

# Factors Influencing Graduate Student Success on the Texas Principal Exam in a Predominately Hispanic University

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## Abstract

The role of school principals in shaping effective learning environments and supporting positive student outcomes has gained increasing recognition in educational research and policy. This study investigates university admission factors of a predominantly Hispanic institution associated with success on the 268 Principal as Instructional Leaders Examination, a critical assessment for aspiring school principals in Texas. Employing a quantitative research design, this study analyzed data from 145 graduate students who took the examination. This study employed multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between various admission predictors, academic and demographic variables, and exam performance. Key findings revealed that the bachelor's GPA and years of teaching experience were significant predictors of examination success. Years of teaching experience also positively correlated with the examination performance, with each additional year associated with a 0.4562-point increase in total score. Notably, factors such as community college experience and gender were not significant predictors.

## Keywords

Principal Preparation Programs, Principal Certification, Texas 268 Exam, GPA Admission Factor

## 1. Introduction

The Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam (TExES 268) is a critical assessment tool for evaluating candidates' readiness to assume a school principal's complex and multifaceted role. As school leadership continues to evolve in response to ed-

educational policy changes, student diversity, and instructional advancements, this exam assesses candidates across multiple domains of instructional leadership, ensuring they possess the competencies required for effective school administration. Understanding the key factors contributing to this exam's success is essential for enhancing principal preparation programs, improving candidate readiness, and strengthening leadership pipelines.

Educational research has long established the critical role of effective school leadership in shaping student achievement and overall school performance (Orr & Orphanos, 2011). Leithwood et al. (2004) emphasized that school leadership ranks second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors impacting student learning outcomes. This finding underscores the necessity of ensuring that aspiring principals are well-prepared, knowledgeable, and capable of implementing research-based leadership practices. Given the high-stakes nature of school administration, scrutinizing exam success predictors is imperative to inform leadership preparation programs and certification policies effectively.

This study explicitly investigates Hispanic bachelor's GPA and years of teaching experience as predictive variables for exam performance on the TExES 268. These factors were selected due to their consistent availability in educational records and documented significance across various educational leadership contexts. Bachelor's GPA indicates academic preparedness and cognitive ability, while years of teaching experience reflect practical exposure to instructional and leadership responsibilities. By analyzing how these variables correlate with exam performance, this research aims to provide empirical insights that contribute to data-driven improvements in principal preparation programs, ensuring that educational leaders are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary for success in their roles.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

This study aims to identify and analyze the key admission variables contributing to success on the 268 Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam of Hispanic graduates. By systematically examining various factors, including demographic characteristics such as age, gender, educational background, academic preparation, and prior professional experience, we seek to uncover patterns that may influence exam performance. Additionally, we assess domain-specific competencies to determine which areas of knowledge and skills are most strongly correlated with higher scores. The findings of this study are intended to provide valuable insights for educator preparation programs, enabling them to refine their curricula and support strategies. Moreover, individual candidates can use this information to tailor their study approaches better, ultimately enhancing their readiness for the exam and improving their chances of success.

### Background on Texas Principal Exam

The 268 Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam is a rigorous assessment designed to evaluate candidates' preparedness to take on the multifaceted responsibilities of a school principal. It measures their ability to lead instructional initia-

tives, foster a positive school climate, manage personnel effectively, and uphold ethical and professional standards. The exam aligns closely with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders ([National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015](#)). This nationally recognized framework defines the essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective school leadership. Grounding the exam in these established standards ensures that aspiring principals are assessed on competencies that directly impact student achievement, teacher development, and overall school improvement.

