

Rethinking Social Work Licensure: Test-Taker Perspectives on Fairness, Relevance, and Reform

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to provide insight into the experiences of social workers who have taken an Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) licensing exam, while exploring the exam's impact on individuals and offering recommendations for reform. The ASWB exams have faced criticism due to disparities in pass rates, raising concerns about potential bias that disproportionately affects people of color and underrepresented groups. Using a mixed-methods survey distributed via the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Community Board and the Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD) listserv, both demographic data and qualitative feedback were collected from 76 social work professionals. Thematic analysis of the responses revealed five key themes: alternative assessment methods, the need for anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) integration in the exams, calls for exam elimination, alignment with Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), and content relevance to practical skills. The results indicate a need for the ASWB exams to evolve in response to the diverse requirements of social work practice, ensuring the exam protects the public while doing so equitably. This study underscores the importance of revising the licensing process to better align with the values of the profession and the realities of social work practice.*

Keywords: *social work licensure, ASWB exams, equity, testing disparities, social work education, licensing reform*

Before the early 20th century, only a few professional groups were regulated including medicine, law, and theology (Law & Kim, 2005). In 1915, Abraham Flexner delivered a speech titled, “*Is Social Work a Profession?*” in which he questioned whether social work holds a distinct knowledge base and practice autonomy. This critique prompted social workers to define the profession’s scope, values, and standards clearly and concisely (Daley & Pittman-Munke, 2021; Flexner, 1915). In the 1920s, social workers worked in child welfare agencies, hospitals, psychiatric clinics, public schools, and settlement houses. Social work was largely unregulated although there were various standards and guidelines across regions. However, as the profession developed, the need for professional standards became more apparent, due to an increasing number of complaints and lawsuits. In 1955, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) was one of the earliest organizations to help centralize and establish the guidelines and standards for the profession.

The United States Constitution grants the states authority to establish laws and regulate professions to protect the health, safety, and public welfare of their citizens. Currently, all fifty states have laws that govern the protection of public health and safety, encompassing the profession of social work. The regulation of social workers typically falls under the

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categories of registration, title protection, certification, and licensure (Kleiner 2006; Wolchik, 2015). Registration is considered the least restrictive whereas licensure is considered the most restrictive. Licensure enables states to track and verify qualified practitioners.

In 1979, the Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) was established. It was originally named the American Association of State Social Work Boards and was created to build uniform licensing standards and regulations across the states as well as the provinces of Canada. Their mission was to create a standardized examination that assesses the competence of social work practitioners (ASWB, 2021). The first exams were administered in the 1980s (ASWB, 2021). Although the ASWB exams primarily serve the United States and Canada, they are now recognized as global models for other countries that are seeking to establish social work licensing exams.

ASWB currently administers five examinations: the Associate, Bachelors, Masters, Advanced Generalist, and Clinical examinations. The Associate examination is used in a limited number of jurisdictions that grant licenses to individuals without a social work degree. The Bachelors examination assesses competencies for generalist social work practice, while the Masters examination focuses on knowledge and skills necessary for social work practice with a master's degree but without post-graduate experience. The Advanced Generalist examination is designed for individuals with a master's degree and supervised post-graduate experience in non-clinical roles, including macro practice. The Clinical examination is intended for those seeking licensure to provide clinical or psychotherapeutic services. The licensing examinations are designed to assess the minimum level of competence required for practice (ASWB, 2025).

As of 2023, the exam pass rate for first-time test takers was as follows: Associate, 69.1%; Bachelors, 67.9%; Masters, 72.5%; Advanced Generalist, 61.4%; Clinical, 73.4% (ASWB, 2024). In 2022, ASWB released data stratifying pass rates by several factors. When stratified by race/ethnicity, the first-time exam pass rates for the clinical exams taken in 2021 show marked disparities. White test-takers achieved the highest pass rate (85%), followed by Multiracial (80.7%), Asian (74.9 %), Hispanic/Latino (65.8%), and Native American (59.1%) test-takers, respectively, with Black test-takers recording the lowest pass rate (46.2 %). Age-related differences were also evident: participants aged 18–29 had an 80.1 % pass rate, those aged 30–39 had 77.2 %, those aged 40–49 had 67.4 %, and test-takers 50 years and older had 62.8 % (ASWB, 2022). Based on the pass-fail rates, test-takers, educators and practitioners have advocated for reform as well as a reconsideration of the exam. Despite those outcries, there has been limited research on the exam or the impact of the exam on test-takers.

