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UNRAVELLING THE MOTIVATIONAL FORCES BEHIND PURSUING A POSTGRADUATE DEGREE IN ENGLISH EDUCATION

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Abstract. This study investigated the motivations of fresh graduate student pursue their postgraduate study in the English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University. The objectives of the study are the to examine the psychological needs, intrinsic factors, and extrinsic factors to develop their study. The main research instruments in this study are semi-structured interviews, which are conducted using a qualitative methodology. The findings revealed that the psychological needs related to the reason for pursuing postgraduate study, participants expressed a desire for control over their educational choices and the importance of feeling competent in their field. The study also finds out intrinsic and extrinsic factors, such as skill development, enhanced career prospects, and meeting personal needs, students are encouraged to pursue a graduate degree. The results show that intrinsic motivation, environmental factors, and professional orientation play an important role in students'

decisions to pursue a postgraduate education. Although this study provides valuable insights, there are limitations in generalizing the findings to just the population studied. Suggestion for further research involving broader samples and more in-depth analysis is needed to understand the impact of motivation on graduate students' academic and career performance.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation for undergraduates to get a postgraduate degree in English education, specifically to improve their English language skills, is affected by both internal and external factors, such as parents, teachers, friends, and the school setting (Sorayyaei Azar & Binti Mohd Sahar, 2021). But knowing what makes people choose these paths is important for making schools that promote connection and academic success (Howard et al., 2021). There are two main types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from within because it is fun and interesting, and extrinsic motivation comes from outside because of rewards. Intrinsic motivation is stronger in a supportive, independent setting (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are like two sides of the same coin that cannot be separated when it comes to education and human growth (Perera, 2022; Yasa et al., 2023). In the meantime, (Ryan & Deci, 2020) claim that intrinsic motivation is a strong inner drive to learn and assimilate. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from outside sources and can

vary in how autonomous it is, showing self-control or external regulation. Interestingly, these two types of drive can work together to make people happier and more successful (Amabile, 1993; Fishbach & Woolley, 2022). Students' internal motivation is based on several interconnected factors, while their extrinsic motivation is based on good intentions and success (Woody, 2021).

Self-efficacy, competence, self-determination, and happiness are some of the things that affect intrinsic motivation in education. These factors can be used to make interventions more effective and promote healthy behaviour change (Turner & Reed, 2022). However, (Jones & Zenko, 2023) say that extrinsic motivation, which comes from outside sources like rewards, praise, or social pressure, might not be as good at keeping people in school over the long run. Because of this, educators and other people involved in education need to understand and support students' intrinsic and extrinsic drives. This can be done by making the classroom a positive and helpful space and giving student's chances to explore their interests and skills (Evi Yupani & Widana, 2023). This will get them interested in a master's program and make them want to improve their skills (Sukendra et al., 2023).

Quality education and postgraduate's programs for career reasons lead to a deep learning process that encourages important learning and reflection. Getting a graduate degree in education is a big choice that is affected by a lot of different factors. Understanding these forces is important for teachers, policymakers, and organizations that want to keep students and get them more involved (Duong, et al., 2023). Teachers can help students get into college by understanding the importance of academic and professional goals, personal growth and development, social and environmental factors, and financial and practical concerns (Ballesteros, et al., 2023). By understanding these things, teachers can come up with specific plans to help students succeed.

Another study by Figuera Gazo et al. (2022) found a link between graduate students' reasons for self-realization and personal growth and how happy they are with their school. This fits with what Nordin et al. (2021); Purnadewi & Widana (2023) found, which is that work, self-motivation, and family have a big impact on students' decisions to get a master's degree in this digital age. After finishing their college studies, many people go on to pursue further education for several reasons other than just graduation (Citrawan et al., 2018). This is one reason why a lot of undergraduates decide to keep going with their master's school. This is because of several things, including getting better at what is done, learning new things, meeting personal needs, pushing and stimulating knowledge, and growing professional network.

