



Seven Motivations for Students Choosing to Major in Elementary School Teacher Education in Higher Education

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Abstract

Choosing a career as an elementary school teacher has many challenges as well as fun, not everyone is interested in this profession if not motivated by very strong reasons and motivations. This study aims to analyze what actually motivates students to choose elementary school teacher education majors in college. This research uses a combined qualitative and quantitative method (exploratory mixed methods design). Qualitative data sources were taken from twenty informants through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically using the NVivo 10 analysis software. Meanwhile, quantitative data sources were taken from one hundred and forty-three respondents using a questionnaire and analyzed using the SPSS 20 software. The eight motivations are i) aspiring to become a teacher; ii) like the world of children; iii) elementary school teacher education is the most favorite major; iv) parental encouragement; v) job opportunities after graduation; vi) Accreditation of superior majors; vii) University facilities, and viii) Tuition is relatively cheap. The research has succeeded in revealing the motivation of students to choose elementary school teacher education majors in Higher Education, of course the findings of the results of this study need to be continued by subsequent researchers by examining the relationship between this aspects of motivation with various other variables. However, at least this data can be used as an initial reference to examine these issues and problems in different contexts and issues.

INTRODUCTION

Discussions about self-motivation are always interesting to study because they are directly to every human being. Psychologists such as Buckledee (2008); Dhiman (2017); Hodges (2022); Kaldi & Xafakos (2017); Warriar et al (2021); Widyarini & Muafi (2021); Zajda (2021) are psychologists who have discussed research related to self-motivation. Among the studies of self-motivation, for example, the relationship between motivation and work ethic or the results of one's

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work, in the context of education there are also various studies such as the relationship between motivation and the enthusiasm or learning outcomes of students, as well as various other themes of self-motivation studies.

Kaldi & Xafakos (2017) argues that motivation is an impulse that arises in a person, with this power encouraging someone to do something. Motivation can also be interpreted as an internal condition that arouses a person to act, encourages humans to achieve certain goals, and keeps a person interested in certain activities that he has chosen (Kuhl et al 2021; Oviyanti, 2017; Zajda, 2021). Meanwhile, Zalnur et al (2022) Motivation is a drive that arises from both internal and external sources in a person which can be seen in the presence of desire, interest, drive, needs, hopes, ideals, appreciation, and also respect. Meanwhile, Widyarini & Muafi (2021) explain that motivation is the drive or cause of a person to carry out an activity to achieve a goal. Based on the expert's opinion as stated above, in general, motivation is a condition or condition that encourages, stimulates or moves a person to do something or activity to achieve a goal, this encouragement can arise from within a person or be influenced by external circumstances or the surrounding environment (Sabrina et al., 2023).

As stated above, the aspect of motivation in a person is always directly related to all activities and work carried out (Nalim, 2014). Even according to Warriar et al (2021) any form of activity carried out by humans is inseparable from what motivates him to do the job, self-motivation will lead a person to continue to be eager to achieve success, have a high commitment, be proactive, always seize existing opportunities and be *istiqamah* to arrive at the goals achieved, even though there are various obstacles and obstacles in the way.

Of course, different circumstances and conditions will occur when someone does a job that is not based on a strong self-motivation drive, this situation will have an impact on unpleasant emotions such as annoyance, anger, sadness, lack of enthusiasm in carrying out something (Damri et al., 2017; Murniyetti et al., 2016). Because according to Hodges (2022) every human being has a need to be able to achieve, the need for achievement encourages humans to strive to achieve success.

Basically, there are various reasons and motivations for a person in making a choice in various fields of scientific discipline. According to Susilowati & Pratiwi (2019) learning something that is not based on motivation that comes from within, not also supported by the existence of talents, interests and abilities will have an impact on unpleasant emotions. For example, a student who chooses a study program on the whim of parents, following friends or it could be just to avoid not continuing education in higher education. Whereas according to (Nayernia et al (2020) research the impact of low motivation behavior in learning results in a decrease in academic achievement, if this condition continues it will result in the low quality of graduates of an educational institution. Of course it will also have an impact on the low competitiveness of a person in the world of work (Stone et al., 2015).