Literature Review

Licensing exams generally constitute one component of the broader process of professional or occupational licensure. Generally, professional licensing helps to ensure a baseline level of competence and client protection. As Nunn (2018) notes, licensed professionals often enjoy higher earnings, longer job tenures, and lower unemployment rates than their unlicensed colleagues. These advantages arise, in part, because licensing

restricts entry into a profession, thus creating a scarcity of qualified providers and a credential-based signal of quality (Blair & Chung, 2019; Nunn, 2018).

Many professions and occupations are regulated in the United States and internationally. As such, many professions utilize licensing exams, of which social work is one. While critical discourse has emerged around the social work licensing exams, it is certainly not the only profession to face questions about exam fairness and relevance. Research looking into the Multistate Bar Exam (MBE) and state bar exams shows that administrators conduct psychometric and practice analyses to ensure fairness and relevance (Raymond et al., 2021). Similarly, research on the North American Pharmacist Licensure Examination (NAPLEX) has identified student-level predictors of pass rates, such as cumulative pharmacy GPA. This underscores that multiple licensing examinations are subject to systematic investigation, albeit often focused on predictive validity rather than solely on fairness metrics (Park et al., 2021). Similar research can be found when examining medical licensure in South Korea. Park and Yang (2015) reviewed major controversies surrounding item disclosure in medical licensing exams: the tension between fairness and test validity, the impact of test item disclosure on passing thresholds, and the overall utility of disclosure, where empirical evidence is mixed regarding whether released items inflate pass rates or have little effect on performance. This study highlights that, as with other professions, concerns about fairness, validity, and the consequences for passing standards remain central to policy debates. This suggests that, across professions, licensing exams not only raise fairness concerns but also shape learners' attitudes and preparatory practices.

Social work practice is regulated in all 50 states as well as Canada, the United Kingdom, Puerto Rico, and many European nations (Davis, 2024; Groshong, 2009). Bibus and Boutté-Queen (2011) stated that social work regulation has become a "fixture" in social work practice. That said, Donaldson et al. (2014) called for deeper understanding of how social work regulation influenced the profession. However, there is still no substantial literature on the effectiveness of social work regulation or its impact on the public's protection. Kim (2022) and Apgar and Nienow (2022) report that there is a lack of research on the exam and its benefits and limitations. Donaldson et al. (2014) also reported that there was a paucity of research on social work education and licensure.

As mentioned above, there is limited research on the benefits and implications of social work licensing exams but more recently there has been a clamor of concerns regarding apparent disparities implicit in the exam (Apgar & Nienow, 2022; Castex et al., 2018; Kim, 2022; Morrow, 2022; Nienow et al., 2022). Research involving social work students highlights both the perceived value and the inequities embedded in the licensure process. Miller et al. (2015) surveyed 223 graduate students and found that, although most recognized licensing as a marker of professional legitimacy, many remained uncertain about its exact purpose and relevance to their future practice. A complementary large-scale analysis by Senreich and Dale (2021), which tracked roughly 5,000 students from a public university, uncovered stark disparities in actual licensure outcomes: white graduates achieved a 78 % licensing rate compared with 48 % for non-white peers, and younger students (ages 21-29) were far more likely to become licensed (73 %) than older students (40 years and older, 50 %). Together, these findings suggest that while a social work license

is broadly viewed as beneficial, systemic demographic and age-related gaps limit equitable access to the license, underscoring the need for targeted interventions that clarify the licensure pathway and address structural barriers.

Other studies surveying social work faculty reveals a mixed picture of support for licensure, licensing exams, and concerns about alignment with professional standards. GlenMaye and Bolin (2015) gathered responses from roughly 1,500 faculty members and found that, while the majority endorsed the idea of social work licensure, many expressed disagreements with the specific licensing requirements. A later study by Apgar and Luquet (2022) examined how well faculty translate the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) into licensure exam content. The results revealed a weak correspondence between EPAS competencies and the exam questions. Together, these findings suggest that faculty generally back the concept of licensure but remain skeptical about the rigor and curricular coherence of the current licensing framework, highlighting a need for tighter integration between accreditation standards and exam design.

