

# Preparedness and Difficulties of OFW Examinees in Taking the Special Professional Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers

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## Abstract

This study examined the level of preparedness and difficulties of Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) teachers in the Middle East in taking the Special Professional Licensure Examination (SPLE) for Professional Teachers in June 2025. Specifically, it assessed their demographic profile, level of preparedness, level of difficulties, differences in these variables across groups, and the relationship between preparedness and difficulties. Using a quantitative research design, data were gathered from 54 OFW examinees through a self-made survey questionnaire administered via Google Forms. Results showed that OFW teachers demonstrated a high level of preparedness, particularly in using review materials, taking mock exams, and managing study habits. However, they experienced a moderate level of

difficulties, including balancing work and study, limited access to review resources, and psychological stress. No significant differences in preparedness were found across educational attainment, examination category, age, sex, or examination results. In terms of difficulties, only sex and examination results showed significant differences, with male and non-passing examinees reporting higher difficulty levels. A significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.338$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ) between preparedness and difficulties indicates that as preparedness increases, perceived difficulties decrease. These findings suggest that enhancing structured review support and addressing psychosocial challenges may improve SPLE readiness among OFW teachers. Further studies with larger samples are recommended to validate these results.

**Keywords:** *OFW Teachers, Special Professional Licensure Examination (SPLE), Preparedness, Difficulties, Licensure Examination Outcomes*

## INTRODUCTION

### Nature of the Problem

The Professional Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (PLEPT) is the key to teachers' integration into the teaching profession. It guarantees teachers' alignment with the current curriculum. It ensures educational quality, encourages teachers' professionalism, and aligns them with continuing professional development (R.A. 11713, 2022).

The PLEPT is the assessment required of all graduate teachers by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) for professional teacher registration under R.A. 7836, (1994). It is a teacher's passport to a lifelong teaching profession. According to Villaflores (2023), passing a professional board exam is a significant achievement that confers dignity and prestige to graduates. Those who pass have a competitive advantage over those who do not, as they possess the necessary knowledge and experience to perform their jobs competently. Moreover, obtaining a professional license represents the peak of professional success. Professionals must adhere to the guidelines established by the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC), which provide them with a framework to work within.

R.A. 7836, (1994) known as the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994, Sec. 2 stated that the State recognizes the vital role of teachers in nation-building and development through a responsible and literate citizenry. Towards this end, the State shall ensure and promote quality education by proper supervision and regulation of the licensure examination and professionalization of the practice of the teaching profession. Sec. 3, stated that (a) the promotion, development, and professionalization of teachers and the teaching profession; and (b) the supervision and regulation of the licensure examination. This provision is under Sec. 4, (c) Board of Professional Teachers (BPT) under the (d) Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) of the Philippines.

In collaboration with the PRC, Philippine Embassy (PE) and Philippine Overseas Labor Office (POLO), the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) this gap has been addressed by provisioning the SPLE for Professional Teachers (Professional Regulation Commission, 2025; Embassy of the Philippines in Singapore, 2024; Department of Foreign Affairs, 2024). The Teachers' Licensure Examination is given throughout the Philippines at the specified examination centers approved by the PRC. However, some unlicensed baccalaureate (BSED, BEED) graduate teachers went abroad after graduation. Other Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) were unit earners in education, post-graduate program certificate in teaching profession, and Diploma in Teaching taken through Distance Education or Open University Program offered in the Philippine colleges and universities recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). These programs were under RA 10650, (2014) known as the Open Distance Learning Act. Program offered were aligned with RA 9293, (2004), the amendments of RA 7836, (1994). The provision in RA 9293, (2004) allows them to take the licensure examination for professional teachers. To cater aspiring professional teachers working abroad, the SPLE was initiated by the PRC in collaboration with POLO-OWWA and the Philippine Embassies in designated nations. The SPLE for Professional Teachers is a credentialing requirement administered by the PRC for OFWs who seek professional recognition abroad. One among services of POLO-OWWA is the reintegration programs, it is a support for OFWs returning to the Philippines, including skills training and business development assistance. A migrant worker is a concept for OFWs; it is a term for a Filipino employed to work outside the Philippines (Bautista & Tamayo, 2020). In relation to Teacher's reintegration program, (DepEd D.M. No. 265, s.2025) the "SPIMS" in "SPIMS DepEd Memo 2025" refers to the "Sa Pinas, Ikaw ang Ma'am/Sir" which is a program by the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) aimed at deploying license teachers to public schools, particularly in areas with teacher shortages. However, according to Longa, Guanzon, & Eslabon (2024),

professional and non-professional teachers went abroad to seek greener pastures and find good salaries offered overseas, although in some instances, not aligned with their own professional jobs and specified educational knowledge, skills, and expertise. They choose to sustain work abroad despite professional teaching job waits for them in the Philippines.