Many research studies have been done on undergraduate students who go on to get master's degrees, focusing on college students. First, this study from Jung & Li (2021) investigates why students in Hong Kong want to get a master's degree. The current state of the economy and society shows the effects. People want to get a master's degree for two main reasons: they want to grow personally, and they want to fill a gap in their education. The study says that students get master's degrees for a variety of reasons that are different for each student. Second, a study from Nghia (2019) shows that students are motivated to learn for 14 different reasons, including work, new experiences, knowledge and skills, and other things. It also shows that there are big differences in how motivated students are to study depending on their age, work experience, the type of work they do, whether they want to go to a local or foreign postgraduate's program, and how they pay for their studies. Their research also

showed that their desire to learn was strongly connected to Confucian cultural and educational ideals. Another study in Indonesia, [Choemue & Laos Mbato \(2020\)](#), wants to find out what drives Indonesian students to get a postgraduate's degree in English Education at Sanata Dharma University. The findings indicate that students are motivated to get a postgraduate's degree by at least three things: personal factors, environment, and career orientation. These factors were studied using a mixed methodology.

However, there is not a lot of study that investigates the psychological and intrinsic motivations of Indonesian students who want to go to master's programs. As a result, this study looks at the ways that students learn about the master's program they want to pursue. To make sure that their data is correct, up-to-date, and valid, academic organizations can learn about primary data sources ([Gooch, et al., 2017](#); [Widana et al., 2019](#)). This data can also show changes and trends in how students look for information. By using this study to learn more about the wants and needs of potential students, colleges and universities can better serve their target groups by giving them relevant and interesting content. Students can find information about study programs in several places, such as on university websites, in newspapers, and on social media sites. The research by [French et al. \(2015\)](#) showed that students pick schools by looking at information from many places, with the Internet being the most popular.

Using this as a starting point, this study investigates and analyses the factors that motivate postgraduate students in the English Language Teaching program at Sanata Dharma University to make decisions. What the author wants to learn more about is "Unravelling The Motivational Forces Behind Pursuing a Postgraduate Degree in English Education." Therefore, researchers want to know what motivates students in Sanata Dharma University's English language education postgraduate's program. To achieve the research objectives, researchers have two questions, namely "what are the psychological needs of graduate students pursuing a postgraduate degree in English education?" and "what are the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors of fresh graduate students pursuing a postgraduate degree in English education at Sanata Dharma University?"

METHOD

This research uses qualitative data research. The data was collected using interview techniques. One instrument is used to monitor the data. The tool used is a semi-structured interview. By focusing on one instrument, researchers can concentrate on gathering detailed and comprehensive information from participants. This can lead to a more thorough understanding of the psychological needs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and decision-making processes of master's students. Semi-structured interviews were used to facilitate in-depth exploration of information related to this research. Qualitative research uses interview methods and to explore various perspectives and experiences, with data collection continuing until the saturation point is reached ([Denny & Weckesser, 2022](#)).

The sample for this study consisted of 6 participants, selected using a purposeful sampling strategy. The participants were recruited from students in the first semester of the Master of English Education study program class of 2023, to ensure a variety of perspectives and experiences. The inclusion criteria are that participants must have experience with the topic being researched. The exclusion criteria were that participants had to be willing to participate in in-depth interviews. Researchers use the theory from [Ryan & Deci \(2020\)](#) which is under the umbrella of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) for interviewing the participants. SDT

emphasizes the importance of psychological needs to foster intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Psychological needs: autonomy: (the feeling of having control and choice over one's actions), competence: (a feeling of mastery and effectiveness in completing a task), and relatedness: (feelings of connection and connection with others). Intrinsic motivation: internal pleasure (do something because it is fun, challenging, or fulfilling), self-directed (feel in control and autonomous in actions), and leads to deeper learning (intrinsic motivation fosters a desire to explore, learn, and grow). Extrinsic motivation: earn rewards (complete tasks to get good grades, money, or praise) and avoiding punishment (study to avoid failing a test or getting into trouble).

Data was gathered through 45-minute semi-structured conversations. Face-to-face interviews were taped with the participants' permission. The purpose of the interview procedure was to find out about the participants' experiences and thoughts on the subject. Open-ended questions were used to get more detailed answers. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that involves identifying, coding, and categorizing themes in the data. Analysis was conducted manually, with researchers using a coding framework to identify patterns and themes. Data were analyzed inductively, which allowed themes to emerge from the data rather than being determined by the researcher.