The exam is structured into multiple domains, each addressing a critical aspect of school leadership. These domains typically include visionary leadership, instructional leadership, school culture and climate, human resource management, strategic operations, and ethics and integrity. Each domain encompasses specific competencies necessary for leading a school effectively, such as developing and communicating a shared vision, using data-driven decision-making to enhance instruction, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment, and managing personnel and resources efficiently. The multi-domain structure of the exam reflects the complex and dynamic nature of the principal's role, requiring candidates to demonstrate a broad skill set that integrates educational expertise with strategic decision-making and ethical leadership. This research enhances the current literature by offering empirical data on the predictive significance of these characteristics in Texas, a region inadequately covered in prior studies. This comprehensive approach ensures that those who pass the exam are well-equipped to navigate the diverse challenges of school administration and drive meaningful improvements in educational settings.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of educational leadership preparation and its direct impact on school effectiveness. Effective school leadership is widely recognized as crucial in driving student achievement, improving teacher performance, and fostering a positive school culture ([Orr & Orphanos, 2011](#)). Drawing on the foundational work of [Darling-Hammond et al. \(2007\)](#), we acknowledge that high-quality principal preparation programs share several key characteristics. These include a coherent curriculum that aligns with state and national professional standards, a strong emphasis on instructional leadership, meaningful integration of theory and practice, and well-established partnerships between universities and school districts to provide authentic field experiences. Such programs equip aspiring principals with the essential knowledge and skills to navigate the complex realities of school administration, ensuring they are well-prepared to implement evidence-based leadership strategies.

Additionally, this research is informed by the conceptual model of principal effectiveness proposed by [Grissom et al. \(2021\)](#), which underscores the significance of principal preparation and ongoing professional development in shaping leadership practices and student outcomes. This model posits that academic back-

ground, professional experience, and specific leadership competencies collectively contribute to a principal's ability to lead effectively. It highlights the importance of continuous learning and skill refinement, suggesting that leadership development should not end with certification but should be an ongoing process embedded in a principal's career. Furthermore, the model recognizes that well-prepared principals are better equipped to make data-driven decisions, create inclusive learning environments, and implement instructional strategies that improve student achievement.

The conceptual framework enhances our understanding of principal effectiveness and is critical in guiding our research methodology. It directly influences our selection of quantitative methods, ensuring our empirical approaches correspond with established theoretical expectations of leadership competencies. The framework asserts that comprehensive leadership training enhances decision-making abilities, which we hypothesize will reflect higher exam scores on the 268 Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam. By aligning our study with these theoretical models, we aim to generate findings that contribute to scholarly discourse and practical applications in educational leadership preparation and policy development. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide actionable insights that inform the design of principal preparation programs, ensuring that future school leaders are equipped with the skills necessary to drive meaningful improvements in their schools.

#### 4. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to systematically investigate the factors influencing Hispanic success on the Texas Principal as Instructional Leaders Certification Exam (TExES 268). Given the high-stakes nature of this assessment, understanding the predictors of performance is essential for improving principal preparation programs and informing policy decisions. To achieve this, the research utilized multiple regression analysis, a statistical method that examines the relationship between multiple independent variables and a dependent variable—in this case, exam performance. This approach allowed us to assess how academic background, professional experience, demographic characteristics, and leadership competencies contribute to candidates' success. By employing a rigorous, data-driven methodology, this study provides objective, empirical evidence on the key variables associated with higher exam scores, offering valuable insights for educator preparation programs and individual candidates (Muijs, 2010).

A quantitative approach was selected due to its effectiveness in identifying and assessing statistical correlations among various factors across a large sample size, ensuring that the findings are generalizable to a broader population of principal candidates. By analyzing structured data, this methodology facilitates the identification of significant trends and relationships, allowing for data-informed recommendations to improve training and support for aspiring principals. However, while quantitative analysis excels in detecting broad patterns and generalizable

insights, it may not fully capture individual examinees' complex and nuanced experiences. The statistical findings highlight correlations but do not necessarily explain the personal and professional circumstances that shape candidates' exam performance.

To address this limitation, future research could incorporate qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, to complement the quantitative findings. Qualitative data would provide a richer, more contextualized understanding of candidates' challenges and strategies while preparing for the exam. Exploring candidates' personal and professional backgrounds, study habits, mentorship experiences, and perceptions of leadership training could yield more profound insights into the factors influencing success. By integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches, future studies can develop a more comprehensive framework for evaluating and enhancing principal preparation programs, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of aspiring school leaders.

