

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intrinsic Motivation of Teacher Education Instructors in Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal on Quality Education

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ABSTRACT

Intrinsic motivation encourages engagement in professional tasks, driven by personal interest, internal satisfaction, and a sense of purpose rather than external rewards or pressures. In the teaching profession, intrinsically motivated teachers are more likely to demonstrate creativity, resilience, and commitment to student success, as they perceive fulfillment from the act of teaching itself. This qualitative exploration focused on understanding intrinsic motivation, particularly altruistic values, among teacher education instructors. College teachers (n=19) were sampled to be interviewed about their altruistic motives and how they work towards quality education. The findings revealed that teacher education instructors were primarily driven by intrinsic motivation rooted in moral responsibility, personal fulfillment, and a commitment to lifelong learning. This internal drive translated into active engagement in professional development, research, and the consistent implementation of inclusive, equity-oriented teaching strategies. Teachers expressed a strong sense of purpose in their work, often describing teaching as a moral obligation to contribute to the development of future citizens. The study showed that intrinsically motivated teachers demonstrated a higher tendency to adopt innovative and student-centered teaching practices. Their motivation was deeply linked with altruistic values and a desire to promote social transformation, which manifested in their relational approach to teaching, emphasizing empathy, care, and responsiveness to student needs. Consequently, the findings emphasized the need for systemic support, including reduced structural barriers and targeted training in care-based pedagogies, to sustain and enhance teachers' intrinsic motivation and altruistic engagement in education.

Keywords: altruistic behaviors; intrinsic motivation; quality education; teacher education

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1. Introduction

Education is an essential pillar in the advancement of both individuals and communities. It serves as a key instrument in unlocking human potential, broadening intellectual horizons, and improving overall quality of life ^[1]. Teachers hold a central role in the educational process, as they are not only tasked with delivering academic knowledge but also with shaping students' character and inspiring them to achieve their aspirations. The teaching profession extends beyond occupational responsibilities; it is often regarded as a vocation dedicated to cultivating the next generation ^[2]. Many individuals are drawn to the teaching profession by a desire to positively impact students' lives, build a lifelong love of learning, and contribute to the creation of an informed, critically aware society.

Dedicated teachers go beyond transmitting curriculum content as they also contribute to mentoring and supporting students through personal and academic challenges, which then helps in transforming the education system into an empowering experience. Consequently, the value of education and the social function of teachers strengthen the view that pursuing a career in teaching is both noble and socially consequential ^[3]. However, prior research has identified that teaching can be a source of stress, emotional exhaustion, and professional pressure, all of which contribute to diminished teacher motivation and work retention ^[4,5]. These challenges may create a negative perception of the profession and reduce its appeal among younger generations ^[6,7].

Intrinsic motivation pertains to an individual's internal drive and authentic interest in undertaking an activity due to the inherent satisfaction and personal fulfillment it provides, rather than as a response to external incentives or obligations ^[8]. It involves psychological impetus that comes from one's innate curiosity, enjoyment, and gratification as a result of the activity itself ^[9]. Notably, increased activation in the anterior insular cortex has been associated with the anticipation of participating in intrinsically rewarding tasks ^[10]. Building intrinsic motivation among teachers has significant implications for educational institutions ^[11]. When teachers are intrinsically motivated, they demonstrate greater initiative in implementing instructional strategies and tend to report elevated levels of job satisfaction and professional commitment ^[12]. Highly dedicated teachers demonstrate greater commitment to their responsibilities, exert effort in fulfilling their tasks, and show investment in their students' academic development ^[13].

Now, this work was committed to understanding intrinsic motivation, particularly altruistic tendencies, of higher education teachers towards quality education. Studies on altruistic tendencies and behavior have primarily focused on pre-service teachers ^[14]. This study addresses an important research gap by extending the inquiry to in-service teacher education instructors in higher education, whose sustained engagement and professional commitment are critical to achieving sustainable quality education. Altruism may manifest in multiple forms, including offering help, dedicating time, or expressing genuine concern for others without the expectation of personal gain. Such actions may be either spontaneous, like assisting someone in distress, or deliberate, as seen in organized social involvement or volunteerism ^[15]. While altruistic motivation is frequently linked to feelings of sympathy or compassion, other theoretical perspectives propose that it may also stem from a deep sense of moral duty or social responsibility ^[16].

