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Motivational Pathways To Teaching in Challenging Times: A Study of English Gen Z Pre-Service Teachers

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Abstract

Teacher motivation has often been studied using broad frameworks that overlook generational traits and rural educational contexts. This study explores how altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations influence Gen Z English pre-service teachers' decisions to pursue teaching in the resource-limited educational setting of West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Using a qualitative approach, data were gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 56 Gen Z pre-service teachers and analyzed through an interactive process of data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The results reveal a layered motivational structure. Altruistic motivation is identified as the main driver, driven by a strong moral commitment to community service and reducing educational disparities. Intrinsic motivation develops gradually through teacher education, reflective learning, and the development of professional identity, serving as a key factor in sustained career commitment. Extrinsic motivation plays a secondary role, mainly as a contextual factor related to job security and work conditions. These findings challenge the stereotype of Gen Z as primarily extrinsically motivated and emphasize the need for context-aware, value-driven approaches to understanding teacher motivation in underprivileged educational settings.

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Introduction

Teachers are pivotal at every educational tier, serving as the most significant human resource and a primary focus of educational policy (Onyefulu et al., 2023). In addition to imparting knowledge, teachers are tasked with inspiring students and fostering moral and

ethical values (Naja, 2023). Their responsibilities encompass professional development, community service, and administrative tasks (Muhammadiyah et al., 2022; Na'imah & Nur, 2021). To fulfill these diverse roles, both current and pre-service teachers must exhibit a spectrum of competencies, namely cognitive, emotional, and practical, encompassing self-awareness, comprehension of their students, adherence to positive values and attitudes, and proficient management of classroom and societal interactions (Sukma, 2023). The multilayered qualifications of the teachers illustrate that the teaching profession is intricate and demanding, retaining its esteem as a noble and highly recognized occupation (Kamali, 2023; Lomi & Mbato, 2021).

Despite those demanding responsibilities, the teaching profession has become even more complex. Numerous studies have reported serious challenges faced by teachers, including mental fatigue, inadequate resources, heterogeneous classrooms, limited support systems, long working hours, and unsatisfactory salaries (Hasibuan, 2024; Jayatissa, 2023; Norman, 2024; Pitaloka & Widowati, 2024; Sebayang et al., 2025; Werang et al., 2022, 2025). Moreover, in West Kalimantan, where this study is situated, the condition is even more critical. Many schools in the least-developed areas lack basic technological facilities, such as projectors, audio systems, and reliable internet access. Yet at present, technological features are among the most powerful tools for helping teachers effectively transfer knowledge.

Consequently, the ongoing transformation from conventional to digital learning brings inevitable changes, requiring teachers to be competent in using technology not only to facilitate learning activities but also to handle administrative tasks. In light of this situation, Generation Z (Gen Z) has emerged as the generation most prepared to meet these demands, having been extensively exposed to rapid technological advancement during their formative years and widely recognized as digital natives (Suyatno et al., 2024). The exposure to technology has significantly shaped their mindset, learning styles, and expectations for their future careers. More specifically, in the workplace, a Deloitte report states that they are required to possess high-technology competencies (O'Boyle et al., 2017), rendering them as ideal candidates for modern teaching professions. However, beyond their technological preparedness, understanding what motivates Gen Z to pursue teaching professions requires analyzing the career values and aspirations they consider when making this decision.

Building on this understanding, Gen Z, in pursuing a career in teaching, has several job aspirations. Several pertinent studies have generally classified Gen Z's top career priorities: healthcare advantage, job safety, flexible working hours, preference to work in a company, work-life balance, supportive working environment, and high salary (Barhate & Dirani, 2021; Jayatissa, 2023; Mărginean, 2021; Ngoc et al., 2022; Pazer, 2024). These diverse career aspirations reflect Generation Z's high professional standards, which are often considered challenging to meet in the education sector, particularly in Indonesia. Moreover, the reality of teaching in Indonesia presents a contradiction between what teachers hope for and what actually happens. Low pay, inflexible organizational structures, and inadequate technology infrastructure are frequently associated with this, especially in less developed areas. These factors conflict with Gen Z's core career aspirations for their employment. As a result, the misalignment between Gen Z's

expectations and the current reality could lead to a decline in younger generations' interest in pursuing teaching as a career (Li & Guo, 2024).

