EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS REGARDING STUDENT MOTIVATION STRATEGIES: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHT

by

Lakeita Lewis Lyles

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2024

EXPLORING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS REGARDING STUDENT MOTIVATION STRATEGIES: A HERMENEUTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHT

by Lakeita Lewis Lyles

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

APPROVED BY:

Russell G. Yocum, EdD, Committee Chair

Grania G. Holman, EdD, Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to highlight the extent of missing student motivation guiding principles by describing the lived experiences of teachers in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. The presence of disengaged and demotivated students in United States secondary school classrooms has become a common phenomenon. The theory guiding this study is Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory. The central research question used in this study was, how do secondary school teachers in Texas describe their experiences of the strategies they employ in bolstering student motivation? The study followed a qualitative inductive path in data collection by focusing on the lived experiences, opinions, attitudes, and worldviews of selected participants. The study took place in Texas featuring 10 participants from a school district in Texas. All the interviews were conducted online via Zoom, which was the participants' preference. Focus groups and questionnaires were also used to collect data. The collected data were analyzed using content analysis to derive recurring themes and patterns in participant responses, thereby unearthing the strategies employed by teachers to bolster student motivation in U.S. secondary schools. Six major themes were identified from the data analysis of this study: teacher-student relationships, teaching methods, socioeconomic aspects, student features, the education system, and school culture and administration. The study found that to bolster student motivation, teachers must begin by establishing positive relationships with students. Student involvement, teachers' genuine concern for students' well-being, and connecting through real-world examples were also pointed out as important factors in bolstering student motivation among secondary students.

Keywords: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, engagement, self-efficacy, self-determination

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to those who dedicated themselves to me:

I dedicate this dissertation to the head of my life, my bright and morning star, the one and only God almighty with whom all things are possible.

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my mother, Mrs. Barbara P. Lewis. Although God saw fit that you did not see this dream come to fruition, it was because of you that I began this journey and saw it through to the end. The life lessons you taught me, the fight you instilled in me, the values and morals you taught me, and the love you gave me will never be forgotten.

To my father, Mr. Tom H. Lewis, the work ethics that you modeled for me, the encouragement that you gave me, and the discipline that you provided me throughout my life is why I dedicate this dissertation to you.

To my loving husband, Mr. Jerrold Lyles, Sr. your love, patience, and support through every step of my journey helped me to accomplish my goal.

To my dear sister Deidra, who is and has always been my biggest cheerleader. Whenever I thought that I couldn't, you reminded me that I could. Your unconditional love is appreciated, needed, and reciprocated.

To my children, Destiny, ZaNya, and Jerrold, Jr., who were my inspiration to obtain my doctorate, everything I do, I do for the three of you. You all gave me the inspiration and desire to be the best that I can be so that you will never settle for less than your best. The sky is the limit, only if you let it be. As paraphrased by Vice President Kamala Harris, "shoes on kids, there's glass everywhere!"

Acknowledgments

I acknowledge my committee chair, Dr. Russell Yocum. Thank you for your never-ending support and encouragement. Your prompt and knowledgeable responses played a tremendous part in aiding me through this process.

Committee member, Dr. Grania Holman. Thank you for serving on my committee and pushing me to go beyond the limits that I set for myself.

Editor, Francis. Thank you for your wisdom and encouragement. Without your guidance, I may have never gotten through this process. The advice and suggestions that you provided helped me to grow as a writer.

Spiritual Leaders, Bishop (Dr.) R. Ray and Kim Gatewood. Thank you for your prayers, support, and encouragement. You saw things in me that I didn't even see in myself. You helped me through extremely hard times and helped me to rediscover my will and desire to achieve.

Spiritual Advisor, Elder Henry Nash. What is a Biblical worldview without a spiritual advisor to help you navigate through the word of God? You helped me to gain an understanding of God's word and connect His word to my everyday life with integrity.

Prayer Warriors, Members of Bethesda Fellowship Ministries. Thank you for praying for me when I could not or would not pray for myself. This tree could not stand without its roots. Thank you for being my roots and keeping me grounded in the word of God.

Co-workers, both past and present. Thank you for always being there for me. Thank you for encouraging me. Thank you for being who you are in not only my life but the lives of others. You truly make a difference.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Center on Education Policy (CEP)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Five-Factor Model (FFM)

Future Time Perspective (FTP)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Teacher-Centered Systemic Reform Model (TCSR)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Student success, particularly academic performance, cannot be divorced from motivation. There is already a long strand of literature (Arulmoly & Branavan, 2017; Gbollie & Keamu, 2017; Özen, 2017; Sukor et al., 2017; Tokan & Imakulata, 2019) linking student motivation to learning behavior and academic success among the global network of students. In the United States and globally, the teacher has been tasked with ensuring that students achieve academic success and the more challenging grind of bolstering student motivation. Given the wide range of students from extensive backgrounds, races, ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds, a one-size-fits-all approach to attaining student motivation is yet to be discovered. Therefore, the classroom, devoid of motivated students, translates into a scene of sluggish, lackluster academic vagabonds with no concern for schoolwork, grades, or achievement. Despite an everlasting need for motivated students, information about the strategies teachers need to develop highly motivated students remains scanty and fragmented. Therefore, the focus of this study is to unearth these strategies based on the lived experiences, opinions, and perspectives of secondary school teachers in the United States, hoping to broaden the options available to educators regarding motivating their learners. To aid in unearthing motivational strategies, chapter one begins with a background, highlighting the chronological evolution and the social and theoretical forces of the problem. The chapter then transitions into the situation to self, problem statement, purpose statement, the significance of the study, research questions, and the definition of terms pertinent to the study in that order. The chapter eventually concludes with a summary, which is a succinct restatement of the problem and purpose of the study.

Background

This section begins with looking at where the U.S. has come from historically and the current trends in student motivation. The section includes historical background, social context, and theoretical underpinning. Ostensibly, the section treats student motivation as a property of history, social dynamics, and theoretical perspectives.

Historical Context

Reports of disengaged students in the U.S. have become ubiquitous. A series of papers released by the Center on Education Policy (CEP) and summarized by Usher and Kober (2012) paints a grim picture of motivation, viewing it as an urgent yet overlooked piece of reform in the U.S. education sector. According to Weiner (1990), praise, reward and punishment, feedback, success, failure, competition, and cooperation have been debated since the 1930s when motivation research gained traction in the U.S. with forerunners like the *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*. In agreement, Robert Marzano's Model of Teaching Effectiveness also includes strategies such as reinforcing effort, providing recognition, providing feedback, providing students with simulations, and low-stakes competition (Marzano, 2012). However, it was only in the 1990s that topics like intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and learned helplessness gained attention among researchers in the educational motivation arena (Koca, 2016).

Earlier studies like Voke (2002) argue that the issue of disengaged students in the U.S. is not new but dates back to the 1980s and 90s, particularly among adolescent learners. Though it has long been known that student engagement is a property of participatory learning and autonomy and an individualized, authentic curriculum that focuses on students' interests, Voke (2002) laments that classroom instruction in the U.S. is still based on routine, rote learning, and

passivity. In reiteration, a report by the National Research Council, as cited by Mazepus (2017), showed that over 40 percent of American high school students are chronically disengaged from school. Critiques of these findings argue that many reforms have swept the education sector within the last two decades. Justifiably, in 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which served as the most recent amelioration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). The NCLB was meant to develop an all-inclusive education system by bringing on board previously neglected groups of students from poor and minority backgrounds and those in special education (Klein, 2015). The NCLB has since been replaced by its newer version—Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 (Klein, 2015).

Even so, there was no evidence of boosted student motivation for the 13 years of the NCLB's existence. Collier (2015) reports that of the 825,000 fifth to twelfth-grade students who participated in Gallup's 2014 student poll, 47% reported disengagement. Similarly, only 40% of the educators who participated in the poll reported that their learners were highly motivated and engaged (Collier, 2015). Another poll conducted by the same organization (Gallup) in 2017 in the U.S. and Canada confirmed that only 47% of all students are engaged, with grade 10, grade 11, and grade 12 students being the least engaged at 33%, 32%, and 34% respectively (Robinson, 2018). These findings surfaced during the era of the NCLB and its replacement, The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), reflecting that student motivation in the U.S. has remained the same or deteriorated. Understandably, the aim of NCLB and ESSA was not to bolster student motivation but to develop an inclusive education system (Klein, 2015).

Nevertheless, the dwindling levels of student motivation in the U.S. suggest that little effort is being channeled toward enhancing student motivation at the policy level. Ultimately,

individual learning institutions and educators have been responsible for developing and implementing student motivation models. This phenomenon substantially explains the need for a unifying approach to learner motivation in the country. It is, therefore, imperative to study the strategies employed by these educators to explore the possibility of attaining a consolidated model of motivation.

Social Context

The social environment is broadly understood in terms of societal beliefs, practices, norms, behaviors, and customs. Arguably, all events in the life of a human being take place within a social context, education and learning notwithstanding. Effectively, a healthy environment provides the appropriate resources and opportunities for continuous learning, while unhealthy environments are responsible for breeding problematic societies. Arifin et al. (2018) blame the social environment for most of the ills displayed by the students within the learning environment, including bullying, skipping, truancy, loitering, and other social ills from social media. Arifin et al. (2018) add that the social environment shapes learners' behaviors based on the premise that human beings are naturally inclined towards mimicking behavior and cues from their environment, regardless of the orientation—negative or positive.

Mostly, behavior is modeled by role models in society, such as parents, peers, educators, and mass media (Arifin et al., 2018). Usman and Madudili (2019) reiterate that the learning environment is a social force stemming from the learning resources, modes of learning, means of teaching, and the connection to societal and global viewpoints. In other words, as much as educators are expected to create positive learning environments, learners' backgrounds are also significant determinants of student motivation levels. Students from dysfunctional families and neighborhoods infested with crime and insecurity are likely to perform dismally as far as

motivation to learn is concerned compared to their counterparts hailing from healthy families and social environments (Lutfi & Razzak, 2016). Similarly, students from certain social groups, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds may need more motivation due to systemic factors in the education sector, which directly impact motivation and performance. For instance, Keumala et al. (2019) point out that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners must adapt to new social and academic systems that are not part of their familial and cultural traditions.

Theoretical Context

The gaps identified regarding student motivation in U.S. secondary schools suggest a serious consideration of future reforms. However, first-order reforms like standardized curricula, shorter school days, and less stringent testing, which are easy to implement, may or may not influence student motivation and achievement. However, such changes are less likely to induce fundamental changes in the daily educational experience for students and teachers. Conversely, suppose stakeholders and schools of thought came together to brainstorm on a second-order reform like principles and standards for student motivation in secondary schools. In that case, there is a likelihood of creating fundamental changes in the way educators approach student motivation. This optimism is founded on the premise that second-order reforms overhaul existing systems by introducing new ways of thinking, organizing, and acting.

The above deductions are congruent with self-efficacy and self-determination theories. For instance, current reforms may need to focus more on curricula and administrative domains to the extent of neglecting the motivational dimensions of achievement, performance, and motivation. According to the self-determination theory, motivation derives from autonomy, competence, and relatedness domains. On the other hand, the self-efficacy theory points out that motivation is a product of how well a person believes he or she can succeed in each situation.

Ultimately, the current study investigates the extent to which secondary school teachers have implemented such theoretical perspectives in their practice.

Problem Statement

The problem is that there are no formally established guiding principles for student motivation in the U.S., which has led to highly fragmented motivational styles among teachers, which are, in turn, reflected in the reluctance of students to participate in learning, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (De Loof et al., 2019; Hornstra et al., 2015). Current research like that of Collier (2015), Mazepus (2017), and Robinson (2018) have all established that more than 40% of all students, particularly those in secondary schools in the U.S., are chronically disengaged. According to Bustamante (2019), there were about 15.3 million high school students in the U.S. in 2019. Using 40% as the lower cut point of the number of disengaged students, then at least six million American high school students are chronically disengaged and demotivated. However, as discussed earlier, the concept of student motivation is far from easy and straightforward, given the individual, environmental, and social determinants of motivation. Even so, apart from standardized testing, which has long been thought to be a deterrent rather than a promoter of student motivation, the U.S. curriculum lacks deliberate clauses and objectives for enhancing student motivation.

Most student motivation efforts have been left to individual teachers who employ different approaches based on intuition and gut feelings, eroding consistency, and producing errors like confirmation bias (Vanlommel et al., 2017). Suppose this problem still needs to be solved. In that case, more students are likely to join the disengagement bandwagon, especially grades 10-11 students who have displayed dismal performance regarding engagement and motivation at 33%, 32%, and 34%, respectively (Robinson, 2018). To some extent, ESSA is

reaching fruition based on the receding student dropout rates in the U.S. According to McFarland et al. (2020), the dropout rates among 15-24-year-olds have fallen to 5.4% and 3.9% for status and event dropout, respectively. Although the percentage rates are promising, the figures are unprecedented—2.1 million and 523,000 students drop out annually in status and event dropout categories, respectively. There are other drivers of the high numbers of student dropouts beyond just student motivation, but bolstered motivation could scale down the phenomenon by keeping more students in school. In all this, the main question regards what teachers are doing to motivate their learners and whether there are underlying patterns in intervention that, once discovered, can assist in developing a unified approach to student motivation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to highlight the extent of missing student motivation guiding principles by describing teachers' lived experiences in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. At this stage in the research, student motivation will be generally defined in three ways—lack of motivation, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. Lack of motivation will be viewed as a situation where the students do not attribute meaning to academic-related actions (Nayir, 2017). Intrinsic student motivation will be defined as student engagement based on the inherent satisfaction derived from learning, devoid of any external pressure or reward (Legault, 2016). Lastly, extrinsic student motivation will be regarded as participation in a learning activity to derive some outcome that stands disjointed from the activity (Legault, 2016). This study is guided by the self-efficacy theory and attribution theory, with the former being a subset of the social cognitive theory coined by Bandura (1986). Self-efficacy has been defined by Doménech-Betoret et al.

(2017) as an individual's belief in his or her competencies in harnessing personal abilities in the achievement of predetermined results.

Attribution is also a cornerstone of student achievement and motivation alongside self-efficacy. According to Maymon et al. (2018), attribution is the perceived cause of an outcome. In other words, attribution underscores a person's explanation of why things turned out the way they did. The theory of attribution is a cognitive functionalism concept originated by Heider in 1958 and advanced by other theorists like Bernard Weiner (Weiner, 1990). Weiner (1990) notes that Heider points out that attributions are crucial in interpersonal relationships because they determine thoughts, feelings, expectations, perceptions, actions, and reactions. Weiner (1990) proposed that an individual's perceptions or attributions of success and failure are reflected in the amount of energy or effort directed toward an activity in the future. Weiner (1990) adds that attributions with more significant positive affect and anticipations of future success are more likely to yield a higher willingness for future engagement compared to attributions with negative affect and low potential for success in the future.

The factors making up the theory of attribution are threefold---stability (stable and unstable factors), locus of control (internal and external), and controllability (controllable and uncontrollable factors). Ostensibly, students are likely to draw their motivation from whether their sources of motivation are stable or unstable, controllable or beyond them, and whether those factors are internal or external. At school, students may attribute success or failure to objects, events, or people in their environments, which can, in turn, be used to shape motivation. Broadly, the social cognitive theory was chosen because it underscores the stepwise progression of human behavior as an individual (the student) engages socially and cognitively with a learning environment.

Significance of the Study

The state of student motivation in the U.S. is dire and ominous. The most recent report by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows no changes in mathematics and reading performances among American secondary school students within the last two decades (U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). This stagnation occurred at a time when other ten education systems in countries like Peru and Germany showed impressive improvements in literary improvements and others like Latvia, Turkey, and Macau recorded improvements in mathematics performance from 2003 to 2018 (U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences; National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Furthermore, a recent study conducted by The Learning Network (2019) found that U.S. students advocate for less pressure in classrooms (autonomy), more technology in the classrooms, the abolition of standardized tests, more engaging lessons, support from teachers, and better learning. The findings of The Learning Network (2019) agree with previous findings by Collier (2015) and Robinson (2018), who cited student disengagement as a significant impediment to academic success among secondary students in the U.S. Arguably, understanding the strategies that teachers employ to motivate their students could be elucidative in shedding light upon why motivation levels among secondary students in the U.S. are so low. Against this backdrop, the significance of this study is three-tier—practical, empirical, and theoretical.

Theoretical

The current student motivation strategies employed by secondary school teachers in the U.S. need unifying standards and principles. Arguably, the motivation strategies employed in one school differ from those employed in another. This study does not insist on the development of

universal student motivation strategies but advocates for an inquest into the feasibility of developing standardized educational guidelines for student motivation aligned to instructional standards. However, if such guidelines are to be developed, there will be an inherent need for structural and cultural change in how student motivation is viewed in secondary schools. The Teacher-Centered Systemic Reform (TCSR) model is efficacious in driving student motivation reforms because it positions the teacher at the nexus of such changes. Figure 1 visually represents the TCSR model, which shows the teacher as the nexus. More specifically, the theory points out that educational reforms can only successfully address the influence of teachers' thought processes, actions, and personal characteristics on the status quo. Ultimately, this study theorizes that instructional leaders, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders must first understand how teachers think and act to achieve standardized student motivation. Ultimately, this study will add to the body of knowledge of student motivation by incorporating self-efficacy and self-determination theories to link theory and practice. In other words, the study will determine the current interaction between theory and practice regarding student motivation in secondary schools.

Figure 1. TCSR Model

"*Removed to comply with copyright*"

Figure 1. Adapted from Gess-Newsome et al. (2003)

Empirical

Although student motivation is an integral tenet of teaching and learning, developing intrinsically or extrinsically motivated students may be impeded by the need to define clearly what constitutes a motivated learner, teachers' characteristics, and cultural and structural barriers. Even so, there is limited phenomenological research about teachers' lived experiences on the cultural and structural sides of student motivation strategies. Against this backdrop, this study is a unique source of qualitative data about how secondary school teachers motivate their learners in the U.S. The study will function as a groundbreaker for future scholars and researchers intending to explore student motivation strategies qualitatively. For the current literature, this study will add to the limited phenomenological research and augment the current research body on secondary teachers' lived experiences regarding student motivation.

Practical

Researching teachers' lived experiences, beliefs, and opinions on motivation may be beneficial to policymakers and curriculum leaders because teachers' thought processes and actions are the primary determinants of the structural and cultural aspects of student motivation (Gess-Newsome et al., 2003; Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002). For policymakers, the findings of this study will underscore the structural and cultural changes needed in future reforms concerning the standards and principles of student motivation for secondary school learners. For educators, the findings of this study will unearth the most used as well as the most helpful student motivation strategies. Moreover, the findings will allow educators to deduce student motivation's structural and cultural sides and how curriculum and instructional methods can be aligned with motivation goals.

Research Questions

This study aims to describe teachers' lived experiences in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. The following questions were formulated to achieve this objective:

Central Research Question

How do secondary school teachers in Texas describe their experiences of the strategies they employ in bolstering student motivation?

The possibility of developing universal curricula through the universal learning design, as advocated for by researchers like Al-Azawei et al. (2016) and Boothe et al. (2018), has spread waves of excitement among education stakeholders in the U.S. as evidenced by policy frameworks like the NCLB and ESSA. Boothe et al. (2018) point out that the universal learning design is a function of three principles: multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression. However, before arriving at such ambitions, stakeholders must first scrutinize the present gaps in curricula. Undoubtedly, one area that still needs to be explored is how secondary school teachers motivate their students to highlight common themes and patterns and to appraise them against practical and theoretical guidelines. In other words, if progress is to be made regarding formalizing student motivation strategies, especially in secondary schools, the current practices, norms, and trends must first be understood. To answer the central question, the following sub-questions were developed:

Sub-Question One

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation?

Sub-Question Two

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the cultural determinant of bolstering student motivation?

Sub-Question Three

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation?

The three sub-questions are founded upon the argument by Woodbury and Gess-Newsome (2002) that teacher thinking relative to change is a function of several salient components. Firstly, the teacher's efficacy in their subject matter affects their teaching abilities, learning opportunities for the learners, and the development of innovative lessons. Secondly, teachers' beliefs and attitudes about students and their learning processes affect learning content delivery (Gess-Newsome et al., 2003). Thirdly, how teachers perceive the need for policy reforms is reflected in how they disseminate content. Lastly, how teachers perceive their curricular and institutional goals within their schools and other educational contexts and systems inform their teaching tendencies (Woodbury & Gess-Newsome, 2002). These components can be categorized into personal, cultural, and structural factors, hence the development of the three sub-questions.

Definitions

1. *Constructivist paradigm*—also known as interpretivism, is the view that reality is dynamic and socially constructed (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016).
2. *Extrinsic motivation*— the participation in a learning activity to derive some outcome that stands disjointed from the activity itself (Legault, 2016).
3. *Intrinsic motivation*— the tendency of people to engage in given activities based on the

activities' inherent satisfaction properties devoid of any other external anticipation (Legault, 2016).

4. *Motivation*—the determinant of individuals' behaviors (Nayir, 2017).
5. *Phenomenology*—the qualitative study of individuals' lived experiences within a specific social issue (Neubauer et al., 2019).

Summary

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to describe teachers' lived experiences in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. I addressed an existing gap regarding teachers' lived experiences that take personal, cultural, and structural paths. Previous research, including Collier (2015), Robinson (2018), and The Learning Network (2019), paints a grim picture of the state of student motivation in the country. Although student motivation is a function of social and environmental factors, teachers have been left alone to figure out ways of motivating their learners to pursue academic progress. There are no specific policy frameworks in the U.S. education curriculum that direct or guide student motivation efforts. Due to this lack of a standardized approach to student motivation, it is up to individual educators to determine the strategies that fit their learning environments. The result is a largely fragmented approach to student motivation in a sector driven by policies such as the ESSA, which advocates for collective success. The first step towards understanding the strategies teachers need to foster student motivation is to understand the current interventions, their strengths and weaknesses, and the ideal approach from the teachers' perspective. Against this backdrop, this study will employ a qualitative phenomenological design founded upon a constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review aims to harness the current and seminal scholarly work and research in identifying the strategies needed to foster student motivation in the U.S. based on selected secondary school teachers' lived experiences, opinions, and beliefs. The literature review section is divided into two major categories: theoretical framework and related literature. The section begins with the theoretical framework followed by a literature synthesis on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, competence, control/autonomy, interest/value, and relatedness. After identifying the gaps in the current literature, a chapter summary highlights the significant constructs from the literature review and acts as a transition into the next chapter.