This study is important in the context of ongoing educational transformations, particularly within higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines that are transitioning from traditional didactic methods to more student-centered pedagogical approaches. Commonly applied approaches include outcomes-based education, problem-based learning, project-based learning, blended and flexible learning modalities, flipped classroom strategies, and experiential learning, which emphasize active student participation, contextualized instruction, and real-world application of knowledge. As HEIs in the Philippines continue to champion such

innovations, understanding what drives faculty motivation becomes essential. Previous research has shown that teachers' motivation is influenced by leadership quality, collegial relationships, and professional development opportunities. However, there remains a critical gap in understanding how intrinsic motivation, particularly altruistic values, functions as a sustainable driver for pedagogical innovation and commitment. This study aims to address that gap by exploring how internal satisfaction, moral purpose, and value-driven teaching contribute to long-term engagement and instructional excellence^[17].

2. Literature review

In recent decades, teaching practices in higher education have undergone a substantial transformation (18). Conventional lecture-centered instruction is progressively being augmented or in some cases, replaced by innovative pedagogical strategies such as blended learning, flipped classrooms, and project-based learning^[19]. These strategies emphasize active learning, heightened student engagement, and the practical application of knowledge to real-world contexts (20). HEIs in the Philippines have emerged as leaders in this educational shift, proactively adopting innovative teaching methods to improve student learning outcomes and equipping graduates with the competencies required to deal with complex, modern-day challenges^[21].

Recent scholarly investigations have highlighted that the trajectory of teacher motivation is significantly shaped by various contextual and relational factors, including the quality of leadership provided by school heads^[22], the collective commitment of teaching staff^[24], the availability of meaningful professional development opportunities^[26], and the presence of strong interpersonal relationships among colleagues^[25]. However, there is also a growing need for understanding the context of how intrinsic motivation and altruistic values are cultivated and sustained. Most studies on teachers' motivation primarily focused on extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic, altruistic, or value-driven forms of motivation that are central to long-term commitment and innovation in teaching. Intrinsic motivational factors, in contrast, are fundamentally linked to the inherent satisfaction from performing one's professional responsibilities^[26]. In the context of teaching, these factors involve the aspiration to contribute to the growth and development of others, a genuine interest in the subject matter being taught, a deep-seated passion for the act of teaching itself, and a profound sense of fulfillment gained from successfully facilitating student learning and knowledge acquisition^[27].

Several studies believed the influence of intrinsic motivation on teachers' willingness to engage in and implement innovative pedagogical practices^[28]. Chen^[29] asserts that intrinsically motivated teachers, especially those who find satisfaction in teaching itself, are more likely to adopt innovative instructional strategies due to their passion for enhancing student learning. Similarly, Calderón et al.^[30] emphasize that such educators often implement student-centered approaches, driven by genuine concern for student development rather than external incentives. Further note that teachers motivated by a commitment to growth and self-improvement view innovation as an opportunity to enrich their teaching, demonstrating adaptability essential for effective, modern education.

Existing literature has also indicated that strong commitment and motivation to enter the teaching profession are significantly influenced by individuals' social consciousness and their concern for students' intellectual development and acquisition of knowledge^[31]. A sense of responsibility for children's education and a desire to contribute to societal well-being, attributes commonly associated with altruism, emerge as central motivational factors for aspiring teachers^[32]. Altruism involves prosocial orientations, including values and emotional dispositions that emphasize empathy, fairness, and the well-being of others. The belief in altruistic ideas can indirectly shape and reinforce interrelated prosocial behaviors within educational settings^[33].

Teachers driven by altruistic motives often demonstrate characteristics such as being lifelong learners, exhibiting heightened social awareness, and cultivating compassion and empathy in their practice. These individuals are motivated by a desire to promote equity, ensure fair access to education for all learners, and foster inclusive environments. Furthermore, altruism in teaching is reflected in the perception of the profession as a meaningful and impactful vocation that advances both individual development and broader societal change [34]. While intrinsic motivations such as personal fulfillment and the desire to inspire are essential, extrinsic factors including job security, extended vacation periods, and enjoyment of subject matter also contribute to professional decision-making.