However, an intriguing phenomenon has emerged: the teaching profession remains a preferred career. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture, the number of teachers has increased over the last five years (2020-2025), rising from 2,727,116 in 2020 to 3,443,662 in 2025, an increase of approximately 716,546 teachers (Direktorat Jenderal PAUD Pendidikan Dasar dan Menengah, 2025). Furthermore, at the university where this study is conducted, many students major in education, particularly in the English program. Therefore, this research aims to explore what drives English Gen Z students to choose teaching as a career amid complex circumstances and how this decision is shaped.

According to Akpochafo (2020), there are three factors that drive students to become teachers: motivation, belief, and decision-making. However, several studies claim that the strongest factor driving students to become teachers is motivation (Alvariñas-Villaverde et al., 2022; Jagielska, 2022). Drawing on established literature, experts consistently identify three primary motivations for becoming a teacher: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation (Berger & Ranellucci, 2021; Garra Alloush et al., 2020; Giersch et al., 2021; Ismail & Miller, 2021). Bergmark et al. (2018) and Hartono et al. (2023) have conceptualized and classified the indicators of each motivation towards becoming a teacher. Intrinsic motive, motivation from within, pertains to interest, enjoyment of teaching, expertise, job satisfaction, personal experience (fallback career), and passion for teaching. Extrinsic motive, motivation beyond the job of teaching, covers job security, salary, social status, flexibility, and job conditions. Meanwhile, an altruistic motive, a motivation that involves contributing to society, encompasses a perception of an important and worthy role and the desire to make a difference by supporting students' development. This well-established framework offers a comprehensive perspective on Gen Z students' motivation to pursue teaching careers.

Numerous studies have explored students' motivations toward the teaching profession in both national and international contexts. In the international context, particularly in the developed countries, research has shown diverse findings. A study conducted simultaneously in three distinguished countries, Finland, Sweden, and the United States, has revealed contradictory results. In Finland, most students view teaching as a high-status, valued profession. In Sweden, teaching is considered a worthy profession that can significantly contribute to the development of future generations. Meanwhile, students in the United States are motivated to pursue a teaching career for several reasons, including job security, flexible working hours, and the invaluable contribution to society's development (Giersch et al., 2021). In the meantime, in China, it was found that most students in urban areas were highly motivated by extrinsic motivations, such as salary and permanent dwelling (Wang & Zhang, 2021). The divergent results from several developed countries above suggest that students' perceptions of teaching as a profession to pursue are influenced not only by their surroundings, as they live in more sophisticated countries, but also by their gut feelings. In Indonesia, particularly at the national level, several studies have reported distinct findings compared with those from other countries regarding motivations to teach. A study primarily focused on intrinsic motivation

identified three critical factors that drive Gen Z students to become teachers: interest in teaching, self-development, and satisfaction with teaching (Suyatno et al., 2024). On the other hand, altruistic motivation was found to be the most dominant factor in initiating students to become teachers, highlighting the two most influential aspects: ‘for the love of children’ and ‘to teach and mold the young generation’ (Haruna & Sackey, 2025). Taken together, the aforementioned studies have provided a comprehensive perspective on how several aspects are integrated into a strong motivation that encourages students to pursue the teaching profession. Moreover, since those studies were conducted in different areas, they offer broad perspectives that enrich the literature in a similar scope.