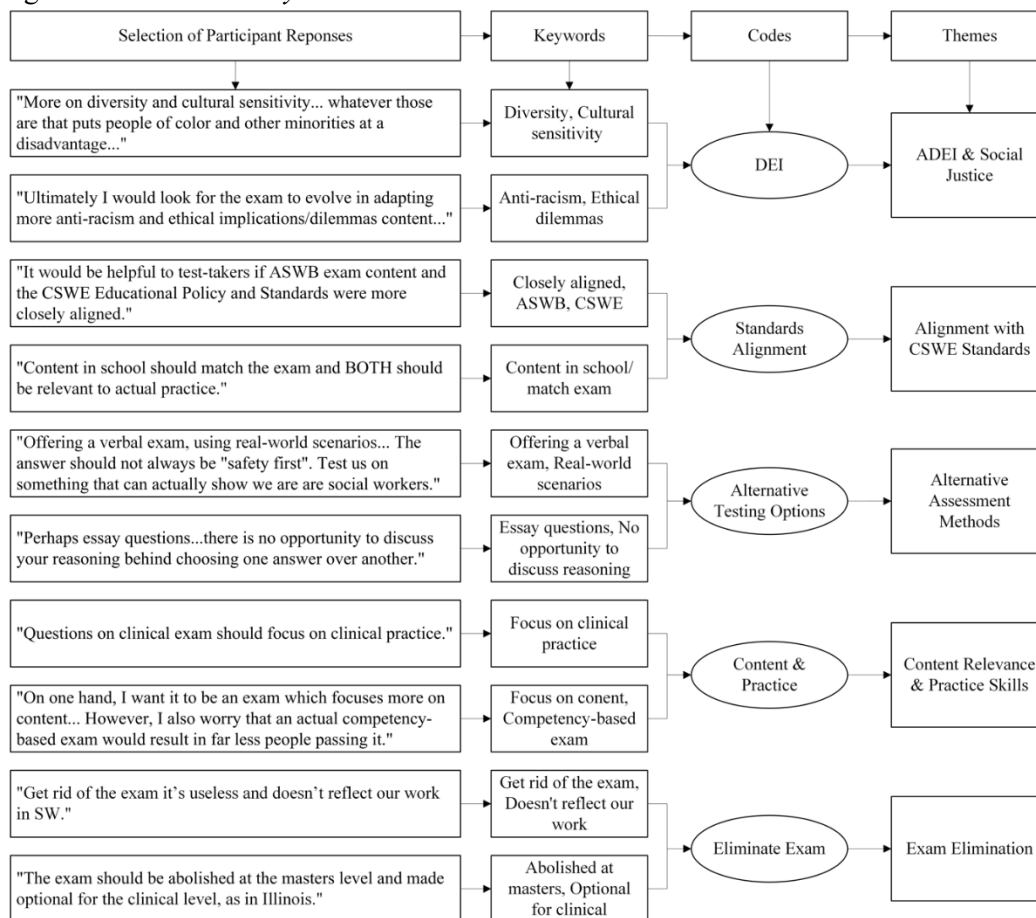
In a comprehensive review of the validity and reliability methods employed in the ASWB exams, Marson et al. (2009) aimed to demonstrate transparency in the examination's development process. Although the article primarily focuses on the technical processes of ensuring reliability and validity, it indirectly acknowledges concerns from the test-taker standpoint, particularly through discussions of readability for English as a Second Language (ESL) candidates and the consistently high failure rates among repeat test-takers. Recent scholarship has highlighted how these psychometric strengths mask deeper systemic biases. Apgar and Nienow (2024) document persistent systemic racial disparities in ASWB pass rates, arguing that the exam functions as a gatekeeping mechanism that disproportionately disadvantages Black social work candidates. Their analysis links these outcomes to broader structural inequities, suggesting that the test's reliability does not translate into equitable practice. Together, these findings underscore the need to complement technical validation with policy reforms that address the exam's disparate impact.

In another study, Victor et al. (2023) replicated a study by Albright and Thyer (2010) by evaluating ChatGPT's performance on 50 recently developed clinical questions by the ASWB. ChatGPT achieved a score of 73.3% across three rounds of testing, providing some evidence of construct-irrelevant variance and overall construct validity concerns. Based on these findings, the authors recommended that state regulators suspend the use of the clinical licensure exam until the construct validity issue is addressed.