There are 13 statements in the interview that need to be discussed with the participants, namely: Reasons for pursuing an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, expectations from completing an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, what to expect from completing an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, how to decide to pursue an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, challenges faced in making the decision for an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, perceived benefits of completing an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, opinions about an English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University for career purposes, opinion about English Education in Indonesia now, good teacher quality in English Education, story about the beginning of interest in learning English, motivation in learning English, and challenges in learning English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The motivation behind students to continue their English Education Master Program studies at Sanata Dharma University has many aspects and requires careful consideration. This study aims to explore the psychological, intrinsic, and extrinsic factors that influence students' decision to continue their education. To achieve this goal, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants. The results of the interviews revealed some key themes regarding the motivations of the students which can be seen below.

Psychological needs

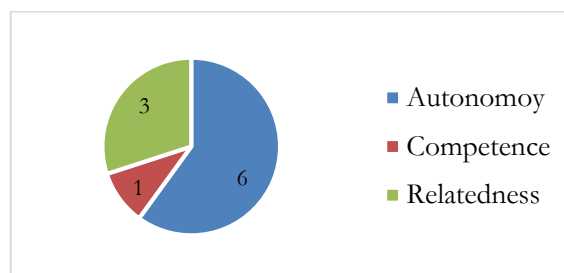


Image 1. The Psychological Needs

Autonomy

Based on the results of semi-structured interviews with English Education Master Program students, six sentences were identified that showed the psychological need for autonomy in their reasons for continuing their education. Participant 5 said: *"I am studying in the English education undergraduate program at Sanata Dharma... therefore, I only want to continue my studies in the linear field."* This statement shows that Participant 5 independently chose to continue his studies in a field that is linear to his previous educational background. This reflects individual autonomy in determining their educational path, regardless of external influences. Participant 6 said: *"I consulted with the principal, rector, and bishop. Because I was assigned by them to continue my studies in Jogja."* Even though Participant 6 consulted with various parties, he still had the freedom to choose to continue his studies in Yogyakarta. This shows autonomy in informed decision making, where he considers input from various parties, but remains in control of his choices.

The two examples above show that English Education Master Program's students need to determine the direction and way they learn and develop. Participant 5 chose to continue studying in a linear field based on his experience and interests, while Participant 6 consulted with various parties to obtain information and input before deciding. This psychological need for autonomy is important for English Education Master Program students at Sanata Dharma because they are at a crucial transition stage in their lives. At this stage, they need to develop their identity and independence as individuals and professionals. Autonomy in learning and self-development allows them to explore their interests and potential to the maximum, and ultimately, achieve their educational goals.

Competence

There is one statement that refers to the reasons why some students drop their Master of Education. Participant 4: *"I see the prospect of pursuing my dream job as a Materials Developer in a start-up company. I also have the opportunity to become a lecturer if I change majors. Therefore, I really hope to get the ammunition needed to level up to increase my competence. I realize being a material developer or lecturer calls me to be equipped with advanced competencies. I want to deepen my knowledge and improve my practice in designing materials."*

This sentence shows that the reason Participant 4 chose a master's education at Sanata Dharma University was to pursue his dream job as a Material Developer in a start-up company and open opportunities to become a lecturer by changing majors. Participant 1 hopes to gain the knowledge and skills needed to increase competence in the field of material development and design material in more depth. This shows that Participant 4 has clear career goals and makes decisions based on their professional aspirations.

Relatedness

There are 3 opinions related to the reasons and motivations of master's students choosing to continue their master's education at Sanata Dharma University. Participant 1 opinion: *"I decided through careful consideration with my parents, professors, and myself, whether I would be more compassionate and serious about pursuing a degree while also working as a teacher."* Participant 1 explained that his decision to continue his master's education at Sanata Dharma University was based on careful considerations involving his parents, lecturers and himself. He considered whether he would be able to pursue these studies with full dedication while still working as a teacher. This shows that the student considered external and internal factors before deciding to continue his master's education.

Participant 2 stated: *“My family, especially my mother and my lecturers when I was still an undergraduate student. They motivated me to pursue a master's degree because I was still very young. Because they said I could pursue it, so I challenged myself to study and pursue master's degree in English education.”* Participant 2 said that his family, especially his mother and his lecturers when he was still an undergraduate student, provided great motivation and support for him to pursue a master's degree. They convince the student that he is capable of pursuing this degree, so that the student feels challenged to study and pursue a master's degree in English education. Support and motivation from family and lecturers are important factors that influence a student's decision to continue their master's education.