Understanding motivational determinants is essential for policymakers, educational leaders, and educators in designing and implementing strategies that sustain and enhance teacher motivation [35]. For example, professional development programs that are aligned with teachers' identified needs and grounded in data-informed approaches to instructional change have been associated with increased teacher motivation and the integration of instructional standards. Given the demand for teachers to stay resilient and competent amidst evolving educational reforms, shifting learner needs, and technological integration, there is a pressing need to cultivate motivation. Effective motivation-enhancement strategies must go beyond compliance-based approaches and instead build professional autonomy, recognition, and meaningful engagement.

3. Objectives

This study explored the intrinsic motivation of teacher education instructors towards achieving quality education in classrooms. Below are the specific objectives to guide the analysis.

1. To explore the personal values, beliefs, and internal drivers that influence teacher education instructors' commitment to quality education.
2. To examine how teacher education instructors translate their intrinsic motivation into pedagogical practices and professional initiatives that support the achievement of quality education.

4. Methods

4.1. Research design

This paper explored the drivers of intrinsic motivation among teacher education instructors towards achieving quality education. Exploratory research is commonly used to examine emerging phenomena and to generate insights into areas that have not been extensively studied [36]. This approach typically involves the application of systematic procedures to uncover significant patterns in the data [37], which then helps in structured analysis of sociocultural and psychological dimensions [38]. Although some researchers have questioned the methodological rigor and reliability of exploratory designs, contemporary academic discourse emphasizes their importance in deepening understanding and promoting the methodical collection of qualitative data [39]. A key advantage of exploratory research is its methodological flexibility, which permits adaptive responses to data as it emerges [40]. This adaptability is particularly important when addressing topics that have received limited scholarly attention [41]. This work answered one important question in teaching: how aspirations on achieving quality education.

4.2. Participants and sampling

Exploratory research often involves the intentional selection of a small number of participants to enable an in-depth examination of relevant ideas and their connections [42]. This approach prioritizes the perspectives of a specific group instead of aiming for broad statistical generalizability [43]. The determination of sample size remains flexible, largely depending on the extent to which participants can provide rich and

relevant data, as well as achieving data saturation^[44]. Out of 45 who responded in the online screening, 19 participants were selected for interviews based on the fulfillment of all sampling criteria and the principle of data saturation. The final sample size was determined when no new themes or substantive insights emerged from subsequent interviews, consistent with qualitative research standards that prioritize depth, richness, and thematic saturation over numerical representation. The participants consisted of 19 teacher education instructors from various higher education institutions in the Philippines. They represented diverse academic specializations within teacher education, including professional education, curriculum studies, educational management, and subject-specific pedagogy. The group included both male and female instructors, with ages ranging from early career to senior faculty members, and teaching experience spanning from a minimum of two years in the higher education academic environment. In qualitative research, purposive sampling is a commonly used strategy for participant selection^[45], wherein individuals are chosen through a structured and deliberate identification process^[46]. In the present study, online purposive sampling was conducted^[47] using Google Forms to disseminate open-ended questions and collect preliminary responses, which subsequently informed the selection of interview participants. Five sample characteristics were considered in selecting the participants: (1) currently employed as a teacher education instructor for the academic year 2024–2025, (2) familiar with the concept of quality education, (3) has at least two years of teaching experience in HEIs, (4) actively involved in teaching professional or pedagogical courses, and (5) willingness to participate in an in-depth one-on-one interview.

4.3. Instrumentation

The semi-structured interview guide was carefully constructed to facilitate the data collection process in a systematic and organized manner. Its development followed the structured protocol outlined by Kallio et al.^[48], which includes critical phases such as establishing the necessary conditions, reviewing relevant literature, formulating initial questions, conducting a pilot test, and redesigning the instrument based on expert recommendations. The guide also included probing questions designed to go beyond surface-level responses^[49]. To strengthen the credibility and dependability of the data, the interview protocol was subjected to expert evaluation^[50]. Three experts in the fields of qualitative research, teacher education, and classroom management were invited to review the instrument. Each expert assessed the clarity, alignment, and relevance of the questions in relation to the study objectives, as well as the appropriateness of the probes. Furthermore, a pilot test was carried out to evaluate the comprehensibility, relevance, and effectiveness of the questions in extracting substantive responses^[51]. Revisions to the final version of the interview protocol were guided by feedback from both subject experts and pilot participants (see **Table 1**). The semi-structured format helped in thorough examination of emerging themes while maintaining adaptability for clarification and follow-up questions^[52].