Other professional organizations are now considering generative AI in the review of their exams, including medical, legal, and business fields (Hammer, 2023). In one example, a powerful ChatGPT tool was used to pass law and business exams at the University of Minnesota and University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business, although the bot performed at a level of a C+ student (Kelly, 2023). Additionally, Kung et al. (2023) found that ChatGPT reached or nearly reached the passing levels on the United States Medical Licensing Exam.

As of this writing, there is limited information and feedback from actual social work test-takers on the examination and their recommendations for improvement and revision. The purpose of the study is to gather feedback from social work licensing exam test-takers regarding the test's reasonableness, usefulness, and potential improvements. Particularly, participants were queried about specific changes or updates they would like to see for the content or format of the ASWB licensing exams to better reflect the evolving landscape of social work practice.

Figure 1. *Thematic Analysis Process*



Adapted from Naeem & Ozuem (2021)

Method

A nonexperimental, qualitative research study employing thematic analysis was conducted to explore social workers' perceptions of the social work licensing examination, including the effects of the licensing exams, its fairness, equity, and overall value. A thematic analysis of data was used because of its recognition for flexibility in analyzing data and its foundation in the data itself, allowing results to emerge organically rather than

forcing preconceived categories on the data (Naeem et al., 2023; Nowell et al., 2017). The qualitative analysis followed a systematic process, involving several steps such as sorting the responses, identifying keywords, coding the responses, and developing themes. Figure 1 highlights the thematic analysis process with a selection of participant responses. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Detroit Mercy approved this study.

Table 1. *Participant Demographic Characteristics*

Characteristic	n (%)
<i>Age</i>	
18 to 30 years	7 (9.1%)
31 to 40 years	24 (31.2%)
41 to 50 years	19 (24.7%)
51 to 60 years	11 (14.3%)
Over 60 years	15 (19.5%)
Missing	1 (1.3%)
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	
American Indian or Alaska Native	2 (2.6%)
Asian American/Pacific Islander	1 (1.3%)
Black or African American	7 (9.1%)
Hispanic	6 (7.8%)
White/Caucasian	55 (71.4%)
Multiple ethnicity	2 (2.6%)
I prefer not to answer	4 (5.2%)
<i>Social Work Degree</i>	
BSW	1 (1.3%)
MSW	56 (72.7%)
DSW	2 (2.6%)
PhD	17 (22.1%)
Missing	1 (1.3%)
<i>Employment Status</i>	
Full-time	69 (89.6%)
Part-time	7 (9.1%)
Retired	1 (1.3%)
<i>Practice Setting</i>	
Academia	21 (27.3%)
Active Military	1 (1.3%)
Private Practice	16 (20.8%)
Child/Family Welfare	3 (3.9%)
School Based Services	1 (1.3%)
Forensics/Criminal Justice	1 (1.3%)
Community Based Mental Health/Social Services	18 (23.4%)
Healthcare	12 (15.6%)
Other	2 (2.6%)
Missing	2 (2.6%)

Participants

Social workers on the National Association of Social Workers (NASW, approximately 120,000 members) Community Board and the Baccalaureate Program Directors (BPD, approximately 800 members) listserv were invited to participate in the study. Participants were social workers who had taken an ASWB licensing exam. Seventy-six participants completed and submitted their surveys.

The participants ranged in age from 18 to over 60, with most indicating their age between 31 and 40 years ($n=24$, 31.2%). Most study participants identified as White/Caucasian ($n=55$, 71.4%). Table 1 outlines the participants' demographic characteristics including age, race/ethnicity, participants' degree, employment status, and primary practice setting.

Participants also had an array of social work degrees, with most reporting an MSW as their terminal degree ($n=56$, 72.7%). Most participants reported being employed full-time ($n=69$, 89.6%). Academia is the largest primary practice setting reported by participants ($n=21$, 27.3%), followed by community-based mental health and social services ($n=18$, 23.4%).