Previous studies have provided valuable insights into students’ motivation to pursue teaching; however, several gaps remain. Many did not classify participants by generational cohort, examined only one type of motivation at a time, or overlooked how Gen Z’s technology-oriented career expectations intersect with local teaching realities. Most were also conducted in urban settings, leaving rural areas underexplored. To address these limitations, this study offers several contributions: (1) it simultaneously examines intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations within a single framework; (2) it analyzes how Gen Z’s tech-oriented career values interact with the resource-limited education system of West Kalimantan; and (3) it expands the literature on teacher motivation in rural Indonesia, a context rarely represented in previous research.

Accordingly, this study aims to clarify how established motivational frameworks function within a specific generational and contextual setting. Focusing on Gen Z English pre-service teachers in a resource-limited educational environment, the study investigates the following research question: How do intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations influence Gen Z English pre-service teachers’ decisions to pursue teaching as a career in such a setting?

Method

Research design

This study employed a qualitative research design to examine pre-service English Gen Z teachers’ motivation to pursue or avoid teaching as a future career. It examines how motivation, framed in terms of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motives, shapes and influences their decision to enter the teaching profession. Many researchers have validated this well-established framework worldwide to examine students’ motivation to pursue a career in teaching. Furthermore, this study also evaluates their career prospects prior to making a professional choice. This study was conducted in the least developed area, which is far from advanced technology, supportive learning facilities, and infrastructure. By integrating the local context, this study provides a unique portrait of Gen Z’s decision to teach and work in rural areas, including its complexities.

Data source

The data were gained from 56 pre-service English teachers at a private university in West Kalimantan. The participants were all within the Gen Z cohort born from 1995 to 2012 (Barhate

& Dirani, 2021); specifically, the sample in this study was born between 2002 and 2005, representing the younger segment of this generation.

Data collection techniques

For data collection, the researchers used two instruments: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire served as an initial mapping of Gen Z motivations towards the teaching profession. Thus, the questionnaire was a supplementary tool, not a primary one. The questionnaire in this study consisted of 15 questions divided into three sections: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation. Each section contained five items with closed-ended questions that required respondents to choose from a limited set of options. A 4-point Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree) was used to allow participants to express their agreement or disagreement with various questions about attitudes toward teaching motivation (Taherdoost, 2019).

The questionnaire items were derived from validated instruments developed by Asriani et al. (2022) and Hartono et al. (2023), both grounded in the motivational framework established by Bergmark et al. (2018). These instruments were selected because their constructs closely align with the current research focus on intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motives among pre-service teachers. Both instruments demonstrated satisfactory reliability in their original studies, affirming their suitability for adaptation in this setting. Before distribution, the modified questionnaire underwent expert validation by two English academics and one psychometrics professional to ensure content relevance and clarity. A pilot test was conducted with ten students not included in the primary sample to evaluate readability and internal consistency. Minor language revisions were made in response to feedback to improve clarity while preserving the original intent of the items.

Data were also gathered through semi-structured interviews. This approach was chosen for its flexibility in obtaining the data. Unlike a structured interview that has a limited and standardized set of questions, a semi-structured interview enables new additional questions to be brought forward based on the interviewees' responses (Ruslin et al., 2022). Thus, the researchers could effectively obtain rich and robust information. The interview in this study served as a primary tool to probe participants more deeply. The data from interviews were the primary source for elucidating the phenomenon among English Gen Z pre-service teachers, particularly regarding their future decision to teach. Before the interviews, the researchers obtained participants' permission and confirmed their availability. As a result, ten students agreed to participate in the interviews. The interview guide included six predetermined open-ended questions. The interviews were conducted online, and each participant was given flexibility in how they completed the questions. To avoid discrepancies in participants' information, the researchers recorded the interviews and transcribed them.

Data analysis

To analyze the data, an interactive model developed by Miles et al. (2019) was employed. This model comprises three critical stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In data reduction, the researchers sorted the entire dataset to obtain valid,

efficient data for the research. After the data were reduced, they were displayed in a diagram, which facilitated the researchers' comprehension and scrutiny of the findings, leading to a more valuable conclusion. The final stage of the analysis is conclusion drawing. It refers to developing primary findings supported by robust evidence and accurate data.