Theoretical Framework

From Sigmund Freud, John B. Watson, B. F. Skinner, Jean Piaget, and Erik Erikson to Albert Bandura, early schools of thought have proven, beyond doubt, the role of theory in the learning environment, whether cognitive, behavioral, psychosocial, psychodynamic, or ecological (Zhou & Brown, 2015). There is a deep and broad pool of these theories in academic literature; hence two of the most renowned were chosen for this study—self-determination (SDT) and self-efficacy (SET). The section primarily contains seminal literature written by original theorists like Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (SDT) and Albert Bandura in 1977 (SET).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The SDT, a metatheory, is a brainchild of Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, who first introduced it in their 1985 publication *Self-Determination and Intrinsic Motivation in Human Behavior***.** The theory bears an organic and dialectical connotation, beginning with the argument that human beings are innately active with an inherent desire for growth, learning, mastering

ambient challenges, and processing new experiences (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Even so, Ryan and Deci (2000) warn that the social context of human development bears a toll on these natural tendencies by either supporting or thwarting psychological growth and active engagement. Against this backdrop, Ryan and Deci (2000) front three nutriments of the dialectic between the social context and the active organism—autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these three basic psychological needs are not met, people become alienated, fragmented, and controlled, meaning that the natural growth tendency among human beings should not be assumed. Two primary sources of contradicting as well as compatible information are social exchange and social learning, respectively.

Social Exchange

Social exchange, in contrast to SDT, posits that social behavior arises from an exchange process bent on the maximization of benefits while keeping costs to a minimum (Homans, 1958). Ostensibly, before engaging in given social interactions, people tend to engage in some sort of risk-benefit analysis and abandon the relationship when the risks outweigh the rewards. In other words, most relationships are founded upon a give and take platform. The exchange between human beings is sustained because each party sees the relationship as reinforcing in a way.

According to Homans (1958), social exchange hypothesizes that human beings act based on rational calculations with the aim of maximizing individual gains or profits. Most people value rewards in the form of financial support, loyalty, acceptance, companionship, and affection and are most likely to relate well with the people who enhance their social status or publicly acknowledge them. Conversely, whenever a negative value arises for an individual, costs ensue. More specifically, some relationships consume time, energy, money, and other. Adjustments that

are necessary to keep the relationship going. The net outcome of social exchange, therefore, is equal to the difference between rewards and costs and not self-determination.

Two primary variables can be deduced from the definition of social exchange. The first variable entails the frequency with which rewards and costs ensue while the second is the value attached to these rewards and costs by the individuals. Some social exchange behaviors have attached costs while others are essentially cost-free. For instance, a compliment such a positive remark on a student's performance by the teacher may be relatively low-cost to teacher. However, other behaviors have substantial costs. For instance, when two students decide to play a game of chess, both derive benefits as long as they are enjoying the game. Conversely, for one of the students (the loser of the game) a substantial loss has taken place. If the player continues to accrue losses into the future, he or she will be utterly demotivated to a point of deciding not to play the game any more.

Based on these deductions, (Emerson, 1972a, 1972b) emphasized the importance of balanced exchange relations. For this balance to be achieved, the individuals in a relationship must be somewhat equally dependent on each other. Dependence arises from the value placed on the resources provided by one party to the other as well as the availability of these resources compared to alternatives. Unequal dependencies are frowned upon by (Emerson, 1972a, 1972b) because they produce imbalanced exchange relationships, which in turn, create an unfair advantage for the less dependent party.

Emerson views the exchange relationship as comprising two main processes—use of power and balance. If a relationship is structured in a way that one individual (a) is highly dependent on another individual (b), then the latter has a power advantage over the former.

Emerson goes ahead to propose four methods that can be used to achieve an equillibrium of power between two parties in an exchange relationship:

1. A reduction of the motivational dependency of one party over the other.
2. Locating an alternative source of a satisfying a need that cannot be ignored.
3. Having control over some source of satisfaction needed by the more powerful party.
4. Finding a way for the more powerful party to become dependent.

According to social exchange, for a teacher-student relationship to be productive, benefits must exceed costs for both parties. In other words, for teachers to develop highly motivated students, teachers must ensure that the learners are deriving more from the relationship than he or she is giving without leaving the teacher deprived. Social exchange, in combination with SDT, can be used to draw the line between motivated and demotivated, engaged and disengaged learners.

Social Learning

Social learning is connected to operant and classical conditioning. Bandura (1977b) adds two important concepts to operant and classical conditioning, (1) mediation between responses and stimuli, and (2) learning is a combination of the environment and observational learning. In other words, children observe the behaviors of their role models and replicate these behaviors. Although more aligned with the vicarious experiences efficacy source explored in SET, observational learning is also aligned with Ryan and Deci's observation that human beings are innately drawn to growth, learning, and processing new experiences by observing others. Some examples of role models include parents, television characters, teachers, and peers. Bandura argues that without mental processes, it is impossible for learning to occur---cognition acts as a mediator in the learning process to deduce a new response. The idea of social learning reiterates

the usefulness of the student-teacher relationship because students can learn by observing their teachers' behaviors, who are widely viewed as the role models for students.

Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning is defined by Schunk (2019) as the learning theory formulated by B.F. Skinner that is based on the assumption that features of the environment serve as cues for responding. This assumption yields to the fact that positive and negative reinforcements are the only components that affect student behavior, motivation, and achievement. However, Woolfolk et al. (2013) used a variety of topics, areas, and over 100 articles to explore and determine the predictors of student motivation. Through the exploration of the forementioned articles, various strategies to increase student motivation were uncovered but none of which included positive and negative reinforcements. Woolfolk et al. (2013) implies that self-determination could be a strategy to increase student motivation since positive and negative reinforcements are not.

Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning was developed by a Russian physiologist by the name of Ivan Pavlov (Gormezano et al., 1986). Through the use of dogs, Pavlov formulated a theory that explored the relationship between stimuli and reponses. Conditioned and unconditioned responses and stimuli were explored. Bandura (1977b) defines classical conditioning as a behavior theory that attributes learning to paired experiences of responses to stimuli. Conditioning is a term that describes why learning takes place, which is a result of pairing stimulation to behavior. However, Dawson and Furedy (1976) suggests that students learn little to nothing from repeated stimuli, unless the student is able to recognize and connect the experience to the behavior. Dawson and Furedy's suggestion is also aligned with SDT.

Self-Efficacy Theory (SET)

The SET theory was developed by Albert Bandura in 1977 based on the argument that regardless of form, psychological procedures impact the level and magnitude of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is loosely defined as the set of beliefs that underscore an individual's success in executing planned actions in prospective situations. In other words, self-efficacy refers to how well a person believes they can succeed in a given situation. Bandura (1977a) built the SET theory around the concept of efficacy expectations, which argues that cognitive representations of future outcomes can elicit behavioral motivation in the present. In other words, reinforcement can influence behavior by creating expectations that specific behavior will yield benefits or avert future constraints (Bandura, 1977a). Bandura further presents efficacy expectations as products of three dimensions—magnitude, generality, and strength. However, the sources of efficacy expectations seem to be the most talked-about elements of the SET theory. According to Bandura (1977a), personal efficacy proceeds from four primary sources of information: (a) performance outcomes, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) emotional and psychological states.

Regarding the role of self-efficacy in academic achievement, recent studies like Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017) have provided empirical findings. The study featured 797 Spanish secondary students across three schools and 36 educational centers. The collected data were analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM), and it was found that students' expectancy beliefs mediate between academic self-efficacy and academic achievement/satisfaction. In other words, even though teachers and educators must develop self-efficacious students, it is paramount for them to understand that self-efficacy is not an end by

itself. Instead, they (teachers and educators) should look for other conceptual inputs that bolster student expectancy and combine them with self-efficacy.

Performance Outcomes (Mastery Experiences)

Previous performance is the most vital source of efficacy information because it underscores the individual's ability to master the need for success. Here, the individual begins by believing that he or she can accomplish a task and practices appropriately. The closest constructs to performance outcomes in the academic context are Academic Self-Efficacy (ASE) and student performance. Existing literature like Basith et al. (2020) and Nasir and Iqbal (2019) have linked ASE positively to student academic achievement. Honicke and Broadbent (2016) found a moderate but statistically significant positive relationship between self-efficacy and academic achievement ($r + = .33$, 95% CI [.28, .37], $p < .0001$ after a systematic review of 59 studies. However, Honicke and Broadbent (2016), just like Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017), insisted that self-efficacy is not a bohemian construct—it is influenced by other moderating and mediating variables like goal orientations, deep processing strategies, and effort regulation.

Alongside ASE, student performance is a facet in determining students' academic performance. According to Maimberg et al. (2014), students use past performance as consistent forms of self-evaluations. The more mastery experences that a student has, the more efficacy is raised to a higher level. Effectively, in efforts to bolster student self-efficacy, teachers should also pay attention to such mediating and moderating variables.

Vicarious Experiences

Vicarious experiences stem from observing other people completing specific tasks successfully. Here, Bandura (1977a) insists that seeing other people of similar attributes succeed through sustained efforts evokes a belief in the observer that they, too, are capable of mastering

comparable activities to succeed. According to Hasan et al. (2014), vicarious experiences tend to be inferior to performance-based self-efficacy sources and less stable. Nevertheless, Hasan et al. (2014) found that vicarious experiences act as lifelines for learners who cannot wholly rely on performance outcomes. However, teachers should understand that observing others but repeatedly failing to replicate the success can be a source of frustration and lead to rapidly diminishing self-efficacy. Additional findings show that vicarious experiences are only effective when students have an empathic relationship with the model, especially among secondary students (Kudo & Mori, 2015). Based on this premise, teachers need to develop alternative methods of motivating learners who rely on vicarious experiences more than performance outcomes but have failed repeatedly. For the current study, it will be crucial to determine how secondary school teachers balance vicarious experiences and performance-based outcomes regarding motivating their students.

Social Persuasion

Individuals who receive positive verbal feedback while performing complex tasks are persuaded to believe they are appropriately skilled and capable of succeeding. In other words, self-efficacy can emanate from encouragement or discouragement about performance or the ability to perform. In a study conducted by Nob (2021), social persuasion from parents, teachers, and peers were explored as it relates to academic self-efficacy. Social persuasion from parents and teachers significantly contributed to academic self-efficacy in approximately 359 college students (Nob, 2021). Researchers like Orji et al. (2018) appreciate the role of social appreciation in social comparison, competition, and social learning for learners. However, Orji et al. (2018) provide a postmodern view of social persuasion. Instead of purely relying on human-to-human persuasion, the digital domain moves persuasion towards computer-to-human persuasion, where

software motivates the learners to achieve specified goals. Since the latter is more interactive and fitting for 21st-century learners, it will likely yield higher results than just positive feedback and other tactics of teacher-student motivation. Based on this premise, the current study will investigate whether social persuasion from secondary school teachers is a valuable student motivation strategy.

Emotional and Psychological States

A person's psychological, physical, and emotional well-being can be ingrained in how they perceive their abilities in a given task or situation. However, Bandura insists that no sheer psychological, physical, and emotional states matter, but rather the way people perceive and interpret them. Here, Hasan et al. (2014) point out that mood, emotions, and psychology have a toll on student motivation—tension, stress reactions, and anxiety are some factors that underscore failure and debility. Students with positive moods are likely more efficacious, while dejected students are less efficacious. However, there is limited research on how teachers can bolster student self-efficacy by influencing their psychological states.

Arguably, for teachers to be well-positioned in nurturing self-efficacy among their learners, they must first possess self-efficacy themselves. Current literature has advocated for fostering teacher efficacy for various teaching and learning purposes. Mohamadi et al. (2011) investigated the role of Bandura's efficacy theory in schools and found that teachers' self-efficacy mediates between teachers' sources of efficacy and student performance. In other words, teachers' performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and emotional and psychological states can be traced directly to students' achievement. The school environment has also been found to directly impact teacher efficacy development by Wilson et al. (2020). The findings by Wilson et al. (2020) place the school culture and structure at the core of developing

teacher efficacy. A positive school climate is developed when the management, staff (including teachers), students, parents, and other stakeholders work harmoniously (Wilson et al., 2020). Ultimately, even though teachers should make deliberate efforts to reflect on and improve their self-efficacy, their institutions are also responsible for creating climates to nurture self-efficacy among teachers. Malinen et al. (2013) found links between teacher efficacy and inclusive teaching, adding to the long strand of benefits that can be drawn from the development of self-efficacious teachers. Some researchers, such as Bray-Clark and Bates (2003), advocate for elaborate professional development to achieve teacher self-efficacy, while others, like Akkuzu (2014), recommend using elementary in-house strategies like effective performance feedback. Whichever the chosen approach to boost teacher self-efficacy, the current literature has a standpoint that self-efficacious teachers are required to achieve the various desirable student outcomes.

Student achievement and satisfaction are the most critical academic outcomes. Prior research has revealed positive correlations between student self-efficacy and academic achievement (Aslam & Ali, 2017; Nasir & Iqbal, 2019). However, scholars and researchers have some consensus that the link between self-efficacy and student achievement/satisfaction is not always straightforward but often requires some form of mediation. Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017) points out that students' expectancy-value beliefs significantly mediate self-efficacy, satisfaction, and academic achievement. As such, there is an underlying need to diagnose these expectancy-value beliefs at the beginning of courses to detect student shortcomings and to design appropriate action plans to improve student expectancy-value beliefs (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2017). In another study investigating the factors affecting academic self-efficacy, Zamfir and

Mocanu (2020) found that positive support from parents and teachers and the school climate boost student efficacy.

Furthermore, self-regulation, perceived social support, academic interest, out-of-school academic activities, and cognition are essential mediators between self-efficacy and student achievement (Van Rooij et al., 2017; Sari et al., 2020). These strands of literature point out that regardless of the level of learning, the achievement of self-efficacy among students may be complex depending on the underlying student's needs or the learning environment. Therefore, different teachers and educators may be forced to employ varying strategies to achieve student self-efficacy and its end product—student motivation.

Related Literature

This section begins with a definition of student motivation, including the intrinsic and extrinsic typologies and the dimensions of motivation. The section also discusses the components of the theoretical framework—personal characteristics and cultural and structural determinants of student motivation. These three factors collectively underline the role of the teacher, culture, and institutional dynamics in student motivation. The section culminates with an in-depth review of contemporary student motivation strategies. The section primarily harnessed the most recent scholarly work and research published not more than five years ago. Peer-reviewed journals and articles were the most used sources of literature.

Student Motivation

Reports about demotivated and disengaged students have become commonplace in U.S. secondary school classrooms. Adolescent learners are undoubtedly the most affected by this widespread academic jeopardy. Interestingly, it has long been known that concepts like autonomy, student engagement, and personalized learning are crucial determinants of student

motivation. However, the 21st-century learning environment is still a mix of passivity, rote learning, and routine. Although there have been notable efforts at the policy level, as evidenced by reforms such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and its newest version-- Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—student motivation levels in the U.S. are still low and dwindling at an unprecedented rate (Collier, 2015; Robinson, 2018). However, instead of dwelling on the current student motivation misgivings, the study emphasizes teachers' lived experiences, beliefs, and opinions regarding the strategies needed to motivate secondary school learners.

Arguably, there can be no learning in the absence of motivation. Akhtar et al. (2019) pits the teacher at the nexus of the learning environment. This responsibility means that teachers should have some expectations from their students but higher expectations from themselves. Put differently, if the students do not invest in the emotional well-being of their learners, then it is almost impossible to impact the students in other areas. According to Akhtar et al. (2019), demotivated students have a notable inclination toward behavioral problems like bullying, fighting, absenteeism, disputes, and involvement in gangs. In their study, Akhtar et al. (2019) employed a descriptive cross-sectional design with the data analyzed using Pearson correlation. The data were collected using a previous questionnaire. There were 217 students and 20 teacher participants. The analysis produced a correlation coefficient of .22, $p < .001$, suggesting a weak but significant positive relationship between teacher-student interactions and student achievement. These findings are consistent with Alkaabi et al. (2017), who postulate that student motivation does not occur in isolation—some antecedents must be provided. Some of these antecedents include needs, cognition, and emotions. Teachers must, therefore, find a balance between personal student needs, their cognitive process, and emotions. Failure to meet any of

these antecedents would augment the problems of demotivation and disengagement among learners.

Although motivation is a crucial tenet for academic achievement, more than a one-size-fits-all approach to student motivation is needed. Most teachers and educators employ singular approaches and theories to motivate their learners. Nevertheless, Alkaabi et al. (2017) frown upon this approach, arguing that teachers can combine various theories from behaviorist, humanistic, and cognitive to goal setting to bolster student motivation. Moreover, motivation theories are not simplistic and should not be employed casually because motivation is a function of various elements. Before employing a given motivation strategy, an educator must evaluate the antecedents of student motivation, motive status, needs, cognitions, and emotions before deciding whether to use or abandon the strategy (Alkaabi et al., 2017). Nayir (2017) reiterates that teachers must first assess student motivation levels and plan accordingly on how to promote classroom engagement.

The lack of a universal student motivation technique cannot be interpreted as a marker of failure by educators, policymakers, and other key education stakeholders. Instead, this deficiency is a product of varied learning orientations among students. Nayir (2017) argues that there are four learning orientations (mastery goal orientation, performance-approach goal orientation, and performance avoidance) accompanied by three types of engagement (authentic, rebellion, and ritual). It is incumbent upon the teacher to understand the interaction between learning orientations and engagement among their students while paying close attention to the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement. Motivation and engagement have often been used interchangeably in academic administration and research. The study by Nayir (2017) examined whether student motivation is related to class engagement levels using a quantitative

approach with a correlational design harnessing t-tests, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), and regression for data analysis. The study's population was all Ankara Central District, Turkey, high school students. The study found a moderate relationship between mastery-oriented learning and authentic engagement (r=.314, r2=.099), a weak relationship between mastery-oriented learning and engagement at the rebellion level (r=.174, r2=.030), and another weak relationship between mastery-oriented learning and ritual engagement (r=.162, r2=.026). Whereas the sample used therein may not represent all students, I impressively underlined a significant causal relationship between student motivation and engagement. These sentiments are echoed by Lee (2014), who found a relationship between student engagement and academic performance. Lee (2014) asserted that engagement is both behavioral and emotional and needs to be nurtured by educators, policymakers, and the research community.

Intrinsic Motivation

Any discussion focusing on motivation is incomplete without expounding the two main categories of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic). There is a longstanding strand of literature—Chang et al. (2017), Fernández-Espínola et al. (2020), Ibrahim et al. (2017), and Legault (2016)—that have dealt with the concept of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Legault (2016), intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in behavior because it is inherently enjoyable and satisfying. Intrinsic motivation is non-instrumental because it does not rely on any outcome other than the behavior itself.

The studies investigating intrinsic motivation as a standalone factor of student achievement or performance are scarce. Even so, there have been empirical findings that intrinsic motivation by itself has a positive impact on learning behavior and academic achievement and that, in some instances, students endorse it more than extrinsic motivation (Moyano et al., 2020;

Shillingford & Karlin, 2013; Tokan & Imakulata, 2019). However, ensuring that learners are intrinsically motivated may be daunting for teachers and educators, especially because intrinsic motivation leans towards neuroscience. According to Di Domenico and Ryan (2017), there are at least three reasons why neuroscience is efficacious in interpreting intrinsic motivation. Firstly, the brain acts as a mediator between behavior and experience, hence the need to comprehend the dynamics of the neural systems that support intrinsic motivation. Secondly, neuroscience effectively provides insights that cannot be drawn from self-reports and observations, which are the current mainstays of examining intrinsic motivation. Thirdly, neuroscience methods help investigate motivational processes at a higher level, which provides a platform for refining the conceptual accounts of intrinsic motivation.

It is important to stress that intrinsically motivated people engage in an activity because "they find it interesting and inherently satisfying" (Di Domenico & Ryan, 2017, p. 1). For teachers and educators, this definition translates to finding ways of developing intrinsically motivated learners. However, expecting teachers and educators to turn to neuroscience to boost intrinsic motivation among learners may need to be more practical. Remarkably, current research has been active regarding the strategies for boosting intrinsic motivation in the classroom. For instance, Kusurkar et al. (2011) propose twelve tips for stimulating student motivation:

1. Identifying and nurturing students' needs
2. Allowing learner internal states to guide behavior
3. Encouraging active participation
4. Encouraging students to accept responsibility for their learning
5. Provision of structured guidance during teaching and learning
6. Providing rigorous curriculums and challenges

7. Provision of positive and constructive feedback
8. Giving emotional support where needed
9. Acknowledging students' expression of negative affect
10. Communicating the value of some uninteresting learning activities
11. Giving choices
12. Use of 'could, may, and can' instead of 'should, need, and must'

In another study on how to increase intrinsic motivation among students, McEvoy (2011) advocates for hands-on methods that focus on increasing novelty and rigor while at the same time paying attention to the relevance of course material to the students. Some of these inputs include making lessons "fun" and using self-reflections (McEvoy, 2011, p. 476). According to Froiland et al. (2012), for most subject areas, including literacy, math, special education, and emotional health and behavior, increasing intrinsic motivation among students hinges on autonomy support and intrinsic goal setting. Regarding autonomy, supportive homes, schools, and classrooms foster intrinsic motivation among students.

However, teachers, educators, and parents cannot be expected to independently promote this form of motivation. Instead, Froiland et al. (2012) recommend that school psychologists train teachers and parents on how to promote intrinsic motivation among students by (a) employing empathetic statements, (b) allowing the students to make decisions about their learning where possible, (c) informing the students that they (parents and teachers) appreciate creative self-expression, (d) providing ample time for the students to solve problems alone and only providing hints or suggestions when needed, (e) underscoring the meaningful or engaging aspects or a lesson, assignment, or task, (f) instead of merely celebrating good grades, the parents and teachers should engage the students in a reflection of what they (the students) learned from

achieving the good grades and using motivational analogies. An example of a motivational analogy fronted by Froiland et al. (2012, p. 95) is "Spending time on homework is like sowing seeds. Eventually, you will reap a big harvest of precious knowledge and skills."

Regarding intrinsic goal setting, Froiland et al. (2012) task school psychologists with counseling students and teaching them how to set their intrinsic goals. Husman and Lens (1999) add that student motivation is partially reflected in how students integrate the future into the present by setting motivation-driven goals. This view of intrinsic motivation is known as the Future Time Perspective (FTP). According to Husman and Lens (1999), learners with longer FTPs prompt students to be more persistent and derive more satisfaction compared to shorter FTPs, which mostly rely on extrinsic regulation and rewards. In other words, for teachers to promote intrinsic motivation among their learners, they must teach them to understand the relationship between current and future goals. Ultimately, these sources posit that a one-size-fits-all approach to boosting intrinsic motivation is nonexistent; promoting intrinsic motivation among learners is context-specific.

Extrinsic Motivation

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to the engagement in behavior for a reason that stands separate from the action itself. Unlike its intrinsic counterpart, extrinsic motivation is instrumental—extrinsically motivated people engage in behavior to attain some reward. In a study investigating the effect of extrinsic motivation on the academic performance of secondary school learners, Ode (2018) found that extrinsically motivated learners outperformed their non-extrinsically motivated counterparts. However, Chang et al. (2017) warn that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are not permanent constructs. Instead, both forms of motivation increase or diminish depending on the relationship between the individual and the activity. For instance, a

student's motivation can shift from highly controlled supervision to self-determination. As such, teachers need to understand the factors that help their learners sustain intrinsic motivation and those that bolster the internalization of extrinsic motivation.

