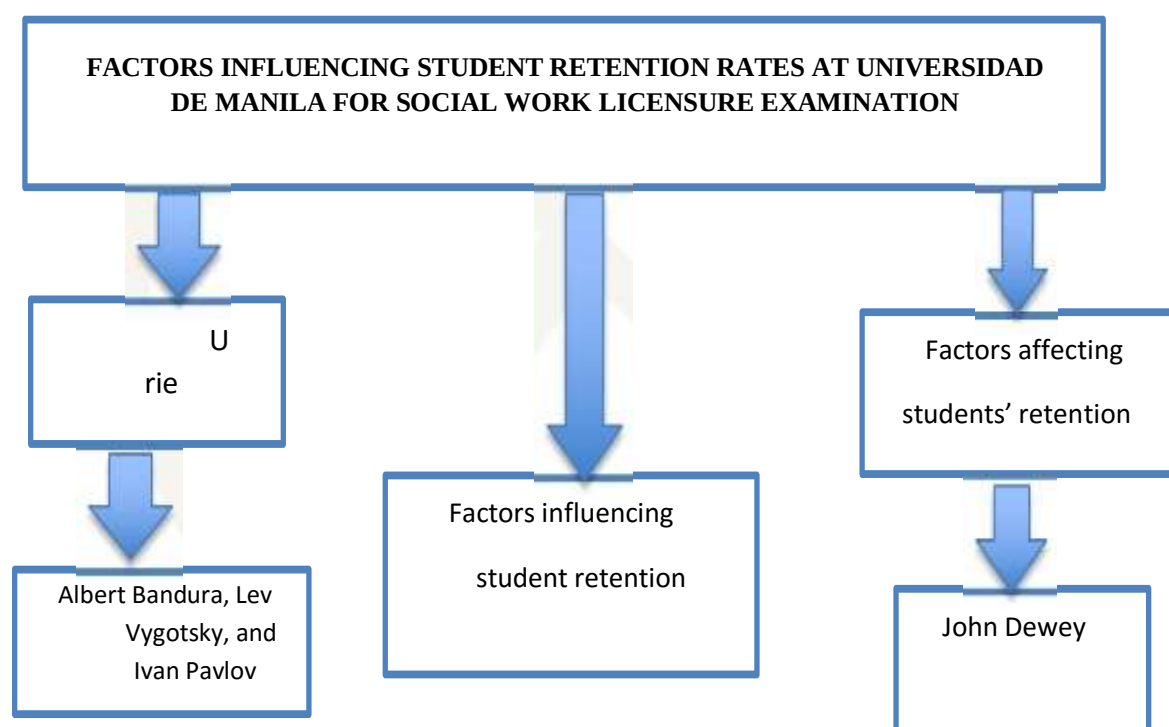


Figure 1: FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT RETENTION RATES AT UNIVERSIDAD DE MANILA FOR SOCIAL WORK LICENSURE EXAMINATION

2. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers used the descriptive qualitative exploratory research methods to determine the Factors Influencing Student Retention Rates At the Universidad De Manila For Social Work Licensure Examination. A descriptive exploratory qualitative approach is useful in summarizing and understanding an area of interest and was appropriately selected for this study to describe and explore the end-of-life of the social work students at Universidad de Manila, College of Arts and Sciences.

Sampling of the Study

In determining the participants, non-probability convenience sampling was used from the SWLE takers of 2018, 2019 and, 2021, and 2022. A convenience sample is a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people easy to contact or reach. There are twenty (20) target participants for the study.

