

Career service examination eligibility readiness: Insights for professional commitment through college-based project

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2026, 19(02), 1543-1552

Publication history: Received on 21 April 2026; revised on 27 May 2026; accepted on 29 May 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2026.19.2.1200>

Abstract

In an increasingly competitive labor market, assessing students' preparedness for professional eligibility is critical. This study addresses this issue by evaluating respondents' readiness for the Career Service Examination (CSE) and their professional commitment. It analyzes variations by demographic and academic profile and examines the relationship between these variables. The study used quantitative correlational methods and stratified random sampling. It surveyed 265 participants from Public Administration, Business Administration, Entrepreneurship, and Accountancy programs. Data were collected using a validated survey instrument and analyzed through descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation. The results indicate that higher levels of academic and examination readiness are associated with increased dedication to professional careers. Findings revealed high levels of readiness and professional commitment among respondents. Outcome expectations and career orientation emerged as strengths, but self-efficacy was comparatively lower. Significant differences were observed based on age, academic year, program, and number of examination attempts. Sex was not a significant factor. A moderate positive correlation between readiness and commitment suggests that greater preparedness is linked to stronger professional dedication. These results highlight the importance of implementing structured academic interventions, such as the COMAREI (College of Management Academic Readiness and Eligibility Initiative). This initiative aimed to enhance both students' readiness and commitment to taking the CSE.

Keywords: Career Service Examination; Eligibility Readiness; Professional Commitment; College of Management; College-Based Support Project

1. Introduction

Professional commitment is defined as an individual's psychological and ethical attachment to their chosen profession, a quality that is particularly important in public service [1]. In the Philippines, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) upholds meritocracy and integrity by administering the biannual Career Service Examination (CSE) at both Sub-Professional and Professional levels [2]. Achieving a passing score on the CSE is a significant milestone for securing permanent government employment, which provides tenure, competitive salaries, and opportunities for career advancement [3]. For students in the College of Management, passing the examination signifies a transition into public service characterized by both subject-matter expertise and ethical responsibility.

Despite its prestige, the CSE remains highly challenging, with only 15.10% of examinees passing in August 2025 [2]. This low pass rate indicates a readiness gap, attributed to limited preparation resources and a misalignment between available support and CSC standards. Although colleges offer leadership training, there is a lack of structured support specifically for exam readiness. Drawing on Social Cognitive Career Theory [4] and the existing literature on

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professional commitment [1,5], this study examines how insufficient institutional interventions compel students to prepare independently, potentially undermining morale and diminishing human capital.

This study aims to analyze the relationship between CSE readiness, measured by self-efficacy [6], outcome expectations, and personal goals [7], and professional commitment among College of Management students. It examines demographic differences and tests the hypothesis that there are no significant variations or correlations. The ultimate objective is to establish a foundation for a structured, college-based support initiative designed to address readiness gaps and enhance professional commitment among prospective civil servants.

2. Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data at a single point in time [8]. This descriptive methodology facilitated the assessment of students' demographic profiles, Civil Service Examination (CSE) readiness, and professional commitment without manipulating variables. The research was conducted at the College of Management, Capiz State University (CapSU), Roxas City Campus [9], selected for its emphasis on leadership and administrative training.

Of the 789 students enrolled in Academic Year 2025–2026, a sample of 265 was selected using the Cochran formula [10] and stratified random sampling [11], dividing the population into subgroups to ensure representation across key demographics. The sample was predominantly female (69.1%) and aged 18–20 (59.2%), with the majority enrolled in BSBA-Marketing Management (36.2%). Additionally, 65.7% had never taken the CSE, 60.8% reported no exam background, and 93.6% had not attended review classes.

Data collection used a structured three-part questionnaire, including demographic items and variables measured on a 5-point Likert scale [12], with participants rating agreement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Content validity was established at 3.89, and reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.951 [13], demonstrating high internal consistency. Surveys were administered both in person and online to maximize accessibility. Data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) [14], employing descriptive statistics for profiling and t-tests, ANOVA, and Pearson's r for inferential analysis. Ethical standards were maintained through informed consent and adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012 [15].