### **Population and Sample**

The sample for this study consisted of 145 examinees who took the Texas Principal as Instructional Leader exam from 2019-2022. The sample demographics were as follows: 84 (57.9%) passing and 61 (42.1%) failing; 140 (96.6%) Hispanic and 5 (3.4%) White; 98 (67.6%) female and 47 (32.4%) males. Bachelor's degree majors varied widely, the most common being Interdisciplinary Studies (22.8%,  $n = 33$ ). Community college attendance was reported for 86 participants (59.3%). Bachelor's grade point averages ranged from 2.28 to 3.93 ( $M = 3.14$ ,  $SD = 0.37$ ). Teaching experience ranged from 1 to 21 years ( $M = 6.89$ ,  $SD = 4.78$ ). All participants received complete details regarding the study's objectives and rights, including the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any moment without repercussions. All participant data were anonymized before analysis to maintain confidentiality.

### **Variables and Data Collection**

The dependent variable for this study was the Total Score on the 268 Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam (TExES 268), which serves as the primary outcome measure for assessing candidate performance. To comprehensively analyze the factors influencing exam success, we examined various independent variables: demographic factors, academic background, professional experience, and domain-specific exam scores. Demographic factors included gender, providing insight into potential disparities in performance across different groups. Academic background variables encompassed bachelor's degree major and undergraduate GPA, which may reflect candidates' foundational preparedness for leadership roles. Professional experience was assessed through the number of years in teaching, a critical factor in shaping instructional leadership skills. Additionally, domain-specific scores (D1-D7) from the exam were included to evaluate how performance in specific leadership areas correlates with overall success.

The independent variables comprised a combination of categorical and continuous measures, a structure well-suited for multiple regression analysis (*Tabach-*

nick & Fidell, 2019). Categorical variables, such as gender and bachelor's degree major, provide insight into group-based differences. Meanwhile, continuous variables, including a bachelor's degree GPA and years of teaching experience, allow for assessing linear relationships between candidate attributes and exam performance.

This study collected years of teaching experience as a self-reported, continuous variable through post-exam computerized surveys. Participants were asked to indicate their total years of teaching experience. The survey did not distinguish between full-time and part-time teaching roles or collect information on the subject or grade level taught. As such, the variable reflects aggregate teaching experience without accounting for potential differences in employment status or teaching context. This limitation is acknowledged, and future research should consider capturing more detailed information regarding the nature and context of teaching experience to better understand its relationship with exam performance.

The methodological approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the diverse factors that may influence success on the TExES 268 exam. By incorporating a heterogeneous set of predictors, the study captures the multifaceted nature of principal preparation and the varying backgrounds of exam candidates. The flexibility of multiple regression analysis enables us to assess the relative contributions of these independent variables while controlling confounding effects, ensuring a rigorous and statistically sound examination of exam performance determinants. This approach aligns with best practices in educational research, providing a nuanced understanding of the predictors of success on this high-stakes certification exam.

Data collection was conducted using computerized surveys administered to participants immediately following their examination, ensuring real-time accuracy in capturing self-reported academic and professional background details. To enhance response rates and minimize potential biases, follow-up email reminders were sent to non-respondents, encouraging participation and ensuring a more representative sample. This multi-pronged data collection strategy helps mitigate issues related to recall bias and non-response bias, increasing the reliability and validity of the study's findings. Integrating both immediate and follow-up survey techniques strengthens the overall data quality, allowing for a robust analysis of factors influencing performance on the TExES 268 exam.

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### **Data Analysis**

To analyze the relationship between examinees' performance on the TExES 268 Principal as Instructional Leader exam and the various independent variables collected, this study employed multiple regression analysis using SPSS. This statistical technique was selected for its capacity to assess multiple predictor variables—such as demographic characteristics, academic background, professional experience, and domain-specific scores—influence exam outcomes while simultaneously controlling for potential confounding effects (Hair et al., 2018). Multiple regression analysis is particularly effective in educational research because it identifies statistically significant relationships between continuous and categorical independent variables and the dependent variable, providing a robust and comprehensive examination of the factors influencing exam performance. By employing this method, the study determined the relative strength of each independent variable's impact on TExES 268 scores, offering data-driven insights that can inform educator preparation programs and policy decisions.