Intrinsic motivation

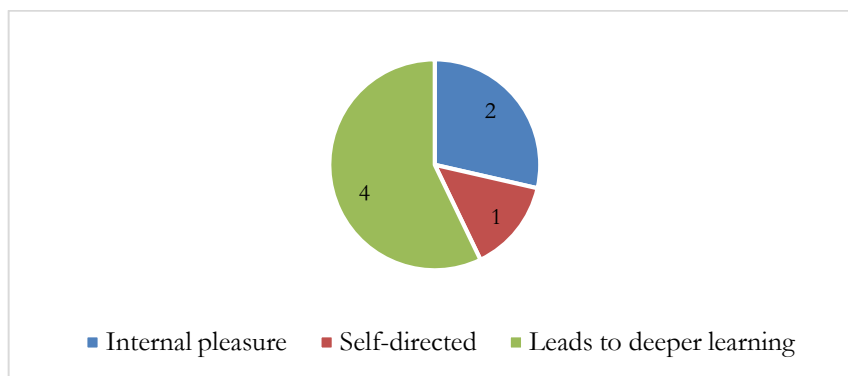


Image 2. The Intrinsic Motivation

Internal pleasure

There are 2 sentences driven by internal pleasure in intrinsic motivation which refer to the reasons and motivations of master's students choosing to continue their English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University. Participant 4 said: *“In elementary school, I was motivated because of excitement. Then, my parents paid for my English course. I took an English course from 2008/2009-2016. In the English course, I was motivated because the fun teacher and the content of the lesson were in harmony. From then on, I knew English could be learned in different ways. I remember the course teacher asked us to make conditional sentences but using funny sentences, we were encouraged to have interviews with teachers in different classes. I love learning in my English courses.”* Participant 4 revealed that his motivation to learn English stems from the joy he felt when taking English courses since elementary school. His parents supported him by paying for the English course. Participant 4 felt motivated by the teacher, enjoyment, and harmony of the learning content in the course. This fun learning experience opened his eyes that English can be learned in different ways, including through creative methods such as making funny conditional sentences. Apart from that, learning English also provided new insights into cultural values and encouraged him to conduct interviews with teachers in different classes. This overall learning experience makes students enjoy the process of learning English and becomes intrinsic motivation for them to continue learning.

Participant 2 opinion: *“I think when I was learning something new about vocabulary and some theories related to educational psychology.”* Participant 2 consulted with the school principal, rector and bishop before deciding to continue his studies at Sanata Dharma University. By involving these parties in the decision-making process, the student shows that he considered input

from various sources before making his academic decision. This shows that the student appreciates the views and suggestions of parties who are considered to have influence and authority in their educational decisions.

Self-directed

In the previous interview, there was 1 statement that was driven by oneself in intrinsic motivation which refers to the reasons and motivations for master's students choosing to continue their master's education at Sanata Dharma University. Participant 6 said: *"I think when I was learning something new about vocabulary and some theories related to educational psychology"*. Participant 6 revealed that he felt motivated when he was learning new things related to vocabulary and educational psychology theories. Intrinsic motivation in this case arises from the sense of satisfaction and excitement that students get when exploring and expanding their knowledge in these two fields. Participant 6 also said that he felt motivated when studying theories related to educational psychology. This shows that Participant 6 is interested in understanding psychological aspects in the educational context, such as how individuals learn, student motivation, and effective learning strategies. Understanding educational psychology theory can help Participant 6 become a better educator by understanding the various factors that influence the teaching and learning process.

Deeper learning

There are 4 statements that lead to deeper learning in intrinsic motivation and refer to the reasons and motivations of Master's students choosing to continue their master's education at Sanata Dharma University. Participant 4 said: *"I decided through careful consideration with my parents, professors, and myself, whether I would be more compassionate and serious about pursuing a degree while also working as a teacher."* This statement identified; the participant explained that his decision to pursue a postgraduate's degree in English education was based on the aim of having a higher chance of being accepted in a job application. He wants to determine his future to be more knowledgeable and wiser as a future teacher and lecturer. By having a master's degree, Participant 1 believes that it will increase the chances of being accepted for work compared to a bachelor's degree. In addition, he realized that having a master's degree could also open up wider career options, especially in the field of English education. Therefore, these reasons became intrinsic motivation for participant 1 to continue his master's education in the field of English education.