More studies must investigate extrinsic motivation as a block concept on student achievement and performance. Those found identified personal recognition, teacher influence, and rewards as the main factors of extrinsic motivation (Ode, 2018). Most researchers investigating the role of extrinsic motivation in learning aspects choose to use specific motivation concepts like rewards, praise, and recognition. In one quasi-experimental study with a control and intervention group, Ortega-Arranz et al. (2019) found that using badges and redeemable rewards promoted student motivation with rewards superior to badges. Ultimately, these studies underscore rewards, recognition, and praise as the core of extrinsic motivation in learning spaces.

However, there have been arguments that the overuse of extrinsic motivation leads to the gradual erosion of intrinsic motivation. While some schools of thought contend that tangible rewards and praise have no adverse effects on intrinsic motivation (Carton, 1996), others hold that when used progressively, extrinsic rewards can foster intrinsic motivation (Pierce et al., 2003). Still, Black and Allen (2018) insist that an activity that was initially undertaken due to a personal desire may suffer due to the introduction of an extrinsic reward. These findings underline the need for more consensus among researchers, scholars, and theorists regarding the role of extrinsic motivation in the classroom. Whichever approach educators and teachers choose, it is essential to appreciate that rewards should only be employed in moderation to avoid making them the drivers of classroom motivation.

Dimensions of Student Motivation

Student motivation has three facets initially developed by Ryan and Deci, 2000: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Ryan and Deci referred to the three dimensions as the basic psychological needs people need constantly searching for motivation. Regarding autonomy, Ryan and Deci (2000) pointed out that people inherently need control over their goals and behaviors. Autonomy can also be viewed from the self-determined perspective in that one can take direct action towards real change (Gandhimathi & Devi, 2016). The competence dimension points out that people need to learn different tasks and gain mastery of tasks. Against this backdrop, people who feel confident about possessing the appropriate skills for success are more likely to pursue goals that drive them toward success (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Lastly, relatedness relates to an innate need for human beings to experience a sense of attachment and belonging to others, having caring relationships, and belonging in a community.

The three psychological needs have been employed widely in various sectors. In a recent study, Martela and Riekki (2018) investigated autonomy, competence, and relatedness as pathways to meaningful work. Their study was three-tier—Finland (n = 594), India (n = 342), and the U.S. (n = 373). The study found that each of the three psychological needs is independently associated with meaningful work. In other words, satisfying autonomy, competence, and relatedness leads to satisfying work. In a study to test the effect of the three psychological needs on student satisfaction, motivation, and outcomes, Wang et al. (2019) found that the three psychological needs have a significant relationship with autonomous motivation, which, in turn, results in lower pressure, higher value, and more enjoyment. Conversely, there was a negative relationship between the three psychological needs and controlled motivation.

A plethora of research studies investigate the role of autonomy on student motivation. Most studies link autonomy positively to student learning, motivation, course performance, and self-efficacy (Furtak & Kunter, 2012; Gandhimathi & Devi, 2016; Garcia & Pintrich, 1996; Honarzad & Rassaei, 2019). However, there has been contention about whether motivation precedes autonomy or vice versa. For instance, in their self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2000) point out that autonomy is a precursor to motivation, while Spratt et al. (2002) insist that motivation prepares students to learn autonomously. The relationship between the two concepts (motivation and autonomy) may not be linear but depends on the needs of the specific group of learners. As such, educators and teachers may be required to use their discernment to determine which domain should precede the other.

As far as bolstering autonomy in the classroom is concerned, Reeve and Jang (2006) identified several instruction behaviors as autonomy supports (asking what the learner wants, taking time to listen, providing rationales, offering encouragements, responding to student-generated questions, and allowing students to work on tasks their way). Similarly, Reeve and Jang (2006) identified a range of autonomy threats, including making should/ought to statements, uttering solutions/answers, using commands/directives, issuing stringent deadlines, criticizing the learners, and using praise as a contingent reward. In addition to these autonomy supports and thwarts, Wubbels et al. (2014) point out that teacher-student relationships must be considered to bolster student autonomy in learning spaces, the teacher's interpersonal style, and the classroom social environment.

These findings highlight the use of autonomy versus control in the classroom. From the results, it would be safe to conclude that the more controlled students feel, the more pressure they are likely to accumulate and the less they are likely to enjoy the lessons. On the other hand,

allowing autonomy among learners is an effective way of invoking enjoyment and value in learning. Although absolute autonomy is impossible in the classroom, teachers and educators must explore more strategies for balancing autonomy, competence, and relatedness to bolster student motivation.

Role of Teacher Personality on Student Motivation

Educational disciplines have distinct research domains that investigate varying aspects of teacher personalities. For instance, deontology and pedagogy disciplines focus on teachers' rights and responsibilities (Finkler & Negreiros, 2018; Nicu, 2016). However, psychological sciences do not have specific research areas for teaching, a surprising phenomenon because of the longstanding consensus that teacher personality cannot be divorced from the educational process (Göncz, 2017; Kim et al., 2018). Nevertheless, at the same time, psychological scientists have not been silent on the concept of personality and individual differences. The Five-Factor Model (FFM) has been increasingly adopted as the new personality research paradigm. The FFM model is not a personality theory per se. However, McCrae and Costa (2008) point out that it bears the characteristics of trait theory by insisting that all individuals can be pitted into personality typologies based on quantitatively assessable longstanding thoughts, feelings, and actions. More specifically, McCrae and Costa (2008) point out that the FFM model is so robust that regardless of how individual differences are structured, the 'big five' concept almost always manifests itself. The five factors are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (Bastian et al., 2017; Lukaszewski, 2020). Consequently, as far as personal teacher characteristics are concerned, this study reviews the efficacy of the FFM model in explaining student motivation.

Each dimension of the FFM model is a function of a range of more specific facet tenets and is a product of various behaviors (John et al., 2008). Extraversion refers to how an individual is in terms of talkativeness and being outgoing in social situations. The core facets of extraversion are activity (vs. lack of energy), assertiveness (vs. submissiveness), and sociability (vs. shyness). Regarding behavior, Lukaszewski (2020) posits that extroverted individuals are talkative, active, energetic, and express positive emotions. On the other hand, extroverts are more uncomfortable in social situations, keeping their feelings and thoughts to themselves.

Agreeableness is another essential element of social behavior and a vital pillar of the FFM model. According to Barakat and Othman (2015), agreeableness highlights how an individual interacts with others in terms of being open to their peers' emotional habits, feelings, and experiences. McCrae and Costa (2008) add that agreeable people are warm, sympathetic, kind, gentle, and altruistic. Some of the critical facets of agreeableness presented by John et al. (2008) are trust (vs. suspicion for others), politeness (vs. antagonism), and compassion (vs. lack of concern for others). Highly agreeable individuals are more willing to forgive and help others and extend respect. In contrast, their lowly agreeable counterparts are linked with starting arguments, holding grudges, and looking down upon others.

Neuroticism measures emotional control and affect. Individuals with low neuroticism levels are considered emotionally stable, while their counterparts with high levels are linked with higher chances of developing negative emotions (Barakat & Othman, 2015). Individuals with high levels of neuroticism are more bothered by environmental stimuli, reactive, sad, temperamental, worried, and become unstable more frequently. Views individuals who are high in neuroticism as touchy, tense, hostile, and anxious with higher vulnerability to psychological problems, maladaptive coping responses, self-defeating, and unrealistic ideas (Barakat &

Othman, 2015; Deniz & Satici, 2017; John et al., 2008). Conversely, individuals with low neuroticism are calm, contented, emotionally stable, and optimistic even in challenging circumstances.

Conscientiousness measures a person's motivation, hard work, persistence, and organization in accomplishing goals. In other words, conscientiousness measures the degree of control over impulses and goal-directedness. Focused individuals concentrate on a limited number of objectives but are not swayed, while their more flexible peers are more impulsive and easily persuaded to jump from task to task (Barakat & Othman, 2015). Furthermore, the more conscientious individuals are thorough, responsible, orderly, dutiful, and more competent (McCrae & Costa, 2008). John et al. (2008) point out that conscientiousness appeals to reliability versus inconsistency, self-discipline versus inefficiency, and orderliness versus disorganization.

Lastly, openness to experiences tests an individual's experiential, artistic, and intellectual life. The characteristics of people who are open to experiences include curiosity, perspective, broadmindedness, imagination, creativity, culture, intelligence, and artistic sensitivity (Barakat & Othman, 2015). Highly open people enjoy learning and testing new things and have broad interests. In contrast, their lowly open peers confine themselves to familiarity and routine, have narrower interests, and have little orientation towards variety and novelty (John et al., 2008). Ultimately, open people are curious and constantly seek out new experiences.

The literature regarding the role of teacher personality in student motivation is limited, but there is increasing interest in the topic. In one study, Khalilzadeh and Khodi (2018) featured 13 teachers and 375 students in an investigation into the effect of teacher personality on student motivation. The study took a quantitative path, with the student data being collected using a scale

that focused on intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and motivation. At the same time, their teachers provided data on the five factors of the FFM model. I then tested whether the motivation side and personality side data had any relationships. The results showed significant relationships between the FFM model traits and the motivation subscales. The most significant finding was that teacher conscientiousness positively affected students' intrinsic motivation and knowledge. Moreover, extraversion was negatively related to intrinsic- motivation- accomplishment, and knowledge. These findings were echoed by Jahangiri (2016), Noreen et al. (2019), and Suseno (2018), who found significant relationships between teacher personality and student motivation. In a study that did not specifically employ the entire FFM model, Dost and Hafshejani (2017) found that students with extroverted teachers were better in English than their peers with extroverted teachers. This finding supports the FFM model's position that extraversion is a critical aspect of teacher personality, advocating for extraversion rather than extroversion in teaching and learning spaces.

Cultural and Structural Determinants of Student Motivation

Student motivation is not a standalone concept. Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) insist that without sufficient motivation, even learners with top skills and abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals. Nevertheless, motivation is not simplistic. Instead it emanates from a combination of factors—psychological, social, and cultural—which include the school environment, teaching style, classroom atmosphere, relevance of subject matter, learning strategies, perceptions of ability, goal-setting and self-regulation, anxiety, the value attributed to a task, effort, self-efficacy expectations, peer pressure, family background, parental influence and involvement, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Brophy, 2013; Garcia, 1995; Lutfi & Razzak, 2016). For instance, Williams and Williams (2011) point out that when the school environment is

empowering, personalized, positive, safe, and accessible, motivation and learning are optimized. Conceptually, regardless of type or form, the factors influencing student motivation boil down to some culture.

A longstanding literature study investigates the interaction between culture and student motivation. Lutfi and Razzak (2016) carried out a mixed-methods inquiry with nursing students and teachers as informants to understand how culture impacts individuals' motivational drives and values. Focus groups with students and reflective interviews with their teachers were used as the data collection techniques. The cultural concepts explored in the study included study habits, study interests (likes and dislikes), attention in classes, disciplinary problems, feelings towards specialization, parents' feelings towards their children's education, challenges faced, and family environment. The most significant culture-related finding was that most students viewed specific majors from a gender lens. For instance, there was a stereotyped view of nursing as a female-only discipline. Mantiri (2013) asserts that the problem of culture in schools lies in the lack of cultural competency in terms of teachers' learning preferences, language, practices, cultural values, and ethnicity. Mantiri (2013) adds that the problem does not always lie with the teachers. However, the current school practices still need to find the balance between uniformity and diversity, suggesting that the interaction between culture and student motivation is complex.

The type of culture adopted in a school and the broader culture within which the school is situated may help explain the context of student motivation. The intra-school culture can be controlled, but the school's administration has to devise ways of co-existing with the cultural aspects of the communities around the school. This intersection between intra-school culture and community culture can be explained from a perspective of organizational and national cultures. Concerning organizational culture, which is the most relevant in the current study, there seems to

be a consensus among schools of thought like Harrison (1972), Handy (1981), and Schein (1984), as cited in Armstrong (2014), that organizational culture can be classified into four main typologies: power culture, role culture, task culture, and people culture.

Organizations that adopt a power culture have a centralized source of power. This power source controls and manipulates all organizational activities and operations. Here, subordinates rely on their superiors for all direction and clearance (Shailashree & Mlemba, 2016). Consequently, such organizations' decisions are based on political strength rather than logic and strategy. Moreover, technical expertise in power culture organizations is overshadowed by money and status. Effectively, power culture organizational members direct their efforts toward pleasing the boss. Unlike power culture, the role culture places rules, procedures, functions, job specializations, and job descriptions before those in the specific roles. Augustina et al. (2017) state that role culture organizations adopt formal operations, including authority relationships, communication procedures, and job descriptions. The manager in role-oriented organizations functions as a coordinator of the various organizational operations. In this kind of organizational culture, new ideas and creativity are highly discouraged, and those who attempt to engage in such activities are considered threats (Augustina et al., 2017). Consequently, organizational members are accustomed to acting only within their job roles and descriptions.

Task-oriented organizations prioritize accomplishing tasks while paying little attention to the process. The approach is helpful for people whose aim is to provide solutions to emergent problems. Teams and groups come together to accomplish tasks, overshadowing individual preferences. Unlike role culture, which places formality at the nexus, task culture overlooks formal roles and procedures (Nightingale, 2018). The task culture is highly adaptive, responding quickly and effectively to environmental changes. Compared to power culture organizations,

authority in task-cultured organizations is decentralized, with tasks and resources allocated to group leaders who manage their teams and the resources to complete the tasks (Nightingale, 2018).

Lastly, personal cultures focus on the well-being of individuals in a group. Like role-oriented cultures, person cultures have well-established job descriptions, structures, procedures, and rules. However, these rules and procedures are not for controlling organizational members but for making sure that organizational members' individual needs are attended to (Augustina et al., 2017). Similarly, organizational changes in such organizations are directly tied to employee needs, and control is subject to mutual consent among the members.

A school's culture can draw the line between motivated and unmotivated teachers and students. The literature concerning the relationship between organizational culture is limited, but there is evidence that organizational culture can affect some factors that, in turn, influence student motivation. For instance, Al-Otaibi et al. (2019) found statistically significant positive relationships between organizational culture and student satisfaction. Hasan et al. (2014) and Stukalina (2014) argue that there is a direct relationship between student motivation and satisfaction, suggesting that satisfied students are more likely to be motivated. Their study found that four cultural features—consistency, participation, adaptability, and mission—are the most impactful. These findings suggest that the four organizational cultures can be combined to derive a hybrid culture that finds the balance. In a study to investigate the interaction between organizational culture and teacher motivation, Uçar and İpek (2019) pitted power culture, role culture, achievement culture (task-oriented), and support culture (people-centered) against intrinsic and extrinsic motivation dimensions of teacher motivation. The study found that support

culture is the most productive because it creates a sense of belonging, and the formal administration structure is not a priority.

Contemporary Student Motivation Strategies

Learning can only take place in the presence of a preceding motivational event. Against this backdrop, Girmus (2012) presents nine instructional strategies teachers use to motivate and engage students in learning: extrinsic rewards, social interactions, goal setting, competition, student autonomy, real-world connections, cooperative learning, relevancy, and meaning making. In reiteration, Shousha (2018) denotes the "ten commandments" of student motivation, ranging from setting a personal example, creating an appropriate learning environment, and developing a rapport with the learners to promoting learner autonomy. Although these strategies were derived from interviews with Hungarian teachers, it is possible to replicate them in U.S. secondary school classrooms.

The range of strategies that can be integrated into the learning process is almost infinite. However, the context of motivation is limited. Perhaps this limited nature of the student motivation context is what Williams and Williams (2011) refer to as the "Five key ingredients for improving student motivation." These five ingredients are the student, teacher, content, method/process, and the environment. Arguably, whichever approach of student motivation a teacher chooses is limited to these five constructs. Every teacher must understand that even in the contemporary era, student motivation is still tied to these five areas, and instability in any of the constructs can be a blow to all other efforts. Essentially, teachers need to find the point of equilibrium to balance their needs, student needs, instructional material and methods, and the teaching and learning environment.

Summary

Perhaps the most notable gap in the literature is the need for more qualitative literature on student motivation. Most empirical literature relied on correlation and causal relationships to unearth the interaction between student motivation and other classroom concepts. Secondly, most studies about student motivation typically collect data from the students themselves, often neglecting the teacher's input or using a few teachers in addition to students as the primary data sources. Lastly, although the theories and empirical studies in this literature review present an in-depth view of student motivation, there must be more convergence toward universally accepted student motivation strategies. For instance, although researchers like Chang et al. (2017) applaud the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in bolstering student value and enjoyment in learning and reducing pressure, they fail to outline the actual strategies that teachers and educators should follow to achieve the three constructs in a balanced approach. The current study will bridge these gaps by conducting a phenomenological inquiry into the strategies needed to bolster student motivation from the perspective of secondary school teachers in the U.S. It is hoped that by conducting the research, this study was a first mover in imploring scholars and myself to involve more teachers in rich-data studies to collect their views on the ideal student motivation strategies.

The review found longstanding literature investigating the dynamics of student motivation. Most studies were quantitative, looking into the correlational and causal relationships between student motivation and essential aspects like performance and achievement. Conceivably, theory and practice in student motivation cannot be divorced; every teacher needs to base motivation on theory and employ practical techniques. However, schools of thought like Alkaabi et al. (2017) and Chang et al. (2017) warn that motivation is not

permanent, nor does it occur in isolation. Teachers and educators must evaluate each student to understand the context and antecedents of motivation and the appropriate motivation approach.

The literature review underscored the role of personal teacher characteristics on student motivation. The literature pointed out that individual teacher characteristics can be classified using the five-factor model, which is a function of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. Extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, and open teachers appear to be the best, although teachers with high neuroticism are likely to have problematic classrooms. Regarding cultural and structural determinants of student motivation, supportive cultures stood out. Based on the deductions of (Augustina et al., 2017; Nightingale, 2018; Shailashree & Mlemba, 2016), power, task, and role cultures must provide more suitable environments for teachers to thrive. On the other hand, it is unlikely that a person's culture can nurture student and teacher motivation. As such, it is upon organizational and instructional leaders to find the balance among the four organizational culture types by understanding the various elements that come together in the development of culture.

The review also unearthed deep-rooted gaps in student motivation research, with the need for adequate qualitative studies taking center stage. The input of teachers to understand student motivation comprehensively has been downplayed by most researchers. Contrarily, teachers and educators form the most critical data sources regarding the strategies needed to bolster student motivation. The argument is that although students know what they want, teachers understand the system, the scope and boundaries of motivation, and the sustainability of each approach (Chang et al., 2017). The current study will bridge these gaps by collecting rich data from teachers in the U. S. and identifying the patterns and themes in the data to unearth the strategies needed to promote motivation among secondary school learners.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to highlight the extent of missing student motivation guiding principles by describing teachers' lived experiences in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. The problem addressed in the study is that despite a rising trend of disengaged students in U.S. secondary schools, the strategies teachers need to bolster student motivation are yet to be fully understood. Researchers, including Collier (2015) and Robinson (2018), have established that more than 40% of all students, particularly those in secondary schools in the U.S., are chronically disengaged. Exploring these strategies from the perspective of teachers' lived experiences is expected to shed light on the strategies teachers need to breed a motivated generation of secondary students. Chapter three is a detailed presentation of the study's methodology, which is the approach employed in completing the research. The chapter features the following subsections: design, research question, setting, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, interviews, data analysis, trustworthiness (credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability), and ethical considerations. A summary is also presented at the end of the chapter.

Research Design

The study leveraged the hermeneutic phenomenological design, which was qualitative. Qualitative research was inductive, dealing with rich data collected from a perspective of the views, opinions, attitudes, and worldviews of selected participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The common approaches to collecting qualitative data included open-ended and structured interviews and naturalistic observations. In other words, qualitative research aims to describe and

interpret phenomena from the viewpoint of an individual or study population to develop a new theory or concept (Mohajan, 2018). Neubauer et al. (2019) define phenomenology as a research approach that describes the fundamentals of a given phenomenon through the lens of its subjects. Put differently, as a research design, phenomenology describes the *what* and *how* aspects of a specific phenomenon as detailed by those who have experienced it. The phenomenological landscape was broad, featuring a range of parallel yet heterogeneous typologies, including transcendental, existential, and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Although phenomenology has existed for centuries, it is widely considered a brainchild of Edmund Husserl, who formalized it during the first half of the 20th century (Smith, 2013). Husserl initially took an epistemological approach to phenomenology, arguing that the human being (subject) cannot be divorced from experience taking place in the world. He intended to study how a phenomenon appears to its subjects and how experiences are formed. Husserl's perspective of phenomenology has come to be known as transcendental based on his argument that the acceptance of the natural attitude must first be suspended, and its validity bracketed through epoché (Davidsen, 2013). Moreover, Husserl insisted that human experiences should not be founded upon preconceived theories (Davidsen, 2013). Instead, he pointed out that human experiences must be the premises upon which theories are developed.

Heidegger, another phenomenological thinker, introduced existential phenomenology in 1927 through his renowned text *Being and Time* to understand existence (Sebold et al., 2017). Here, the focus is on the individual's actions and experiences instead of behavior or conformity. Heidegger challenged a reductionist view of human beings by prioritizing ontology before epistemology. Simply put, existential phenomenology describes how human beings are and

understand themselves as opposed to what they are (Davidsen, 2013). Heidegger named this ontological concept "Dasein," which can be translated as "being there" (Davidsen, 2013, p.322).

Hans-Georg Gadamer built upon Heidegger's work and became the father of phenomenological hermeneutics (Guillen & Elida, 2019). According to Laverty (2003), Gadamer, just like Heidegger, argued for a connection between 'being in the world,' language, and understanding. Guillen and Elida (2019, p.220) reiterate that Heidegger saw language as the "house of being" and that hermeneutics appeal to and endeavor to "understand the other" through a combination of language as well as nonverbal cues. Gadamer emphasized that understanding cannot be divorced from linguistics because interpretations are enunciated linguistically.

The proposed study, therefore, adopted a qualitative methodology and a hermeneutic phenomenology path. Qualitative methods suffice when the researcher intends to describe, understand, or explain a social phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Lee & Krauss, 2015). The social phenomenon explored in the current study is student motivation in United States secondary schools. Another rationale for the qualitative method is that it allows people to construct meanings from life and share their interpretations with others through structured communication (Lee & Krauss, 2015). For the current study, the lived experiences of secondary school teachers were used to derive meanings from the approaches employed in motivating secondary school students.