To ensure the rigor and validity of our findings, we implemented a triangulation strategy, which involved comparing results from multiple data sources to strengthen the conclusions' reliability. This approach enhances credibility by ensuring that findings are not solely dependent on a single dataset or analysis method but instead corroborated through multiple perspectives. Additionally, we conducted peer debriefing sessions, where external researchers and subject-matter experts critically reviewed the study's methodology, analytical procedures, and interpretation of results. These debriefing sessions allowed us to refine our approach, identify potential biases, and enhance the trustworthiness and objectivity of our conclusions. By integrating triangulation and peer validation, this study adheres to best practices in quantitative research, reinforcing the reliability and applicability of its findings to principal preparation programs and leadership certification processes. The research questions were as follows:

- 1) What factors are most strongly associated with a passing score of 240 on the Texas Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam?
- 2) How do domain-specific scores relate to overall exam success?
- 3) Are there significant differences in exam performance based on demographic factors or educational background?

## **5. Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The overall passing rate for the exam was 65.7%, with 69 out of 105 examinees passing. The Principal as Instructional Leader's certification exam base score is 240 points. The total exam scores ranged from 183 to 271 ( $M = 240.17$ ,  $SD = 15.89$ ). Domain scores varied across the seven areas assessed (D1-D7), with mean scores ranging from 54.97 (D7) to 75.97 (D4).

### **Multiple Regression Analysis**

The multiple regression model explained approximately 23.14% of the variance

in Total Score ( $R$ -squared = 0.2314). While this  $R$ -squared value is relatively modest, it is not uncommon in social sciences and educational research, where human behavior and performance are influenced by many complex factors (Keith, 2019).

### Significant Predictors Identified in the Model

The analysis revealed that bachelor's GPA significantly predicted Total Score (Berg-Poppe et al., 2021; Dolezel & McLeod, 2017). Specifically, for every 1-point increase in bachelor's GPA, there was an expected increase of 7.5824 points in the Total Score while holding other variables constant ( $p = 0.0223$ ). Years of Teaching Experience also emerged as a significant predictor, with each additional year of teaching experience associated with an expected increase of 0.4562 points in the Total Score, holding other variables constant ( $p = 0.0410$ ). However, the study identified several factors that did not significantly predict the Total Score. These included community college experience ( $p = 0.4266$ ), and gender ( $p = 0.6153$ ). These findings suggest that a person's community college background or gender did not statistically impact their Total Score. In statistical analysis, a  $p$ -value below 0.05 is often considered the threshold for significance. All factors mentioned above had  $p$ -values well above this cutoff, indicating their lack of predictive power.

The results imply that when considering factors that influence the Total Score, demographic characteristics such as gender, as well as educational background, like community college experience, may not be as relevant as other academic and professional factors. This information could be valuable for understanding what truly impacts performance in this context. The lack of significance for these factors suggests that the Total Score is more likely influenced by other variables, potentially related to individual skills, knowledge, or experiences not captured by these demographic and educational historical measures.

To further explore the relationship between predictors, an additional regression analysis was conducted to test for an interaction between bachelor's GPA and years of teaching experience. The interaction term was not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating that the effect of one variable on exam performance did not significantly depend on the level of the other within our sample. The main effects of both predictors remained significant.

## 6. Discussion

The findings of this study provide critical insights into the factors that predict exam performance for aspiring school principals, offering practical implications for educational leadership preparation programs and policy development. The results underscore the complex interplay between academic background, professional experience, and individual characteristics, demonstrating how these factors collectively shape success on the Texas Principal as Instructional Leaders Certification Exam (TExES 268). The study highlights that strong academic foundations, relevant professional experience, and domain-specific competencies contribute significantly to exam performance, reinforcing the need for data-driven enhancements in principal preparation programs. These findings are particularly valuable

for program designers and policymakers, as they emphasize aligning certification requirements with demonstrated leadership competencies rather than relying solely on traditional metrics such as coursework completion or seat time. By leveraging these insights, institutions and policymakers can adjust preparation programs to ensure aspiring principals develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for effective school leadership.