While the intent of SPLE is to uphold professional standards, many examinees face considerable difficulties due to a range of personal, academic, and contextual factors. This gap found in this study was the preparedness and the difficulties of OFW examinee teachers who's dreaming of becoming professional teachers. The researchers were motivated to understand the level of preparation and the difficulty challenges of OFW teachers regarding SPLE and to interpret outcomes that align with becoming Professional Teachers.

### **Current State of Knowledge**

Current research shows that preparedness for licensure examinations is shaped by multiple cognitive, emotional, and institutional factors. Several studies emphasize that examinees with higher levels of preparation demonstrate improved performance and reduced anxiety. For instance, Zimmerman (2002) found that self-regulated learners who use planning, goal-setting, and monitoring strategies are more academically prepared and perform better in high-stakes exams. Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) likewise highlighted that a deep learning approach, characterized by conceptual understanding rather than rote memorization, enhances preparedness. In the Philippine context, De Guzman and Tan (2007) reported that preparedness for licensure examinations is strongly influenced by institutional support, cultural expectations, and the availability of review resources. These findings align with Adaralegbe and Ezeugbor's (2021) argument that teacher preparation programs often lack test-oriented training, and Okpala and Ellis's (2005) observation that insufficient emphasis on test-taking skills leads to lower examination success.

Recent literature on OFW teachers preparing for the Special Professional Licensure Examination (SPLE) also underscores the role of preparedness in shaping examination outcomes. Gines (2014) found that OFW teachers often experience gaps in preparedness due to limited access to updated review materials, inconsistent exposure to Philippine education standards, and the absence of structured peer review groups. Similarly, Almerino, Ocampo, and Capistrano (2019) noted that preparedness improves when examinees have strong support systems, access to quality review programs, and adequate time for study—resources not always available to teachers abroad. Research by Bautista (2017) further showed that preparedness is enhanced when candidates regularly engage in mock examinations, practice tests, and competency-based review activities. Collectively, these findings highlight the interplay between personal strategies, environmental support, and contextual limitations in shaping OFW teachers' readiness for the licensure exam.

Language and content proficiency continue to be significant contributors to licensure examination difficulties. Salandanan (2012) noted that comprehension issues arise due to the English-medium structure of the licensure exam, challenging examinees with limited vocabulary or reduced exposure to academic English. Del Rosario (2019) similarly stated that outdated pedagogical knowledge and insufficient access to updated instructional theories hinder examinees' ability to interpret higher-order test questions, especially in Professional Education and specialization subjects. These studies show that linguistic readiness and updated content mastery are critical for successful examination performance.

Time and workload constraints add another layer of difficulty for OFW teachers. Arugay and Gepte (2020) found that OFWs often struggle to balance full-time employment with structured exam preparation, resulting in irregular study schedules, low retention, and increased stress. Psychological factors further intensify these challenges. Cassady and Johnson (2002) demonstrated that high test anxiety reduces working memory capacity and concentration, while David and Dizon (2022) reported that homesickness, isolation, and lack of family support diminish OFW teachers' confidence and motivation to maintain consistent review. These findings align with Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory, suggesting that

individuals with low confidence in their abilities are less likely to persist and perform effectively in evaluative situations.

Socioeconomic and systemic constraints also shape licensure examination outcomes. Balagtas (2017) reported that examinees with limited financial resources struggle to afford review centers, updated materials, or digital tools needed for effective exam preparation. Ordoñez (2018) added that SPLE takers abroad often lack access to PRC-aligned review programs, limiting their exposure to current LET frameworks and test trends. Tarraya and Potestas (2020) further identified systemic issues, including unclear test specifications, inconsistent coverage, and weak feedback mechanisms that complicate examinees' ability to prepare adequately. These structural limitations underscore the need for stronger institutional support and more accessible review systems for OFW teachers preparing for the SPLE.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

The preparedness of teachers for the licensure examination is anchored in Edward Thorndike's Law of Learning, particularly the Law of Readiness, which states that learning occurs most effectively when individuals are mentally, emotionally, and physically prepared. Readiness involves mastery of knowledge, effective study habits, confidence, and motivation. Thorndike's broader principles—the Laws of Effect, Exercise, and Readiness—explain that practice, positive reinforcement, and proper mental conditions enhance learning. Applied to licensure examinations, teachers who are motivated, well-conditioned, and supported are more likely to engage meaningfully in review activities, whereas the absence of readiness leads to frustration, lower engagement, and reduced chances of success in the SPLE.

Preparedness also aligns with theories emphasizing cognitive and emotional regulation. Zimmerman (2002) highlighted that self-regulated learning—planning, goal setting, and metacognitive monitoring—strengthens examination readiness, while Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) noted that deep learning strategies promote meaningful understanding and reduce anxiety. Emotional factors further influence readiness; Cassady and Johnson (2002) emphasized that anxiety control and emotional stability are essential for effective exam preparation. Environmental and institutional factors likewise shape preparedness, as noted by Karander and Kulkarni (2005), along with cultural and familial support emphasized by De Guzman and Tan (2007). In contrast, difficulties in preparation are explained by Zimmerman's Self-Regulated Learning Theory and Zeidner's Test Anxiety Theory, which describe how poor planning, low motivation, emotional strain, and external distractions increase the challenges faced by examinees.