The study took a phenomenological turn because the focus was on teachers' lived experiences regarding student motivation in U.S. secondary schools. The concept of hermeneutics was introduced to the study with my intention of interpreting the participants' experiences. Moreover, understanding and language could not be separated from this study because the participants and I would transact through language facilitated by semi-structured

interviews. Also, I had first to understand the context of the participants to make any meaningful interpretations. Principally, the study adopted the hermeneutic phenomenology design because apart from focusing on participants' experiences, it facilitated the understanding and interpretation of the participants' context through the medium of language (Cohen et al., 2000; Guillen & Elida, 2019; Laverty, 2003; Sebold et al., 2017). In other words, participants and I could express themselves through some form of language to understand and interpret the strategies teachers in the U.S. employ in motivating students.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How do secondary school teachers in Texas describe their experiences of the strategies they employ in bolstering student motivation?

Sub-Question One

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation?

Sub-Question Two

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the cultural determinant of bolstering student motivation?

Sub-Question Three

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation?

Setting and Participants

Throughout this section, the setting and participants are explored. The setting allows readers to visualize the high schools in ISDT. The setting paints a picture of the work, teaching,

and learning environments. In this section, the participants are described yet not identifiable. However, based on each participant's profile, the reader can visualize and connect with each participant based solely on the participation criteria.

Setting

The study was slated to occur at an Independent School District in Texas. For this study, the school district was referred to as ISDT to protect the identity of the selected schools and participants. Besides my convenience, ISDT was chosen based on institutional and systemic concerns at the state and local level that were relevant to student motivation and were already found to be pressing national issues (Goodman, 2018; The Texas Tribune, 2019a). Generally, Goodman (2018) reports that although there has been a notable improvement in student attrition rates in Texas, especially over the last three decades (33% to 22%), the rates were still unprecedented, especially among ethnic minority students. More specifically, one in every five students in Texas public high schools is failing to graduate, as underscored by the loss of 94,767 students from public high school enrollment in 2017-18 (Goodman, 2018). From a broader perspective, Goodman (2018) adds that since 1986, about 3.8 million students have been lost from public high school enrollment in Texas. Interestingly, African American and Hispanic students account for more than half (51%) of the attrition rate.

In ISDT, The Texas Tribune (2019a) warned that 51.6% of the students were at risk of dropping out of school according to the state-defined criteria. The Texas state statutes provided that a student is at risk of dropping out of school if they are aged below 26 and (a) failed to advance to a higher grade level for one year or more, (b) in grades 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 but failed to maintain an average of 70 in two or more subjects, (c) pregnant or is a parent, (d) in an alternative education program, (e) has been expelled from school, (f) on parole, probation,

deferred prosecution, or other conditional releases, (g) has previously dropped out of school, (h) has limited English proficiency, (i) in the care or custody of the Department of Family and Protective Services, (j) homeless (The Texas Tribune, 2019b). Economic disadvantage (61.6%) and limited English proficiency (10.5%) were the most profound risk factors for dropping out of school, as mentioned by The Texas Tribune (2019a). Arguably, these issues point back to the contexts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, hence the feasibility of ISDT for the proposed study.

ISDT serves four communities and approximately 45,500 students attending 32 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, five high schools, and a state-of-the-art career center. ISDT has a team of approximately 6,800 individuals working together to develop well-rounded students from rigorous, innovative, and challenging curricula, safe and orderly campuses, and inviting facilities. The school district is led by a board of trustees, superintendent, deputy superintendent, and directors overseeing operations like communication, security, grants and education, technology, and learning services.

Participants

The study's population was all the high school teachers in ISDT. In research, the study population referred to all the objects or individuals that collectively formed the locus of the study by bearing the primary unit of comparison and falling into the specified inclusion criteria (Murphy, 2016). The following inclusion criteria were used to recruit the study participants: full-time teacher at any of the five public high schools had worked at the current school for at least two years, and computer literate. The requirement of two years of experience will ensure that the study participants were well versed with the student motivation strategies employed at their

school, while the computer literacy criterion would ensure that the participants were competent in conducting online interviews, which were the prospected data collection methods.

A sample referred to the group of subjects selected from the larger target population to provide the researcher with the data necessary to complete an investigation while the sample size is the actual number of participants in a study (Alvi, 2016; Kadam & Bhalerao, 2010). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), phenomenology research utilized between three and 10 participants. Furthermore, previous academics-oriented peer-reviewed phenomenological studies such as Hall et al. (2016) and Spencer et al. (2015) published in reputable journals underscored the validity of between six and 10 study subjects in deriving reliable findings. Based on these literary justifications, the proposed study featured 10 participants.

The study participants were purposefully sampled. Gentles et al. (2015) pointed out that sampling in qualitative research was choosing informants—the people who possessed the necessary data for a specified research design. Sampling was divided into two significant typologies—probability and non-probability, with the former being the norm in quantitative research and the latter sufficing in qualitative inquiries (Taherdoost, 2016); instead of randomization, as was the case of quantitative studies, qualitative research employed judgment in sampling research participants. The non-probability sampling method has been chosen because the current study took a qualitative stance. Moreover, the study employed purposeful sampling, a category of qualitative sampling techniques alongside convenience sampling, quota sampling, judgment sampling, and snowball sampling (Taherdoost, 2016). Purposeful sampling was chosen because it allowed me more flexibility in selecting participants, settings, and events.

All the interviews were conducted online via Zoom, based on the participants' preferences. The choice of online interviews over face-to-face interviews was informed by the

fact that during the preparation for data collection, the globe was grappled with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This highly infectious disease made it risky for people to interact freely, notwithstanding me and my study participants. I contacted each of the five high schools through the contacts provided online and asked for official permission to conduct research featuring the most experienced teachers at the institutions. For each school, two teachers who have worked the longest were targeted. The essence of recruiting the most experienced teachers was to collect data from the participants with the most objective and richest information regarding the student motivation strategies employed at each school. This approach also aligns with the characteristics of purposeful sampling, which allowed me to recruit the subjects thought to be the best informants for the given study.

Once contact was made with the management of each school, I provided the details of the study, including purpose and significance, after which the contact information of all the teachers was requested from the management. The participants were contacted and provided with the study details based on their experience level, with the most experienced being the primary informants. The participants who agreed to participate in the study filled out an informed consent form sent to them via mail to confirm their participation. In case a potential participant declined to participate, I derived the next experienced teacher from the list provided by the school until a sample size of 10 participants was attained. In conformation to the excellent research practices outlined by Surmiak (2018), all the names of the participants and their institutions were coded using pseudonyms. I also relied on the university's institutional review board's (IRB's) approval to conduct the study.

Recruitment Plan

The total number of high school teachers within ISDT is 549 (Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2023). Of those 549 teachers, only ten were sought for this study. The recruitment sample size of ten was determined based on two teachers from each of the five high school campuses in ISDT.

The criteria used to recruit participants were as follows: had to be a full-time teacher at each of the five high schools in the school district, have worked on the current campus for at least two years, and must be computer literate. The requirement of two years of experience ensured that the study participants were well versed with the student motivation strategies employed at their school, while the computer literacy criterion ensured that the participants were competent in conducting online interviews, which were the prospected data collection methods. Several steps were implemented in the recruitment plan based on the criteria above. The first step in recruitment was to obtain permission from the school district to research district employees. After receiving permission from the school district, principals at all five high schools were contacted via email. Each email included participant criteria.

Purposeful sampling was used in the selection of potential participants. According to Gentles et al. (2015), qualitative research sampling involves informants or participants who possess data or knowledge necessary for a specific research design. Purposeful sampling was utilized in the recruitment plan because it allowed for more flexibility in selecting participants. Although the study participants were purposefully sampled, teachers' names were included in the email to their principal in case those teachers were not able to participate or if the principal had a more suitable candidate in mind. Once permission from campus principals was obtained, participants were contacted via email. All participants were employees of ISDT and had the

same email format: first name.last name@isdt.org. Email addresses were also verified by employee searches within each high school's website, as this information is publicly available. Only one template was used for recruitment, as all recruitment was conducted via email. Recruitment follow-ups were conducted via email as well.

Recruitment emails to participants included the purpose of the research, the criteria for participation, the estimated time needed to complete the interview, the focus group, and the questionnaire. Participants were assured that their participation would remain completely anonymous, and therefore, no personal, identifying information would be collected. Participants were provided with my contact information, email address, and phone number to schedule times for an interview. Lastly, a detailed consent form containing additional research information was attached to the email. Potential participants who had not responded to the original recruitment email within the allotted one-week timeframe were sent a follow-up email, which included more details related to participant requirements, an extended deadline, and another copy of the consent form.

Researcher's Positionality

My choice of student motivation as a topic of study was informed by an innate omnipresent orientation to understand what drives students to behave the way they do, as well as what can be done to shape their behaviors positively. As a future curriculum development leader, my lived experiences, personal opinions, and beliefs about the drivers of student motivation, pooled with the views of other educators, can develop a one-of-a-kind model of student motivation in U.S. secondary schools. Based on my lived experiences and personal beliefs about the study subject, I am predisposed to conducting a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological study. I want to work with study participants whose life experiences are in many ways like mine

because of the freedom I will derive from relating my experiences with those of my study participants.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), selecting a methodology is almost always subjective, such that our philosophies are imprinted in how we develop and proceed with our research frameworks. Based on my philosophy, experiences, and opinions, I identify with a constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm. More specifically, in conducting research, I am concerned with understanding the world from peoples' subjective experiences instead of measurements. Contrasting to a constructivist paradigm will create knowledge while interacting with my research participants. My ontological standpoint is that there is a social connotation to the nature of the world and what we can know about it—the world can be dialogued; it can be perceived and experienced, hence the applicability of the constructivist approach to research. More specifically, if I can have a subjective experience of student motivation, other teachers and curriculum leaders can also have similar experiences, creating an opportunity for a constructivist dialogue.

Interpretive Framework

While conducting this study, I followed the interpretivist (social construction) research paradigm. The interpretivist philosophical camp has been associated with the works of Socrates and his student Plato, who posited that the truth is only approachable dialectically and through careful reflection (Schunk, 2019). Simply put, the truth can only be interpreted, not measured, created, not discovered, and that truth and reality are subjective, culturally, socially, and historically constructed (Dean, 2018; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016; Ryan, 2018). I followed the interpretivist approach based on my understanding that there is no one reality regarding the lived experiences of secondary school teachers in their student motivation strategies. As such, instead

of discovering a universal context of student motivation among my participants, I sought to understand their interpretations of the phenomenon based on their lived experiences, based on the awareness that different people construct their knowledge of a given social issue.

Philosophical Assumptions

Ontologically, my philosophical assumption was that there was a social connotation to the nature of the world and what we can know about it—the world can be dialogued; it can be perceived and experienced. Ultimately, my main focus in research was to "get into the heads of the study participants" to understand them and interpret their thoughts about the study phenomenon. Here, the focus was on the subject's viewpoint instead of the observer's. These deductions aligned with Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), who described the interpretivist worldview as an admission that the social world is dynamic and transient such that one individual's standpoint cannot be used to understand it and that realities are multiple and socially constructed. Despite being predisposed to insider bias, I remained objective. I focused on the subject's viewpoints throughout the study, functioning only as a human research instrument and maintaining a substantial positivist inclination to mitigate against underlying bias in understanding and interpreting collected data.

Ontological Assumption

Ontological assumptions refer to the study of being. Kaushik and Walsh (2019) and Žukauskas et al. (2018) define ontology as the nature of reality. In the context of the current study, my interpretivism ontological assumption was that multiple social realities exist regarding the lived experiences of secondary school teachers in their attempts to motivate their learners. Another assumption is that as the researcher, I could not define the reality of these lived

experiences alone, hence the need to capture the perceptions, experiences, and meanings the participants give to their student motivation strategies.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemology appeals to the nature of knowledge. From an interpretivist epistemological perspective, knowledge resides in observable phenomena and subjective values, beliefs, reasons, and understandings (Aliyu et al., 2015). Also, knowledge is constructed and concerned with how people make meanings in their lives and the kind of meanings they make (Aliyu et al., 2015). Here, I assumed that reality is dynamic and highly transient. As such, how one comes to know things cannot be divorced from interpersonal relationships, which are the drivers of most of our experiences. Because the constructivist/interpretivist research paradigm is founded on the assumption of a continuous interaction between a researcher and the social world and that the researcher's values and perspectives inevitably influence research findings, I have come to the appreciation of my epistemological stance as mainly constructivist: I am seeking to interpret the social world of student motivation first for my learners and then for myself, my colleagues, and other stakeholders.

The rhetoric of qualitative research is fascinating. Firestone (1987) and Poth and Creswell (2018) set the language, narration, and literary abilities at the nexus of rhetoric. The narrative should be personal and literary. The researcher should possess the art of persuasion to compel the reader that what is being said is worth something. Firestone (1987) insists that rhetoric is contained in the art of speaking and writing without employing insincerity or manipulative words. In this study, I used the first-person pronoun and a narrative style to adhere to the confines of this qualitative rhetoric.

Axiological Assumption

Axiological assumptions refer to the role of values in terms of a researcher's biases, intuition, and values (Chakravartty, 2018; Mertens, 2016). These values are considered vital in research because they play a significant role in the way dialogue is structured between the researcher and the participants, which is, in turn, reflected in the construction and interpretation of data. Against this backdrop, my axiological assumption will be interpretive—the questions I will ask the participants and the extrapolation of themes in their responses will be significantly influenced by my values, experiences, and worldviews. Since I am a secondary school teacher, just like the participants, I assume that the participants and I will bear similar values, experiences, and worldviews that will interact to deepen the analysis.

Researcher's Role

Unlike in quantitative research, where the role of the researcher is virtually non-existent, the researcher is regarded as a data collection instrument in qualitative studies (Xu & Storr, 2012). Qualitative researchers function as human instruments by reconciling the participants and the interview protocol (Fink, 2000). Although scholars like Sutton and Austin (2015) casually view the researcher's role as simply accessing study participants' thoughts and feelings, the researcher's point of view may and does complicate the research process. In the current study, I am a secondary school teacher, just like the study participants, meaning that the student motivation experiences being explored may be similar or different from mine. However, this underlying similarity or difference in student motivation experiences between me and the participants may lead to bias when I engage in a covert or overt comparison of my own experiences to the collected data. More precisely, I might have been tempted to interpret the collected data about my own experiences of student motivation.

I took both an emic and etic position. The emic position is that I am also a secondary school teacher, hence an insider role in deciphering student motivation. Regarding the etic position, I am like an outsider, taking the role of an objective viewer. To mitigate any biases resulting from personal experiences, I intended to maintain an outsider standpoint during the collection of data while at the same time harnessing the advantages of insider knowledge, especially in developing the interview protocol.

My interpretivist/constructivist worldview was the proposed study's best cushion against bias because instead of viewing things from a single lens, the same construct can be viewed differently within a given social environment. Epistemologically, I did not rely on intuition, logic, or rationality to understand concepts. Instead, sensible experiences and objective facts form the most significant section of how I came to know the truth or reality. Effectively, instead of using personal judgments or biases to understand concepts, I leaned on the empirical side of epistemology.

Procedures

Besides the IRB permissions (see Appendix A for IRB approval), I sought authorization from the ISDT board to conduct the research (see Appendix B for site approval). Initially, I used the ISDT contacts provided on ISDT's website to initiate contact with the school district and follow the established research approval protocol afterward. The formal permissions from the ISDT board were crucial in convincing individual school leadership boards and management to relinquish their teachers for the study. I sent copies of the formally signed ISDT and IRB approvals to each school's administration as proof that I had observed all the necessary research ethics. The essence of providing the school administrations with these approval documents was to solicit the contacts of potential research participants.

After I secured the potential research participants' contact information, communication commenced with an initial focus on establishing a rapport and getting informed consent. Based on the COVID-19 dynamics mentioned earlier herein, I intended to avoid meeting any participants physically; phone calls, emails, and Zoom mediums were crucial aspects of communication during the study. Once a potential participant agreed to participate in the study, an informed consent form was sent via email (see Appendix C for participant consent form). Participants were required to scan the filled consent forms and send them back to me through the same email address. I was ready to conduct pilot studies with a few randomly selected participants.

Hassan et al. (2006) outlined several benefits of conducting a pilot study during research, including (a) determining the feasibility of the research protocol, (b) exploring the weaknesses of the research, (c) testing whether the study instrument is asking the intended questions, (d) evaluating the appropriateness of the selected data collection method (online interviews in the proposed study), and (e) appraising the data collection process including the time taken with each interviewee as well as the informants' willingness to provide meaningful information. I intended to conduct the pilot study with three educators who met the inclusion criteria but were outside the ten sampled participants.

Audio recording formed an essential part of the data collection. Zoom had built-in audio-visual recording tools. I used these tools to record all the interviews and stored the recorded data in a password-protected computer. In addition to these built-in recording tools, I leveraged an external audio recording device (Sony UX560A) as a backup. The recording process was set to begin at the beginning of each interview and culminate at the end. The essence of recording the

collected data was to facilitate transcription. Once the data were collected, I transcribed the data from audio to text to expedite the data analysis.

Although collecting and recording audio data was crucial, it was also paramount to collect contextual data such as the interview's date, time, location, setting, and background. This contextual data were mainly collected through participant observation, which Kawulich (2005) described as providing a "written photograph" of the data collection context. Kawulich (2005) added that observing the participants provides the researcher with data, such as nonverbal expressions of feelings that cannot be detected through audio recordings. I, therefore, took notes as deemed necessary to record this contextual data. When the collected data had been transcribed verbatim, thematic context analysis was used to identify the inherent patterns and themes.

Data Collection Plan

I employed an interpretivist/constructivist worldview throughout the entire study. This conceptual framework argues that the world is not static—different individuals can have divergent views of the same phenomenon because realities have many dimensions and are socially constructed. As such, the methodological assumption was that interviews are more likely to deduce optimal information based on account of individual experiences. Moreover, the study employed hermeneutic phenomenology, which seeks first to understand study participants' experiences through language and then interpret their viewpoints. Put differently, hermeneutic phenomenology points out that each person is responsible for their own experience through individual being and being with others (Sebold et al., 2017). Accordingly, the proposed study employed a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured open-ended interviews, and a focus group to collect the data.

Data triangulation was also used to ensure the research was robust, affluent, well-

developed, and comprehensive. Data triangulation involves using two or more methods to verify a study's results or findings. The rationale of data triangulation was to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings when the various methods of triangulation yield converging results (Heale & Forbes, 2013; Noble & Heale, 2019). Against this backdrop, interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires were the data collection methods for the proposed study's triangulation efforts. I employed the following sequence: (1) interviews, (2) focus groups, (3) questionnaires. I chose this sequence because the interviews formed the primary data collection method for the proposed study, while focus groups and questionnaires were used for triangulation. In other words, focus groups and questionnaires functioned as verifications for the validity and credibility of the interview findings. A detailed account of each of the three data collection methods was provided in the following sections.

Individual Interviews

Harrell and Bradley (2009) endorse interviews as the best primary data collection method for understanding participants' practices, beliefs, and opinions about a study context. Moreover, interviews suffice when the researcher intends to collect background information as a buildup to understanding the study phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews are particularly crucial when the researcher bears discretion concerning the order of questions to be asked. Like the structured typology, semi-structured interviews employ an outline of questions and topics prepared in advance by the researcher. However, the latter has no rigid adherence—the researcher progresses depending on the derived responses (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). As such, using semi-structured interviews provides flexibility, allowing the researcher to ask even more complex questions than the initially drafted ones (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Harrell and Bradley (2009) add that semi-structured interviews facilitate a conversational approach to data collection, allowing the

researcher to delve deep into the topic and thoroughly understand the participants' viewpoints. The current study aimed to understand teachers' lived experiences in their endeavor to motivate secondary school students. Semi-structured interviews were, therefore, crucial in ensuring that a conversational stance was maintained between me and the interviewee, allowing the latter to express himself or herself entirely.

The interviews were collected via Zoom (see Appendix D for interview questions) based on the participants' convenience. I also allowed the participants to choose any other online platform accessible to both parties. Each interview was arranged beforehand and set at a time agreed upon between the research participants and me. Although the setting of the interviews was immaterial, I implored the participants in advance to choose a place with minimal noise and other distractions. The prospected length of each interview was between 45 minutes and one hour, but I was flexible to allow each participant to express themselves fully.

Saunders et al. (2009) outline the antecedents of collecting qualitative data that the researcher intends to employ in the proposed study. These antecedents are (a) establishing a rapport with the study participant, (b) introducing the study and its purposes, (c) following the interview protocol, (d) employing probing techniques like overt encouragement, the silent probe, clarification, elaboration, and reflection, and (e) thanking the participants for their time and commitment. I did not anticipate a rigid interview process but intended to employ this general approach as a rough guide to conducting the interviews. Each participant was assured that the collected data would not be used for any other purpose outside the study and that their personally identifying information would always be considered private and confidential.

I relied on Zoom's built-in cloud recording system to record the conversations during the interviews. Additionally, I set the computer to record the screen, including the audio data, as a

backup method to Zoom's system. Before each interview, the connection between the interviewee and me was tested through an innocuous conversation with the interviewee, which also established rapport. I also recorded information like the interviewee's mood, environment, and setting. Each interview was slated to last between 45 minutes and one hour to facilitate an in-depth dialogue. Lastly, to test the face and content validity of the interview protocol, a field test was carried out with non-participants before the interviews with the selected participants. Present your semi-structured interview protocol using the formatting below.

Table 1

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please give me a detailed outline of your profile as a high school teacher. CRQ
2. What aspect of your profile makes you stand out in your teaching career? CRQ
3. What motivated you to choose the subject combination you are currently teaching? CRQ
4. What would you say is the biggest achievement in your teaching career? CRQ
5. Is there something else that you would like me to know about you? CRQ
6. Please describe your worldview regarding student motivation among secondary school students. CRQ
7. Please describe your personal student motivation strategies if you have any. SQ1
8. Research has shown that the rate of student motivation in the United States is dwindling, especially among secondary students. On a scale of your choice, how would you describe the rate of student motivation among your students. SQ2
9. People typically derive motivation, intrinsically, or extrinsically. How would you describe the source of motivation for your students? SQ2
10. Self-efficacy has been cited as a source of motivation for many learners. How would you

describe the extent of self-efficacy among your students? SQ2

11. Theoretically, people are always soliciting attributions for their successes and failures. For your students, what are the main attributions for success and failure? SQ2
12. Please describe the main student motivation strategies employed at your school. SQ3
13. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your student motivation strategies? SQ1
14. How would you describe the weaknesses of your school's student motivation strategies? SQ3
15. Please describe some of the struggles you have experienced in your bid to bolster student motivation. CRQ
16. If you were a policymaker, what are some of the changes you would make in the curriculum to improve student motivation? SQ3
17. If you would do anything different as far as student motivation in your school is concerned, what would it be? SQ3
18. Lastly, is there something else you would like me to know about how your view of student motivation? CRQ

The development of the above interview protocol followed the three phases (contextualization, apprehending the phenomenon, and clarifying the phenomenon) proposed by Bevan (2014). Questions one through seven were about contextualization. In the contextualization phase, Bevan (2014) recommends descriptive questions about the participants' experiences and how those experiences came to be to prompt them to reconstruct and describe experiences in a narrative containing significant information. More specifically, in questions one through seven, I focused on the contexts of the participants' profiles, teaching careers, achievements, worldviews, and personal motivation philosophies. The seven questions can be

summed up by two concepts – teacher personality and worldview. According to Jurczak and Jurczak (2015), personality makes each teacher unique, original, and different and allows them to stand out. Personality may determine a teacher's effectiveness depending on the challenges of teaching and learning.