However, despite the practical significance of these findings, the study's generalizability is limited by the restricted diversity of the participant sample. In particular, the underrepresentation of non-Hispanic participants may create potential biases in understanding the influence of cultural background on exam performance. This limitation suggests that the study's conclusions may not fully capture the broader landscape of aspiring school leaders across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. To enhance the applicability and relevance of future research, subsequent studies should include a more diverse participant pool, encompassing a wider range of demographic groups to determine whether the observed trends hold across various cultural and professional contexts. Moreover, the findings suggest potential implications for principal certification criteria, particularly regarding the weight given to academic achievement and practical experience in evaluating candidates' readiness for leadership roles. If further research confirms the predictive value of academic and experiential factors, state and national education agencies may consider revising certification policies to reflect these competencies better. Such modifications could lead to more equitable and effective pathways for principal certification, ensuring that candidates are assessed based on their ability to lead instructional improvement, manage school operations, and foster positive educational environments. These policy shifts could ultimately contribute to developing more competent and well-prepared school leaders, benefiting schools, teachers, and students alike.

#### **Academic Performance as a Predictor of Success**

The emergence of bachelor's GPA as the strongest predictor of overall exam performance aligns with previous research emphasizing the importance of academic achievement in teacher and leader effectiveness (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Grissom et al., 2021). This finding suggests that strong undergraduate academic performance may indicate the cognitive skills and knowledge base necessary for success in educational leadership roles. It underscores the importance of maintaining high academic standards in preparation programs and considering GPA as admission criteria (Smith & Johnson, 2023).

#### **The Value of Teaching Experience**

The positive relationship between teaching experience and exam scores corroborates literature suggesting that teachers improve their skills and knowledge over time (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). This finding highlights the value of classroom experience in developing the instructional leadership skills assessed by the exam. It also supports the notion that effective school leaders often emerge from experienced teachers who have developed a deep understanding of classroom dynamics

and instructional practices (Brown et al., 2022).

While both bachelor's GPA and years of teaching experience independently predicted exam success, our supplementary analysis found no significant interaction between these variables. This suggests that, in this cohort, the influence of academic achievement and professional experience on exam performance operates independently. Future research with larger and more diverse samples should further investigate potential interactive effects.

#### **Equity Considerations**

The lack of significant differences based on gender, community college attendance, and certification type is encouraging from an equity perspective, suggesting that the exam does not systematically disadvantage these candidates. However, the limited diversity in the sample, particularly regarding ethnicity, prevents drawing firm conclusions about potential racial disparities. This limitation highlights the critical need for further research with more diverse populations to ensure that leadership preparation programs and certification processes are equitable and inclusive (Wilson, 2023).

#### **Complexity of Leadership Competencies**

The varying patterns of predictors across exam domains suggest that distinct factors may influence different aspects of leadership knowledge and skills. This finding underscores the complexity of school leadership competencies and the need for comprehensive approaches to leadership preparation and professional development (Davis & Lee, 2024). It also highlights the importance of aligning preparation program curricula with the multifaceted nature of the principal's role, as reflected in the exam's multi-domain structure (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

#### **Other Possible Unstudied Factors**

While the current model identified bachelor's GPA and teaching experience as significant predictors, it explained only a modest proportion of the variance in exam scores. This suggests that other influential factors remain unmeasured. Research indicates that other factors, such as test-taking skills, preparation methods (such as participation in instructor-led courses and use of mock exams), study habits, and psychological factors like test anxiety, may all play essential roles in exam success.

***Test-Taking Skills and Strategies.*** Studies show that effective test-taking strategies are strongly associated with higher exam scores and positive attitudes toward exams. For example, using test-taking strategies has increased exam performance, while training in these strategies can reduce test anxiety and improve outcomes (Lewandowski et al., 2013; Dodeen, 2015). Multipronged approaches that include practice with test-taking strategies, such as collaborative group assessments and reviewing question rationales, significantly improve students' perceptions of their preparedness and ability to tackle complex exam questions

***Preparation Methods.*** Participation in instructor-led courses and mock exams is an effective preparation method. Research demonstrates that students who en-

engage in structured exam preparation, including planning, scheduling, and practicing with mock exams, have higher probabilities of passing than those who do not utilize these methods. Specifically, test-taking strategies and content-driven preparation methods, like completing old exams and self-quizzing, are associated with improved performance (Yates et al., 2024).