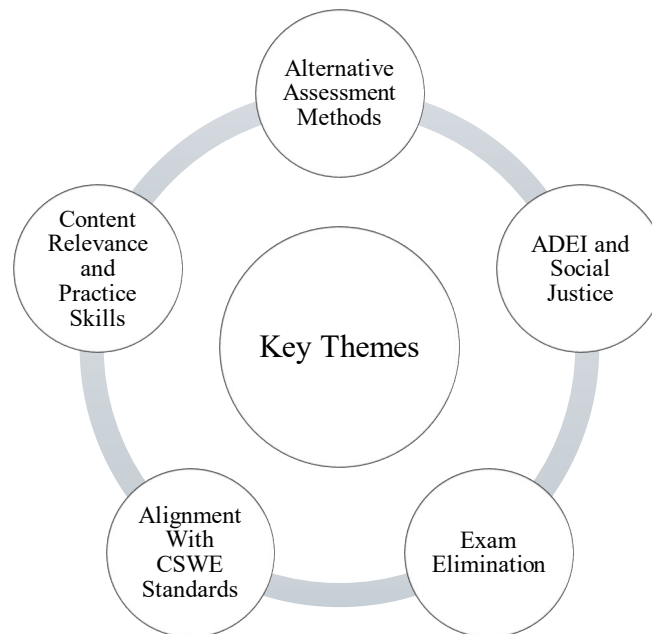
Most participants reported taking an ASWB social work licensing exam immediately after graduating from their social work degree program ($n=41$, 53.2%). The ASWB clinical level was taken by most participants ($n=40$, 51.9%). Table 2 outlines the participant licensure exam characteristics.

Table 2. *Participant Licensure Exam Characteristics*

	n (%)
<i>Took Licensure Exam Immediately After Graduation</i>	
Yes	41 (53.2%)
No	36 (46.8%)
<i>Type of ASWB Licensing Exam</i>	
Bachelor's	4 (5.2%)
Master's	30 (39%)
Advanced Generalist	3 (3.9%)
Clinical	40 (51.9%)

Findings

The thematic analysis of responses regarding proposed changes to the ASWB licensing exam revealed five key themes: alternative assessment methods, ADEI and social justice, exam elimination, alignment with CSWE standards, and content relevance and practice skills (Figure 2). These themes capture the diverse perspectives and concerns of the participants, highlighting the evolving landscape of social work practice and the need for the licensing exam to adapt accordingly.

Figure 2. *Key Themes Regarding Proposed ASWB Licensing Exam Changes*

Theme 1: Alternative Assessment Methods

Some participants proposed alternative assessment methods to evaluate social work competencies (n=27) more effectively. One participant shared:

The exam measures your ability to recite book knowledge that, in no way, correlates to social work practice in the real world. You almost need to take the exam immediately after graduating before you forget all the book knowledge and learn how to actually practice social work. Plus, the exam is racist and sexist.

Suggestions included creating two different practice-focused tests, one focused on clinical work and another on macro practice, or developing new forms of assessment that go beyond traditional testing. Participants expressed that the current structure of the licensing exam promotes only rote memorization and recall over practice-focused and content-specific knowledge. Participants advocated for competency-based assessments such as simulations, real-world case scenarios, and portfolios, as these approaches may better reflect the practitioner's ability to navigate complex client situations. This theme suggests a desire for more tailored and flexible approaches to evaluating social work professionals.

Theme 2: A DEI and Social Justice

The themes of A DEI and social justice also emerged as crucial areas for inclusion in the exam content (n=10). For example, one participant reported:

More on diversity and cultural sensitivity. I don't know what all the specific issues are that came out in the research but whatever those are that puts people of color and other minorities at a disadvantage, those things need to be addressed so the exam tests general knowledge but in a way that is culturally sensitive and fair for all who sit for these exams.

Participants raised concerns about the current licensure exams' lack of attention to anti-oppressive practice, anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that the licensing exam reflects the profession's core values and ethical principles while suggesting that the exam should include questions and scenarios that address systemic issues and promote social justice. More specifically, participants noted that the licensing exams should include culturally grounded case scenarios while challenging implicit biases. Additionally, participants noted that the licensing exams should directly assess knowledge about systematic racism, historical trauma, and health disparities.