Table 1. Final validated interview guide

Objectives	Interview Questions
To explore the personal values, beliefs, and internal drivers that influence teacher education instructors' commitment to advancing quality education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What personal values or principles guide your work as a teacher education instructor, particularly in relation to promoting quality education?2. Can you describe any experiences or moments in your career that strengthened your commitment to contributing to quality education?3. What motivates you internally to support quality education, even in the face of professional or institutional challenges?
To examine how teacher education instructors translate their intrinsic motivation into pedagogical practices and professional initiatives that support the achievement of quality education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How do your personal motivations influence the way you design or deliver your courses in teacher education?2. Can you provide examples of classroom practices or teaching strategies you implement that reflect your commitment to quality education?3. Have you engaged in any projects, collaborations, or advocacy efforts aimed at

Objectives	Interview Questions
	promoting quality education? If so, what inspired your involvement and how do you see its impact?

Table 1 (Continued)

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method to explore the ideas of participants through a systematic yet adaptable method, allowing for a detailed investigation of their behaviors, viewpoints, and shared meanings [53]. Guided interviews were employed to balance methodological rigor with the flexibility needed to facilitate inductive, in-depth discussions [54], which is widely applicable for exploratory studies [55]. Participants were identified through online purposive sampling, and the application of predetermined sampling criteria ensured the selection of individuals relevant to the study objectives. Once identified, participants were formally invited and scheduled for individual interview sessions. Each interview adhered to a structured data collection protocol such as the provision of informed consent procedures, ethical considerations, confidentiality, and methodical data processing [56]. To ensure an open and respectful environment, participants were encouraged to express themselves in their preferred language. This helped in reducing linguistic constraints and promoting genuine engagement [57]. Probing techniques were systematically employed to draw out implicit meanings and enhance the depth and quality of the data collected. With the consent from selected participants, interviews were recorded using secure mobile devices, and preliminary themes and observations were organized in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to support subsequent analysis.

4.4. Data analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data obtained from individual interviews, with the objective of identifying prevailing themes and recurrent patterns that reflect the participants' shared meanings. Thematic saturation was reached when successive interviews no longer yielded new codes, perspectives, or conceptual insights relevant to intrinsic motivation and altruistic teaching practices. At this point, the themes identified were well-developed, internally coherent, and consistently reflected across participant narratives. This method involved a systematic process of organizing, categorizing, and interpreting textual data, providing a coherent yet flexible structure for generating insights directly from participants' accounts [58]. Its adaptability makes it particularly well-suited for exploratory inquiries, as it allows themes to develop inductively rather than imposing pre-established theoretical constructs [59]. Originally conceptualized by Braun and Clarke [60], reflexive thematic analysis involves a multi-stage process involving data familiarization, code generation, theme identification and refinement, thematic definition, and final integration (see **Figure 1**). A critical component of this approach is reflexivity, wherein researchers continuously engage with the data while acknowledging and reflecting on their positionality—not as a source of bias but as a factor that can deepen the analysis [61]. To further reduce the potential for researcher bias, an inductive approach was employed, ensuring that themes were firmly rooted in participants' perspectives [62]. These procedures allowed for organic emergence of themes, preserving the authenticity of participant voices and enabling rich, nuanced, and contextually grounded interpretations [63].