In the research, it is known that in the world of education, students' lives always experience transitions at each level of education they take. Typically, the transition from one level to the next will go through various methods and tests that are available. For students who will continue their studies in college, in addition to being required to go through a rigorous and lengthy selection process, students are also required to choose the majors or study programs they take must come from motivation within themselves, even better if it is in accordance with their talents

and interests. According to [Ekaningtyas \(2022\)](#), a mistake in choosing a study program by a student in higher education can have an impact on the results of his learning in the future, even without getting a diploma.

In fact, according to the author, because of the enormous role of motivation for a student in achieving success in Higher Education, studies related to whether the background and motivation of students in choosing the majors they will undergo need to be discussed and researched. Although research related to student motivation in higher education has been widely studied by previous researchers such as [Daumiller et al \(2020\)](#); [Moneva et al \(2020\)](#); [Odanga \(2018\)](#); [Wibowo \(2018\)](#); [Yuriatson & Asmi \(2020\)](#), but the researchers above only focus on the problem of the relationship between student self-motivation and learning outcomes. Meanwhile, research that specifically discusses the motivation of students to choose majors, especially in the field of early childhood education teacher education in college has not been found. The fundamental difference between this research issue and previous research is that the previous researchers discussed the study of motivation after students were active as students in college, but on the issue of this research discussing student motivation before entering the world of education in college.

METHODS

This research uses a combined qualitative and quantitative method (exploratory mixed methods design). This approach was popularized by [Yusuf et al \(2024\)](#) who explained that if two data sources are combined in a study, researchers will get more comprehensive, accurate and in-depth data. In this research, qualitative data sources were taken through in-depth interviews with twenty informants who were determined using purposive sampling techniques. The selected informants have met four criteria, namely understanding the problem under study, still active in the field under study, having time to provide information to researchers, and providing information in accordance with the facts that occur in the field ([Elkhaira et al., 2020](#); [Engkizar et al., 2018](#); [Zafirah et al., 2018](#)). After the interviews were taken to all informants, the transcript process was carried out, then the author took themes that were in accordance with the research needs. According to [Amnda et al \(2020\)](#); [Castleberry & Nolen \(2018\)](#); [Herzog et al \(2019\)](#); [Syafri & Yaumas \(2017\)](#) thematic analysis with NVivo software is an effective way for a researcher to analyze interview results so that they can be seen in detail and in depth.

Furthermore, quantitative data sources were taken using a questionnaire to one hundred respondents selected from a population of three hundred and ten people using a simple random sampling technique ([Aini et al., 2019](#); [Hakim, 2019](#)). Respondents in this study were active students who were studying in the early childhood education teacher education study program in the 2017 and 2018 entry years at Universitas Negeri Padang. The author needs to explain that all items contained in the questionnaire for quantitative data collection are themes obtained from previous qualitative analysis data. All data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed descriptively using SPSS 20 software ([Asril et al., 2023](#)).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews conducted with twenty informants, the results of the analysis revealed that there are seven important themes related to what actually

motivates students to choose the early childhood education teacher education major. The seven themes can be seen in Figure 1, below.