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Level of Career Service Examination Eligibility Readiness of the College of Management Students as a Whole and in terms of Self-efficacy, Outcome Expectations, and Personal Goals

3.1.1. As a Whole

College of Management students demonstrate a high level of readiness for the CSE ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.59$). Outcome Expectations received the highest mean score ($M = 4.14$), followed by Personal Goals ($M = 3.74$), while Self-Efficacy was lowest ($M = 3.62$). This distribution indicates strong motivation for stable employment and effective use of digital review materials, which help reduce barriers to preparation. Nevertheless, lower self-efficacy scores indicate ongoing doubts about mastery of the subject and test-taking abilities. These results are consistent with Verma's holistic readiness framework [16], Thorndike's Law of Readiness [17], and Skaalvik & Skaalvik's research linking self-efficacy to persistence [18].

3.1.2. Self-Efficacy

Students reported confidence in exam management ($M = 3.66$) and study strategy ($M = 3.65$), but indicated weaker mastery of subject areas ($M = 3.52$). This pattern suggests that students feel capable of managing exam conditions but remain uncertain about their specific content knowledge. These gaps help explain why self-efficacy is the lowest readiness dimension and underscore the need for targeted academic interventions. These findings are consistent with Bandura's self-efficacy theory [19], which emphasizes that beliefs about personal capability influence persistence and responses to challenges.

3.1.3. Outcome Expectations

Outcome Expectations received the highest mean score ($M = 4.14$), with students expressing strong beliefs that passing the CSE leads to government employment ($M = 4.20$), personal accomplishment ($M = 4.17$), and career growth ($M =$

4.15). Long-term aspirations also scored highly ($M = 4.07$). These results indicate that practical benefits are a primary source of motivation, offsetting lower confidence in subject mastery. This finding supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory [19], which posits that individuals exert greater effort when they perceive clear connections between actions and desirable outcomes.

3.1.4. Personal Goals

Personal Goals received a high overall score ($M = 3.74$), with career opportunities ($M = 3.89$) and belief in the effectiveness of study effort ($M = 3.87$) rated highest. Social recognition received the lowest score ($M = 3.51$), indicating that students prioritize intrinsic goals such as stability and advancement over external validation. This finding aligns with Social Cognitive Theory [19], which emphasizes the importance of clear, meaningful goals in sustaining long-term effort and overcoming obstacles.

Table 1 Level of Career Service Examination Eligibility Readiness of the College of Management Students as a Whole and in terms of Self-Efficacy, Outcome Expectations, and Personal Goals

Variables	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Self-Efficacy			
I am confident in my ability to pass the Career Service Examination.	3.66	0.911	High
I believe I have mastered the necessary subjects (e.g., Numerical, Verbal, Analytical) required for the exam.	3.52	0.901	High
I can effectively manage my time during the actual examination period.	3.66	0.852	High
I feel capable of overcoming difficult questions through the mastery of the necessary subjects.	3.61	0.903	High
I have a clear strategy for how to study and to prepare for the different parts of the examination.	3.65	0.938	High
Total	3.62		High
Outcome Expectations			
Passing the CSE will significantly increase my chances in securing a government job,	4.20	0.797	High
I believe that earning my eligibility will lead to career opportunities and professional growth.	4.15	0.793	High
I expect that passing the CSE will give me a sense of accomplishment and social recognition.	4.17	0.783	High
Achieving eligibility is a crucial step in fulfilling my long-term career aspirations.	4.07	0.778	High
I believe that the effort I put into studying will directly result in passing score.	4.11	0.773	High
Total	4.14		High
Personal Goals			
Passing the CSE will significantly increase my chances in securing a government job,	3.73	0.949	High
I believe that earning my eligibility will lead to career opportunities and professional growth.	3.89	0.827	High
I expect that passing the CSE will give me a sense of accomplishment and social recognition.	3.51	0.981	High
Achieving eligibility is a crucial step in fulfilling my long-term career aspirations.	3.71	0.910	High

I believe that the effort I put into studying will directly result in a passing score.	3.87	0.907	High
Total	3.80		High
Grand Mean	3.83		High

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High; 3.41-4.20 = High; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate; 1.81-2.60 = Low; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Source: Data gathered by the researcher.