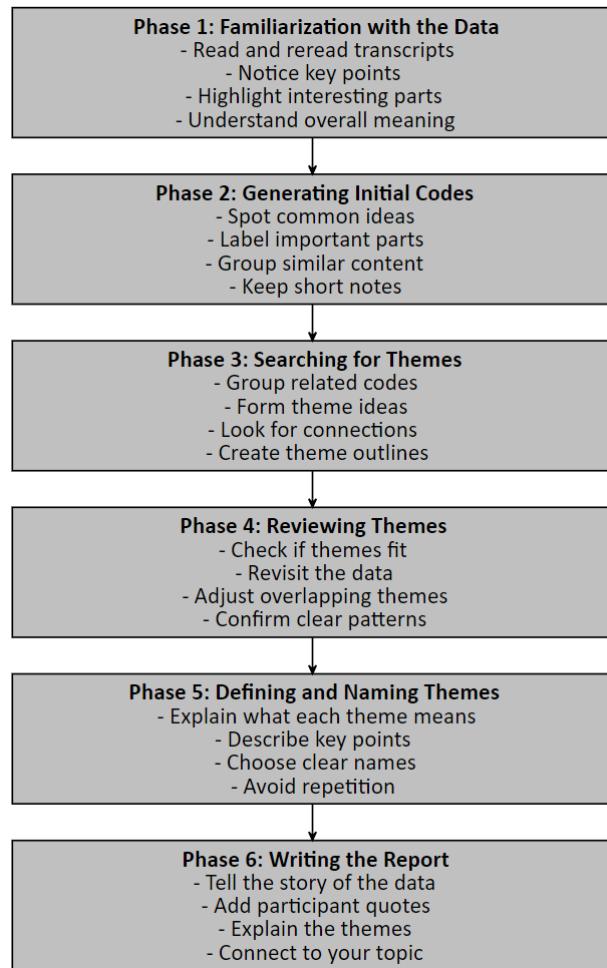


Figure 1. Workflow of data analysis process

5. Results

Objective 1. To explore the personal values, beliefs, and internal drivers that influence teacher education instructors' commitment to advancing quality education.

Theme 1: Teaching as a Moral and Social Responsibility

Most teachers viewed teaching as a vocation driven by a sense of moral responsibility rather than a mere profession for economic gain. Their internal motivation was rooted in the belief that education served a broader societal function like the development of informed, responsible citizens. They demonstrated an intrinsic desire to serve the community, suggesting that their teaching practice extended beyond classroom instruction into civic engagement.

“For me, teaching is more than a job. It’s a moral obligation to serve the community and help shape future citizens.”

Teachers expressed a personal sense of duty, suggesting that their commitment to teaching was driven by internal moral convictions rather than external expectations. They viewed social inequality as something they had a direct role in addressing through daily actions in the classroom. Their belief system was aligned with social justice principles, indicating that their teaching was informed by both ethical concerns and a desire to empower.

“I believe education is a powerful tool to reduce inequality, and I feel it’s my duty to make sure no student is left behind.”

“I see myself as an agent of change, and teaching gives me the platform to promote justice and equity in society.”

They presented a strong commitment to inclusivity, indicating that their instructional practice was guided by values of equality and non-discrimination. Their pedagogical decisions were influenced by a strong moral framework that prioritized social justice and human dignity.

“Every time I step into the classroom, I remind myself that I have a responsibility to build inclusive learning for all learners, regardless of their background.”

Their motivation appeared deeply rooted in empathy and ethical responsibility, revealing a profound sense of purpose in their teaching. They want to use teaching as a platform for engaging with social issues and empowering students to challenge injustices.

“My commitment to quality education comes from my belief that every child deserves a fair opportunity to succeed.”

Theme 2: Personal Fulfillment through Educational Impact

Some teachers expressed that their motivation came from witnessing meaningful progress and achievements among their students. Their commitment appeared to be grounded in a deep sense of purpose, suggesting that their dedication was both affective and value-based. This motivation likely translated into consistent efforts to improve teaching practices and maintain meaningful student engagement.

“I find real joy in seeing my students grow. Knowing that I have an important role in their transformation and growth is deeply fulfilling.”

For example, their intrinsic motivation was tied to legacy-building, with the success of their former students serving as tangible evidence of their impact. Their motivation was evidently anchored in purpose, and the satisfaction derived from such outcomes reinforced their professional identity. Such moments of affirmation functioned as internal motivators that deepened their commitment to quality education. These instances validated not only the effectiveness of their pedagogy but also the impact of their values, beliefs, and dedication.

“The most satisfying part of my work is watching my students become educators themselves, passing on the same passion for learning.”

“When former students come back and tell me how I helped shape their paths, that’s when I know my work matters.”

Some of them demonstrated a powerful awareness of the broader social impact that teaching can generate. Their motivation came from the understanding that their instructional efforts had a ripple effect, influencing not only individuals but the communities their students belong to. Their commitment was shaped by an understanding that every learner reached had the potential to become a catalyst for further improvement.