In relation to the present study, Thorndike's Law of Readiness explains how OFW teachers' cognitive, emotional, and environmental conditions influence their preparedness for the SPLE. Meanwhile, Zimmerman's Self-Regulated Learning Theory and Zeidner's Test Anxiety Theory help clarify the types of difficulties they encounter as they balance demanding work schedules, emotional stress, limited resources, and study strategies abroad. Together, these theories support the study's findings that higher preparedness corresponds to fewer perceived difficulties, while lower readiness results in greater challenges. This integrated framework provides the basis for interpreting how OFW teachers in the Middle East navigate their review process for the Special Professional Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study aimed to determine the level of preparedness and the difficulties experienced by examinees enrolled in one of the review centers catering to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in the Middle East in taking the Special Professional Licensure Examination (SPLE) for Professional Teachers in June 2025. Specifically, it sought to describe the respondents' profiles in terms of educational attainment, examination category, age, sex, and examination results. It further aimed to assess their level of



preparedness and the difficulties they encountered in relation to the SPLE. Moreover, the study sought to determine whether significant differences exist in the level of preparedness of OFW examinees when grouped according to the identified variables, as well as whether significant differences occur in the level of difficulty when respondents are similarly grouped. Finally, it investigated whether a significant relationship exists between the level of preparedness and the level of difficulties of OFW examinees in taking the SPLE for Professional Teachers.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, data-gathering procedures, other instrumentation, and statistical tools. It also discusses the parameters, especially the statistical tools, the respondents, and the study's locality.

### Research Design

This study used a quantitative method. It utilized a descriptive research design. It used cross-sectional surveys to observe and analyze data from a population at a single point in time. The research typically describes the distribution of variables in a population. This survey is considered a snapshot that gives a picture of what the researcher wants to study (Connelly, 2016; Capili, 2021). The advantages of this method are its flexibility and ability to cover many different areas of human populations. A survey is relatively quick to conduct when information is needed about what is happening currently (Capili, 2021). The methodology is descriptive and correlational. It is a scientific method often used as a precursor to quantitative research designs, with the general overview providing some valuable pointers as to what variables are worth testing quantitatively (Dovetail Editorial Team, 2023). It helped researchers understand the preparedness, difficulties, and outcomes of OFW examinees in taking the Special Professional Licensure Examination (SPLE) for professional teachers.

### Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study were Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) preparing for the Special Professional Licensure Examination (SPLE) for Professional Teachers. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula, resulting in 54 examinees drawn from a population of 64. According to Berkowitz (2016), the sample size (N) influences the accuracy of statistical estimates and the ability of a study to draw valid inferences.

### Data-Gathering Instrument

The data-gathering instrument used in this study was a researcher-constructed questionnaire consisting of two main parts. Part A covered respondents' demographic profile—educational attainment, examination category, age, sex, and examination result—which served as grouping variables in the analysis. Part B was a Likert-scale survey measuring two major constructs: Preparedness and Difficulties of OFW examinees taking the SPLE. Each dimension contained twenty (20) items, for a total of forty (40) indicators designed to capture their review practices, perceived readiness, and the challenges they encountered while preparing abroad.

A five-point Likert scale (5 – Strongly Agree to 1 – Strongly Disagree) was used to assess agreement with each item, enabling the quantification of respondents' levels of preparedness and difficulties. The items were developed to represent essential aspects of SPLE preparation—such as access to study resources, self-confidence, work–study balance, and emotional challenges. This structure allowed for consistent data collection among OFW teachers from different Middle Eastern countries.

The instrument underwent expert validation to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study constructs. Six expert validators—school administrators, research professors, master teachers, and international educators—evaluated the content and rated the questionnaire 4.81, interpreted as Excellent, confirming strong content validity. A pilot test with 30 OFW examinees was later conducted to determine internal consistency. Using Cronbach's alpha, the Preparedness scale yielded  $\alpha = 0.982$  and the Difficulties scale  $\alpha = 0.976$ , both classified as Excellent. These results confirm that the instrument was both valid and highly reliable for measuring the constructs in this study.

### Data-Gathering Procedure

The data gathering was established after the validity and reliability of the instrument, and approved permission from the authority (Director, Teacher A Online Review Center, and the president of the Filipino Teachers' Association in Saudi Arabia, Central Region, Riyadh, KSA) was secured to initiate the survey. The most appropriate data-gathering procedure used was an online questionnaire using Google Forms. The questionnaire answered by the respondents was tallied and tabulated using the proper statistical methods. The raw data were translated into numerical ratings, which made tabular presentations, statistical derivations, and computer processing possible. The data above was processed on a computer using SPSS.

### Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objectives 1 to 3 employed a descriptive analytical scheme, using frequency counts and percentages as statistical tools to assess the profile of respondents and means to assess the levels of preparedness and difficulties across the three areas. Objectives 4 and 5 utilized a comparative analytical scheme, applying the Mann-Whitney U test to determine significant differences in the levels of preparedness and difficulties when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables. Lastly, objective 6 employed Spearman rho to investigate if a significant relationship exists between the level of preparedness and the level of difficulties of OFW teachers in taking the SPLE.

### Ethical Consideration

By guaranteeing the confidentiality of the respondents' answers and upholding their anonymity during the entire research process, the study made a concerted effort to reduce the possibility of harm to its target respondents in accordance with Republic Act 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012. The researchers also requested their free and informed consent upfront.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered to achieve the predetermined objectives of this study.

### Profile of Respondents

Table 1: *Profile of the Respondents*

Variable	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Educational Attainment	Baccalaureate (BSED and BEED)	29	53.7
	Diploma in Teaching /18 Unit Professional Education Earner (Certification)	25	46.3
	Elementary	14	25.9

Examination Category	Secondary	40	74.1
Age	Older ( $\geq 39$ years old)	27	50.0
	Younger ( $< 39$ years old)	27	50.0
Sex	Female	28	51.9
	Male	26	48.1
Examination Result	Passed	43	79.6
	Failed	11	20.4
	Total	54	100.0

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents; it analyzes and interprets the data presented for objective no. 1. It summarizes the determined profile of the respondents in terms of the variables and their categories using descriptive frequency and percentage data counts on the occurrence of respondents' responses to the survey questionnaire.

The respondents' profile includes Educational Attainment, Examination Category, Sex, Age, and Examination Result. Educational Attainment: Baccalaureate (BSED and BEED) ( $f = 29$ , 53.7%), while Diploma in Teaching /18 Unit Professional Education Earner (Certification) ( $f = 25$ , 46.3%). Examination Category: Elementary ( $f = 14$ , 25.9%), while Secondary ( $f = 40$ , 74.1%). Age, Older ( $\geq 39$  years old) ( $f = 27$ , 50.0%), while Younger ( $< 39$  years old) ( $f = 27$ , 50.0%), in terms of Age, median = 39, age range: older = 56-years old and younger = 25-years old. Sex, Female ( $f = 28$ , 51.9%), while Male ( $f = 26$ , 48.1%). Examination Result, Passed ( $f = 43$ , 79.6%), while Failed ( $f = 11$ , 20.4%).

This signifies that by educational attainment, there is a greater number of examinees holding a baccalaureate (BSED and BEED) compared to those Diploma in Teaching/18 units earned in professional education (certification) who took the SPLE for Professional Teachers. By Examination Category, the Elementary level provides a lesser number over secondary level. By Age, both Older and Younger have the same number of examinees, as found in this research. However, this number does not represent the totality of all SPLE examinees under PRC records, to which the researchers do not have access. By sex, there is a slightly (3.8%) greater number of females than males. In terms of sex, according to Longa, Guanzon, and Eslabon (2023), "Female OFWs deployed in the Middle East have a greater number than males." This data on the number of OFWs deployed in the Middle East was taken from PSA (2020). By Examination Result, a very high number of passers compared to non-passers is reflected in this study. Generally, there were 54 examinees who responded in this study. There was 59.2% difference between passers and non-passers. This implies that the high number of passers can be interpreted as having a higher rate of preparedness than difficulties faced by the OFW examinees in the Middle East. Statistically, the result of passing for OFW in the Middle East is close to the 68-95-99.7 rule, also known as the empirical rule. Therefore, it indicates that modalities such as online review or face-to-face review conducted were effective tools in preparation. Minimizing preparation concerns can help address gaps and improve success in the SPLE Exam for Professional Teachers.

### Descriptive Analysis in the Level of Preparedness and Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE

**Table 2: Level of Preparedness of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE**

Items	Mean	Interpretation
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*As an examinee, I...*