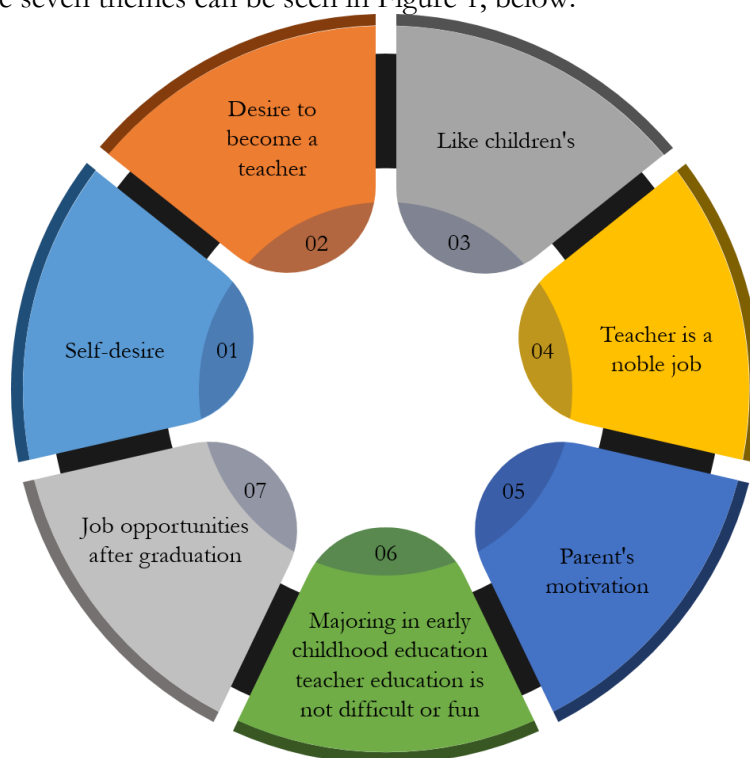


Fig 1. Motivates students to choose the early childhood education teacher education major

Based on Figure 1, the author can explain that after conducting in-depth interviews with informants, there are seven motivations for students to choose the early childhood education teacher education major, the seven themes are i) self-will, ii) desire to become a teacher, iii) like the world of children, iv) teaching is a noble job, v) parental encouragement, vi) majoring in early childhood education teacher education is not difficult or fun vii) job opportunities after graduation. To make it more interesting, the following will describe excerpts from interviews with informants based on the seven themes as described above. The interview descriptions that the author will present are short excerpts of statements from informants when the interviews were conducted. These interview quotes, although conveyed by informants in slightly different language editorials, actually have more or less the same purpose and intention.

The first theme of self-will emerged as one of the main motivations for informants in choosing this major. Some informants stated that the decision to enter the early childhood education teacher education major came from personal desire, without any coercion from any party. They felt that they already had an interest in this major from the start. This theme was stated by several informants as in the interview excerpts.

... When I'm around them, I want to teach them like a teacher (informant 1), ... I really wanted to enter this department from the beginning, because I felt suitable and wanted to become a pre-school teacher (informant4), ... since the beginning of entering school, had dreams of becoming a great teacher (informant5).

The second theme, the desire to become a teacher, was also a dominant reason for choosing this major. Informants revealed that since childhood they

aspired to become teachers, and choosing this major was a concrete step towards realizing this dream. They feel that being a teacher is a job that suits their calling. This theme was stated by the informants as in the interview excerpt.

... Since I was a child, I always said that when I grow up, I want to be a teacher (informant 6) also said the same thing, ...I feel that being a teacher is my dream from a long time ago, that's why I chose this major (informant 7).

The third theme, liking the world of children, was one of the important factors that encouraged informants to choose this major. Informants said that they felt comfortable, happy and interested in interacting with children, so they felt suitable to pursue education and a career in this field. This theme was stated by the informants as in the interview excerpt.

... I like children very much, I like to see them play and learn, so I think I am suitable for this major (informant 5), adding ...When I meet small children, I feel happy, so I want to learn how to educate them (informant 8), ...because I think teaching children is fun, children are adorable, responsive, and curious (informant 9).

The fourth theme, teacher as a noble job, also encouraged informants in determining the choice of major. They view the teaching profession, especially early childhood teachers, as a valuable task and a major contribution to the development of future generations. This theme was stated by the informants as the interview excerpt.

... I chose to become a teacher because it is a noble job, and it can shape the character of children from an early age (informant 10), (Informant 7) also said ...My parents always told me that being a teacher has many rewards, so I was interested.

The fifth theme, parental encouragement, according to informants, parental encouragement was among their motivations for choosing this major. Informants also stated that at first they were not interested, but after encouragement and motivation from parents, they were interested until they made the choice to enter the early childhood education teacher education major. This theme was stated by the informant as the interview excerpt.

... Our mother is a teacher, so she also asked me to become a teacher (informant 12), ... My parent wants their children to become teachers (informant 3).

The sixth theme is that some informants chose this major because they considered it not too difficult and even fun. They felt that the learning process in this major was in line with their interests and abilities, and provided an exhilarating experience. This theme was stated by the informants in the interview excerpts.