“I’m intrinsically motivated when I realize that what I do in the classroom can influence entire communities through my students.”

“My purpose is fueled by knowing that my efforts can lead to a ripple effect of educational improvement.”

Theme 3: Value-Driven Commitment to Lifelong Learning

Teachers also embraced lifelong learning not merely as a professional expectation, but as a personal identity. They considered the process of learning continuous and integral to their role as an educator. Their motivation to acquire new knowledge was intrinsically linked to their desire to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

“I see myself as a lifelong learner. What I learn, I bring into the classroom to improve my teaching and support my students.”

They associated being well-informed with the ability to deliver instruction that is timely, accurate, and relevant. This intrinsic motivation was connected to a vision of excellence, reflecting the participant’s value for competence and educational integrity. Their commitment extended beyond personal advancement and focused on fulfilling their role in shaping capable, informed learners.

“Being updated in my field is not just a requirement. It’s a commitment to delivering the best education possible.”

Teachers also recognized that education was rapidly evolving, and adapting to these changes required ongoing engagement with new knowledge and pedagogies. Their commitment was not passive but characterized by active efforts to stay informed, responsive, and student-focused. They perceived their own growth as essential to ensuring their students received an education that was not outdated or disconnected from real-world contexts.

“My belief in continuous learning keeps me engaged and helps me remain relevant in addressing the needs of 21st-century learners.”

Similarly, they actively engaged in professional development activities, not only for self-improvement but also to serve as a role model for their students. Their actions were driven by a value-laden belief that teaching extends beyond content delivery to embodying behaviors that inspire learners. They regarded up-to-date knowledge as essential to maintaining the quality and impact of their instruction.

“I’m always attending workshops and reading about SDG No. 4 because I believe it’s my role to model lifelong learning to my students.”

“I invest in my growth as an educator because I want to provide my students with current and meaningful learning experiences.”

Objective 2. To examine how teacher education instructors translate their intrinsic motivation into pedagogical practices and professional initiatives that support the achievement of quality education.

Theme 1: Purpose-Driven Instructional Design

Teachers’ intrinsic motivation was deeply connected to their commitment to creating meaningful and contextually grounded learning experiences. Their approach to lesson preparation was driven by a belief in education’s relevance to real-life situations, presenting a student-centered pedagogy. Their internal motivation clearly guided how they translated educational ideals into tangible classroom practices.

“Every time I prepare my lessons, I make sure they are aligned with real-world issues because I want students to see the relevance of what they are learning.”

For example, they ensure that values and critical thinking are embedded in their instructional strategies to ensure quality education and build socially responsible individuals. Their intrinsic motivation appeared to stem from a desire to nurture not only knowledgeable students but also ethical and critical thinkers. The integration of values and critical thinking illustrated a deliberate effort to equip students with essential life skills and a strong ethical compass.

“I always integrate values and critical thinking into my activities so that students are not just learning content but also developing as responsible individuals.”

Their intrinsic motivation was rooted in the belief that education should serve as preparation for life, not just for passing exams. Their desire to create an engaging learning environment reflected an understanding of diverse student needs and learning styles. The incorporation of multimedia, storytelling, and case studies indicated a learner-centered pedagogical approach rooted in creativity and relevance.

“My passion for education pushes me to make my classroom engaging. I use multimedia, storytelling, and case studies to deepen student learning.”

“I design my assessments to reflect both mastery and application, because I believe education must prepare students for actual life challenges.”

Lastly, their willingness to invest additional time and effort in revising instructional materials demonstrated a strong internal motivation anchored in professional integrity. The regular updating of materials signified responsiveness to changing knowledge, student needs, and educational trends. The participant did not view curriculum content as static; instead, they recognized the importance of adaptation in maintaining educational relevance and engagement.

“Even if it takes more time, I revise my materials regularly to keep them updated and meaningful, because I want to give students the best learning experience possible.”

Theme 2: Engagement in Capacity-Building and Professional Development Initiatives

Teachers' intrinsic motivation also inspired them to pursue continuous learning as part of their teaching practice. Attending professional development events was not perceived as a formal obligation but as a personal commitment to self-growth and instructional enhancement. Their pursuit of learning also suggested a high degree of professional self-awareness and accountability. Such actions likely led to enriched instructional practices and a more engaged classroom environment.