1. review professional education subjects as part of my SPLE preparation.	4.48	High Level
2. study the content of my chosen major field regularly.	4.35	High Level
3. use SPLE-aligned reviewers and study materials.	4.33	High Level
4. revisit teaching strategies and classroom experiences to reinforce learning.	4.11	High Level
5. follow a personal study schedule to manage my review time.	4.39	High Level
6. take mock exams or practice tests to assess my readiness.	4.52	High Level
7. participate in online or face-to-face review sessions.	4.22	High Level
8. engage in group study or discussion with other OFWs preparing for the SPLE.	3.87	High Level
9. have access to updated reading and review materials.	4.33	High Level
10. can dedicate sufficient time to studying despite my job abroad.	4.19	High Level
11. regularly access online platforms for SPLE-related materials.	4.26	High Level
12. receive encouragement and support from family or peers in pursuing the exam.	4.31	High Level
13. feel confident in my ability to pass the SPLE.	4.15	High Level
14. maintain motivation and discipline in my review habits.	4.24	High Level
15. can manage my stress while balancing work and exam preparation.	3.93	High Level
16. stay positive even when I encounter difficulties in studying.	4.22	High Level
17. am informed about the SPLE application process, schedule, and requirements.	4.33	High Level
18. know the SPLE venue and guidelines in the country where I work.	4.39	High Level
19. receive support from Filipino organizations or groups related to teaching.	3.91	High Level
20. feel guided and encouraged by relevant Philippine government agencies (e.g., PRC, POLO, OWWA).	4.13	High Level
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>4.23</b>	<b>High Level</b>

The overall mean obtained for OFW teachers' preparedness in taking the SPLE was 4.23. This implies a High Level as according to the rating scale, giving an indication that respondents were generally very ready in the areas of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional domains with respect to exam preparation. This suggests that the OFW examinees usually developed the habit of studying and learning new materials, and they would always apply methods to help improve upon their endeavors through intensive review. These research findings manifest an endorsement of Zimmerman's (2002) theory that self-regulated learners who apply certain strategies like planning, monitoring, and evaluating themselves regarding their study behaviors would, with good likelihood, perform better in high-stakes examinations; thus underlining the point that readiness enables exam success.

Among the indicators, the one with the highest mean, "I take mock exams or practice tests to assess my readiness" (4.52), clearly reveals that OFW exam takers highly regard practice testing as a foremost review strategy. These findings are in alignment with the idea of the "testing effect" (Roediger and Karpicke, 2006) which states that repeated testing enhances retention and increases performance in prolonged activities that additions are focused on compared to acquisition types. In the same vein, Awofala and Fatade 2015 found that mock tests provided learners with familiarity with the test format, improved their metacognitive awareness, and reduced anxiety via realistic performance feedback. Their high rating



on the item suggests that OFW educators recognize the importance of simulated assessment in fostering self-assurance and pinpointing areas of improvement.

However, items with the least means: "I receive support from Filipino organizations or groups related to teaching" (3.91) and "I can manage my stress while balancing work and exam preparation" (3.93), though they too represent High Level, show a kind of readiness that is comparatively less solid. The low value for organizational support might suggest that OFW exam takers could be devoid of professional networks and community groups abroad that can provide some extra academic or emotional backup. Gines (2014) has also set out similar findings: OFW teachers suffer limited access to review centers, academic structures, and communities of teachers compared to those available in the Philippines. This lack of support can block collaborative learning and diminish opportunities for resource sharing.

Of note, the low mean for stress management underscores how challenging it is for OFWs to balance employment, personal duties, and exam preparation. These findings may be consistent with David & Dizon (2022) who found that OFW examinees commonly experienced psychological stress, isolation, and lowered self-efficacy brought about by the pressure of work abroad, extreme stress, and distancing from family support. The experimentally consumed resources of working memory and attention. High stress and test anxiety were reported by classes of students overwhelmed by excitement, and because it reduces test preparation states of efficiency. Consequently, it is implied that emotional and psychological challenges remain formidable barriers for even highly motivated OFWs.

In general, although OFW teachers demonstrate relatively strong readiness in progressing to the Society of Plateres Landspasati Exam (SPLE), it is very vital to infuse psychosocial support and stress management mechanisms. Possible structured support mechanisms can be fashioned from collaboration with Filipino associations abroad, review centers, and/or government agencies. Nonetheless, the case is inclined to favor the blending of wellness options with mental health options for examinees on diseases within the SPLE review. Renovating it prepares examinees to handle stress better as well as maintain modestly, sanely balanced, and well-spaced study conditions. Immediate attention in the development process can ultimately lift the readiness level higher, and this will probably steer better SPLE results for OFW teachers.

**Table 3: Level of Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE**

<b>Difficulties</b>		
<b>Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
<i>As an examinee, I...</i>		
1. find it difficult to balance work and study time.	3.46	High Level
2. feel that my job responsibilities prevent me from reviewing consistently.	3.15	Moderate Level
3. feel physically exhausted after work, which affects my study time.	3.48	Moderate Level
4. experience schedule conflicts that interfere with my SPLE review.	3.43	Moderate Level
5. have difficulty finding updated and relevant SPLE reviewers.	2.74	Moderate Level
6. lack access to quality review centers or mentors abroad.	2.59	Moderate Level
7. experience internet connectivity problems while accessing online materials.	2.48	Moderate Level
8. have limited access to educational or reference materials (books, modules, etc.).	2.63	Moderate Level
9. feel anxious or overwhelmed about taking the SPLE.	3.11	Moderate Level