Data Procedure

In the conduct of data, the researcher-made questionnaire was utilized. It is a combination of structured and unstructured interview guide questionnaires. The questionnaire was specifically for the target participants. During the administration of the questionnaire, the researchers provided a brief description of the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis

The researchers employed exploratory data analysis (EDA). It is a set of strategies for the analysis of data with the goal of permitting the data to speak and find patterns in the data (AQUAD 7, 2025). A thematic coding was used in identifying the responses of the twenty (20) participants. Thematic coding is a form of qualitative analysis that involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a common theme or idea allowing you to index the text into categories and therefore establish a framework of thematic ideas as stated (Gibbs 2007).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Factors influencing student retention

1.1 Self-determination

The theme of Self-Determination and Dedication revolves around the notion of perseverance, responsibility, and determination. This theme simulates a scenario where a student manages their time effectively, maintains good grades, and remains committed to their educational goals despite adversities: A range of factors influence student retention, with self-determination playing a significant role. Ohee (2019) found that self-efficacy, social support, and stress are key predictors of retention, while Jensen (2011) emphasized the importance of academic, social, and cultural integration. Walsh (2016) highlighted the impact of residential status and self-beliefs, such as educational self-efficacy and personal valuing of education.

1.2 Self-discipline

The theme that emerges regarding factors influencing student retention in terms of self-discipline revolves around several key elements: Time Management, Positive Support System, Understanding Learning Style and Preferences, and Maintaining a Balanced Lifestyle. Self-discipline plays a significant role according to Kennett (2009) found that students who improved their academic self-control and reduced hyperactivity-impulsivity were more likely to achieve higher grades and continue their studies. Similarly, Nakajima (2012) identified a strong correlation between self-efficacy and student persistence, with higher cumulative GPAs and English proficiency also contributing to retention. Ohee (2019) further emphasized the impact of self-efficacy, integration, and social support on retention rates. Wernersbach (2014) highlighted the role of study skills courses in enhancing academic self-efficacy, a key component of self-discipline. These studies collectively underscore the importance of self-discipline in student retention, with self-efficacy, academic self-control, and social support being key factors.

1.3 Self-efficacy

The theme regarding factors influencing student retention in terms of self-efficacy revolves around the following key elements: Purposeful Goal Setting, Continuous Improvement, and Resilience and Perseverance. A range of factors influence student retention, with self-efficacy being a key predictor. Ohee (2019) found that self-efficacy, along with integration, social support, and stress, significantly impacts retention rates. Similarly, Hsieh (2007) and Kennett (2009) both identified self-efficacy as a crucial factor in academic success and retention, with

students on academic probation reporting lower self-efficacy. Nakajima (2012) further emphasized the importance of self-efficacy, noting its correlation with cumulative GPA and student persistence. These studies collectively highlight the significant role of self-efficacy in student retention.

2. Factors that affect the students' retention

2.1 School factor

The survey reveals that the highest answer is “Strongly Agree” in terms of school factor which means the Importance of Accessible Education and Resources (Free Education). Free education represents an opportunity for students to showcase their abilities and talents without the financial burden of tuition fees. Schools that offer free education, such as the Universidad de Manila (UDM), provide support and opportunities for students, especially those from marginalized sectors, to pursue their educational aspirations. Including relational, educational, psychological, and external environmental factors (Kim, 2014). Positive relationships, affordability, clear communication, action plans for retention, and adherence to the school's mission are particularly important in faith-based independent schools (Ahlstrom, 2013). In high schools, student background characteristics and school factors directly influence students' intentions to stay in school. Academic performance, effort, participation, and completion of an Individualized Education Plan are key factors in student retention in grades K-2 (Pace, 2004).

2.2 Personal Factor

This shows that the respondents had an interest in the field they enrolled in and also shows some physical fitness concerns which got “Agree”. Personal interest and passion in the chosen field of study significantly impact student retention. Students who have a high level of interest in their field are more motivated to complete their courses and enjoy their learning experiences. On the other hand, maintaining good physical health is highlighted as an important personal factor that contributes to student retention. Poor health can negatively affect students' ability to engage in their studies, leading to problems such as grade retention and dropout. Kim (2014) found that relational, educational, psychological, and external environment factors all play a role, with students' satisfaction with campus life and academic achievement motivation being particularly important. Kim (2010) further identified six key personal variables for college success, including academic self-efficacy, organization, and emotional satisfaction. Herjanto (2022) focused on the role of personal values, finding that hedonism, power, achievement, and self-direction were significant drivers of marketing student retention. Tanoira (2021) emphasized the importance of personalized attention, economic factors, and academic achievement in enhancing student retention. These studies collectively highlight the complex interplay of personal factors in student retention.