Participant 4 opinion: *"My instincts say that's a good decision hababa. Oh, not just from a supernatural point of view actually. This comes from a very rational point of view by looking at the track record of the English Language Education bachelor's program. The same lecturer in the English Language Education bachelor's program manages the Master of Education program English. So, my confidence has been built over time. I am also fascinated by the subject and there is potential to have."* Participant 4 stated that his decision to continue his master's education at Sanata Dharma University was based on very rational considerations. Participant 4 looked at the track record of the English Language Education undergraduate program at the university, where the same lecturer in the undergraduate program also managed the English Language Education master's program. This builds his confidence over time. Apart from that, participant 4 was also fascinated by the courses offered and saw the potential to gain an in-depth learning experience in the master's program. Thus, these factors become a strong basis for these students to choose to continue their master's education at Sanata Dharma University.

Extrinsic motivations



Image 3. The Extrinsic Motivation

Earn rewards

There is one statement that shows extrinsic motivation that leads to awards or rewards. Participant 2 statement: *"I always remember how hard my mother worked for me and my family's expectations of me, that's why I continued my master's studies at Sanata Dharma."* Participant 2 stated that one of the motivations was remembering how hard his mother worked for him and the family's expectations. This also shows extrinsic motivation that comes from appreciation or expectations from those closest to you.

The discussion that follows is based on the findings. This study explores the motivational forces that drive students to pursue a postgraduate degree in English Language Education at Sanata Dharma University. By exploring intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, this research highlights the psychological needs and aspirations of these graduate students (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Results from this study identified psychological needs as an important aspect of graduate student motivation. Participants seek to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, enhance their skills, and advance their careers through higher education (Howard, et al., 2021). By understanding and addressing these psychological needs, academic institutions can better meet the diverse motivations of prospective students. These findings underscore the importance of autonomy and competence in students' educational journeys. Participants valued autonomy to make informed decisions regarding their academic path, as seen in Participant 6's consultation process with various stakeholders. Additionally, competency emerged as a driving force for participants like Participant 4, who aimed to acquire advanced skills for their desired career path. Educational institutions can leverage these insights to create supportive environments that foster students' intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and competence (Turner & Reed, 2022). By providing relevant and engaging content, institutions can attract and retain students who are driven by a combination of internal and external interests and aspirations.

Additionally, understanding the diverse motivating forces behind graduate activities can inform the development of student support programs and initiatives to enhance the overall academic experience. Participants demonstrate intrinsic motivation through their passion for learning and personal growth. For example, Participant 4 found motivation in the joy of learning and the alignment of course content with his interests. This intrinsic drive led him to explore creative learning methods and gain insight into cultural values, thereby enhancing his overall learning experience (Turner & Reed, 2022). Likewise, Participant 2 expressed excitement about learning new vocabulary and educational psychology theories,

demonstrating a genuine interest in academic exploration (Woody, 2021). External factors also play an important role in motivating students to pursue a graduate degree. Participant 2, for example, highlighted the important role of his mother in recognition if he continued his English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University (Jones & Zenko, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This research has demonstrated that postgraduate's students in the English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University have various reasons and motivations that underlie their decision to continue their master's education. Several psychological factors that influence their choices include developing skills and knowledge, increasing career prospects, meeting personal needs, challenging and stimulating knowledge, and expanding professional networks. Apart from that, there are also intrinsic motivations such as genuine enjoyment of learning and personal growth, desire to satisfy intellectual curiosity and enhance skills, need for autonomy in making informed academic decisions, and aspiration to acquire advanced skills for career advancement. Therefore, extrinsic motivations that desire for external rewards, such as improved career prospects and social status. However, there are several limitations to this study that need to be noted. First, this study only focuses on Master's students in the English Education Master Program at Sanata Dharma University, so the generalization of the findings can only be applied to this population and cannot represent Master's students at other educational institutions. Second, although several motivational factors underlying student decisions have been presented, there has been no in-depth analysis of the impact of these factors on students' academic performance and careers after completing their master's education. Therefore, further research involving follow-up of master's program alumni and a more in-depth analysis of the motivational factors that influence their academic and career success could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Considering the conclusions and limitations of this study, further research involving a wider sample and more in-depth analysis could provide deeper insight into the motivational factors of master's students in choosing to pursue master's education and its impact on their academic and career achievements.

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