Results and Discussion

Result

To explore Gen Z students' motivations for pursuing a career in teaching, a descriptive analysis was conducted. An investigation of participants using questionnaires and interviews showed that motivation itself prompted and shaped students' decision to become teachers. The researchers looked into various factors affecting Gen Z students' choice to enter teaching. The results revealed how intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations influence Gen Z English majors' decision to pursue a teaching career in West Kalimantan's difficult educational environment.

1. Results from the questionnaire

To illustrate the results from the questionnaire, the figure below presents the motivations that led Gen Z students to teach, followed by a further description of their decision to teach, ranging from altruistic and intrinsic motivations to extrinsic motivations.

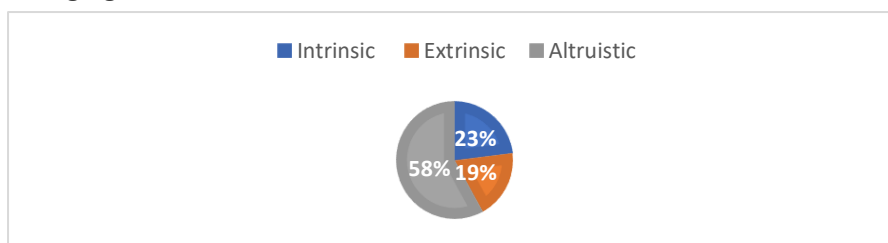


Figure 1: Teaching Motivation

The figure shows that altruistic motivation (58%) was a prominent factor in influencing most Gen Z students to pursue a teaching career. 32 out of 56 participants agreed that they were motivated by altruism. This motivation tends to resonate with Gen Z students aged 19-21. Followed by the intrinsic category (23%), in which 13 respondents were inclined to be influenced by this motivational impetus. Those who chose teaching for intrinsic motivation were aged 19-20.

In the meantime, data from extrinsic motivation (19%) were considered the weakest factor influencing students' decision to teach. In this category, only 11 participants reported an inclination to pursue a teaching career driven by extrinsic motivation. The majority of students who were triggered extrinsically were aged 22 years old. The age classification shows significant differences: younger students were more likely to choose teaching for altruistic reasons, whereas older students were more likely to choose it for extrinsic reasons.

2. The results from interviews

Altruistic motivations

Altruistic motivation is the most frequently mentioned driving factor by participants during the interview process. The theme of altruistic motivation was identified through coding as follows: social contribution and a perception of a job as worthy and valuable. As reported by the participant through the interview, as follows:

Excerpt 1:

Student A: *The reason I decided to pursue a career in teaching is that, by being a teacher, I can make a contribution to society. I will use the experience I gained during my time in university. One of the contributions I plan to make is introducing technology to those who have not known it before.*

According to excerpt 1, they believe that the teaching profession offers a meaningful way to contribute to society, especially through the integration of technology. Gen Z in this study recognizes that technology should not be avoided but embraced. As digital natives, they see a teaching career as a means to support the community via academic engagement. Therefore, motivated by altruism, Gen Z views the teaching profession as a societal obligation to fulfill.

On the other hand, participants also mentioned that a teaching career was perceived as a worthy and valuable job.

Excerpt 2:

Student B: *I view the teaching profession as a worthy and valuable profession. Since it has become a worthy and valuable profession, I believe the teaching profession is a path I can pursue for a fulfilling and meaningful career.*

According to this statement, Gen Z, who are motivated altruistically, regard the teaching profession as a meaningful job. Rather than seeking material incentives or popularity, they place greater emphasis on the value and meaning inherent in the teaching profession itself. Thus, notwithstanding the adverse conditions, this motivation greatly strengthened Gen Z's commitment to pursue the teaching profession.