... I don't think this major is too hard, it's even fun because there are a lot of practices and activities with children (informant 9). Informant 8 added ...the course is fun, not stressful, and I find it suitable.

The seventh theme, job opportunities after graduation, was also a consideration in choosing this major. Informants considered that graduates of early childhood education teacher education have quite good job prospects, especially with the increasing need for educators in various Early Childhood Education institutions. This theme was stated by the informant as in the interview excerpt.

... Now there are many early childhood education programs that need teachers, so I think the job opportunities are quite big (informant 2). Informant 6 added ...I saw that alumni from this department can quickly find work, so I was also interested and many schools need replacement teachers who have retired.

For more details, the author also displays the results of quantitative data analysis on student motivation to take the department of elementary teacher

education. Can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Student motivation to take the department of elementary teacher education

Items of motivation for students majoring in elementary school teacher education	N=143 (Total number of respondents)					Total (%)
	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)	
Self-will	(2,1%)	(5,6%)	(21,7%)	(46,2%)	(24,5%)	(100%)
Likes children	(2,8%)	(2,8%)	(13,3%)	(51,7%)	(29,4%)	(100%)
Did not graduate in previous major	(14,7%)	(36,4%)	(11,9%)	(27,3%)	(9,8%)	(100%)
Inspired by elementary school teacher	(3,5%)	(11,9%)	(19,6%)	(49,0%)	(16,1%)	(100%)
Encouragement from parents	(4,2%)	(5,6%)	(11,9%)	(45,5%)	(32,9%)	(100%)
Major accreditation A	(2,8%)	(4,2%)	(7,0%)	(42,7%)	(43,4%)	(100%)
University Facilities	(8,4%)	(17,5%)	(34,3%)	(25,2%)	(14,7%)	(100%)
College's most favorite major	(4,2%)	(13,3%)	(20,3%)	(36,4%)	(25,9%)	(100%)
Tuition is relatively cheaper	(18,2%)	(21,0%)	(21,7%)	(32,2%)	(7,0%)	(100%)
Job opportunities are clear	(2,8%)	(4,2%)	(9,8%)	(44,8%)	(38,5%)	(100%)
Welfare guarantees (salary and benefits)	(3,5%)	(4,9%)	(16,8%)	(48,3%)	(26,6%)	(100%)

The research and issues related to motivational aspects in education have been widely studied in the world of education, especially in the learning process in the classroom. However, previous studies only focused on the motivational aspects of students or students who were or after going through a lesson, for example the results of research on the relationship between teacher competence and learning outcomes [Yusnita et al \(2018\)](#); or the relationship between learning media and learning interest [Agusti et al \(2018; Dix et al \(2012\)](#), and the relationship of parental support to learning motivation [Hasanah et al \(2019\)](#), then the relationship between motivation and learning outcomes [Pratama et al \(2019\); Zanthi \(2016\)](#). All of the research results above conclude that, in principle, the motivational aspect of a learner or student in a learning process has a very significant relationship in determining his success in completing education.

As the author has mentioned earlier that basically motivation does not only arise after a person enters the world of learning, but motivation has arisen when a person determines his choice to do and pursue a profession because this choice will determine how his career and future will be in the future. As stated by [Pragholapati, \(2020\)](#), a person will have high learning motivation if he realizes and understands the goals he will achieve in the future. This means that the motivational aspect has appeared before someone does a job that he will do.

Regarding the motivation of students in choosing the early childhood education teacher education major in college as the issue discussed in this article, the results of this study clearly found seven important themes of what actually underlies students choosing the major. To make it more interesting, the author will discuss the seven findings of this research based on theory, expert opinion and the results of previous studies that discuss this problem in a similar context and issue.