3.2. Level of Professional Commitment of the College of Management Students as a Whole and in terms of Self-efficacy, Outcome Expectations, and Personal Goals

3.2.1. As a Whole

College of Management students demonstrate consistently high levels of professional commitment ($M = 4.02$). Among the dimensions assessed, career orientation received the highest mean score ($M = 4.06$), followed by affective ($M = 4.05$), continuance ($M = 4.00$), and normative commitment ($M = 3.96$). These findings indicate a strong identification with the chosen profession, characterized by a balance between emotional engagement and practical incentives. The marginally lower normative commitment score suggests that, although most students feel a sense of duty to remain, a subset may be reconsidering their professional trajectory. This pattern aligns with the argument of Nazari and Emami [20], who contend that professional faith fosters deep identification with a profession's values.

3.2.2. Career Orientation

Students reported a strong career orientation ($M = 4.06$), with particularly high scores for staying informed about industry trends and exerting extra effort ($M = 4.12$), as well as pursuing skills beyond classroom requirements ($M = 4.09$). The lowest score was observed for viewing the profession as a vocation ($M = 3.87$). These results underscore the presence of clear career goals and proactive competitiveness among students. This is consistent with Hirschi [21], who emphasized the importance of adaptability and planning, and with Tan [22], who noted that career orientation is shaped by both personal choice and external influences.

3.2.3. Affective Commitment

Affective commitment was also high ($M = 4.05$), primarily driven by passion for skill development ($M = 4.16$) and a sense of responsibility to uphold the profession's reputation ($M = 4.15$). This pattern reflects a strong emotional attachment, which is associated with increased motivation and persistence. Liu et al. [23] identified similar relationships between emotional engagement and retention, while Cruz [24] observed that passion enhances involvement in both academic and extracurricular activities.

3.2.4. Normative Commitment

Normative commitment ($M = 3.96$) reflects a strong sense of duty, with the highest scores attributed to contributing to society ($M = 4.00$) and a perceived obligation resulting from training ($M = 3.97$). According to Meyer and Allen [25], such commitment develops through upbringing and early exposure to values. In the Philippine context, this sense of duty is reinforced by cultural norms such as *utang na loob*. Reyes [26] similarly observed that Filipino students feel a moral responsibility to complete their education and secure stable employment for the benefit of their families and communities.

3.2.5. Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment ($M = 4.00$) reflects pragmatic considerations, with stability and benefits receiving the highest ratings ($M = 4.14$). Students acknowledge that leaving their chosen field would result in a significant loss of time and resources ($M = 4.05$). This practical orientation aligns with findings by Liu et al. [23] and Chen et al. [27], who reported that perceived stability increases retention. Pinugu [28] further notes that economic challenges and limited opportunities in the Philippines reinforce continuance commitment, motivating students to remain in fields where they have already invested substantial effort.

Table 2 Level of Professional Commitment of College of Management Students as a Whole and in terms of Career Orientation, and Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment

Variables	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
Career Orientation			
I view my chosen profession as a vocation rather than just a job.	3.87	0.900	High
I am actively seeking ways to improve my professional skills beyond what is required in class.	4.09	0.770	High
I stay updated on the latest trends and developments within my chosen professional field.	4.12	0.741	High
I am willing to put in extra effort to ensure I am highly competitive in the job market.	4.12	0.790	High
My career identity is a central part of who I am as an individual.	4.09	0.851	High
Total	4.06		High
Affective Commitment			
I feel a strong sense of belonging to my future profession.	4.06	0.826	High
I am emotionally attached to the values and ethics of the career path I plan to choose	3.98	0.783	High
I am passionate about continually developing my professional skills.	4.16	0.742	High
I talk to my friends and family about my planned profession as a rewarding career choice.	3.89	0.908	High
I feel a personality to uphold the reputation of my future profession.	4.15	0.748	High
Total	4.05		High
Normative Commitment			
I feel an obligation to remain in the chosen profession because of the training and education I have received.	3.97	0.837	High
I believe it would be "wrong" to leave on my chosen career path after all the resources invested in me	3.90	0.880	High
I am committed to contribute to society through my chosen profession.	4.00	0.759	High
Even if it were my advantage, I do not feel it would be right to abandon my own career goals.	3.98	0.786	High
My family, mentors, and peers expect me to succeed professionally, and I am motivated by these expectations.	3.94	0.913	High
Total	3.96		High
Continuance Commitment			
It would be very difficult for me to change my career path at this point in my life.	3.86	0.965	High
One of the main reasons I stay in this program is that the costs of switching are too high.	3.98	0.904	High
I feel that I have too few options to consider a different profession outside of this field.	3.94	0.862	High
Leaving this career path would represent a significant loss of time and financial investment.	4.05	0.877	High

I am considering this career path because the long-term stability and benefits it offers make it a more reliable choice compared to other options.	4.14	0.858	High
Total	4.00		High
Grand Mean	4.02		High

Legend: 4.21-5.00 = Very High; 3.41-4.20 = High; 2.61-3.40 = Moderate; 1.81-2.60 = Low; 1.00-1.80 = Very Low Source: Data gathered by the researcher.