Intrinsic motivation

Based on the questionnaire results, intrinsic motivation ranked second as the key factor influencing many Gen Z students to pursue a teaching career. During the interview, participants identified two main motivational indicators that influence them most. The theme of intrinsic motivation includes: fallback career, personal experience, and interest in teaching. During the interview, the participant reported,

Excerpt 3:

Student C: *Actually, I didn't expect to pursue a career in teaching. At first, I enrolled in a different major that was definitely not in education, but unfortunately, I wasn't accepted. I was confused at the time, and eventually I decided to major in education and became eager to become a teacher.*

This excerpt illustrates that motivation to enter a teaching career could derive from an unpleasant individual experience. While rejection is generally not a blessing in disguise, in the process of developing motivation to become a teacher, a fallback career can serve as a stepping

stone that strengthens that motivation. In this regard, a fallback career does not serve as an immediate indicator of motivation that instantaneously shapes one's drive, but rather operates through a gradual process, shaped and reinforced by various factors that develop incrementally over time.

In addition, the participant also mentioned that interest in teaching has significantly shaped their determination to enter the teaching profession. As expressed by the participant, Excerpt 4:

Student D: *The reason I want to pursue a career in teaching is that I have a strong interest in teaching. I believe this interest has greatly influenced my desire to become a teacher in the future.*

This implies that intrinsic motivation, reflected in a genuine interest in teaching, functions as a potent inner impetus that both preserves and amplifies an individual's commitment to pursuing the teaching profession.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation, though acting as the weakest factor in Gen Z's decision to teach, still plays a crucial role in shaping students' motivation. A number of participants identified at least two motivational drives within the extrinsic dimension: job security and job conditions. Students motivated extrinsically, particularly indicated by job security, consider teaching a safe job:

Excerpt 5:

Student E: *I am very sure that the teaching profession is a secure job. I like to work in a workplace that is safe and away from threats. In line with this, I decided to pursue a career in teaching.*

This indicates that when Gen Z selects a career, particularly in teaching, they consider job security their top priority. The underlying reason for this is that job security creates a psychological environment free from anxiety, thereby enabling educators to perform at their best and focus more on delivering high-quality instruction.

Furthermore, participant mentioned that job conditions also contributed to their decision-making towards the teaching profession:

Excerpt 6:

Student F: *I chose teaching because I love working at school. I like the school's atmosphere, which provides me with a comfortable place to work.*

According to this excerpt, physical and social conditions at the workplace significantly motivate them. They believe that the school setting is not just a place to meet professional responsibilities, but also a space that provides comfort and emotional satisfaction. In this context, the appeal of the school environment plays a key role in shaping Gen Z's perceptions of the teaching profession, showing that working conditions are an essential factor in their career choices.

The results clearly show that altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations have significantly influenced Gen Z students in West Kalimantan's challenging educational context to choose teaching as a profession. Altruistically, students were mainly shaped by factors

related to worthwhile and valuable jobs and social contributions. In the meantime, intrinsic motivation stems from a fallback career and from factors related to teaching interest. Lastly, in the case of extrinsic motivation, students were motivated to teach because of their preference towards the security and enjoyable conditions of the school environment.

Discussion

This study examines the impact of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations on Gen Z English pre-service teachers' decisions to enter the teaching profession in West Kalimantan's challenging educational environment. The results indicate an imbalance in motivational influences, with altruistic motivation most prevalent, followed by intrinsic motivation, whereas extrinsic influences had the least impact. This pattern undermines prevailing narratives that depict Gen Z as chiefly motivated by material incentives and job stability. The findings suggest that purpose-driven beliefs and social responsibility significantly influence career decisions in resource-constrained environments. The ensuing discussion commences by analyzing altruistic motivation as the principal determinant.

Altruistic motivation

This study's findings reveal that altruistic motivation is the primary factor influencing Gen Z pre-service teachers' decisions to enter the teaching profession in West Kalimantan. This outcome corroborates previous Indonesian research that identifies altruism as a primary motivator for selecting a teaching career (e.g., Haruna & Sackey, 2025), while also expanding the literature by uncovering a context-specific understanding of altruism among Gen Z students. Rather than focusing primarily on emotional connections with children or the pleasure of classroom engagement, the participants in this study expressed altruistic motivation through broader, value-oriented perspectives, particularly by viewing teaching as a significant, socially beneficial, and transformative vocation.