Regarding world views, Walker (2004) points out that it is like a window through which people see the world, the environment, and their peers. Worldviews are embedded in the teaching and learning environment. Teachers have inherent assumptions about their learners, teaching approaches, philosophies, colleagues, and schools.

Questions eight through 15 concentrated on apprehending the phenomenon (student motivation). Bevan (2014) describes this second phase as an endeavor to unearth the participants' experiences regarding the study phenomenon. As such, the questions in this phase converged towards prompting the participants to describe their experiences about the rate of student motivation in their schools, the source of motivation among their students (intrinsic or extrinsic), the extent of self-efficacy among students, attributions of success and failure among the students, student motivation strategies in their schools as well as strengths, weaknesses, and struggles. These constructs have been reviewed in-depth by scholars and researchers like Doménech-Betoret et al. (2017), Legault (2016), and Maymon et al. (2018).

The last phase (questions 16 and 17) clarified the phenomenon that Bevan (2014) points out is akin to imaginative variation. Here, I prompted the participants to think about the changes that would bolster student motivation at the policy and school levels. Both questions were phrased to challenge the respondents to consider the ideal student motivation strategies. Arguably, these questions introduced the concepts of imagination, creativity, and play, as elucidated by Tsai (2012). In other words, if student motivation in the U.S. is to be bolstered, secondary school

teachers must be more imaginative and creative in their approaches. The last question culminated in nature, allowing the participants to provide additional information about their view of student motivation. This data collection phase was expected to provide data for this study's three research questions.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are similar to structured interviews but involve more than just collecting similar data from selected participants. Focus groups are group discussions on a given topic for research purposes. The researcher was the moderator who guided and monitored the participants and recorded the data (Gill et al., 2008). For this study, two focus groups of five participants each were formed for a reflective discussion on teachers' lived experiences regarding the current student motivation strategies (see Appendix E for focus group questions). According to Nyumba et al. (2018), focus groups are influential when the researcher wants to gain a more in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon.

Although interviews and focus groups are similar, the role of the researcher and the relationship with the informants drew the line between the two techniques. In the interviews, the researcher was an 'investigator' in a one-on-one discussion focused on asking questions and controlling the discussion with one informant at a time (Nyumba et al., 2018). Conversely, in focus groups, the researcher became a facilitator whose role was to moderate dialogue among the participants rather than between the researcher and participants. In other words, the individual interviews were used to unearth patterns and themes ingrained in the participant's responses. At the same time, the focus groups featured an in-depth exploration and confirmation of the initial themes and patterns (Nyumba et al., 2018).

The data from the focus group were audio-recorded in the same manner as the interviews because the whole process was conducted virtually via Zoom. The logistics of the focus groups were similar to those of the interviews, except that the former involved video conferencing because there were more than two participants. In the beginning, I welcomed the participants, gave them an overview of the topic, issued ground rules like the use of phones, and notified them that they would be recorded as they spoke for data analysis purposes. I contacted each of the 10 participants to decide on the focus groups' appropriate day, place, time, and duration. I intended to use focus groups in this study to triangulate the collected data to enhance credibility and validity.

I allowed the participants to submit their views while also giving them opportunities to respond to each other's views and submissions. I projected that each focus group would last about two hours. After I collected the data, I transcribed them verbatim, just like the interview data. The focus groups addressed all the research questions because the questions asked addressed the personal, social, and structural sides of student motivation.

Table 2

Focus Group Questions

1. How have you been involved in student motivation? CRQ
2. Think back over the past six months about the things you have done to motivated you students. What went well and why? CRQ
3. Do your colleagues use the same approaches as you to student motivation? SQ1
4. What are some of the areas that need improvement as far as student motivation is concerned? CRQ
5. Suppose you were in charge of your school and needed to change the approaches used

in motivating students. What would you do? SQ3

6. What would you like to add about student motivation? CRQ

Questionnaires

In addition to the individual interviews and focus groups, the participants were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire to unearth the most-used motivational strategies (see Appendix F for focus group questions). The questionnaire was drawn from a study conducted by Bernaus and Gardner (2008), who investigated student and teacher perceptions regarding motivational strategies in the classroom. The questionnaire was a 15-item scale containing ten traditional and five innovative student motivational strategies, although they still need to be identified as such on the instrument. Unlike the quantitative approach that uses a Likert scale, I employed an open-ended method for each of the ten traditional and five innovative motivation strategies. The questionnaire did not include demographic information like age, gender, and education level of the participants. For the main questions, the participants filled in the approximate number of times they have used the specific motivation strategy in the last three months.

The questionnaire responses were harnessed in the triangulation of the collected data. The role of the questionnaire data was to investigate whether the strategies mentioned in the interviews and focus groups were consistent with the traditional and innovative motivational strategies contained in contemporary literature. Regarding the logistics, I modified the questionnaire questions from Bernaus and Gardner (2008) to change them from quantitative to qualitative language, printed them into a participant-friendly transcript, and then sent a scanned copy to each participant to fill out and return. After filling it out, each participant scanned her copy and emailed it back to me. I covered all the expenses incurred by the participants while

printing and scanning the questionnaire transcripts. While filling out each questionnaire took less than two hours, I allowed the participants three days due to any logistical issues that may arise. I then used descriptive statistics like mean and standard deviation to deduce the most-used student motivation strategies. The questionnaire addressed the first research question because it takes a personalized approach to understanding the strategies most used by the participants in motivating their students.

Table 3

Questionnaires

1. I am always polite to my students. SQ1

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

2. I create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. SQ2

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

3. I use a clear and loud voice during lessons and classroom activities. SQ1

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

4. I vary classroom activities to allow learners to take part in lessons and classroom activities. SQ2

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

5. I use gestures, pictures, and illustrations to clarify concepts and content. SQ2

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

6. I am enthusiastic about teaching, and I show it to my learners. SQ1

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

7. I listen to my learners keenly when they have problems. SQ1

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

8. I provide support to individual students to show that I care about them. SQ2

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

9. I allow my students to choose how and when they want to be assessed. SQ2

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

10. I allow my learners to choose their most-preferred classroom activities. SQ2

    ☐Agree

    ☐Disagree

    Reason for your choice:

11. I involve my learners in planning and organizing teaching and learning activities. SQ2

    ☐Agree

    ☐Disagree

    Reason for your choice:

12. I use images, quizzes, songs, short videos, and games to introduce new topics in the classroom. SQ1

    ☐Agree

    ☐Disagree

    Reason for your choice:

13. I monitor each student's work individually, and I notice and celebrate every success. SQ2

    ☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

_____

_____

14. I use various reward methods to motivate my learners. SQ3

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

_____

_____

15. I use punishments to motivate my learners. SQ1

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

_____

_____

Data Analysis

The data analysis section was centered on the triangulation of the transcribed text data from interviews and focus groups, as well as the responses to questionnaires. I focused on understanding the data through segmenting, taking apart, and then assembling the data obtained from responses to interview questions, focus group questions, and questionnaires into codes and themes. The data analysis process followed the five general steps modeled by Creswell and Creswell (2018):

Step 1. Organizing and preparing the data for analysis

The data from the interviews and focus groups are first transcribed to transfer it from audio to text. Secondly, I performed an optical scan of the transcribed data, typed up field notes,

and cataloged visual material based not only on the interviews and focus groups but also the questionnaires. Lastly, the data are sorted and arranged into various types depending on the source of information.

Step 2. Reading or looking at all the data

In this step, I got a general sense of the data and a prerogative to reflect upon the overall meaning of the information. The focus was on the general ideas of identifying emergent patterns and observations such as the tone, overall impression, and perceived credibility of the information.

Step 3. Coding

Coding organizes the data by bracketing chunks of information and using specific words, phrases, or terms to represent each code (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). More precisely, I took the text data gathered during data collection, segments, sentences, or paragraphs into categories and labeled these categories with a Maxqda term (a term from the participant's actual language). Coding is divided into open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding involves breaking textual data into discrete parts, axial coding entails drawing connections between codes, and selective coding involves selecting a central category that connects all the codes and underscores the essence of the study (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). However, as mentioned, I intend to draw the codes directly from what has been said and written by the participants by the use of special descriptive codes known as *Maxqda* codes. Cope (2010) describes this coding strategy as finding the common phrases in the responses from the research participants and using these phrases to form the codes.

Step 4. Theme generation

Using the developed codes, I created broader categories called themes. The themes form the major headings in the qualitative findings section, making them the study findings. In phenomenology, themes are shaped to form general descriptions of the participants' worldviews.

Step 5. Presenting the themes

This step is synonymous with presenting and interpreting qualitative data. Usually, this process was undertaken in the discussion section, where I discussed the themes based on respective subthemes, quotations, and multiple perspectives from the study participants.

Data coding is the nexus of qualitative data analysis. Although the five-step model of qualitative analysis presented by Creswell and Creswell (2018) provides a general guideline of how to analyze qualitative data, it still needs to offer a detailed data coding framework. Against this backdrop, I employed the Modified Van Kaam Analysis model, a nine-step guideline popularized by Moustakas (1994) and Van Manen's (1990) approach to data analysis. Moustakas developed the Modified Van Kaam model specifically for qualitative phenomenology, making it an ideal data coding guide for this study. Apart from the model, I intended to employ Maxqda, a qualitative data analysis software, to code the collected data. The model appears to endorse axial coding, where I identified the open codes in the data and then sought the connections between those codes. Since the study adopted the Modified Van Kaam mode, it effectively employed axial coding. The model's nine steps are discussed in the section that follows.

I began the preliminary data coding process by grouping or listing all the relevant quotes to the study phenomenon. All the data were treated equally at this stage, with no excerpt or quote superseding the others. For the current study, horizontalization would mean counting open-code frequency across data sets.

In the second step, Moustakas (1994) requires that for every quote, the researcher asks two main questions: (1) is the quote significant to the respondents' lived experience regarding the study phenomenon? Moreover, (2) Is the quote reducible to a latent meaning? If the answer to the two questions is no, then the Modified Van Kaam model dictates that the quote be eliminated. The essence of reduction and elimination is to separate redundant and ancillary information from the invariant constituents of the experience.

The third step is about thematizing the invariant constituents. The excerpts and quotes that passed the two questions of step two are explored for latent meanings and then grouped commensurate with those latent meanings (Moustakas, 1994). The groupings are then regarded as themes highlighting each participant's experiences. In step four, the resultant themes are checked against the data. After the themes have been generated in step three, the researcher should begin examining those themes against the dataset. The essence of this step is to ensure that the themes align with the participants' experiences. (Moustakas, 1994). In other words, this step ascertains that the themes tell the participants' stories. In the fifth step, individual textural descriptions are developed. When presenting the data, this step of the Modified Van Kaam requires that verbatim quotes and excerpts be utilized (Moustakas, 1994). For instance, if several participants pointed out that their students are extrinsically motivated, the researcher should provide verbatim quotations in the discussion section.

Step six involves the creation of individual structural descriptions. This step requires the researcher to formulate descriptions that connect what the participants say or write to social, cultural, and emotional domains. The step is regarded as the beginning of the primary data interpretation phase. Moustakas (1994) endorses the employment of imaginative variation in this step.

In step seven, Moustakas (1994) prompts the researcher to create composite textual descriptions. Here, the researcher creates a table detailing all the themes for every study subject. The essence of this step is to help highlight all the prominent and reoccurring themes across all the participants. The researcher needs to report these prominent and recurring themes because they comprise the participants' lived experiences of the study phenomenon.

Step eight focuses on the creation of composite structural descriptions. In this step, the researcher examines all participants to examine their social, cultural, and emotional connections (Moustakas, 1994). The step entails describing the common aspects of the participants' experiences. At this point, the researcher begins conceptualizing the most significant factors in the participants' experiences and the elements that drive these experiences. The last step entails creating composite structural-textural descriptions. Creating composite structural-textural descriptions is the last step of the Modified Van Kaam model. It is also called synthesis because it involves merging the textural and structural domains to provide an overarching understanding of the study phenomenon. Ultimately, this merging of the two domains creates the lived experience of the study phenomenon, which is the end goal of phenomenology.

Hermeneutic phenomenological data are analyzed through thematic analysis consistent with Moustakas' approach. Max Van Manen's data analysis approach has four steps as follows:

1. Uncovering thematic aspects
2. Isolating thematic statements
3. Composing linguistic transformations
4. Gleaning thematic descriptions.

Cohen et al. (2000) view uncovering thematic aspects as an endeavor that immerses the researcher in the data by reading them twice or more. The uncovered themes are initial

interpretations of the data that drive later coding in the other stages of analysis. As far as isolating thematic statements is concerned, Van Manen (1990) argues that as lived-experience descriptions are studied and initial thematic aspects are uncovered, some experiential themes are found to be recurrent or have some underpinned commonalities in how the informants describe them. To isolate these themes, the researcher held on to these recurrent themes by highlighting and lifting appropriate phrases from the data. In the third step (composing thematic transformations), the researcher focuses on converting the isolated thematic statements into phenomenologically sensitive paragraphs (Van Manen, 1990). These transformations are based on interpretations of the themes and other research in a creative, hermeneutic process (Van Manen, 1990). Lastly, gleaning thematic descriptions involves grasping the essence of an experience in a phenomenological description.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the extent of faith in the data, interpretation, and research methodology. Gunawan (2015) presents four classifications of trustworthiness: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. This section defines each of the four elements of trustworthiness and how I will ensure the trustworthiness of the proposed study.

Credibility

Credibility is the level of confidence that can be allocated to the truth of a study's findings. A credible study accurately presents the participants' perspectives as drawn from the original data (Noble & Smith, 2015). In the proposed study, I employed member checking to ascertain the study's credibility. A sample member checking form was included as a reference and template. After the data transcription, all the interview transcripts were emailed to individual participants for feedback. Moreover, after the data analysis and findings sections were drafted,

copies of the sections were sent to the participants, allowing them to confirm, challenge, or correct the researcher's interpretations of the collected data.

Transferability

Transferability is equitable to external validity or generalizability in quantitative studies (Cambon et al., 2012). For a study's transferability, its findings must be relevant to other fields. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated, "It is, in summary, not the naturalist's task to provide an index of transferability; it is his or her responsibility to provide the database that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers" (p. 316). The readers, not the researcher, make the transferability judgment because the latter does not know the former's specific settings nor the applicability of research findings to those settings. For the proposed study to be transferable to other settings, I provided a thick description of the study's context, setting, sample, sampling strategy, sample size, inclusion and exclusion criteria, data collection procedures, and interview questions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Moon et al. (2016) view dependability as the reliability and consistency of a study's findings and the documentation of research procedures such that an external party can follow, critique, audit, or replicate the study. The methodology, design, instrumentation, and data collection details for the proposed study constituted dependability because any party could follow the details and replicate the study.

Confirmability

Confirmability mainly refers to the concept of neutrality—the researcher did not base interpretations on their viewpoints, preferences, or experiences but on the collected data. I demystified all the philosophical assumptions, beliefs, and predispositions that could lead to bias

regarding confirmability. Moreover, detailed, thick descriptions of the themes and member-checking the findings and interpretations were used to address dependability and confirmability.

Ethical Considerations

The proposed study focused on providing participants with a safe environment during the interview process and allowing them informed consent. Also, in line with Saunders et al. (2009), I informed the participants that they had the discretion to abandon the study at their convenience without being obliged to give any explanations. I ensured that no harm would come to the participants for participating in the interviews, pilot study, or member checking. For instance, I chose online interviews instead of one-on-one interviews to protect the participants from contracting COVID-19 by participating in the study. Arguably, by conducting the interviews online, I reduced the need for movement and interaction with other people during data collection, thereby minimizing the risk of the participants getting infected with the virus.

Regarding confidentiality and anonymity, the collected data were stored in a password-protected computer that only the researcher can access. Pseudonyms for the participants and their respective schools were also used to protect the identity of the participants. Three years after the completion of the research, the stored digital files will be deleted.

Poth and Creswell (2018) provide rich guidance on how to conduct ethical research. Before beginning the study, the researcher should seek IRB approval, gain local access and permissions, and select a site free of conflict of interest. At the beginning of the study, the researcher was required to disclose the purpose of the study to the participants, refrain from pressuring the participants to sign informed consents, respect participants' backgrounds and diversity, and maintain sensitivity towards the needs of vulnerable populations like children (Poth & Creswell, 2018). During data collection, the researcher respected the study site,

minimized interference, avoided deceiving participants, and stored the collected data safely away from third-party access (Poth & Creswell, 2018). Other vital concepts of ethical research include respecting the participants' privacy, avoiding plagiarism, and sharing the findings with others. The researcher intended to comply fully with these ethical directions.

Permissions

There were three necessary approvals and permissions for this study. IRB approval was needed to collect data and recruit participants (see Appendix A for the IRB approval letter). IRB approval was obtained by completing the online IRB application. Aside from obtaining IRB approval, permission to conduct my research with ISDT employees was also needed (see Appendix B for the district approval letter). To obtain permission from the school district, I sent a permission request email to the ISDT point of contact, followed by completing the ISDT research guidelines questionnaire. Formal permission from the district was crucial in obtaining buy-in from school principals to agree to their teachers participating in the study. The third and final necessary permission was from the participants themselves. Consent forms were attached to each potential candidate's recruitment email (see Appendix C for informed consent form) and asked to be returned to verify that the candidate wanted to participate in the research study.

Other Participant Protections

Each participant was provided with a consent form that informed them of the voluntary nature of the study. Through the consent f`orm and the recruitment email, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study without any consequences. Aside from being a part of the consent form, participants were verbally assured that their personally identifying information would always be considered private and confidential at the start of each interview. Pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names to ensure confidentiality. All data

collected was stored on a password-protected computer that I can only access. All data will be appropriately deleted after three years.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to explore the strategies used by teachers to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. The problem addressed in the study was that despite a rising trend of disengaged students in U.S. secondary schools, the strategies teachers need to bolster student motivation are yet to be fully understood. The study occurred in Killeen, Texas, with the participants being teachers in the five Killeen Independent School District secondary schools. The participants were purposefully sampled, where a sample of 10 participants will be recruited, two from each school. The data were collected using semi-structured interviews online via Zoom, based on the participants' preferences. After collection, the data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis guided by Moustakas' Modified Van Kaam model.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Prior to this study, the perspectives of high school teachers regarding their efforts to bolster student motivation were largely unknown. Although there is a plethora of literature on student motivation, scholars and researchers still need to pay more attention to the qualitative inquest into the dynamics of student motivation, specifically the lived experiences of high school teachers regarding their views, strategies, opinions, and beliefs about the phenomenon. Nevertheless, current research such as Collier (2015), Mazepus (2017), and Robinson (2018) have all established that more than 40% of all students, particularly those in secondary schools in the U.S., are chronically disengaged. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of high school teachers in the U.S. to establish their perceptions about the state of student motivation in the country. This chapter presents the study's findings following an in-depth analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires. The chapter begins with an overview of the participants' demographic profile before presenting the themes emanating from a thematic analysis of interview responses. The chapter then proceeds to concise analyses of the focus groups and questionnaires, which serve as the study's data triangulation methods.

Participants

According to the desired criteria, all participants must be full-time teachers at any of the five high schools within the school district. Participants must also have worked at the current campus for at least two years and be computer literate. Based on these criteria, participants have not only met but exceeded the desired sample, as all 10 participants completed all three data

collection strategies: interview, focus group, and questionnaire. The demographic profile of each participant reiterates that all participants met the requirements of the desired sample space.

Amelia

Amelia is a certified Chemistry teacher. Having taught for about 22 years, this participant brought experience into the study. Amelia has also taught a variety of teaching areas, including biology, physics, astronomy, mathematics, and chemistry, hence a direct interaction with learners from an array of backgrounds, which was paramount in deriving dependable findings in the study. Effectively, when asked about the aspect of her profile that makes her stand out in her career, she said, "I would probably just say like I've taught a variety of classes, and I can teach. All different types of kids, whether they're high or low." This response reiterates her experience as an educator, making her a reliable source of information.

Charlotte

Charlotte embodies passion—she does not shy away from asserting her love for the profession, making her a perfect fit for the interview. When asked about her profile as a teacher, she said, ". . . I've been teaching since 2005. . . But I knew in my heart ever since I was in kindergarten that I wanted to be a math teacher." This response underscores her passion for teaching and her readiness to discuss the various aspects of bolstering student motivation in U.S. high schools.

Maya

Maya is a certified secondary mathematics teacher. The most significant contribution of this participant to this research lies in her ability to connect with struggling learners and help them pass their state assessments. Remarkably, she is the kind of teacher who never gives up on a student, primarily when the learner's background affects student performance. When asked

about her most significant achievement in her career, she responded, "I guess when I talk the more the struggling students to watch them finally after several teachers, you know, they finally get to me, and they finally meet their state assessment." This response reiterates Maya's dedication to helping struggling students, making her ideal for this research, mainly because student motivation significantly contributes to performance and academic success.

Sophia

Sophia has a bachelor's degree in English and has worked at her current campus for four years. Having 12 years of experience as a teacher of English and aspirations to hold an administrative role in education leadership, this teacher is equipped with a solid understanding of effective teaching methodologies and student motivation modalities. This participant brought rare experience to the study because she has taught all levels of English. Most of the time, English teachers specialize in a single level, such as 1, 2, or 3, but Sophia has, over time, taught all these levels. When asked what makes her stand out, she said, "Okay. As a high school teacher, my background is teaching English. And teaching all levels of English. English 1, 2, 3, and 4, so ranging everyone, including seniors." This rare experience means the teacher has interacted with learners in all grades, from freshmen to seniors, and is well-positioned to provide information about the tenets of bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools.

Olivia

Olivia is a certified secondary mathematics teacher who has taught in several school districts. This participant brings experience to the study. Over her 21 years in the profession, Olivia has taken various leadership positions, including as a mentor teacher for the Obama Teacher Advancement program, classroom teacher, and master teacher. She is, therefore, equipped with adequate knowledge about the administrative side of student motivation, making

her a suitable informant for this study. When probed about the most outstanding aspect of her career, Olivia said, "I think the leadership roles that I have been able to take on, for one, I think that every single administrator that I've had in the past, any of my schools would tell you that I've always been an active member."