3.3. Differences in the Level of Career Service Examination Eligibility Readiness When Students Are Grouped According to their Profile

Table 3 indicates that sex does not significantly influence CSE readiness ($t = -0.901$, $p = 0.369$), as male and female students reported nearly identical scores. This finding supports Meyer and Allen [25], who contend that organizational and psychological factors have a greater impact than demographic variables. Conversely, significant differences were observed for age ($p = 0.002$), year level ($p = 0.023$), program ($p = 0.000$), and number of exam attempts ($p = 0.002$), resulting in the rejection of the null hypotheses for these variables.

3.3.1. Age

Readiness levels were generally consistent across age groups, except between the 18–20 and 21–23 age groups ($MD = -0.20020$, $p = 0.008$), where older students demonstrated higher preparedness. This finding aligns with Aune et al. [35] and Cahan et al. [36], who reported that increased maturity and prolonged academic exposure enhance performance. Therefore, the null hypothesis for age was rejected.

3.3.2. Year Level

Analysis by year level revealed significant readiness differences only between first-year and fourth-year students ($MD = -0.29062$, $p = 0.013$), with seniors exhibiting greater preparedness. This result aligns with Sawyer and Simpson's [37] findings, which showed that self-efficacy and adaptive strategies develop over time, consistent with Meyer and Allen's model [25].

3.3.3. Program

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration-Marketing Management students demonstrated significantly higher readiness compared to those in Accountancy ($p = 0.023$), Entrepreneurship ($p = 0.000$), and Public Administration ($p = 0.000$). No significant differences were observed among the latter three programs. The elevated scores among BSBA students may be attributed to curricula that emphasize analytical and administrative skills relevant to CSE requirements. This finding supports the findings of Simpson et al. [33], who noted that program specialization influences career identity.

3.3.4. Number of Times the CSE Was Taken

Analysis of testing history indicated that first-time takers were significantly more prepared than non-takers ($MD = 0.27895$, $p = 0.000$). However, no significant differences were found among individuals who had taken the exam 1, 2, or 3 times. This finding supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory [19], which emphasizes the importance of mastery experiences in developing self-efficacy. Familiarity with the exam environment appears to enhance confidence, accounting for higher readiness among those with testing experience.

Table 3 Differences in the Level of Career Service Examination Eligibility Readiness When Respondents are Grouped According to Their Profile

Variables	F-test / t-test	p-value	Remarks
Sex	-0.901	0.369	<i>ns</i>
Age	5.040	0.002	<i>s</i>
Year Level	3.231	0.023	<i>s</i>
Program	10.885	0.000	<i>s</i>
Number of times the CSE was taken	4.247	0.002	<i>s</i>

Legend: $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ = not significant; $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ = significant Source: Data gathered by the researcher.

3.4. Differences in the Level of Professional Commitment When Students Are Grouped According to their Profile

Table 4 shows that sex does not significantly affect professional commitment ($t = -0.124$, $p = 0.901$), with male and female students reporting nearly identical scores. This supports Meyer and Allen [25], who emphasize organizational experiences over demographics, though it contrasts with Ahmad et al. [29], who found gender-based differences. Age also showed no significant effect ($F = 1.390$, $p = 0.246$), consistent with Meyer and Allen [25], but differing from Cohen [30], who argued that career priorities shift with life stage. In contrast, significant differences were observed across year level ($p = 0.000$), program ($p = 0.000$), and number of exam attempts ($p = .001$).

3.4.1. Year Level

First-year students reported lower commitment than second-year ($p = 0.000$), third-year ($p = 0.000$), and fourth-year students ($p = 0.004$), while no differences appeared among upper cohorts. This suggests commitment stabilizes after the first year, consistent with Astin [31], Lam [32], and Meyer and Allen [25], who highlight growth through involvement and accumulated experience.