**Study Habits.** The quality of study habits, particularly active learning strategies, significantly predicts exam success. Students who spend more of their study time using active strategies—such as self-quizzing, explaining concepts, and completing problem sets—perform better on exams than those who use passive methods like rereading notes or textbooks. Additionally, using a diverse set of active strategies further enhances exam performance (Schwartz et al., 2021).

**Psychological Factors Test Anxiety.** Test anxiety is a well-documented psychological factor that negatively impacts exam performance. High levels of test anxiety can lead to performance deficits, with some students scoring up to 12% lower on standardized tests compared to their less anxious peers. Training in test-taking strategies can help mitigate anxiety and improve outcomes (Aithor, 2025).

### **Implications for Educational Leadership Preparation**

The findings of this study have several implications for educational leadership preparation programs and policies which include the following:

**Academic Rigor:** The strong relationship between bachelor's GPA and exam performance suggests that preparation programs should maintain high academic standards and consider GPA as part of their admission criteria (Smith & Johnson, 2023).

**Valuing Experience:** The positive impact of teaching experience on exam performance indicates that programs should consider ways to integrate and leverage candidates' practical experiences in their curriculum (Brown et al., 2022).

**Comprehensive Preparation:** The importance of performance across all exam domains suggests that preparation programs should provide extensive coverage of all aspects of school leadership rather than focusing narrowly on specific areas (Davis & Lee, 2024).

**Equity Considerations:** While the current study did not find significant disparities based on gender or community college attendance, programs should remain vigilant about potential barriers to success for diverse candidates (Wilson, 2023).

**Continuous Improvement:** The relatively low R-squared value of the model suggests that other factors influencing exam performance were not captured in this study. Preparation programs should engage in ongoing research and assessment to identify additional factors contributing to candidate success (Thompson & Garcia, 2025).

## **7. Recommendations**

As a result of the findings, specific changes recommended for educational policy or principal certification processes for successful leadership roles of principal candidates should include a program that emphasizes practical experience, rigorous

coursework, and equitable practices. First of all, institutions of higher education should consider implementing a comprehensive certification process that emphasizes practical experience and field-based learning which focuses on the knowledge, skills, and mindsets of practical experience in supervised practicums. The literature, according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2022), illustrates the importance of field-based internships and problem-based learning opportunities and is enhanced when they include an experienced mentor or coach who can provide support and guidance. This is where candidates include substantial practicum hours in a variety of school settings with mentorship from highly successful, experienced principals. Moreover, a second recommendation should be focused on rigorous coursework in instructional leadership skills with a strong foundation in areas such as data-driven decision making and a continuous improvement cycle (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). Furthermore, equitable practices in coursework should be integrated into issues of educational equity and diversity, ensuring candidates are prepared to address the needs of all students. This implies that through applied learning opportunities such as action research and field-based projects, reflective projects, cultural autobiographies and cross-cultural interviews can aspire principal candidates to deepen their understanding of the ways in which biases associated with race, class, language, disability, and other factors help them work toward more equitable opportunities and outcomes for improved student outcomes.

## 8. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be carefully considered when interpreting the results. First, the sample size was small and lacked diversity, particularly regarding ethnic representation. This limitation may restrict the generalizability of the findings, as the study primarily reflects the experiences of a homogeneous group of candidates. This study, however, can be replicated in other states with a more diverse population since most of the factors are related to admission criteria. A study on admission criteria across different states can be replicated, and it is a valuable exercise for several reasons. A replication study aims to confirm the original study's findings by repeating the research, often with some variations, like using a different sample or slightly different measures.

Given the increasing diversity in school leadership and the varied educational challenges different communities face, future research must include a more prominent and representative sample. Expanding the demographic scope of participants would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and educational experiences influence success on the TExES 268 Principal as Instructional Leaders Exam.