“I attend seminars and conferences not because I have to, but because I want to stay informed and bring something new to my students.”

They also took leadership in creating a collaborative learning environment among peers, driven by the belief that professional growth is a collective responsibility. They build a space where faculty members could exchange ideas, reflect on practices, and solve pedagogical challenges collaboratively.

“I initiated a faculty learning circle in our department so we can regularly share strategies and improve our teaching together.”

Their intrinsic motivation was closely tied to the belief that quality education depends on the effective preparation of future teachers. Sharing classroom practices with mentees was viewed not merely as a task but as a moral and professional obligation. Their actions demonstrated a commitment to nurturing pedagogical skills, values, and attitudes among novice educators.

“I mentor student teachers and share my classroom practices with them because I feel responsible for preparing the next generation of educators.”

“Even outside teaching hours, I volunteer to facilitate training workshops in nearby schools because I believe in sharing what I’ve learned.”

Some of them engaged in research not merely to fulfill institutional requirements or gain academic recognition, but to enhance their pedagogical competence and contribute meaningfully to the teaching profession. This proactive involvement in scholarly inquiry reflected their commitment to evidence-based practice and continuous self-improvement.

“Part of my motivation is research. I do it not just for publication, but to find better ways of teaching and improving student outcomes.”

Theme 3: Support for Inclusive Education

Teachers’ intrinsic motivation was rooted in a strong belief that all learners, regardless of ability level, deserved equitable access to education. Because of this, they demonstrated a proactive take on ensuring that lesson content and delivery methods were inclusive, personalized, and accessible. It showed how internal drivers such as fairness, responsibility, and compassion translated into actionable strategies within the classroom.

“I make sure to adapt my lessons so that students with different learning needs are not left behind.”

Rather than enforcing rigid rules, the instructor chose to create classroom policies that accommodated students’ socio-emotional contexts. Their intrinsic motivation was clearly rooted in a humanistic perspective, recognizing that students’ well-being had a significant impact on their ability to learn. The flexibility extended to struggling students reflected a belief in responsive and compassionate teaching. This approach promoted equity by acknowledging that students face different life circumstances, which may require differentiated forms of support.

“My class policies are always grounded in empathy. I allow flexibility when I know students are dealing with personal struggles.”

“I believe inclusive education is non-negotiable, so I constantly educate myself about how to better support students from marginalized backgrounds.”

They have their core beliefs about fairness and accessibility which shaped their instructional strategies. Their intrinsic motivation was guided by the conviction that every learner, regardless of academic standing, should be given equal opportunities to contribute and be heard. This approach also addressed the risk of marginalization often experienced by quieter or lower-performing students.

“My teaching philosophy centers on fairness and accessibility. I design group activities that ensure every student has a voice, not just the high achievers.”

6. Discussion

This study noted some important drivers of intrinsic motivation among teacher education instructors towards achieving quality education. Teacher education instructors were intrinsically motivated by deeply held values such as moral responsibility, personal fulfillment, and a commitment to lifelong learning, which influenced their dedication to advancing the education system. This motivation was translated into practice

through purposeful instructional design, active engagement in professional development and research, and the consistent application of inclusive, equity-centered pedagogical approaches.

Theory of Planned Behavior posits that altruistic behavior is influenced by three key components: individual attitudes, perceived social expectations (subjective norms), and perceived behavioral control [64]. Individuals are more inclined to perform altruistic acts when they hold favorable attitudes toward helping others, believe that such behavior is socially endorsed, and feel confident in their ability to carry it out [65]. This study revealed that teachers' strong moral convictions and belief in education as a tool for social transformation reflected favorable attitudes toward altruistic action. Likewise, their perception that academic institutions and professional communities expect educators to uphold ethical, inclusive, and transformative roles highlighted the influence of subjective norms in motivating their behavior.