3.4.2. Program

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration-Marketing Management students showed significantly higher commitment than Accountancy ($p = 0.023$), Entrepreneurship ($p = 0.000$), and Public Administration ($p = 0.000$). No differences were found among the latter three programs. This supports Simpson et al. [33], who noted that program specialization shapes career identity and alignment with aspirations.

3.4.3. Number of times the CSE was taken

Testing history revealed non-linear effects. First-time takers reported higher commitment than non-takers ($p = 0.000$) and those with three or more attempts ($p = 0.000$). No differences were found between one- and two-time takers. This pattern suggests burnout among repeat failures, contradicting Bandura's self-efficacy theory [19] and Wyse & Anderson [34], who argued that multiple attempts build familiarity. Instead, initial exposure appears to boost commitment, while repeated setbacks diminish resolve.

Table 4 Differences in the Level of Professional Commitment When Respondents are Grouped According to Their Profile

Variables	F-test / t-test	p-value	Remarks
Sex	0.124	0.901	<i>ns</i>
Age	1.390	0.246	<i>ns</i>
Year Level	7.321	0.000	<i>s</i>
Program	7.110	0.000	<i>s</i>
Number of times CSE was taken	5.049	0.001	<i>s</i>

Legend: $p\text{-value} > 0.05$ = not significant; $p\text{-value} < 0.05$ = significant Source: Data gathered by the researcher.

3.5. Relationship Between Career Service Eligibility Readiness and Level of Professional Commitment

Table 5 presents the statistical correlation between respondents' Career Service Examination (CSE) eligibility readiness and their overall professional commitment. The data reveal a highly significant relationship between these variables, as indicated by a Pearson r value of 0.504 and a p -value of 0.000, which is well below the 0.05 alpha level of significance. This moderate positive correlation indicates that professional commitment is closely associated with examination preparedness. As individuals demonstrate greater cognitive, emotional, and psychological readiness for the CSE, their dedication, sense of responsibility, and motivation toward their chosen career path also increase. These findings suggest that the process of achieving professional eligibility lays a foundation for developing professionalism and strengthening motivation to excel and remain in the chosen field.

This positive relationship between readiness and long-term dedication aligns with Bandura's (1997) Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that individuals with high levels of preparedness and task-specific self-efficacy are more likely to demonstrate greater commitment and persistence in pursuing professional goals. Furthermore, the statistical results are consistent with findings from studies of student teachers who, when highly prepared for their final licensing qualifications, exhibited significantly stronger commitment to entering and remaining in the teaching profession. As readiness for a high-stakes certification process enhances accountability and solidifies professional identity, the null

hypothesis stating that no significant relationship exists between CSE readiness and professional commitment was rejected, thereby confirming a substantial positive relationship between these variables.

Table 5 Relationship Between Career Service Eligibility Readiness and the Respondents' Level of Professional Commitment

Variables	N	Pearson-r value	Degree of Relationship	p-value	Remarks
Level of CSE Eligibility Readiness	265	0.504	Marked or Substantial Relationship	0.000	s
Level of Professional Commitment	265				

Legend: $p < 0.05$ = significant Source: Data gathered by the researchers

4. Conclusion

The study finds that students in the College of Management generally demonstrate high levels of readiness for the Career Service Examination (CSE) and strong professional commitment. The results indicate a significant relationship: increased outcome expectations, such as strong beliefs in securing employment and career advancement, directly contribute to greater emotional attachment and affective commitment to future careers. However, self-efficacy records the lowest scores among the variables studied, indicating that, although students are motivated, many question their ability to adequately prepare for and pass the examination. The findings further show that the academic environment influences professional identity. Differences across programs and year levels suggest that increased exposure, training, and coursework enhance essential knowledge and clarify long-term career objectives. In summary, the college environment serves as a catalyst by providing an academic foundation, confidence-building interventions, and professional orientation, which collectively foster exam readiness and strengthen career commitment by developing key psychological and experiential factors.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The author extends sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of this study, particularly the respondents and Capiz State University, Main Campus, Roxas City, Capiz, for their valuable support and assistance.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Statement of ethical approval

This study complied with ethical standards and the Data Privacy Act of 2012 by obtaining voluntary, informed consent from all participants and safeguarding their identities through the use of anonymity codes and secure data storage. Although AI tools (Grammarly, Co-Pilot, and Gemini) assisted with grammar correction, paraphrasing, and structural suggestions, the authors independently verified all information and assume full responsibility for the final content.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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