Eleanor

Eleanor has 12 years of experience, all of which are at her current campus. Apart from teaching in the classroom, this teacher is also an active participant in extra-curricular activities, having been a coach for volleyball, powerlifting, and track. This phenomenon means she has interacted with more students than the typical classroom teacher. Such interaction with students outside the classroom means she understands how extra-curricular activities can be used to bolster student motivation. Asked about the aspect of her career that makes her stand out, she reiterated, "I think my ability to connect and build relationships with kids since I was a coach. I get to spend a little bit of time with them like on a non-academic way, and so they tend to open up a little bit more."

Alice

Alice has served on her current campus for three years but has eight years of experience across two school districts. The participant advocates for building positive relationships with learners at all levels. When asked what makes her stand out, she replied, "Really easy to build relationships with students and establish a good classroom culture. I think that's what has helped me, especially in the demographic on my campus." This response translates to closeness with learners and an inevitable understanding of what motivates them, an attribute paramount in this study.

Nora

Nora has ten years of experience in education as a secondary mathematics teacher, turned instructional coach, and returned to the classroom as a geometry teacher. This participant claims to be a natural-born leader. When asked what makes her career outstanding, she said, "I would honestly have to say, I'm like a born natural leader. They kinda flock to me even though I'm not the team lead, but they just kind of like, okay, what are we doing?" This interaction and connection with students translate to knowledge about student well-being strategies, including motivational tactics, a crucial concept in this study.

Chloe

Having six years of experience as a teacher but 20 years of experience in education as a student advocate and tutor, Chloe has learned the importance of valuing the holistic development of every student. She firmly believes that education goes beyond textbooks and exams. This teacher introduces an aspect of student motivation that is rarely discussed by others—student disability and diversity. Teachers and educators often quickly assume that student motivation is primarily connected to reward schemes and reinforcement without considering the impact of background, disability, and diversity. Asked about the aspect of her career that stands out the most, she said, "Like dyslexia, sped, ESL students for the STAAR testing. I also have a very good pass rate for my re-takers." Effectively, this teacher brings insight into the dynamics of student motivation when issues like dyslexia and diverse backgrounds are involved.

Isabella

Isabella is experienced in 9th- 11th-grade mathematics, focusing mainly on geometry. Isabella is another participant who brought experience into the study. Having taught the same subject in the same school for more than a decade, Isabella is equipped with rich knowledge

about the dynamics of student motivation. Effectively, when asked what makes her stand out in her career, she said, "I'm just gonna steal what you said someone that's taught at the same school for 13 years with the same subjects."

All the study participants reported having taught in secondary schools for more than five years in various subjects, with mathematics ranking the highest at about 60%. Two participants were English teachers, while the remaining two taught history and chemistry. Table 4 is a presentation of the demographic profile of the participants. A brief description of each participant is provided in the sub-section that follows.

Table 4

Teacher Participants

Teachers	Teaching Level	Years of Service	Gender	Teaching subject
Amelia	Secondary school	22	Female	Science
Charlotte	Secondary school	18	Female	Mathematics
Maya	Secondary school	16	Female	Mathematics
Sophia	Secondary school	12	Female	English
Olivia	Secondary school	21	Female	Mathematics
Eleanor	Secondary school	12	Female	History
Alice	Secondary school	8	Female	Mathematics
Nora	Secondary school	10	Female	Mathematics
Chloe	Secondary school	6	Female	English
Isabella	Secondary school	13	Female	Mathematics

Results

This sub-section is divided into three major segments. The first segment presents the findings from the interviews featuring 10 participants. The second segment contains the findings from two focus groups, while the third segment presents questionnaire findings. The interview findings should be interpreted as the study's main findings, while the focus groups and

questionnaires were used for data triangulation. Table 5 depicts the participants involvement in each data collection strategy.

Table 5

Teacher Participants by Data Collection Strategies

Interviews:	Focus Group 1:	Focus Group 2:	Questionnaires:
Amelia	Alice	Eleanor	Amelia
Charlotte	Charlotte	Isabella	Charlotte
Maya	Chloe	Nora	Maya
Sophia	Olivia	Maya	Sophia
Olivia	Amelia	Sophia	Olivia
Eleanor			Eleanor
Alice			Alice
Nora			Nora
Chloe			Chloe
Isabella			Isabella

Interviews

After data collection and verbatim transcription, the data were analyzed through thematic analysis. The thematic analysis approach to data analysis involves locating patterns and themes in the collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose thematic analysis because I wanted to focus on the repetitive themes and patterns that would impact how teachers in United States secondary schools describe their experiences with student motivation. Resultantly, six significant themes were identified from the interviews, as presented in Table 6. An in-depth description of the themes and sub-themes alongside accompanying *Maxqda* quotes from the participants are shown in the following section.

Table 6

Themes & Subthemes

Themes	Sub-themes
Teacher-student relationships	Connecting with the learners Building positive relationships with the learners

Themes	Sub-themes
	Respect
Teaching methods	Clear rules and regulations Genuine concern for student well-being Student involvement Use of real-world illustrations
Socioeconomic aspects	Family and background Parental involvement Student diversity
Student features	Willingness to learn/apathy Self-esteem Devices in the classroom
The education system	Curriculum Tests and assessments
School culture and administration	Extrinsic motivation strategies Administration issues

Teacher-student Relationships

This theme was the most prevalent of all the themes identified in this study. All the study participants mentioned some form of teacher-student relationship as a driving factor of student motivation in the classrooms or campuses. Some of the over-arching subthemes identified from this central theme included (a) building positive relationships with the learners, (b) patience, (c) understanding and incorporating student diversity, (d) leadership, and (e) respect.

Connecting with the Learners

The codes that were used in developing this sub-theme included "connect," "talk," and "come back." These codes appeared more than 30 times from the transcripts of collected data. For instance, when asked about the aspect of her profile that makes her stand out, Amelia said, "And I would say just being able to Connect with kids. And all the different levels. Thanks." Similarly, Sophia replied, "But another thing that I think makes me stand out is the cross-curricular connections that I really tried to make for students and how closely I worked with social studies teachers." The general indication from this sub-theme is that the participants relied

on connecting with the learners as a fundamental element in their relationships with learners. Table 7 is a presentation of all the responses related to connecting with the learners as quoted by the study participants.

Table 7

Sub-theme 1 (Connecting with the Learners) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	And I would say just being able to. Connect with kids. And all the different levels. Thanks.
Charlotte	I'm gonna want to come to school. I might even wanna learn because I may not connect with my teachers but maybe there's some sort of aid out there some sort of coach some sort of counselor that I do connect with and I want to go and I wanna tell, guess what, remember that.
Sophia	But another thing that I think makes me stand out is the cross-curricular connections that I really tried to make for students and how closely I worked with social studies teachers.
Eleanor	I think my ability to connect and build relationships with kids since I was a coach. I get to spend a little bit of time with them like on a non-academic way and so they tend to open up a little bit more.
Alice	Makes me stand out. Hmm. I think my ability to connect with students. On a different level, I find it really easy to build relationships with students and establish a good classroom culture. I think that's what has helped me especially in the demographic on my campus.
Chloe	As a Hispanic woman in 2023. You know, I just. So, to me just a lot of connections really motivates my students and knowing.

Building Positive Relationships

Related to sub-theme 1, it was apparent that participants rely on positive relationships with their learners as a foundation for bolstering student motivation. This sub-theme emanated from codes like "relate," "relationships," "meaningful," "coming back," and "genuine." These codes appeared at least 28 times throughout the data. For instance, Isabella inferred that when the right relationships are built between the teacher and the learners, it becomes easier to bolster

student motivation: "I mean, relationships are key. When you're teaching, you build those relationships so that you're building the trust with the student. . .So if you push them through that relationship, the motivation kind of just winds itself right in." Overall, there appeared to be some agreement among the participants that student motivation starts with building relationships before incorporating other strategies. Table 8 highlights the responses related to this sub-theme.

Table 8

Sub-theme 2 (Building Relationships) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	Correct. I think student relationships, I mean, are probably the like the most important thing that you have in education at this time.
Charlotte	The relationships that I eventually build with my students when I know that they're coming back to me with the thank yous or the I love you or that was great, or this is my favorite class can I come back?
Maya	Hmm. I will definitely think that they benefit from. Block schedules and shorter weeks. I think that that will definitely because it give you an opportunity to one bill more relationship with them and go into more depth.
Sophia	And then you have some students that are not motivated at all. And in the secondary world, it's scary because we do not want them to drop out. We want them to stay with us. We want them to graduate. And so, I really think that relationships meaningful relationships, genuine relationships.
Eleanor	I think my ability to connect and build relationships with kids since I was a coach. I get to spend a little bit of time with them like on a non-academic way and so they tend to open up a little bit more.
Alice	Makes me stand out. Hmm. I think my ability to connect with students. On a different level, I find it really easy to build relationships with students and establish a good classroom culture. I think that's what has helped me especially in the demographic on my campus.
Nora	Those relationships and that's actually why I stepped down from admin to come back to the classroom is because I missed teaching

Participant	Responses
	and I missed those special moments you have with the kids and it's not always about the math.
Isabella	I mean, relationships are key. When you're teaching, you build those relationships so that you're building the trust with the student.
	If they realize they can trust you. Like I said earlier, they'll do anything you want them to do.

Respect

There was a notable agreement that respect cannot be divorced from the teaching and learning process, particularly with the need to bolster student motivation at stake. Most participants who mentioned respect as a critical factor in student motivation reiterated that the teacher should cultivate a culture of respect first so that the learners follow suit. In other words, the participants insisted on a two-way respect avenue, with the teacher as the leading promoter of respect. Specifically, Chloe noted, "As a Hispanic woman in 2023. You know, I just. So, to me, just a lot of connections really motivates my students and knowing that I have their back, you know. I'm real big on respect. I respect you, respect me, respect each other, and that really does motivate them." The underlying implication here is that respectful relationships in the classrooms and campuses are critical factors in bolstering student motivation. Table 9 highlights the responses related to respect as a vital element of student motivation based on the experiences of the study's participants.

Table 9

Sub-theme 3 (Respect) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Charlotte	We're not gonna use curse words. We are going to respect one another and that's gonna look like this. And if that means I've got to have 1520 rules posted so that we're following them.
Sophia	They're not just like ritually compliant. Anymore like they need to see respect from me so they can have respect for you and so I think that's something that is important as well.

Participant	Responses
Olivia	I think. I think one thing I understand that you respect them. They respect you. So, you show respect first, even though it goes against everything. Well, you didn't show me respect first. Well, you know what? . . . I'm gonna show you respect first. I think capturing their respect in that regards is gonna help, everybody. I am not there to be their friend. Yes. Absolutely. But you have to have the respect so you can get them academic where they need to be.
Nora	The cell phones. Like, I tell my, like, my 2 rules: Don't disrespect me; don't disrupt my learning apartment. You disrupt my learning environment; you are disrespecting me. You sitting on your phone and I'm trying to teach you a lesson that's disrespectful. You got your head down; That's disrespectful. But did you want to ask for my help later?
Chloe	I'm real big on respect. I respect you, respect me, respect to each other and that really does motivate them. I respect you; you respect me, we respect each other. Okay, what beef you have? Keep it out there.

Teaching Methods

The participants strongly asserted their teaching philosophies and provided justifications for why they employ various principles. Most responses showed a clear flow from Theme 1 (teacher-student relationships), emphasizing the importance of a positive teaching and learning environment in developing highly motivated learners. As far as teaching methods were concerned, most of the participants underscored the importance of choosing a consistent approach and sticking to it. For instance, Isabella argued that:

> You have those few that you gotta kind of push all year long. But, overall, usually within the first semester, those kids that don't think they can do it realize that they can. And if you just keep pushing that they realize you're not going to give up. I guess you could say that my persistence on it is my strength.

Overall, four sub-themes related to teaching methods were identified from the data: (a) use of clear rules and regulations, (b) genuine concern for student well-being, (c) student involvement, and (d) use of real-world illustrations.

Clear Rules and Regulations in the Classroom

This sub-theme was derived from two principal codes: (a) rules and (b) regulations. The participants insisted that effective teaching and learning must be founded on some ordered and well-organized classrooms. Fewer rules were considered more effective for some participants like Nora and Chloe. Specifically, Nora reported that she uses only 2 rules in the classroom: "Like, I tell my, like, my 2 rules. Don't disrespect me. Don't disrupt my learning apartment." Similarly, pointing out the relevance of fewer rules, Chloe said, "I'm a really laid-back teacher. Some people say too laid back, 'cause I only have 3 rules in my class." Conversely, Charlotte insisted on as many rules as possible to align students. She said, "And if that means I've got to have 1520 rules posted so that we're following them moment by moment, that's okay." Regardless of whether a teacher uses a few or many rules in the classroom, it was deducible from this sub-theme that participants embraced a rules-based approach to teaching and learning. Table 10 is a summary of all the responses that embody this sub-theme.

Table 10

Sub-theme 1 (Clear Rules and Regulations) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Charlotte	So those children still need to be Guided, they still need to have the rules in place. They still need to have, what's the word I'm looking for. So yes, their rules and regulations, they gotta be a little bit more detailed and clear in your classroom.
Nora	Like, I tell my, like, my 2 rules. Don't disrespect me. Don't disrupt my learning apartment.

Participant	Responses
Chloe	I'm a really laid back teacher. Some people say too laid back, cause I only have 3 rules in my class. And that but it motivates my kids. It's. That's REC. Respect again.

Genuine Concern for Student Well-being

This sub-theme was exemplified by codes such as care, genuineness, compassion, and understanding and was mentioned by six of the 10 study participants. From the sentiments in the participants' responses, a keen observer would note that some extent of affection and commitment to student well-being was fronted as an antecedent to student motivation. Table 11 is an exhibit of the responses that highlight this sub-theme.

Table 11

Sub-theme 2 (Genuine Concern) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Maya	I tender games and I tend to show them that I care about that as well. And try to work with the schedules the best I can you know to make sure that they're successful.
Sophia	And like showing a genuine concern into that students learning style and their interest. Helps motivation go a long way because oftentimes kids that don't feel like you care have an investment in them are not going to care and have an investment in that class.
Olivia	They want that to also be a motivator so that again, like what I'm talking about is when students know that you care, then they care to do stuff for you.
Eleanor	And so, by being able to build relationships and like make the kids comfortable and make them realize that I care. I hope that it kind of rubs off on them and it makes them start to care too like, oh, if she cares as much about my education, it must be important I should care too.
Nora	And I had him for sixth grade math. He just he was that teacher that wasn't just the you know 8 to 5 or whatever teacher he truly cared like he would hand out our papers and ask us what we did on the weekends and you know how was it and things like that.
Chloe	Just, I think. The strengths are that my students know that I'm authentic. I'm not pretending.

Participant	Responses
	To care. I do care. You know. When I say I have your back, I mean, I'm gonna have your back. You know, and if I don't know something, I'll find somebody that can, if I can't help you, I'm gonna find somebody that can. And I will go to the ends of the earth for you, you know, kind of thing.

Student Involvement

When asked about their perspectives and strategies for student motivation, student involvement stood out among the most-used strategies. Four participants (Maya, Sophia, Eleanor, and Chloe) insisted on the role of student involvement in bolstering classroom motivation. For instance, Maya pointed out that students have an inherent drive to seek involvement, making it easier for the teacher. Sophia held that through constructive feedback, learners are able to reflect on their learning which, in turn, facilitates growth. Eleanor and Chloe reiterated that when students are made to feel like they belong and when their successes are celebrated, they feel involved and motivated to learn. Table 12 is a highlight of the participant responses for this sub-theme.

Table 12

Sub-theme 3(Student Involvement) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Maya	I try to be as flexible as possible. Because I know a high schoolers they and try to get involved.
Sophia	So, I think that attributes to success when students have the opportunity to reflect. On their work. And to be given feedback and be given opportunities to get involved in part of their learning process to grow themselves.
Eleanor	Kind of go with relationships, I think trying to find a way to get every kid, involved or to feel like they belong somehow.
Chloe	I mean. Most of my kids will be involved and willing to do things. But I'm also big on celebrating successes, you know.

Real-world Illustrations

There was a general feeling among the participants that the learners may be demotivated or disengaged in learning because they need to understand why they are in school. Amelia, Maya, Nora, and Chloe collectively pointed out that students need to understand things from a real-world perspective so that they can understand the real implications of their academic performance. Specifically, they pointed out that students must be taught to relate classroom and school with real-life scenarios, particularly life after school. Charlotte and Alice insisted that classroom content be prepared in a way that connects to day-to-day events for teaching and learning to be relevant. In a nutshell, these participants highlighted an endemic mismatch between academic content and real-life situations, which may be one of the main contributors to the unprecedented disengagement among secondary school students in the United States. Table 13 is a highlight of all the participant responses related to this sub-theme.

Table 13

Sub-theme 4 (Real World Illustrations) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	They only see value in the grade, then like. What they get at the end and they're not seeing like the big picture of when you get out in the real world and you don't know how to do anything that you passed.
Charlotte	Because you gotta bring it. So, videos. showing them real world applications the who's the wise and what's in the world.
Maya	You know, outside of this school and not out of success, you know, that they just not motivated, but I have to remind him, you know. They have as you form today will follow you tomorrow so you can be lazy and low achieving and then think that you're gonna go into the real world and be the scholar.
Alice	The relevancy at times. I think that in algebra one sometimes it's hard to make the content relevant to the real world at times because you know. When you're graphic inequalities like Oh, how to connect that sometimes to the real world under you know when they're certain like

Participant	Responses
	things so I would say sometimes when it's not relevant it can be hard for them to be motivated.
	And you know that's something that you can't really change because it's you know part of the teks and things like that.
Nora	Like because think about it in the real world. Do we really have incentives with our job? Not really.
	I'm all about, you know, if you learn Math, great. If you don't, that's okay, but you can learn.
	How to survive in the real world on a job, in college, in the military from my class. You will learn how to be a successful member of society at the end of the day.
	You can learn time management, organization, discipline, motivation, because it's going to get hard and you go and cry and it's okay.
Chloe	How can you tell me my kid is not up to par? And I feel that we
	We're not, I also feel like there needs to be more real world application.
	I thought our goal was to make sure that they're good adults when they get out and I've equipped them.
	Right now we're not equipping them with anything. They don't. You know, many times I hear, well, I'll never use Math in real life, really? Cause you use math all the time. Right. Oh, I would never use Context clues. Really? Because you do it all the time.

Socioeconomic Aspects

Predictably, participants mentioned the effect of socioeconomic dynamics on student motivation in their classroom and campuses. These issues spanned from lack of essential resources like food to domestic violence and child labor to diversity and lifestyle. For instance, Charlotte pointed out that motivation is embedded in providing basic needs like food for some groups of students: "Student motivation doesn't just come from the teacher. It comes from the school, from administration, from the secretary, from staff, from the cafeteria. If I know that my needs are being taken care of as a student, that includes food, breakfast, and lunch. Even dinner, I'm gonna wanna come to school. The sub-themes comprising this theme were (a) family and

background, (b) parental involvement, and (c) student diversity. These sub-themes are presented more in-depth in the section that follows.

Family and Background

Four participants expressed concerns about the impact of family and background on student motivation. Specifically, Maya and Alice noted that many students from disadvantaged backgrounds often find themselves playing parental roles at a young age, which translates into sacrificing their academics for such responsibilities. They pointed out that these children come to school already tired, stressed, or hungry, making it difficult for teachers to get them motivated. Sophia added that for those who start working early, their earnings result in apathy at school because they believe that they no longer need education. According to Eleanor, working with students from different backgrounds is often problematic because most teachers are not adequately trained to handle such dynamics. Table 14 highlights the comments from the participants regarding family and background.

Table 14

Sub-theme 1(Family and Background) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Maya	You know, they have a lot of outside responsibility. And when you have a 15, 16 year old that it's driving taking care of all of this and grocery shopping and doing all this other stuff to help the family or what a job to help support the family, you know, it's kinda hard to talk to them as a child because really when they go home, they're like an adult. So having that balance to remind them that they're still a child, they're still have to learn but they know that at the end of the day they go home and they almost like a mini adult.
Sophia	Or those few students who are like, yes, I'm going to school. I'm here to get an education. It is important to me and my family. It is important to me. And then they go on and they do whatever they're gonna do.

Participant	Responses
	So post-secondary, right? But those apathetic students in the middle, who are just like, I, I'm gonna work at McDonald's.
	I'm already making 15 an hour. What do I have to make anything else for? I'm already making, you know, $12 an hour.
	What else do I need? They just don't understand. And so, I think my worldview is.
Eleanor	And sometimes it's just because it's hard for me to personally connect because we have very different backgrounds or we, you know, have very different lifestyles.
Alice	Sometimes the struggle can be, If. Their home life sometimes. You know, some, come from different backgrounds to where Maybe there.
	They're up all night or they're the parent at home. So when they come to school, they don't.
	They don't want to work. They don't want to do those things. They may be hungry and you know, so they're, have all these.
	If there, your basic needs aren't met, you know, that pyramid.

Parental Involvement

Despite the importance of parental involvement in academic performance, six study participants noted a lack of adequate parental support as a critical factor in the current dwindling levels of student motivation in their schools and classrooms. Although Charlotte indicated that not all situations require parental involvement, Sophia and Isabella reported that some parents blatantly refuse to be involved in their children's learning processes and even withhold crucial information from the teachers. From the responses provided for this sub-theme, it was apparent that the participants were imploring more parental involvement and support, indicating that such a parent-teacher collaboration would be impactful in bolstering student motivation. Table 15 is a detailed presentation of the responses related to this sub-theme.

Table 15

Sub-theme 2 (Parental Involvement) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	Parental support and setting boundaries for their kids. Like most of the kids that struggled in my class struggled because they didn't come to school which to me that's a parent responsibility. I know that If my kid wasn't going to school, I'd be walking them to class.
Charlotte	Let's be nice. Let's be let's be hard. Let's go to the parents. Let's not go to the parents. Let's allow them to do lists. I try whatever means I can to reach out to them and motivate them to succeed and do you boo-boo because We gotta get them.
Sophia	They don't seem to know or care what they do with their life after high school. And there is a lack of parental support as well. I actually remember a phone call that I had to make to a parent about a student and I was told if I wanted if I wanted that student to stay in school it was on me because that parent dropped out of high school and they are doing just fine.
Alice	But if those basic needs aren't met, then it's hard to motivate them to do anything else. Also, sometimes parent, a lack of parent support. Whether it's the parent isn't holding them to the standard that you are. They know they can maybe get away with some things. That can be a struggle. And also like we talked about their student self-efficacy.
Chloe	Our students saw. The technically they could get by with that. I think COVID showed that a lot of parents. One is educated as you would think. And if they see their parent is getting by, well, I mean, if my parents don't know that, why should I know that?
Isabella	Yeah, parents. Are a big one. Because usually when you're trying to push these kids you try to get the parents involved to see, you know, is there anything that like motivates them? Is there anything that, makes them shut down? And then you get hit with those parents who are like, I don't know. I don't know, they don't wanna be in school. I'm not gonna make them do anything. And so that's probably the biggest part that that pushes back for us teachers is you don't have that support at home. So, you're not really sure how to approach this student in general because if you can't get information from home.