2.3 Environmental Factor

This shows that the respondents “Agree” with Environmental Conditions and Learning Environment. The physical environment, including factors such as space availability, noise levels, and classroom size, significantly impacts students' ability to focus and engage in learning activities. Adequate space and a peaceful atmosphere are essential for creating a conducive learning environment. Noise Disturbances: Noise disturbances, such as those caused by external sources like the LRT (Light Rail Transit), can disrupt students' concentration and hinder their ability to hear lessons and participate in class discussions effectively. Classroom Size and Student-Teacher Ratio: The size of classrooms and the student-teacher ratio play crucial roles in determining the quality of learning experiences. Smaller class sizes allow for more personalized attention and engagement, whereas larger classes may lead to reduced participation and decreased retention rates. Granger (2008) examines the role of the learning environment in promoting student engagement, motivation, and retention. Drawing on research from educational psychology and sociology, the author highlights the importance of creating conducive learning environments that accommodate students' diverse needs and characteristics.

2.4 Financial Factor

The survey reveals that the highest answer is “Agree”. Financial Support and Strategies: Financial support, including scholarships and allowances, plays a crucial role in enabling students to meet their educational expenses and requirements. Utilizing available resources and implementing strategies to manage financial constraints can help students stay enrolled and engaged in their studies. A range of factors influence student retention, with financial aid and proactive advising playing a significant role (Preuss, 2023). The type of institution, its selectivity, and the availability of financial aid also impact retention rates (Wekullo, 2022). In the field of accountancy, factors such as encouragement by close persons and academic and intellectual development are particularly influential (Braga, 2018). In community colleges, age, work hours, and financial aid are key factors, with cumulative GPA being the strongest predictor of student persistence (Nakajima, 2012). These studies highlight the complex interplay of financial, academic, and psychosocial factors in student retention.

3. Proposed program for the improvement of student retention and the result of social work licensure examination

The proposed program focuses on aligning professors with the social work field, ensuring resource availability, and enforcing strict policies for failing students to improve retention rates and licensure examination results. Additionally, it emphasizes personalized support through initiatives such as free review centers, psychosocial training, and stress debriefing activities, aiming to cultivate a conducive learning environment and enhance student success in social work education and practice.

4. CONCLUSION

1. The analysis highlights the significant influence of self-determination, self-discipline, and self-efficacy on student retention, with factors such as perseverance, time management, and purposeful goal-setting playing pivotal roles. Various studies underscore the importance of these psychological factors in enhancing student persistence and academic success, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions addressing students' motivational and cognitive processes.

2. Examination of factors affecting student retention reveals the critical importance of school, personal, environmental, and financial factors in shaping students' educational experiences and outcomes. Schools offering accessible education and fostering positive relationships demonstrate higher retention rates, while students' personal interests, physical well-being, and financial support significantly impact their engagement and persistence in their studies. Addressing these multifaceted influences through targeted interventions and support services can effectively enhance student retention and success.

3. The proposed program for improving student retention and social work licensure examination results emphasizes aligning professors with the field, ensuring resource availability, and enforcing strict policies for failing students, alongside providing personalized support through free review centers, psychosocial training, and stress debriefing activities. By addressing both academic and psychosocial needs, this comprehensive approach aims to create a supportive learning environment conducive to student success in social work education and practice, ultimately enhancing retention rates and licensure examination outcomes.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Aligning professors with the field, providing personalized support, and enforcing policies to enhance retention rates and examination results. This comprehensive approach aims to create a supportive learning environment conducive to student success in social work education and practice.

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