This change in focus indicates that Gen Z students in under-resourced educational settings perceive altruism not merely as a personal emotional tendency but rather as a societal obligation. Teaching is regarded not only as a profession but also as a means of fostering community development and promoting educational equity. These findings support the notion that altruistic motivation is a social construct, significantly influenced by environmental factors (Yöney & Mirici, 2025). In West Kalimantan, recurrent problems such as inadequate infrastructure, unequal access to technology, and geographic remoteness seem to amplify students' altruistic tendencies through direct exposure to educational inequities.

The data indicate a developing form of altruism that can be characterized as contextual and placed within specific generations. Gen Z students, as digital natives, view their technological skills as assets for addressing local educational deficiencies. Numerous participants underscored their aspiration to integrate technology, digital literacy, and creative pedagogical methods for kids in under-resourced schools. This viewpoint embodies technical altruism, in which social contribution is achieved by using digital talents to mitigate educational disparities. In this regard, altruistic motivation operates at the intersection of generational

identity and contextual necessity, differentiating Gen Z pre-service teachers from previous cohorts, whose altruism was typically confined to caring responsibilities.

This study's high prevalence of altruistic motivation stands in stark contrast to findings from more economically developed educational settings. In places like China, research shows that extrinsic factors such as money, job security, and material rewards are the primary motivators for choosing a teaching career (Wang & Zhang, 2021). The differences observed here suggest that motivational priorities vary across contexts and are shaped by structural constraints and by individual educational backgrounds and experiences. In situations where financial rewards are limited and professional obstacles are considerable, the appeal of teaching appears to be driven more by moral purpose and perceived societal impact than by economic factors and incentives.

This research contradicts existing narratives that portray Gen Z as primarily motivated by practical career factors, such as pay, flexibility, and work–life balance. The findings confirm the perspective that Gen Z exhibits increased social consciousness and environmental awareness (Sharma & Pandit, 2021), especially when faced with apparent disparities in their local communities. The focus on teaching as a “worthy and useful profession” highlights a values-driven approach to career selection, indicating that altruistic motivation serves as a stabilizing influence, sustaining interest in teaching despite adverse working conditions.

The significance of altruistic motivation in this study suggests that Gen Z pre-service teachers' dedication to teaching in complex educational environments is rooted in a profound sense of purpose and social involvement. This discovery has significant ramifications for teacher education and policy, underscoring the need to acknowledge, cultivate, and sustain altruistic tendencies through institutional support, contextualized training, and avenues for substantive community involvement.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation was identified as the second most significant factor influencing Gen Z pre-service teachers' decisions to enter the teaching profession. Although it did not exceed altruistic motivation in overall significance, intrinsic factors were essential in maintaining students' commitment to teaching as a viable career option. The findings indicate that intrinsic motivation among Gen Z students is not necessarily inherent or instantaneous, but rather evolves gradually through academic engagement, reflective experiences, and greater familiarity with the teaching profession.

A key finding of this study is the link between fallback career paths and the rising interest in teaching. For many individuals, enrolling in teacher education was initially accidental and resulted from unsuccessful attempts to enter their preferred fields. However, rather than showing a lack of dedication, this alternative route often sparked the gradual growth of genuine passion. As students participated in pedagogical training, classroom experiences, and identity formation as future educators, their interest in teaching evolved from mere circumstantial acceptance to true professional dedication. This pattern supports the idea that intrinsic motivation can develop over time rather than only stemming from early career ambitions.