Theme 3: Exam Elimination

Several participants challenged the assumption that a licensing exam is necessary and expressed a desire to eliminate the exams (n=9). One participant noted:

I do not believe that exams like this prove competence or skill. I am not born in the US and in my country your degree and passing all the classes and clinicals is what proved your competence and ability. Not a written exam. Most of social work is interpersonal skills and complex multi-faceted decision making that exams cannot encompass.

Participants expressing this viewpoint argued that the current exam does not adequately measure the competencies required for effective social work practice. They believe that eliminating the exam could allow for more holistic and practical methods of assessing readiness for professional practice. Those advocating for exam elimination criticized the current testing system as overly simplistic, favoring theoretical knowledge over the interpersonal, ethical, and situational judgment skills essential for effective practice. Several participants suggested that the licensing exam might hinder entry into the profession—especially for individuals with test anxiety and diverse learning styles.

Theme 4: Alignment with CSWE Standards

Some participants expressed concern that the ASWB licensing exam should more closely reflect the educational standards set by CSWE (n=5). A participant shared:

It would be helpful to test-takers if ASWB exam content and the CSWE Educational Policy and Standards were more closely aligned. There is a distinct gap between the ASWB exam and CSWE education standards. It is vital for future social workers that we close this gap.

These participants argued that the exam should ensure that the competencies emphasized in social work education are adequately represented in the licensing

assessment. By aligning the exam with CSWE standards, they believe the exam could better validate the preparedness of social workers to meet the demands of the profession, ensuring that new practitioners are equipped with the essential knowledge and skills endorsed by the leading accrediting body in social work education.

Theme 5: Content Relevance and Practical Skills

Another theme was the need for the exam to focus more on content relevance and practical skills (n=3). For example, one participant reported:

On one hand, I want it to be an exam which focuses more on content, such as the EPPP exam psychologists take. However, I also worry that an actual competency-based exam would result in far less people passing it.

Participants emphasized that the exam should assess knowledge and skills directly applicable to real-world social work scenarios, particularly in clinical settings. This theme reflects a broader concern that the current exam content may be too theoretical and not sufficiently grounded in the practical realities of social work practice.

Discussion

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into the concerns and suggestions of social workers who have taken an ASWB licensing exam. As previously noted, the ASWB exams have faced criticism in recent years for their perceived inequities, especially following the 2022 release of exam pass rates which indicated potential bias affecting people of color and other underrepresented groups (Apgar & Nienow, 2022). The results of this thematic analysis build on these concerns by presenting a detailed view of test-takers' experiences and proposing pathways for reform that align with the evolving needs of the profession.

Participants' suggestions for alternative assessment methods reflect a broader conversation within social work education about the limitations of standardized testing as a measure of professional competency. Since the development of the first ASWB exams in the 1980s, social work practice has become increasingly diverse, encompassing a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the call for a more nuanced approach to licensure suggests a need for ASWB to consider whether a "one-size-fits-all" exam still meets the profession's requirements or if more specialized testing approaches would better assess readiness for different social work domains.

Moreover, participants' recommendations for incorporating competency-based assessments, which evaluate practical skills and decision-making abilities, align with previous critiques of the exam's relevance to actual social work practice. These suggestions reflect a shift in the profession towards emphasizing experiential learning and real-world application, resonating with Donaldson et al.'s (2014) call for a deeper understanding of how social work regulation influences professional practice. Incorporating alternative assessment methods could better prepare social workers for the complexities of their roles and potentially address existing disparities in exam pass rates.

The concerns raised about ADEI, and social justice aspects of the licensing exam highlight a need for ASWB to ensure the exam upholds the profession's commitment to these principles. There is a lack of literature on how the exam protects public interests without perpetuating bias, and the findings of this study appear to further substantiate these concerns. Participants frequently pointed out that the current exam format and content may reinforce cultural biases, thereby disadvantaging candidates of color or those from marginalized backgrounds. This is in line with recent critiques that have called for licensing exams to be more culturally sensitive and reflective of diverse social work practices (Kim, 2022; Nienow et al., 2022).

To address these issues, the inclusion of questions that address cultural humility and scenarios dealing with systemic inequities could help the licensing process reflect the values of social work more accurately. Aligning the exam content with these principles could not only promote fairness but also signal a commitment to social justice, a foundational component of the profession (CSWE, 2022; NASW, 2021). Such reforms would align with the broader trend in social work education and practice toward integrating ADEI principles.