The first and second motivations are motivated by self-will and the desire to become a teacher, the author deliberately combines these two themes because they have more or less the same meaning and intention. If analyzed, these two themes are very important in every individual, even these two self-motivations are the key

that really determines a person's success regarding whatever field of work will be chosen and carried out. Especially in the context of education, the aspect of self-motivation cannot be separated from a student both at the time of determining the chosen major and when undergoing the chosen education. According to several previous studies such as [Daniela \(2015\)](#); [Hashemian & Heidari \(2013\)](#) concluded that students who have high self-motivation in undergoing their education period have shown better results in the aspect of grades and academic achievement in Higher Education. Even according to [Wang et al \(2008\)](#) students who have high self-motivation in their education are proven to adjust faster, try to learn independently and can complete their studies more on time. Meanwhile, [Józsa & Molnár \(2013\)](#) state that there is a significant relationship between self-motivation and one's educational success, and it will even have an impact on the motivation to find the right job according to the diploma that has been obtained.

Based on some of the research results above, it is increasingly clear that aspects of self-motivation such as the desire to pursue a field of work have proven to be very impactful on an individual both when carrying out the profession and after completing it. The findings of the fifth and sixth themes in this study are supported by the results of research by [Darmiah & Marvida \(2024\)](#) which concluded that the motivation of a student in choosing a major is very influential on the learning achievement achieved. While [Haristi et al \(2015\)](#); [Ruswandi \(2019\)](#) most students who majored in early childhood education teacher education were motivated by self-motivated demands such as the job prospects of this profession have great opportunities in the future.

The third motivation is motivated by liking the world of children, according to the author, this motivation is actually a drive and desire that has arisen from within the student (intrinsic motivation), in contrast to the previous two motivations which come from the influence of someone or the environment (extrinsic motivation) ([Putri et al., 2022](#); [Zalnur et al., 2024](#)). Referring to the results of previous interviews, most informants stated that before choosing the early childhood education teacher education major they actually liked the world of children, speaking in the context of children's education, of course the early childhood education teacher education major is the right choice because this level of education will always be in and associate with the world of children.

The fourth motivation is motivated by the belief that teaching is a noble job, this finding according to the author is an interesting theme because it is still one of the motivations and inspirations for students in choosing the early childhood education teacher education major. In fact, quantitative data shows that almost all respondents stated that this theme was true as one of their motivations for becoming an early childhood education teacher education teacher. The author also considers that this motivation is very important to prioritize, even mandatory for all prospective educators, not only for early childhood education teacher education majors but also for all education majors. The existence of motivation and belief that teaching is a noble job will at least change the thinking and fighting power of students in completing their education or after working as a teacher in a school.

Being a teacher is no longer seen only as a daily task, but also personal, moral, social and religious responsibilities. When viewed from the context of religion and education in Islam, the teaching profession is one of the most noble professions, the glory of the teacher in the Islamic context as described by Imam Al-Ghazali (1982) is a person who provides the usefulness of life in the world and eternal

afterlife to his students, to achieve this goal, the teacher should emulate how the Prophet Muhammad has exemplified how to become a teacher for children, students, friends and teachers of all people. Imam Al-Ghazali (1982) further explained that being a teacher is like a farmer who takes care of his plants, whenever he sees stones or plants that endanger his plants, he immediately uproots and throws them away. Furthermore, the farmer also always waters his plants so that they can grow well and be maintained, so that they become better than other plants.

Furthermore, according to [Aprillia et al \(2023\)](#) there are eleven characteristics of a noble teacher, namely first, reprimanding mistakes through sarcasm, second, having patience in teaching, third, not adding lessons before students understand, fourth, having principles, fifth, being wise and compassionate, sixth, being an example, seventh, giving lessons according to the level of understanding of students, eighth, giving clear and bright lessons, ninth, respecting the teacher's code of ethics, tenth, intelligent and eleventh, perfect intellect.

The expression of the analogy of a teacher from Imam al-Gazhali and the nine descriptions of the duties and responsibilities of teachers as described above, it is appropriate to say that the teaching profession is one of the noblest jobs. Because according to [Kasmar et al \(2019\)](#) there are only two jobs in this world, the first is being a teacher and the second is a job other than the teacher himself, because everything starts and starts with a teacher and there is no other job in this world without learning from a teacher. Referring to the concept of teachers above, at least the enthusiasm and hope have begun to be seen among prospective teachers of early childhood education teacher education today, as the results of [Halida \(2014\)](#); [Wahyuni & Reswita \(2017\)](#) research there are several positive trends found in early childhood education teacher education students such as behaving positively in dealing with various situations, increasing the attitude of learning independence, good emotional maturity.