This discovery both contests and expands upon the current literature. Prior research has frequently depicted other job options as peripheral or perhaps harmful to professional dedication (e.g., Başöz, 2021; Virtanen et al., 2025). The current analysis indicates that, in demanding educational environments, a backup entry into teaching may serve as a transitory stage that facilitates reflective career realignment. The rise of intrinsic motivation in this process underscores the fluidity of career decision-making, especially among Gen Z students actively exploring their identity, purpose, and professional trajectory.

Furthermore, participants' accounts suggest that motivation in teaching is intricately linked to perceived personal development, enjoyment of instructional involvement, and fulfillment gained from significant interactions with students. These results align with previous studies emphasizing interest, self-improvement, and job satisfaction as fundamental elements of intrinsic motivation in education (Dewi & Fajri, 2023; Suyatno et al., 2024). Significantly, our study contextualizes these internal motivators among prominent structural constraints and professional ambiguities. This indicates that contextual realities influence intrinsic motivation among Gen Z pre-service teachers and that this influence arises through their active engagement.

The findings indicate that Gen Z students value internal alignment and personal resonance in job decisions, typically placing less weight on long-term career predictability at the initial phases of professional development. Instead of being discouraged by the intricacies and demands of teaching, students who cultivated intrinsic motivation had greater clarity, confidence, and devotion as they progressed through their training. This substantiates the assertion that intrinsic drive serves as a stabilizing mechanism, allowing students to maintain interest in education despite the scarcity of extrinsic rewards.

This study highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation by presenting the decision to pursue a teaching career as a dynamic process rather than a fixed choice. Understanding intrinsic motivation as emergent rather than predetermined has significant implications for teacher education programs, as structured learning experiences, reflective practices, and supportive educational environments can convert initial uncertainty into enduring professional commitment among Gen Z pre-service teachers. In this hierarchical motivational framework, intrinsic motivation serves mainly as a sustaining force rather than a catalyst for career initiation. Altruistic reasons provide the moral impetus to pursue a teaching career, while intrinsic motivation enhances persistence by cultivating personal engagement, enjoyment, and a sense of professional significance during teacher preparation. Nonetheless, intrinsic commitment does not operate in isolation; the subsequent part thus explores extrinsic motivation to elucidate how external situations are perceived, assessed, and negotiated within this comprehensive motivational framework.

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation was identified as the least significant element influencing Gen Z pre-service teachers' decisions to enter the teaching profession in this study. This finding indicates a reassessment of how extrinsic factors are evaluated in a challenging educational situation, rather than a disregard for external conditions. Contrary to prevailing narratives that

depict Gen Z as chiefly motivated by wages, job security, and flexible working conditions, the participants in this study seemed to regard external factors as secondary or contingent, negotiated alongside their intrinsic values and sense of purpose.

The constrained impact of extrinsic motivation can be comprehended through participants' recognition of the structural realities of the teaching profession in Indonesia, especially in rural and under-resourced areas. Numerous students commenced their teacher education with a clear awareness that the profession may not offer substantial financial incentives or rapid material advancement. Thus, extrinsic incentives such as wages and social standing were regarded not as pivotal elements but as contextual constraints to be recognized and addressed. This conclusion diverges from research in more economically secure educational systems, where extrinsic rewards frequently dominate career decision-making (Wang & Zhang, 2021), underscoring the context-dependent characteristics of motivational hierarchies.

Significantly, the extrinsic characteristics that remained pertinent for participants were associated with psychological and environmental security rather than material benefits. Job stability and a nurturing educational environment were often identified as preferred conditions, illustrating Gen Z's inclination towards secure, predictable, and emotionally sustainable workplaces. This approach aligns with research indicating that Gen Z prioritizes security and well-being over mere financial incentives, especially in unstable job markets. In this context, extrinsic motivation among Gen Z pre-service teachers is reconceptualized not as a pursuit of rewards but as a pragmatic evaluation of working conditions that facilitate sustained professional performance. Moreover, the very minor influence of extrinsic motivation highlights the cohesive character of the motivational framework identified in this study. Extrinsic factors do not independently influence professional selection; rather, they serve as moderators that either facilitate or hinder the fulfillment of altruistic and intrinsic values. When external conditions are considered sufficiently stable and favorable, they boost students' commitment to the teaching profession. Conversely, when external conditions are viewed as incongruent with individual values or career ambitions, they may exacerbate uncertainty rather than inspire engagement in teaching.