10. lack confidence in passing the exam due to being long years away from teaching.	2.81	Moderate Level
11. get discouraged due to limited support or encouragement.	2.35	Moderate Level
12. feel isolated from my exam preparation.	2.52	Moderate Level
13. find it difficult to save money for exam-related expenses.	2.41	Moderate Level
14. feel that the cost of review materials, registration, or travel burdens me.	2.24	Low Level
15. struggle to secure time off from work to take the SPLE.	2.54	Moderate Level
16. have difficulty locating or reaching the designated testing center abroad.	2.31	Low Level
17. find the SPLE application process unclear or complicated.	2.15	Low Level
18. lack updated information about SPLE schedules or requirements.	2.15	Low Level
19. encounter delays or issues in communicating with relevant agencies (e.g., PRC, POLO).	2.28	Low Level
20. find it difficult to process the needed documents while working abroad.	2.46	Moderate Level
<b>Overall mean</b>	<b>2.66</b>	<b>Moderate Level</b>

The level of difficulties experienced by OFW teachers in taking the SPLE yielded an overall mean of 2.66, interpreted as a Moderate Level, indicating that while examinees face several challenges, these difficulties do not reach severe levels but remain significant enough to affect their preparation. This result reflects the reality that OFW teachers often juggle demanding work conditions, limited access to review resources, and logistical constraints abroad. These findings align with Zimmerman's (2002) assertion that external barriers—such as environmental challenges, time constraints, and lack of support—can impair self-regulated learning processes, making exam preparation more difficult for adult learners balancing multiple responsibilities.

Among all indicators, the item with the highest mean, “I find it difficult to balance work and study time” (3.46), signals that time-management difficulties are the most prominent challenge for OFW examinees. This finding is consistent with Arugay and Gepte (2020), who reported that OFWs are often required to work long hours, resulting in fragmented study schedules and reduced cognitive energy for exam preparation. Similarly, David and Dizon (2022) found that the dual burden of employment and exam preparation causes emotional fatigue, decreases motivation, and contributes to inconsistent review habits. These difficulties highlight the tension between economic responsibilities and academic goals experienced by OFWs, making time management a critical barrier to licensure examination readiness.

Conversely, the two items with the lowest means—“I find the SPLE application process unclear or complicated” (2.15) and “I lack updated information about SPLE schedules or requirements” (2.15)—both interpreted as Low Level difficulties, suggest that examinees generally have access to sufficient information regarding SPLE procedures. This may be due to digital platforms, active communication channels, and social media groups dedicated to SPLE updates. This finding aligns with Castañeda and Serrano (2020), who noted that overseas Filipino communities increasingly rely on online networks and digital tools for obtaining timely and accurate information, reducing confusion regarding administrative processes. Likewise, the accessibility of PRC, POLO, and OWWA announcements through online portals may contribute to lower levels of difficulty in obtaining examination-related information.

However, despite lower difficulty levels in accessing information, OFW examinees still encounter substantial challenges in areas such as the cost of preparation materials, institutional communication delays, and securing time off from work. Psychological difficulties—including anxiety, discouragement, and

feelings of isolation—remain moderately present, reflecting the emotional burden associated with exam preparation abroad. Cassady and Johnson (2002) emphasized that anxiety and emotional strain negatively impact concentration and memory, potentially hindering SPLE performance. Meanwhile, Gines (2014) found that OFW teachers frequently report academic isolation and a lack of professional support networks abroad, which can weaken motivation and confidence.

Generally, the findings imply that while information-related barriers are minimal, significant challenges persist in the behavioral, emotional, and logistical domains of SPLE preparation for OFW teachers. Programs supporting OFW examinees should, therefore, prioritize interventions related to time management, work-study balance, stress reduction, and access to review resources. Strengthening partnerships with Filipino organizations, employers abroad, and government agencies may enhance OFW teachers' support systems, reduce their preparation burdens, and ultimately improve their chances of success in the SPLE.

### Comparative Analysis of the Level of Preparedness and Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE

**Table 4: Significant Difference in the Level of Preparedness of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE**

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann - Whitney U-Test	p-value	$\alpha$	Interpretation
Educational Attainment	Baccalaureate (BSED/BEED)	29	24.97	289.000	0.201	0.05	Not Significant
	Diploma in Teaching / 18 Units Earner in Professional Education (Certification)	25	30.44				
Examination Category	Elementary	14	26.57	267.000	0.797	0.05	Not Significant
	Secondary	40	27.83				
Age	Older	27	31.13	266.500	0.089	0.05	Not Significant
	Younger	27	23.87				
Sex	Female	28	31.32	257.000	0.063	0.05	Not Significant
	Male	26	23.38				
Examination Result	Passed	43	29.59	146.500	0.053	0.05	Not Significant
	Failed	11	19.32				

The analysis revealed no significant differences in the level of preparedness of OFW teachers across educational attainment, examination category, age, sex, and examination result, indicating that these demographic variables did not substantially influence readiness for the SPLE. This suggests that OFW examinees, regardless of background, share a comparable level of preparedness, possibly due to similar motivations, review access, and professional goals. The finding supports Zimmerman's (2002) assertion

that self-regulated learning and personal agency play a stronger role in exam preparation than demographic characteristics.