The theme of exam elimination brings attention to deeper philosophical debates about the role of standardized testing in social work licensure. Some participants argued for the complete removal of the exam, proposing instead a model based on supervised practice hours and ongoing education. The suggestion to eliminate the exam raises important questions about the most effective ways to ensure public protection and competency in the profession, echoing earlier critiques that question whether a high-stakes, time-limited test can adequately measure the complex skills required for social work practice.

While some scholars have supported the need for standardized exams to maintain professional standards, others, like GlenMaye and Bolen (2015) have critiqued their potential to serve as gatekeeping mechanisms that may disproportionately exclude people of color. It is also noted that gatekeeping may be rooted in bias and inequality itself. The debate surrounding exam elimination highlights the tension between maintaining rigorous professional standards and adopting more inclusive and flexible credentialing methods that recognize different pathways to competency.

The concern about aligning the ASWB exams with the CSWE standards underscores the disconnect between social work education, practice, and licensure. CSWE standards seek to ensure that social work programs adequately prepare students for professional practice. However, participants noted a gap between the content taught in accredited social work programs and the material covered on the licensing exam. This gap may contribute to feelings of unpreparedness among test-takers and could be a factor in the disparities observed in pass rates (Apgar, 2019).

Ensuring that the exam reflects the competencies outlined in the CSWE standards would not only validate the skills taught in social work degree programs but also support a more seamless transition from education to practice. It would bridge the divide between theory and practice, helping to ensure that new social workers are equipped to meet the demands of the profession.

The participants' call for more content relevant to practical skills echoes concerns about the current exams' focus on theoretical knowledge rather than practical competencies. Given that social work is inherently a practice-based profession, the ability to apply knowledge in real-world settings is crucial. The findings suggest that a shift toward including more situational judgment tests, which evaluate decision-making in practice scenarios, could make the exam more meaningful and reflective of actual social work practice.

Integrating practical skills into the exam would align with the recommendations for competency-based evaluations and could be achieved by revising exam content to include case-based questions or simulations. This would also complement the call for alignment with CSWE standards by ensuring that the exam assesses not just knowledge, but also the ability to apply that knowledge in diverse and dynamic practice environments.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications for policy changes to the ASWB exams. Addressing the identified themes through targeted reforms could improve the exam's fairness, relevance, and alignment with social work values. Policymakers should consider incorporating alternative assessment methods, integrating ADEI principles into exam content, and aligning the exam with CSWE standards. Social work educators can support these efforts by integrating exam preparation into the curricula in ways that encourage and emphasize critical thinking, cultural humility, and real-world application. Additionally, revising the exam to include more practical skills assessments could help bridge the gap between education and practice.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the sample size is relatively small ($n=76$), which may limit the generalizability of the results to the broader population of social work professionals who have taken an ASWB licensing exam. Although the sample included participants from diverse demographic backgrounds, they are likely not representative of the current social work profession. Many participants also primarily worked in academic settings, which is therefore not representative of the social work profession. Second, the use of a mixed-methods survey distributed through the NASW Community Board and BPD listserv may potentially introduce selection bias. As this was a voluntary study, the voices of people who were less inclined to participate, or who had neutral or positive experiences with the exam, may be underrepresented. Third, the thematic analysis involves subjective interpretation, which may influence the identification and categorization of themes. Although the coding process was iterative and aimed to minimize bias, other researchers may potentially identify different themes or interpreted the data differently. Additionally, while the study captures participants' perceptions and experiences, it does not include objective measures of the ASWB exams' content, structure, or scoring approaches. As a result, the findings reflect subjective views instead of empirical evidence about the exams.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could further explore the impact of potential changes to the licensing process on both the diversity and competency of licensed social workers. It is also important to examine the effectiveness of alternative, experiential credentialing pathways that emphasize experiential learning. Additionally, future research should consider using larger, more representative samples and incorporating longitudinal or objective data to better understand the impact of the ASWB exams on social work licensure outcomes. The findings indicate a need for ongoing dialogue within the profession to reassess the role of standardized testing in social work and explore innovative approaches to credentialing. This study contributes to ongoing efforts to reassess social work licensure considering evolving professional expectations, equity considerations, and the need for practice-relevant assessment.

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