Collectively, these data indicate that extrinsic motivation among Gen Z pre-service teachers serves more as a contextual filter for evaluating career sustainability than as a primary driver. This viewpoint challenges deficit-focused interpretations that link low extrinsic motivation to diminished professional dedication. It underscores Gen Z's ability to prioritize significance, personal involvement, and social impact while concurrently navigating external circumstances. This highlights the necessity for teacher education institutions and legislators to enhance working conditions and institutional support, not merely as recruitment strategies but as vital means of maintaining motivated, value-oriented future educators.

Summary of motivation dynamics

This study's findings indicate that Gen Z pre-service teachers' decisions to enter teaching careers in demanding educational environments are influenced by a complex, interconnected motivational framework. The altruistic drive serves as the principal impetus,

grounding professional selection in ethical purpose and social accountability, especially in response to local educational disparities. Intrinsic motivation functions as a sustaining mechanism that evolves, enhancing commitment through personal involvement, professional significance, and reflective development. Extrinsic drive, although less significant in initial career selection, serves as a contextual filter that mediates the durability of professional commitment by shaping perceptions of job security and working conditions. Collectively, these findings challenge simplistic portrayals of Gen Z as primarily motivated by external factors and underscore the importance of contextualized, value-centric analyses of teacher motivation. This study elucidates how generational traits and environmental factors jointly influence teaching career trajectories in a resource-constrained educational setting.

Conclusion

This study examined how altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations influence the career choices of Generation Z English pre-service teachers in the challenging educational setting of West Kalimantan. The results show that these motivational factors function in a layered and interconnected way rather than as separate or competing influences.

Altruistic motivation proved to be the most influential factor, framing teaching as a vocation rooted in moral responsibility, social contribution, and community service. For many participants, choosing to become teachers was more than just a career decision; it was a commitment to tackling educational inequality and supporting social development, especially in underserved areas. This emphasizes the ongoing importance of value-based motivations in shaping how Gen Z students engage with the teaching profession.

Intrinsic motivation plays a vital role in this motivational framework. Instead of being a fixed trait before entering teacher education, intrinsic interest develops gradually through participation in teacher training, reflective learning experiences, and the formation of a professional identity. This indicates that the commitment to the teaching career among Gen Z pre-service teachers builds over time, highlighting the need for supportive teaching environments that foster professional purpose and long-term involvement.

Extrinsic motivation mainly serves as a contextual factor rather than a core reason for choosing a career. Elements like job security and working conditions are assessed practically as signs of career sustainability. However, these factors are usually viewed through personal values and professional goals instead of directly influencing the decision to pursue a profession.

Overall, the study challenges typical portrayals of Gen Z as mainly extrinsically motivated. Instead, the findings show that teaching career decisions stem from a complex interaction between moral purpose, developing professional interest, and pragmatic contextual assessment. By placing these motivational factors within a resource-limited educational environment, this study adds to a more detailed understanding of teacher motivation and provides insights for teacher education programs and policy efforts aimed at maintaining altruistic commitment, boosting intrinsic engagement, and improving extrinsic conditions to support long-term teacher retention.

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be recognized. First, the study is limited to a specific regional context; future research could compare different disadvantaged or rural areas to see if similar motivational patterns appear. Second, since Gen Z students are digital natives, more research might examine how technological expectations influence actual teaching experiences in rural schools with limited tech infrastructure. Lastly, studies with larger and more diverse groups of participants could offer broader insights into the motivational drives of Gen Z entering teaching. Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into the complex motivational factors influencing Gen Z teachers' career choices in difficult educational settings.

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