Student Diversity

The issue of diversity appeared to be a significant determinant of student motivation from the perspective of the study's participants. Some, like Chloe, reported that they deliberately incorporate diversity, such as Chinese culture, in their lessons, while others, like Eleanor, expressed their frustrations about having to deal with learners from different backgrounds, citing the clash of teacher-student culture and lifestyles as a significant impediment to student motivation. Sophia and Eleanor aired their concerns about schools' tendency to neglect the issue of diversity among teachers and learners. Charlotte and Olivia pointed out that diversity goes beyond ethnicity and socioeconomic background to encompass performance—their view was that teachers must view diversity from the perspective of all clusters, including performance so that even minor improvements among struggling learners can be acknowledged and celebrated. Table 16 is an outline of all the responses regarding student diversity.

Table 16

Sub-theme 3 (Student Diversity) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Charlotte	And in the end, I don't care if student got a 20 on the test and then the next time around they got a 22 guess what that's a two-point improvement I would say you know what congratulations you did 2 points better. I'm proud of you. And I mean like are you insane? Yes. Because a 2 point difference is better than a 2 point going backwards.
Sophia	I don't think that we're tapping into like genuine kids. Interest and I also don't think that we're tapping into some cultural differences in how we're approaching different kids.
Olivia	We have to try to capture all of the students. Not just the ones who are already motivated enough to get there on their own. We have to capture the ones who need extra motivation external motivation not just intrinsic, you know, good use of a word there.
Eleanor	We don't necessarily have the same belief system. And so, finding a way to get them to realize like I'm not this person that's out to get

Participant	Responses
Chloe	them and that I do really want to help them that's kind of been the challenge for me and it's really only a handful of students. You know. I also think They don't really tap into the cultural aspects of our school…It's predominantly African American, but it's also. No, the Hispanic population is growing. And you have to look at those cultures and connect with them And what motivates them. 2 to be, you know, I feel like we don't do that.

Student Features

Participants mentioned three aspects related to student features. Firstly, there was agreement among the participants that some students have no personal drive to go to school or to learn. When asked about the level of self-efficacy among their students, the participants lamented that although some believe in themselves and show effort, there is a cluster of others who are unwilling to try. Lastly, the issue of phones and devices in the classroom was rampant, with participants arguing that it was one of the most disruptive student behaviors at the school. As a result, this theme comprises three sub-themes: (a) willingness to learn, (b) confidence, and (c) phones and social media.

Willingness to Learn

Regarding willingness to learn, the participants agreed that the rate of unwillingness is unprecedented in U.S. secondary schools. Amelia pointed out that students can excel if they are willing to put in the effort. Charlotte cited this unwillingness to learn as the biggest roadblock to student motivation. Olivia, Chloe, and Isabella noted apathy among students is at dangerously high levels, and, to some extent, it is being fueled by teacher apathy. Isabella pointed out that many teachers are leaving the profession because they are tired of pushing uninterested kids to focus on their studies. Table 17 is a presentation of the responses related to this sub-theme.

Table 17

Sub-theme 1 (Willingness to Learn) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	Yes, it's just being willing to take the time to do it. I think that they Most of them know that they can. I have a slight few. That just flat out refuse to even to try. And that's, yeah.
Charlotte	The biggest roadblock has been a student who just is unwilling to learn.
Olivia	They are more willing to try something new. If they don't have a skill set and they know they're missing a skill set, then they're very reluctant to do anything. You know, you have the students who you almost have to leave them by the hand to get them to do anything. But besides what we've talked about, I do honestly think, The apathy is growing a lot and this is nationwide. It's not just, our district.
Chloe	You know, I have students that. Work construction and they make in their minds they make good money and so why are they wasting their time in your classroom and you're showing them a YouTube video. And not showing up really what to do. So I would go make money too. And so I feel like that honestly is my biggest combative. And I feel the student apathy. That's growing. Is feeding off teacher apathy.
Isabella	And you see that a lot more and I feel like that's kind of why a lot of teachers are leaving the profession as well because they're tired they don't want to push forward and push these kids. They just want kids that are willing to learn. And we don't have that right now. We have kids that need to be pushed to learn.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is a fundamental issue as far as bolstering motivation among high school students is concerned. The participants talked positively about their learners' potential when combined with high levels of esteem or confidence. However, most participants who spoke about student esteem were disgruntled about teachers' efforts to sustain high confidence levels among learners. For instance, Amelia and Olivia insisted that although most students know they can

perform well, some do not believe in themselves and are unwilling to try. The rest, Alice, Chloe, and Isabella pointed out that teachers are responsible for helping the learners raise their esteem and confidence levels. Table 18 is a presentation of the participant responses related to this sub-theme.

Table 18

Sub-theme 2 (Self-esteem) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	I think that they Most of them know that they can. I have a slight few. That just flat out refuse to even to try. And that's, yeah.
Olivia	You have students who know that they can do it and they have a skill set to do it and they go and do it. And then you have a few who are just like, I don't even know. How I'm gonna do this and then some who just get themselves in a hole and they're making bad choices with their own academics.
Alice	Sometimes it can be super low. And so, if they don't have a high confidence in themselves and they shut down easily. It's a it's a hard wall to get past.
Chloe	I hate to say it, but bad teachers who treat students disrespectfully and then wonder why they're treated disrespectfully. Who makes students feel like they aren't worth anything or they can't do something. If I could take all that time that I have to undo that. But showing them that they can do something and get it. That's I think. That's what we need to do is we need to show these kids that they can do it and that we believe that they can do it.
Isabella	Hmm. Honestly, it's just a lot of the time just getting kids to believe in themselves I think when it comes to math in general you have so many kids who are just so weak at it and no one takes the time to get them to understand that they can do it. So, I do try best, although it can be hard with our time constraints. I try. To build the kids' confidence up. And so, if you can build the confidence up, they're really willing to do anything you want to do.

Phones and Social Media

Four participants expressed their concerns about the extent of phone and social media use by their learners. Charlotte and Nora were particularly distraught about the use of phones in the classroom, which, according to them, affects attention and disrupts the teaching and learning process. Olivia and Isabella discussed social media and how these online platforms systematically draw learners' attention from the classroom to entertainment, like watching movies, YouTube, and TikTok. Furthermore, according to Isabella, social media distorts the learners' thought processes, making them believe that they do not need school because they can become online influencers and bloggers instead of concentrating on their studies. Table 19 is a presentation of the participant responses that accentuate this sub-theme.

Table 19

Sub-theme 3 (Phones and Social Media) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Charlotte	Do the work, learn, put your phone away, pay attention. That right there has been my most single hugest. Struggle ever that I've come across. Because You can tell a kid. A 1 million times put your phone away, put your phone away, put your phone.
Olivia	I definitely agree that overall, it's dwindling. The phone and social media and videos that they can have access to is definitely overtaking their minds. But. They wanna watch videos and I, they want to watch movies. They wanna, watch TikTok. They wanna watch the social media accounts. I think trying to drag them away. The instant gratification that the cell phone gives them.
Nora	The cell phones. Like, I tell my, like, my 2 rules. Don't disrespect me. Don't disrupt my learning apartment. You disrupt my learning environment. You are disrespecting me. You sitting on your phone and I'm trying to teach you a lesson that's disrespectful.

Participant	Responses
Isabella	Hmm. I think that coming into the, I mean, we've always had social media, but the heavier the social media influences. Kids are thinking, oh, I don't really need school. I can become a blogger. I can do all these social media things. I don't need school. And so, it's kind of affecting their participation in school because it's almost like they're just sitting there with no motivation to do anything because they're like, oh, I can do this and make all this money.

The Education System

The participants mentioned the current education system as a significant impediment to student motivation. The two major issues were the curriculum and tests/assessments. Regarding the curriculum, there was agreement among the participants about the need to slow it down. The participants also agreed that the current approach to tests and assessments could have been more convenient, causing too much pressure on the learners and leading to dwindling motivation levels. As such, two sub-themes were embedded in the theme: (a) the curriculum and (b) Tests and assessments.

The Curriculum

Seven participants talked about the curriculum, all pointing out its inefficiency in bolstering student motivation. For instance, Amelia argued that the focus is on content delivery and finishing the syllabus such that everything moves too fast in the classroom. Charlotte and Eleanor agreed that the curriculum has become monotonous, highlighting the need for more differentiation to capture the learners' interest. Maya and Chloe noted that the motivational focus has been redirected to extra-curricular activities, emphasizing the need to bring it back to the classroom. Sophia advocated for adding socioemotional teaching into the curriculum, while Olivia endorsed project-based learning in secondary schools. Table 20 summarizes the responses regarding the different curriculum dynamics mentioned by the participants.

Table 20

Sub-theme 1 (The Curriculum) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	Slow it down. Like kids love education again. We're so into curriculum moving fast and you know, and we are not allowing kids to like Slow down and actually enjoy what they're learning.
Charlotte	I would wanna see a variety of everything. I wanna see differentiation actually in action. I wanna see my teachers going to the classrooms that are successful in the differentiation in the motivational and I want them to start implementing one thing in their classrooms. Through the curriculum and then I want to come see you do it and then and then once you're doing that you're doing that good for 2 weeks. I want you to throw in one more thing because I want you to be successful in motivating your students, getting them up, getting them learning.
Maya	The motivation. Is not quite in the academics. The motivation is in extra curriculum activities and the academics tend to take like a back burner to.
Sophia	Okay. Maybe an unpopular opinion. At secondary, especially at the high school level. Hi, I genuinely feel. That we need to do more. Social emotional. I think we need to do social more social emotional stuff and not just counselors, not just counselors. I think that there needs to be. I think then there needs to be a mindset shift or maybe a philosophy shift and I'm only here to teach content. I'm not here to teach kids. And we need to be able to all say we are here for the the kid the whole kid.
Olivia	Not necessarily getting rid of worksheets but doing a lot more project-based learning. Even for Do you have much for your algebra too? Geometry is really easy to do project-based learning because there's a geometry in construction class that could be brought into our. But taking some of those. Yeah, how much in construction? Concepts and bring them into geometry. I think I would definitely get rid of a lot of worksheets and put in more project-based learning.
Eleanor	Our district likes to use a program called Lowman and it is very like every day is the same thing.

Participant	Responses
	They start with a warm up. They do a PowerPoint little lecture, they do an assignment, they do an exit ticket. And so, I would say that's not very motivating for kids. I understand that they like routine and they like structure. But the same thing day after day kind of gets stale. So, for me, using the curriculum because it does have some good pieces to it, but being able to mix it up a little more where every day is not the same thing. You want to keep them on their toes.
Chloe	I also feel like we rely heavily on sports. Which don't get me wrong, I'm all about football, whatever. But sometimes I feel like that overshadows some of the other things, you know.

Tests and Assessments

The issue of tests and assessments was mentioned by four participants (Amelia, Alice, Nora, and Chloe). Amelia pointed out that the curriculum is so exam-oriented that students fail to see the benefits of knowledge; they are just interested in the grades. Alice, Nora, and Chloe agreed that the amount of testing is too high, leading to anxiety and performance pressures. The participants pointed out that the inevitable outcome of these pressures and anxiety is low motivation among the learners. Table 21 is an outline of the participant responses that constituted this sub-theme.

Table 21

Sub-theme 2(Tests and Assessments) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	They only see value in the grade, then like. What they get at the end and they're not seeing like the big picture of when you get out in the real world, and you don't know how to do anything that you passed. Because cheated. So, I think they're, motivation to learn is simply by grades. I don't think it's by like wanting to actually have knowledge.
Alice	Hmm. Honestly. Maybe the amount of testing. And the weight of it all.

Participant	Responses
Nora	It feels like a lot of I think the students know the amount of pressure that they feel that they have to they have to pass they have to do this for a certain amount of credit, I think. Those certain pressures. Maybe is what hinders them at times. Hmm, well, I don't know if this account is curriculum, but standardized testing. All you're doing is causing kids anxiety. You're causing anxiety. Like. Even the teachers like that's why I just I can't teach algebra no more.
Chloe	The amount of testing we do. We test. The crap out of them. English II. This year lost. Was it 60 something days to testing? That's a lot of time that I could be doing other things with my students. Also making it to where Changing it up the days of. Believing in old school teaching, there are good things from old school teaching.

School Culture and Administration

From most participants' responses, it was apparent that their institutions mostly rely on extrinsic motivation strategies like bonus points, rewards, and examination exemptions. Apart from this overreliance on extrinsic motivation strategies, the participants lamented about the administration's role in bolstering motivation, with some arguing that the bureaucracy makes it difficult for individual educators to implement perceivably impactful motivation strategies. Against this backdrop, this theme is made up of two sub-themes: (a) extrinsic motivation strategies and (b) administration issues.

Extrinsic Motivation Strategies

The findings of this study showed that most secondary schools are employing extrinsic motivation strategies. Six participants (Charlotte, Sophia, Eleanor, Alice, Nora, and Isabella) pointed out that their campuses use a reward system where the learners earn points for good behavior within the school. The points can be exchanged for rewards like candy at the school's store. Interestingly, apart from boosting students' esteem, which has already been expounded

upon herein, there was no mention of efforts by the participants to bolster students' intrinsic motivation. Against this background, it appears appropriate to conclude that most motivation efforts are reward-oriented, making the extrinsic typology the primary strategy for bolstering motivation among most schools' learners. Table 22 outlines the responses related to how participants view motivation strategies in their schools.

Table 22

Sub-theme 1 (Extrinsic Motivation) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Charlotte	And during certain months of the school time frame. The students are rewarded. Hey, come to the hero store and turn in your points for a reward. And this in turn should motivate those students to want to continue to dress right comes class on time do good things because they are being recognized. Are there hiccups? Sure. Absolutely, because we're not always rewarding those kids monthly like we'd like to.
Sophia	Okay, on the campus I'm at now we do have a system called Hero and hero is a school wide, system for rewards you know for acknowledging things that students are doing well so you can earn hero points by arriving to class on time you can earn hero points by wearing your ID you can earn hero points by. I think that like showing dignity and respect, which is a huge part of our school culture is on there as well that you can earn points for and then they have a hero shop. And so, the students can trade their points in for things and whether that's snacks, whether that's head a pair of headphones or school supplies they can trade them in for stuff.
Eleanor	Our campus likes to use, Hero. So, students can, if they're, you know, on task and they're doing an assignment, teachers can offer Hero points. And those points can add up for them to be able to like purchase things, whether it's like material objects, whether it's like, you know, not having to do an assignment or something so Hero is kind of one of the school's things it's more for like behavior and it is more like an extrinsic thing.

Participant	Responses
Alice	They use, PBIS. We use PBIS. Points. So, with the admin or if we see something good in the hallway or things like that, then we scan their IDs and they get a point. You know, let's see. Like A-B Honor Roll. Things like that. Perfect attendance. Just like the general things.
Nora	Maybe rue points. To come to. They can use those points to clear So as the points are gaining a hero.
Isabella	So that one-on-one time with a teacher. Seem to be a good motivator for the older kids. The younger kids, man, these teachers give out prizes like little pieces of candy or like, points, the hero points where they can get free candy.

Administration Issues

Although the school administration is expected to play a critical role in supporting teachers to bolster student motivation, there were complaints that, in many cases, the administration stands in the way of student motivation initiatives, albeit indirectly. While Charlotte noted that although student motivation should start with the administration, Amelia and Chloe criticized the administration for not allowing educators the autonomy needed to bolster student motivation. Finally, Nora insisted that the administrators should be more diverse compared to the number of students, making it hard to enforce the rules that would bolster student motivation. Table 23 is a presentation of the participant responses making up this sub-theme.

Table 23

Sub-theme 2 (Administration Issues) Participant Responses

Participant	Responses
Amelia	Admin. You know, we're not allowed to do. All the things have to; they have to agree with all the things you do all the time and I just I have a problem with that because It's like, oh, well, you're not allowed to do

Participant	Responses
	this on the last day of school, or you can't bring this in or you can't bring that in.
Charlotte	Student motivation doesn't just come from the teacher. It comes from the school from administration from the secretary from staff from the the cafeteria.
	And when I say bye bye, I'm gonna walk the hallways and make sure that I want all my admin walk in the hallways.
	I got 6 administrator. I wanna see 3 administrators in the hallways every class period put those phones away for the first 3 weeks.
Nora	You got 2,400 kids and is what? 6 admin? A 100, some teachers.
	You outnumber, we're outnumbered.
	So, guess what? If the whole campus decide, we can wear pajamas today. They're gonna send everybody home.
	Thank you, but it's hard. And so, you notice that things start to fall off. So, like I'm still enforcing the rule.
Chloe	Other teachers. Sometimes admin, but it's supposed to other teachers.
	I spend a lot of time combating.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups of five participants each were used as the first data triangulation method. I wanted to investigate whether there was at least some consistency between the themes derived from the interviews and the responses given by the focus group participants. The pseudonyms of the participants in the first and second focus groups correlate with those of the interviews to protect their anonymity. I then tested each focus group for consistency with the six major themes derived from the interviews.

Regarding the first theme (teacher-student relationships), Alice, in focus group one, pointed out that motivating students is almost impossible unless the teacher is willing to connect and build positive relationships with the learners: ". . . it's hard, and so if you're not willing to connect and build relationships it did that you're gonna have a hard time trying to motivate some students." Similarly, when asked about her efforts to motivate learners over the last six months,

Sophia of focus group two responded, "I'll be, I'll be 100% honest with you. I think that building meaningful relationships."

Concerning the second theme, teaching methods, participants mentioned teaching styles and use of examples and real-life scenarios in the classroom. Chloe of focus group one said, "I actually do a lesson where it's different teaching styles, the different types of teachers you might come across. And then also figuring out. Their learning styles they take a test." Maya of focus group two added, "So I always give that example: community college, trade school, the career center. I mean, there's nothing wrong with being a petition, a plumber, a mechanic. I'm definitely encourage all of the ones that have graduated."

For the third theme, socioeconomic aspects and sub-themes like parental involvement and student background were identified. Specifically, Olivia of focus group one said, "I think that schools are not going to be able to do this without parents. We do have a lot of parents who want to be off." Eleanor of focus group two added, "Yeah. I think being in the classroom, you have to play a big role in trying to motivate the kids because we know that they all come from different backgrounds, and not all of them are eager to jump in and participate, and a lot of them come from probably a background that doesn't value education anymore."

The fourth theme, student features, was also identified from the focus groups. Concerning student willingness, Chloe noted, "And that that can be celebrated, it seems to really motivate them. You know, and they're more willing to do things for you because they know it's also appreciated what they're doing. There was also a comment about cell phones in the classroom by Charlotte of focus group one, "Especially this day and age with these kids who are mainly motivated by their cell phones. So why not?"

The fifth theme, the education system, was also identified from the focus groups. Maya said about the curriculum, "I think that because the curriculum that we have is so fast-paced. Students do not have enough time to explore and discover themselves and keep looking at the clock, and we know how much we have to cover, and if we don't cover by a certain date, you have your administrator on your back." Nora of focus group two added, "You know, being able to spread out the curriculum, why do we have to rush so much? Everything's so jam-packed, and it takes the fun out of learning." There were also comments about testing and assessments from the focus group participants. Isabella of focus group two lamented, "So these kids are just being tested to death. For what there's no to me, there's no meaningful reason behind it because you're taking out that classroom time where those kids could be learning information, meaningful information, but instead, you're just testing them just to be testing them."

The last theme, school culture and administration, was also unearthed from the focus groups. Regarding administration issues in student motivation, Isabella responded, "I think I would add that whenever we as teachers like start to feel the pressure, whether it's from administration or district or something about the test scores and about the data. It kind of trickles down to our kids, and I think like. The big thing for me is like reminding myself that like they're humans first, not students first." The sub-theme, extrinsic motivation, was also identified from the focus groups. Specifically, Olivia commented about the use of rewards and incentives, "And giving the A and A be on a roll as either a special ticket to get to the front of the line at lunch or to eat somewhere special at lunch, or to give them, you know, slice of pizza for a lunch or something else so that they are getting an instantaneous reward, for that six weeks."

The overarching finding from the two focus groups was that all the six themes identified in the interviews were manifest in the focus groups. Interestingly, the focus group participants

aired the same complaints about their experiences of student motivation in secondary schools. These findings indicate that the focus groups successfully triangulated the interview findings because all six themes were embedded in the interview and focus group data.

Questionnaires

Ten open-ended questionnaires were emailed to all participants to fill out and return. The questionnaires were analyzed to determine whether they were consistent with the findings of the interviews and focus group data already obtained. Regarding the first theme (teacher-student relationships), Amelia said, “I believe in building relationships. I want to know and understand what drives my students. Once students know that I care, the learning is easier.” Alice reiterated, “It’s not always a one size fits all environment. So, it is vital to build relationships with students to determine what motivates them and what doesn’t.” Sophia stated that, “Providing support to individual students demonstrates care and concern for their well- being and academic success, fosters a sense of belonging, and strengthens teacher-student relationships, ultimately enhancing student motivation, engagement, and achievement.” These responses underscore the role of teacher-student relationships in bolstering student motivation in secondary schools.

The second theme, as derived from the interviews, was teaching methods. Within the qualitative questionnaire, participants were asked about their classroom strategies. Eleanor responded, "I am constantly mixing up the lessons and activities that students participate in. I am a big fan of simulations, escape rooms, and collaborative activities." Charlotte said, "Although not always, I attempt to vary and use differentiation in my class to allow learners to adhere to their own likings." From these responses, teaching methods appear to be paramount in developing highly motivated learners in U.S. secondary schools.

The third theme, socioeconomic aspects, was also unearthed from the qualitative questionnaire. The respondents underscored their concern for the well-being of learners from different backgrounds. Specifically, Alice noted the age difference between teachers and their students— "I believe you should treat others the way you want to be treated regardless of their age." Amelia mentioned that despite employing an animated approach to teaching, she tries to accommodate English language learners by slowing down— "I am very animated when I teach. I try to make sure that I am clear. I do think that I talk fast sometimes. I try to slow myself down for my ELL kids." Chloe states, “My classes include emergent bilingual students, inclusion students, dyslexia students, and on-level students. With this kind of mix, it is crucial that I use gestures, pictures, and other visual images to reinforce concepts. These types of visuals also help students create connections to what they are learning, so I try to provide these as often as possible.” Ultimately, these responses indicate the socioeconomic aspects cannot be divorced from the attempts to bolster student motivation in U.S. secondary schools.