Educational attainment and examination category also showed no significant differences, reinforcing the idea that preparedness is shaped more by review engagement than formal credentials. Studies such as Almerino et al. (2019) and Gines (2014) found that LET and SPLE readiness are more influenced by consistent review strategies and access to test-oriented materials than by degree type or specialization. Similarly, age and sex did not produce statistically meaningful variations in preparedness. Although older and female examinees had slightly higher mean ranks, the differences were not significant, echoing findings from De Guzman and Tan (2007) and Awofala and Fatade (2015) that preparedness tends to equalize when learners share similar access to resources and review environments.

While examinees who passed the SPLE displayed higher preparedness than those who failed, the difference was not statistically significant. This suggests that preparedness alone does not fully determine performance, as other factors—such as test anxiety, stress, and environmental pressures—may influence outcomes. Cassady and Johnson (2002) noted that anxiety can hinder test performance even among well-prepared individuals, while David and Dizon (2022) highlighted the impact of psychological strain on OFW examinees' confidence. Overall, the results imply that preparedness is broadly consistent across groups and that psychological and contextual factors may play a critical role in exam performance.

**Table 5: Significant Difference in the Level of Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE**

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann - Whitney U-Test	p-value	$\alpha$	Interpretation
Educational Attainment	Baccalaureate (BSED/BEED)	29	29.50	304.500	0.314	0.05	Not Significant
	Diploma in Teaching / 18 Units Earner in Professional Education (Certification)	25	25.18				
Examination Category	Elementary	14	27.04	273.500	0.898	0.05	Not Significant
	Secondary	40	27.66				
Age	Older	27	23.80	264.500	0.083	0.05	Not Significant
	Younger	27	31.20				
Sex	Female	28	23.16	242.500	0.035	0.05	Significant
	Male	26	32.17				
Examination Result	Passed	43	24.00	86.000	0.001	0.05	Significant
	Failed	11	41.18				

\*Sex is significant (2-tailed) \*0.024 < alpha (0.05)

\*Examination Result is significant (2-tailed) \*0.002 < alpha (0.05)

The results showed that only sex and examination results produced significant differences in the level of difficulties experienced by OFW teachers taking the SPLE, while educational attainment, examination category, and age did not show statistically meaningful variations. These findings indicate that most demographic factors do not substantially influence perceived difficulties, suggesting that OFW examinees encounter similar challenges across groups. This supports Zimmerman's (2002) assertion that environmental and contextual barriers—such as workload, limited resources, and stress—affect learners broadly. Likewise, Gines (2014) found that OFWs often face uniform constraints abroad, including limited review support and access to updated resources, which contribute to similar levels of difficulty regardless of background.

Differences in educational attainment and examination category also proved insignificant, consistent with studies showing that external conditions, more than academic credentials, shape licensure exam challenges (Almerino et al., 2019; Bautista, 2017). Age likewise showed no significant variation, indicating that both younger and older OFWs face comparable barriers, aligning with De Guzman and Tan's (2007) conclusion that age-related differences diminish when learners share similar review environments. In contrast, sex yielded a significant difference, with male examinees reporting higher levels of difficulty than females. This aligns with findings by Cassady and Johnson (2002) and Awofala and Fatade (2015), which show that female examinees often demonstrate stronger study discipline and help-seeking behaviors, resulting in fewer perceived barriers.

Examination results also showed a significant difference, with those who failed the SPLE experiencing higher levels of difficulty. This supports research indicating that heightened stress, limited support, and work–study imbalance negatively affect exam performance among OFWs (David & Dizon, 2022). Test anxiety and emotional strain, as noted by Cassady and Johnson (2002), may further hinder performance despite adequate preparation. Generally, the findings highlight that difficulties are strongly shaped by psychological and contextual factors, particularly among male examinees and those who fail the exam, suggesting the need for targeted support systems, stress management programs, and structured mentoring to improve SPLE outcomes.