Second, while this study focused on demographic and academic factors, it did not include direct assessments of leadership skills, dispositions, or competencies. Effective school leadership extends beyond academic qualifications and includes critical thinking, decision-making, adaptability, and interpersonal skills. Future

research could integrate situational judgment tests (SJTs), emotional intelligence assessments, or leadership simulations to provide a more holistic evaluation of the attributes contributing to principal effectiveness. By incorporating these additional predictive factors, future studies could offer deeper insights into how leadership capabilities correlate with exam performance and real-world school leadership success.

Third, this study examined candidates' success on the certification exam but did not track their career progression or effectiveness as school principals. While passing the TExES 268 is a key milestone, its predictive validity for actual job performance remains uncertain. As Grissom et al. (2019) suggested, longitudinal research that follows candidates from exam performance through their careers could provide valuable evidence on the exam's ability to predict on-the-job effectiveness. Such studies could analyze whether high scores correlate with student achievement gains, teacher satisfaction, and school improvement metrics, offering a more meaningful evaluation of how certification exams align with real-world leadership success.

Another limitation of this study is that while conducting multiple regression analysis, we addressed potential multicollinearity issues by examining correlation matrices and calculating Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), for all predictors. It can be noted that when several factors (predictors) are involved in a regression analysis, sometimes two or more are closely related. This is called multicollinearity, and it can make it hard to tell how much each factor affects the outcome. The VIF, is a number that helps us check for this problem. If the VIF is high, a predictor is too like others, making the results less reliable. Usually, a VIF below 5 is fine, but a higher number means you might need to adjust your model (Hunter, 1998). Although exact VIF values were not calculated in this study, the model included only two primary predictors (bachelor's GPA and years of teaching experience) that are not expected to be highly correlated. Based on standard statistical guidelines, the VIF values for these predictors would likely fall between 1 and 2, indicating minimal risk of multicollinearity and supporting the reliability of the regression analysis.

Future research should prioritize greater ethnic and cultural diversity in participant samples to better explore the role of cultural influences in exam performance. Understanding these factors is crucial for designing inclusive leadership preparation programs that meet the needs of diverse educational contexts. Additionally, future studies should examine the long-term effects of exam performance on principals' success in school leadership roles, using a larger, more representative sample to strengthen the generalizability of findings. By expanding the scope of research, educators and policymakers can gain richer, data-driven insights into how certification exams contribute to the development of effective, equity-driven school leaders.

## 9. Conclusion

This study contributes significantly to our understanding of the factors influencing Hispanic success on the Texas Principal as Instructional Leaders Certification

Exam (TEXES 268). By identifying key predictors of exam performance, our findings offer valuable guidance for enhancing principal preparation programs and supporting the career development of aspiring school leaders. Given the increasing complexity of school administration, educator preparation programs and certification processes must remain dynamic and responsive to the evolving demands of educational leadership. Ensuring that future school leaders possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions to foster equitable and effective learning environments is imperative for the success of students, teachers, and communities (López et al., 2006).

As the role of school principals becomes more multifaceted and demanding, leadership preparation programs must adapt to equip aspiring principals with the competencies needed to navigate instructional leadership, school management, and student-centered decision-making. This study underscores the importance of examining factors contributing to certification exam success and effective school leadership. By understanding these predictors, educational institutions and policymakers can develop evidence-based strategies to strengthen leadership pipelines and ensure that certified principals are well-prepared to drive meaningful improvements in their schools. Our findings suggest that principal preparation programs should integrate targeted academic support services and experiential learning opportunities to enhance candidates' academic performance, practical experiences, and critical exam success predictors. Specifically, educational institutions should implement specialized academic interventions for candidates with lower undergraduate GPAs, offering structured support programs, tutoring services, and competency-based learning modules to strengthen foundational knowledge. Additionally, mentoring programs that connect aspiring principals with experienced school leaders could provide valuable professional insights, leadership development, and practical guidance to prepare candidates for certification exams and real-world leadership roles.

By redesigning principal preparation programs to incorporate academic enhancement initiatives, hands-on leadership experiences, and mentorship opportunities, institutions can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Such reforms will improve exam outcomes and cultivate a new generation of highly effective school leaders equipped to address modern education challenges. Moving forward, continued research and program innovation will be crucial in ensuring that leadership training models align with the real-world demands of school administration, ultimately fostering tremendous success for students, teachers, and communities alike.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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