The fifth motivation was motivated by parental encouragement, according to several informants, previously they were less interested in majoring in early childhood education teacher education, but after discussing with their parents, they were finally interested in choosing this profession as their career after graduating from college. The importance of the role of parents to be active and discuss with children in directing careers and the future is very much needed, because children need to reap experiences from adults and parents are the first teacher for a child in gaining experience. The importance of the role of parents to motivate and play an active role in directing children's careers has been proven by research by [Taylor et al \(2017\)](#) which concluded "without parental approval or support, students and young adults are often reluctant to pursue-or even explore-diverse career possibilities. Likewise, [Ross et al \(2016\)](#) concluded "through career planning with a parent, adolescents in Grade 12 showed greater career certainty, less indecision, more career salience, and stronger ego identity". The point is that parental support is very necessary for children in designing their careers and their future in the future.

The sixth motivation is motivated by students' perceptions that the early childhood education teacher education major is not difficult or fun. Referring to the results of interviews with informants, what is meant by the Early childhood education teacher education major is not difficult or fun is that the informant believes this department is full of the world of games and children, so indirectly the informant assesses the challenges that will be faced are not too difficult when compared to majors who pursue the exact field.

However, the author considers that the above assumption is not entirely correct, in fact the profession of an early childhood education teacher education teacher requires various skills to be able to develop children's creativity in learning. As stated by [Alfi & Amalia \(2024\)](#) early childhood education teacher education teachers need to always hone their abilities with various skills, because among their duties in learning is to explore and hone the abilities of students. early childhood education teacher education students must also have proficiency in the use of ICT to support the successful learning of early childhood education teacher education children ([Widuroyekti et al., 2023](#)). In other words, in principle, students majoring in Early childhood education teacher education as prospective teachers have a big responsibility as a teacher, because it is during this childhood that students need to be explored, honed various competencies they have to go to the next development ([Lionar et al., 2025](#); [Satrial et al., 2025](#)).

The seventh motivation is motivated by the large job opportunities for early childhood education teacher education majors after graduating from college. According to informants, before a child continues education at a higher level, at this time early education is the level of education that must be passed first. This opportunity was used as the basis of motivation by most informants and respondents to choose the early childhood education teacher education major. This second motivation is supported by [Risnawati \(2012\)](#) research which found many factors behind students' decisions to choose majors in higher education institutions, including the great opportunities in finding work after completing education. In fact, according to some informants, graduates of childhood education teacher education are not only focused on becoming a teacher of Childhood Education Teacher Education but can also have a career in many professions including as kindergarten teachers, early childhood tutors, teachers of children with special needs, childhood education teacher education lecturers in universities, child counselors, business owners of children's playgrounds and other social work engaged in education. As the results of research by ([Pratiwi et al \(2017\)](#); [Wulansari et al \(2022\)](#)) after conducting surveys in various educational institutions where graduates of early childhood education teacher education are employed in general, it is found that the competency level of early childhood education teacher education graduates is at a very good stage.

CONCLUSION

This study has succeeded in revealing seven motivations of students in choosing the early childhood education teacher education major in college. The seven motivations are parental encouragement, job opportunities after graduation, liking the world of children, teachers are noble jobs, self-desire, desire to become a teacher and majoring in early childhood education teacher education is not difficult or fun. Indeed, for a prospective teacher, the motivational aspect is so important, because this profession has a great responsibility in building civilization and educating the nation's children, because teaching is a noble profession. Because there are only two jobs in this world, the first is to be a teacher and the second is a job other than the teacher himself, because everything starts and starts with a teacher and there is no other job in this world without learning from a teacher. At least this research can be used as a foundation and reference for future researchers to examine this problem in different contexts and issues.

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DECLARATIONS

Author contribution

Mutiaramses: data curation, **Syofia Alkhaira:** writing-original draft preparation, conceptualization, **Zuryanty:** methodology, visualization, and **Feby Kharisna:** editing, analysis.

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