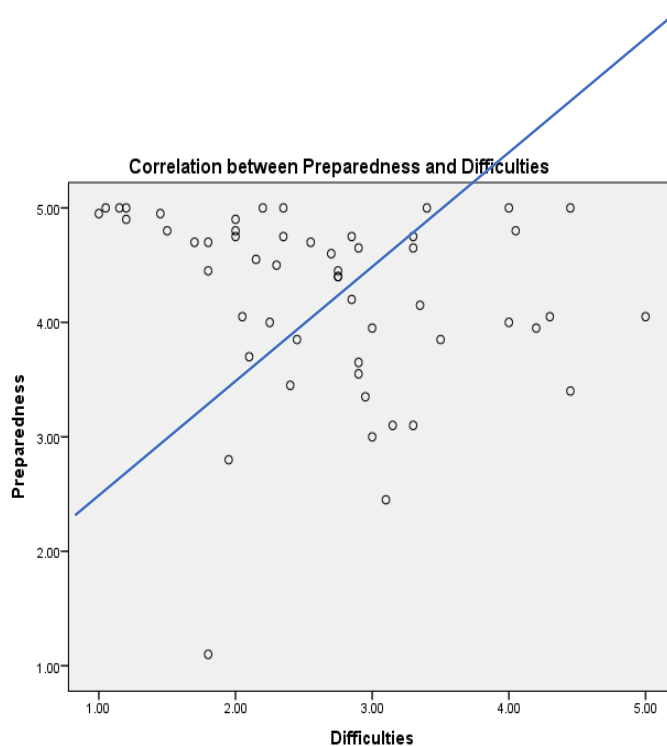
### **Relational Analysis Between the Level of Preparedness and the Level of Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE**

**Table 6. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Preparedness and the Level of Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE**

Correlate	N	Spearman Rho	Sig. Level	p-value	Interpretation
Level of Preparedness	54	-0.338	0.05	0.013	Significant, Negative Correlation
Level of Difficulties	54				

\*\*Relation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed), negative correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) = -0.338,  $p$ -value = 0.013.





*Figure 1. Graph of Correlation Between the Level of Preparedness and the Level of Difficulties of OFW Teachers in Taking the SPLE*

The relational analysis between the level of preparedness and the level of difficulties of OFW teachers taking the SPLE revealed a significant negative correlation, with Spearman Rho  $r = -0.338$  and  $p = 0.013$ , indicating that the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This means that higher preparedness is associated with fewer perceived difficulties, whereas lower preparedness corresponds to greater challenges during SPLE review. Although moderate in strength, the inverse relationship clearly demonstrates that preparedness serves as a protective factor for OFW examinees. This result supports the work of Entwistle and Ramsden (2015), who argued that well-prepared learners are better equipped to manage academic demands and perceive fewer obstacles because they engage in deeper, more meaningful learning strategies. Similarly, Schunk and DiBenedetto (2020) emphasized that preparedness rooted in strong self-regulation improves learners' ability to cope with complex tasks, thereby lowering the level of perceived difficulty.

The findings also align with research showing how preparedness influences emotional and cognitive challenges during exam preparation. Pekrun's Control–Value Theory (2017) asserts that students who perceive themselves as academically ready experience fewer negative emotions—such as anxiety and frustration—which in turn, reduces overall difficulty. In high-stakes testing contexts, Appleton et al. (2016) found that examinees with strong academic engagement and readiness report significantly fewer barriers, as preparedness enhances their sense of control and reduces stress-related cognitive overload. In the context of overseas Filipino teachers, Barrot (2021) noted that those who maintain systematic study habits and actively use online learning platforms demonstrate greater confidence and encounter fewer obstacles, even while managing demanding work conditions abroad. Thus, the significant negative correlation observed in this study reinforces that enhancing preparedness directly contributes to lowering the challenges experienced by OFW examinees as they prepare for the SPLE.

## Conclusion

The profile of the OFW SPLE examinees reflects a diverse group in terms of educational attainment, examination category, age, sex, and examination results, suggesting that individuals from various backgrounds pursue licensure while working abroad. This diversity indicates that SPLE preparation and experiences occur within a heterogeneous population whose differing personal and professional circumstances may influence their study habits and examination challenges.

The level of preparedness of OFW teachers was found to be high, demonstrating that despite the demands of overseas employment, examinees exert considerable effort in organizing their review practices, using updated materials, and taking mock examinations. This high level of preparedness reflects strong motivation and determination among OFW teachers to pass the licensure exam and advance professionally. In contrast, the difficulties encountered by the examinees were at a moderate level, revealing that although OFWs face notable barriers such as work–study imbalance, limited access to review resources, and feelings of anxiety, these challenges remain manageable. The findings highlight the unique pressures associated with preparing for the SPLE abroad, where both environmental and emotional factors affect exam readiness.

The analysis of differences in preparedness showed that no demographic variable—educational attainment, examination category, age, sex, or exam result—produced significant variation, suggesting that OFW teachers share a relatively uniform level of readiness regardless of background. This implies that preparedness is shaped more by personal review practices than by demographic characteristics. However, when examining differences in difficulty levels, sex and examination results were significant factors. Male examinees and those who failed the exam reported higher levels of difficulty, indicating that certain groups may require additional support, while other variables did not meaningfully influence perceived challenges. Finally, the relationship between preparedness and difficulties revealed a significant negative correlation, showing that as examinees become more prepared, the difficulties they experience tend to decrease. This emphasizes the importance of strong study habits, structured review strategies, and consistent preparation in reducing the barriers faced by OFW teachers taking the SPLE.

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