Intrinsic motivation serves as a powerful force that influences behavior, learning, and performance, encouraging individuals to engage in activities with enthusiasm, purpose, and sustained effort. This study observed sources of motivation among teachers that stemmed from deeply rooted personal values, ethical convictions, and a strong sense of professional purpose. One teacher said that teaching is "...*a moral obligation to serve the community and help shape future citizens.*" Many teachers expressed that their drive to teach originated from a desire to make a meaningful impact on their students' lives and contribute to broader social transformation. Drivers for intrinsic motivation are closely aligned with the concept of social utility values [66], particularly those that emphasize shaping the future of youth, enhancing social equity, making a meaningful social contribution, and working with children or adolescents. They are motivated to teach because they find fulfillment in working with young individuals, supporting their educational journey, and taking pride in witnessing students learn, realize their potential, and prepare themselves to become responsible and capable adults [67].

Most significantly, teaching is fundamentally an interpersonal and compassionate endeavor, rather than merely an individual pursuit [68]. Such a notion was still evident in this study, as teachers consistently demonstrated a strong relational ethic in their practice, emphasizing empathy, connection, and responsiveness to students' needs. For example, one teacher explained that their "...*commitment to quality education comes from my belief that every child deserves a fair opportunity to succeed.*" For them, education is not only a method to transfer knowledge but also as a process of nurturing, mentoring, and empowering learners to succeed in both academic and personal spheres. Essentially, teachers' motivation towards quality education was altruistic in nature, guided by their pursuit towards social development and equity.

Stumbrienė et al. [69] conducted a survey-based investigation and identified a significant correlation between intrinsic motivation and innovative teaching practices. Educators motivated by an internal drive to enhance their instructional approaches were more inclined to experiment with and adopt new strategies within the classroom setting. This explained why altruistic teachers consistently engaged in purpose-driven instructional design, integration of real-world contexts, and the use of creative pedagogical tools such as storytelling, case studies, and multimedia.

Teachers driven by intrinsic motivation frequently exhibit enhanced creativity, strong commitment, and greater resilience in their professional practice [70]. In contrast to external motivators such as rewards, mandates, or performance evaluations, intrinsic motivation arises from internal drives, including a genuine passion for teaching, intellectual curiosity, and a deep sense of purpose in influencing students' development. One teacher emphasized that her "...*passion for education pushes [her] to make my classroom engaging.*" Teachers who are intrinsically motivated tend to exhibit proactive behaviors in enhancing their professional practice, such as adopting innovative pedagogical approaches, integrating emerging technologies, and

continually improving their instructional competencies to address the needs of their learners. Such educators are more inclined to explore and implement digital tools in their teaching, adapt methodologies to accommodate learning styles, and actively participate in ongoing professional development [71].

However, there is still limited understanding of how to build altruism in the teaching profession. The majority of existing interventions have primarily focused on enhancing teacher competencies, increasing accountability, or improving instructional effectiveness, rather than nurturing the ethical and relational dimensions of teaching [72]. Schools and policymakers should focus on reducing structural barriers, such as class size and workload, and provide targeted training in empathy-building and care-based pedagogies [73]. There is also a need for cultivating a supportive institutional culture to empower teachers to engage more deeply in altruistic actions towards quality education, student success and well-being [74].

7. Conclusion

Intrinsic motivation among teacher education instructors was significantly influenced by personal values such as moral obligation, empathy, and the pursuit of lifelong learning. These internal drivers shaped their teaching identities and translated into purposeful instructional practices, sustained professional development, and inclusive approaches that collectively advanced the goals of quality education. Teachers demonstrated a deep sense of social responsibility, viewing their work as a means to contribute to student empowerment and broader social equity.

Consequently, institutions and policymakers should recognize that nurturing intrinsic motivation requires more than skill development. Academic institutions should also build environments that value ethical teaching, empathy, and care-centered education. This might involve reducing structural barriers such as high workloads and limited resources, and investing in programs that build teacher well-being, reflective practice, and relational competencies. Similarly, professional development initiatives should integrate opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and personal meaning-making in teaching. Future research may build on the qualitative findings of this study by incorporating standardized questionnaires to complement in-depth interviews, allowing for a more detailed and comparative analysis of motivational patterns. Quantitative approaches could facilitate the examination of differences in motivation across gender, age groups, and levels of teaching experience. In addition, future studies may compare intrinsic motivational factors with extrinsic influences such as financial security, promotion opportunities, institutional recognition, and social status, to better determine the relative contribution of each type of motivation to teaching career choice, persistence, and long-term engagement in the educational process.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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