The fourth theme was student features. From the questionnaire responses, I wanted to understand whether the participants had any connections between how they teach or motivate their learners and how those students behave, especially in the classroom. Sophia noted that, “monitoring each student’s work individually allows for personalized feedback, identifies areas for improvement, and acknowledges progress, while celebrating successes reinforces positive behavior, boosts confidence, and motivates continued effort and achievement, fostering a supportive and encouraging learning environment.” Amelia stated, “I believe in building relationships. I want to know and understand what drives my students. Once students know that I care, the learning is easier.” Chloe also noted a drive as a form of willingness to learn by stating, “Students learn best in classrooms they feel comfortable in. Having up interesting posters,

educational and otherwise, and having good lighting go a long way in making my students comfortable enough that they are willing to learn.” Arguably, student features such as willingness, drive, and confidence are essential in developing highly motivated learners, in some cases, they are antecedents of bolstering motivation.

The fifth theme, the education system, was found throughout the participant responses. The major sub-themes that made up this theme were the curriculum and assessments. Here, when asked whether students are allowed to choose how they want to be assessed, Charlotte noted, "State exams and standards do NOT always allow for this. But there are software programs out there that will allow kids to showcase their abilities." Amelia said, "I allow students choices in how they learn topics by teaching them multiple ways. I do not offer choices on how they are assessed. We don't get to choose how we are tested in life." Olivia noted, “I would like to, but there are state standards I must follow as far as what I need to teach. We all know our state does this for us. I feel like if I polled my students on when they want to be assessed over a certain topic, they may never choose, who would choose to be given a test if given the opportunity.” These responses suggested that the high school education system in the U.S. is not designed in a way that students can choose their preferred assessment modalities.

The final theme, school culture and administration, were identified throughout the qualitative questionnaire responses. Here, the focus was on the specific approaches to motivating learners. Like the interviews and focus groups analyzed herein, extrinsic motivation was the predominant method of motivating learners from the qualitative questionnaire. Eleanor noted, "I offer classroom incentives as well as using hero points." Amelia reiterated, "My rewards are stickers, stamps, and excitement over their progress." In addition to rewards and incentives, some respondents noted that they celebrate student success to motivate their learners. For instance,

Charlotte remarked, "Cake cookies, candy, high fives, pizza, certificates, praise are some of my go-to rewards, plus they are allowed to skip an assignment." Like Charlotte, Olivia also mentioned external motivations by stating, “Some students need an external motivation. Pizza parties are good for this. Little pieces of candy are good for this.” Amelia added, "I celebrate the small things. It helps build relationships. Even if the celebration is sitting next to an annoying student without saying anything." Nora stated, “I also use little incentive cards regularly to motivate and encourage student success.” These responses underscore extrinsic motivation as the primary approach to bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools from the perspective of the participants of this study. Table 24 is an enumeration of the collected data's open codes, themes, and sub-themes.

Table 24

Enumeration of Codes and Themes

Open codes	Enumeration of open code appearance across datasets	Themes
Connecting with the learners	34	Teacher-student relationships
Building positive relationships	40	
Respect	31	
Clear rules and guidelines	10	Teaching methods
Concern for student well-being	13	
Student involvement	11	
Real-world illustrations	20	
Family and background	13	Socio-economic aspects
Parental involvement	23	
Student diversity	12	
Willingness to learn/apathy	18	Student features
Self-esteem	12	
Devices and social media	17	
Curriculum	11	The education system
Tests and assessments	7	
Extrinsic motivation	14	School culture and administration
Administration issues	12	

Based on the results of this study, it is imperative that the guiding principles unearthed by secondary teachers as strategies used to bolster student motivation in secondary school be implemented across the United States. If the low levels of student motivation are not addressed, there will be dire consequences on our country's future. Consequences such as no one to take care of U.S. citizens as it relates to health and wealth. Unmotivated students will not possess the proper level of education and training necessary to be launched into successful lives of learning, service, and meaningful work, which will in turn affect society.

Outlier Data and Findings

Outliers are data that appear to be inconsistent with other findings based on some measure (Aguinis et al., 2013). In this qualitative study, outliers were defined as the findings that seemed to deviate significantly from what other participants were saying. These seemingly erroneous findings should not be treated as irrelevant, but deliberately acknowledged because they may contain useful information about the abnormal behavior of the participants or the system described in the data (Nowak-Brzezińska & Łazarz, 2021). Against this backdrop, several outlier findings were unearthed from this qualitative study as described in the sub-sections that follow.

Outlier Finding #1

Perhaps it would be deemed common sense for any teacher to understand that students possess different ability levels in different subject areas, particularly mathematics. In other words, teachers should not approach the subject area with preconceived ideas and prejudices like "math is easy." Instead, teachers should understand that pedagogy extends beyond the generation of right answers. In mathematics, educators should draw from the broad scope of student math

abilities and avoid generalizing intelligence or judging it through the mere observation of students' lower-level skills. In line with this outline, one participant (Amelia) noted:

> Because it's hard for you to understand why other . . . why the kids don't understand. Because like for me, math is easy. Like I don't understand why kids can't just do it. Like and it was because I had to memorize and do all the things that they are, you know. And to me, it's just very simple. Like I don't understand why they struggle.

Outlier Finding #2

In this study, concepts like real world illustrations, family and background, student diversity, and student-teacher relationships have been major themes. When talking about diversity and real-world illustrations, perhaps one often overlooked feature of learners is their view of the outside world. It is easy for teachers to assume that since they have traveled outside their states and even outside the country, it is the same for the learners. However, one participant (Charlotte) noted:

> A lot of our students have never been outside of their tunnel, outside of their city, outside of their home, outside of the small little district. It is up to us to bring the world to them. Because not everything in this lifetime is about what you're doing in your own little, tiny bubble.

Research Question Responses

The problem addressed in this study was that before it, it was unknown how teachers in U.S. secondary schools described their experiences concerning student motivation. Against this backdrop, one central research question was developed and answered using three sub-questions. This section answers the main research question and the three sub-questions.

Central Research Question

How do secondary school teachers in Texas describe their experiences of the strategies they employ in bolstering student motivation? Generally, the participants agree with the current research that student motivation in U.S. secondary schools is dwindling. For instance, when asked about her students' motivation level, Olivia said, "I definitely agree that overall it's dwindling. The phone, and social media, and videos that they can have access to is definitely overtaking their minds." Similarly, on a scale of 1 to 10, with the latter being "very motivated," Nora said, "I'm gonna say about a. A 2? The 2. I do try to do things to, you know, change up the lesson, not just, you know, the traditional brick and mortar." Similarly, using a scale of 1 to 5, Maya reiterated, "So if we were doing a scale of one through 5. They're at two, you know, because it just not motivated to grind it out in the classroom." From these responses, it was clear that from the perspective of the participants of this study, student motivation in U.S. secondary schools is worryingly low.

Sub-question One

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation? Teaching methods accounted for the individual determinants of bolstering student motivation. This theme was considered a unique factor because it is the only one among the six that was within the control of the participants. Regarding clear rules and regulations, Chloe said, "I'm a really laid-back teacher. Some people say too laid back, cause I only have 3 rules in my class. And that but it motivates my kids. It's. That's REC. Respect again." Concerning student involvement, Eleanor said, "Kind of go with relationships, I think trying to find a way to get every kid involved or to feel like they belong somehow." In a nutshell, clear rules and regulations, genuine concern for learners, student involvement, and use of real-

world illustrations were identified as the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools, according to the study participants.

Sub-Question Two

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the cultural determinant of bolstering student motivation? Themes one (student-teacher relationships), three (socioeconomic aspects), and four (student features) encapsulated the cultural determinants of bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools. These themes were considered to have a cultural connotation because they involved interpersonal interactions between teachers and their learners. For instance, regarding teacher-student relationships, Alice said, "I think my ability to connect with students. On a different level, I find it really easy to build relationships with students and establish a good classroom culture. I think that's what has helped me, especially in the demographic on my campus." Amelia added, "Correct. I think student relationships, I mean, are probably the like the most important thing that you have in education at this time.

Sub-Question Three

What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation? Themes five (the education system) and six (school culture and administration) formed the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation. These themes have a structural nuance because they highlight 'how things are done' at the district and campus levels, primarily by higher-level leaders and administrators. Regarding the education system, the participants strongly criticized the curriculum and assessments as presently designed. Amelia stated the following about the curriculum, "Slow it down. Like kids love education again. We're so into curriculum moving fast, and you know, and we are not allowing kids to, like, Slow down and actually enjoy what they're learning." About tests and assessments, Alice noted,

"Hmm. Honestly. Maybe the amount of testing. And the weight of it all. It feels like a lot of I think the students know the amount of pressure that they feel that they have to they have to pass they have to do this for a certain amount of credit I think." Table 25 summarizes the research questions, subsequent themes, and appropriate answers.

Table 25

Research Question, Themes, and Answers

Research Question	Themes	Answer to the Research Question
Sub-question 1: What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation?	1. Teacher-student relationships 2. Teaching methods	Connecting with learners, building positive relationships, respect, clear rules and guidelines, concern for study well-being, student involvement, and use of real-world illustrations are the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools.
Sub-question 2: What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the cultural determinant of bolstering student motivation?	1. Socio-economic aspects 2. Student features	Family and background, parental involvement, student diversity, willingness to learn, self-esteem, and devices and social media are the cultural determinants of bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools.

Research Question	Themes	Answer to the Research Question
Sub-question 3: What do secondary school teachers in Texas describe as the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation?	1. The education system 2. School culture and administration	The curriculum, tests and assessments, extrinsic motivation, and administration issues are the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation in U.S. secondary schools.

Summary

This chapter presented the study findings based on the analysis of interviews and triangulation using focus groups and qualitative questionnaires. The initial thematic analysis of the interview data derived six themes: teacher-student relationships, teaching methods, socioeconomic aspects, student features, the education system, and school culture and administration. Data triangulation through focus groups and qualitative questionnaires showed that participant responses were consistent with interview findings. Generally, the participants agreed that the rate of student motivation in U.S. secondary schools was low. Specifically, (a) teaching methods were identified as the personal determinants of bolstering student motivation; (b) student-teacher relationships, socioeconomic aspects, and student features were the cultural determinants of bolstering student motivation; and (c) the education system and school culture and administration issues were concluded to be the structural determinants of bolstering student motivation. The next chapter is the study's conclusion, including in-depth discussions and interpretations of the findings, implications of the study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to highlight the extent of missing student motivation guiding principles by describing teachers' lived experiences in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. This chapter is an in-depth discussion and interpretation of the study's findings. Specifically, the chapter is divided into (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This section is a detailed scrutiny of the study's findings within the context of the identified themes. I scrutinized the themes to unearth any relationships between or among them. I also explored the most emphasized sub-themes and how they relate to student motivation. This scrutiny formed the basis of the interpretation of the study's findings. The section is divided into (a) a summary of thematic findings, (b) interpretation of findings, (c) implications for policy or practice, (d) theoretical and empirical implications, (e) limitations and delimitations, and (f) recommendations for future research.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The analyzed data revealed that the secondary school teachers participating in this study must be more responsive to student motivation in their school districts and campuses. Generally, the participants highlighted the need for (a) positive teacher-student relationships, (b) effective teaching methods, (c) understanding various backgrounds, diversity, and parental involvement, (d) cultivating positive behavior among learners, (e) Developing appropriate curriculum and

assessment methods, and (f) balancing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation strategies. The following section provides a detailed discussion of how these six findings were interpreted.

Interpretation of Findings

This section was developed concerning the six generated themes. Firstly, I identified a pattern between the first and second themes—participants seemed to advocate for developing positive teacher-student relationships before using effective teaching methods. Secondly, when talking about socioeconomic aspects (third theme), the participants emphasized the role of parental involvement, hence the interpretation that parental involvement was a critical standalone factor in student motivation. Similarly, I found three other interpretations discussed herein: mismatch between teacher training and student diversity, devices, and social media in the classroom, and systemic issues in student motivation.

Structure of Teacher-student Relationships and Teaching Methods

The study participants expressly fronted positive relationships in teaching and learning spaces as one of the significant drivers of motivation among secondary school students. Effectively, the participants seemed to ratify positive teacher-student relationships exemplified by connections, building positive relationships, and respect as the foundations of bolstering student motivation. In other words, there was a specific indication from the participants' perspective that it is implausible to develop highly motivated learners without first forming these relationships. Although this finding emerges as predictable and self-explanatory, it is more evident than it appears because many educators may need to be more aware of the importance of relationship-building in developing highly motivated learners. There is no one way to define positive connections, relationships, and respect, but there is insight in current literature from researchers like Guay (2022) who advocate for caring relationships. According to Guay (2022),

loving relationships are characterized by mutual warmth among the involved parties. Using this definition, teachers have the task of cultivating caring relationships with their learners with the expectation of reciprocity. Perhaps the first place to start is to eliminate the current conflictual relationships between teachers and learners in most U.S. secondary schools. Koca (2016) adds that these conflictual relationships between learners and their teachers are due, in part, to new challenges and growing demands as the students transition from one level to the other.

Consequently, teachers are the social agents responsible for bolstering students' socio-emotional and intellectual experiences through appropriately stimulating classroom experiences (Koca, 2016). These sentiments have been echoed by other scholars and researchers like Li et al., (2022), Yoshimoto et al., (2023). Despite these relationships having a social connotation, they were chosen to be a personal determinant of student motivation because they usually begin as a one-sided phenomenon initiated by the teacher before being adopted as a classroom culture by both the teacher and the learners.

Although this finding emerges as predictable and self-explanatory, it is more evident than it appears because many educators may need to be more aware of the importance of relationship-building in developing highly motivated learners. Although researchers and scholars like Yunus et al., (2011) are constantly advocating for the development of positive teacher-student relationships, it is not always a straightforward process due to other underlying factors like varying learning methods, communication barriers, classroom behavior management, and pressure from the administrators (Diu et al., 2022). Against this backdrop, there is an underlying need to explore the antecedents and precedents of positive teacher-student relationships and the exact link between them and bolstering student motivation. Ultimately, the interpretation from

this finding is that all things are held constant; if all secondary school teachers can relate positively with their learners, there is a high probability of refocusing and motivating them.

However, like in all other occupations, every teacher is unique in personality and teaching philosophy. Essentially, the participants of this study underscored teaching methods as a significant determinant of student motivation to learn with clear rules and regulations, genuine concern for student well-being, student involvement, and use of real-world illustrations being the prominent methods. At the core, these preferred approaches to teaching are clustered around activity-based teaching and learning. This finding was not surprising because it is backed by empirical research such as one conducted by Anwer (2019). According to Anwer (2019), activity-based learning encompasses critical thinking and creativity. However, it relies on the level to which there is a connection between the teacher and the learners and the extent of student involvement and use of rigorous curricula. Nevertheless, Popovska Nalevska and Kuzmanovska (2020) contend that although most teachers know that their learners are chronically disengaged from learning, evidence-based teaching methods, particularly for the younger generations, are yet to be ratified and implemented.

Here, the significant finding was that there is a structure in how teachers can use relationships and teaching methods to bolster student motivation. It was appropriate to conclude that a teacher must establish positive connections with the learners and develop respectful teaching and learning spaces. Once such relationships have been established, the findings of this study show that the teacher must employ suitable teaching methods, preferably activity-based ones that trigger creativity and critical thinking. Simply put, although relationship-building and teaching methods are distinct concepts in student motivation, they are structured so that the former precedes the latter if highly motivated learners are to be developed.

Parental Involvement is Proportionate to Student Motivation

Students can only be highly motivated if all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, and the community, actively enhance the learners' well-being. At the same time, the role of some stakeholders is understandably more significant than others, given the part they play in the students' lives. Current research shows that students whose parents are involved in the learning and socioemotional aspects of the learner are more likely to outperform their peers whose parents are unaffected (Jones, 2022; Luo, 2023). Perhaps more pertinent to this study are the findings of Đurišić and Bunijevac (2017), Mata (2018), and Sumanasekera et al. (2021), who found direct links between parental involvement and student motivation. Specifically, Sumanasekera et al. (2021) found that parental involvement mediates student motivation and academic performance so that students whose parents are more engaged in their learning are more motivated and subsequently have better academic outcomes. Even so, the participants of this study indicated that parental involvement is critically low in secondary schools. The reason behind these low levels of parental involvement is not yet fully understood. However, although the U.S. Department of Education (2021) points out about nine parent engagement opportunities for secondary schools, including back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, involvement in governance, and parent education workshops, Jones (2022) laments that most school administrators disproportionately focus on persuading parents to support school policy instead of encouraging them to have an active role in the learner's education, both at school and at home. From this study's findings and the supporting literature, it is appropriate to conclude that parental involvement and student motivation go hand in hand, rising together and falling simultaneously and proportionately.

Mismatch between Teacher Training and Student Diversity

There is a mandate in the U.S. for all school districts and campuses to provide equal opportunities to all learners, a direct requirement for teachers, educators, and administrators to adapt to rapidly shifting student demographics. Teachers and educators are now being required to rethink their teaching strategies. As a result, there have been policy shifts and recommendations towards the paradigm of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching (Rodríguez-Izquierdo, 2020; Yoon, 2023). However, unlike the widespread belief that culturally and linguistically responsive teaching involves being nice or exercising some extent of affirmative action for diverse learners, Rodríguez-Izquierdo (2020) argues that this approach involves sociolinguistic consciousness, value for linguistic diversity, advocating for the well-being of multilingual learners, understanding student backgrounds and cultures, and scaffolding instruction to accommodate all learners. Fundamentally, bolstering the motivation of diverse learners need more than just awareness; it requires the teacher to have a detailed understanding of diversity dynamics and the appropriate problem-solving strategies.

Conversely, the participants of this study expressed their frustration in dealing with learners from different backgrounds and lifestyles, denoting the mismatch between how teachers are currently trained and the actual demands of the classroom regarding diverse backgrounds. These findings agree with current literature—Sarı and Yüce (2020) found that when teachers and their learners come from different backgrounds and cultures, contextual problems like inadequate teaching experience, communication barriers, classroom management issues, and indiscipline arise. Notably, Sarı and Yüce (2020) emphasize that a specific curriculum for teaching students from diverse backgrounds creates a significant problem, particularly concerning learners' cognitive and affective skills, akin to motivation. In reiteration, Adams (2022) points out the

need for teacher preparation programs to develop culturally and linguistically competent teachers to meet all the needs of learners from diverse cultures, ethnicities, and abilities. This study's findings and current research agree that more training is required to develop culturally and linguistically competent teachers.

Devices and Social Media

In an age where digital communication and the internet are the mainstay, teachers still have the responsibility of managing classroom behavior in a way that develops high expectations for the learners while at the same time bolstering their motivation. These strategic requirements in the classroom have coincided with a time of lower student attention span, notwithstanding increasing sources of distraction, phones and social media. As learners become increasingly attached to their phones and social media, their attention, focus, and motivation are eroded alarmingly. At the same time, teachers are finding themselves responding like untrained social workers in their desperate attempts to liberate their learners from the effects of social media, including dwindling attention and focus, depression, anxiety, and confusion (Raut & Patil, 2016; Yilmazsoy et al., 2020). Apart from using strict rules and regulations in the classroom, the study participants did not appear to have any other professionally sound strategies for dealing with the ever-growing menace of phones and social media in the classroom.

Interestingly, there appears to be a juxtaposition between how the participants of this study view phones and social media in learning spaces versus the findings of current research. Specifically, there is empirical evidence from researchers and scholars like Mahdiuon et al. (2020) and Ravikumar et al. (2022) that integrating technology in the classroom using basic methods such as the use of smartphones and social media has a positive effect on student engagement and can contribute significantly to academic performance, either directly or a

mediator. Others like Assefa et al., (2023) credibly warn that although using devices and social media in the classroom has yielded promising results, the whole landscape of technology integration is yet to be fully understood. It is, therefore, appropriate to infer, from the study's findings and current research, that more evidence-based research is needed alongside awareness creation among teachers and education that phones and social media should not be necessarily viewed as detractors but as opportunities for bolstering student engagement and motivation. Just like the issue of background and diversity, it is clear that educators are yet to be professionally equipped on the dynamics of technology integration in the classroom despite this phenomenon being one of the significant contributors to the unprecedented levels of disengaged learners in U.S. secondary schools.

Systemic Issues in Student Motivation

It is easy to assume that student motivation is the sole responsibility of parents and teachers, with teachers being expected to play a more significant part in bolstering motivation. However, the participants of this study expressed their concerns about the role of school and district-wide administrators. The first concern was about the curriculum, which was considered too fast-paced by the participants. The second concern was about how testing and assessment are done, with most participants arguing that too many tests are leaving the learners under too much pressure and triggering anxiety. The most notable issue raised by the participants, albeit inadvertently, was how schools and districts motivate their learners. Most participants mentioned approaches like hero points, candy, rewards, exemptions from assignments, and celebrating success as the most-used approaches to student motivation in their schools and districts. Critics argue that although these approaches are impactful, they are cumulatively extrinsic, hence the need to balance extrinsic and intrinsic student motivation strategies. Pundits of extrinsic

motivation, including Kohn (1993) and (Lungu, 2019), discourage the overreliance on rewards, gold stars, praise for scoring A's, and other incentives as student motivation strategies.

Additionally, in a research report, Amrein and Berliner (2003) found that when rewards and sanctions are attached to learning and educational outcomes, learners' intrinsic motivation to learn is negatively affected, and they are less likely to develop critical thinking skills. Instead, these scholars call for a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic student motivation modalities, focusing more on cultivating the intrinsic drive to learn. Moreover, some participants mentioned that administrators stand in the way of student motivation because they do not allow educators to be autonomous in their student motivation efforts. These issues are systemic because they are at least school-wide, leading to cultures that do little to bolster student motivation.

Implications for Policy or Practice

This study found personal, cultural, and structural determinants of student motivation. The personal determinants were those within the teacher's control, such as teacher-student relationships, classroom behavior management, and teaching methods. On the other hand, cultural and structural determinants are not always within the teacher's control. As such, the personal factors bore the implications for practice, while the cultural and structural aspects informed the policy implications.

Implications for Policy

When asked as policymakers what they would do differently, most respondents pointed out the cumbersome nature of the current curriculum and the ineffectiveness of the testing and assessment domain in secondary schools. Some respondents also mentioned that their district and school administrations often barricade the extent to which teachers can motivate their learners through bureaucracy. The respondents mentioned that the curriculum, as currently stipulated, is

too fast-paced, and the learners need to take more exams. The underlying implication is a need for policymakers to review the curriculum and testing to ensure a balance in each. These concerns, particularly regarding the issue of standardized testing, have been previously discussed by scholars like Jimenez and Boser (2021). According to Jimenez and Boser (2021), policymakers should reduce the assessment footprint in secondary schools by making it shorter to leave more time for instruction. Amrein and Berliner (2003) adds that high-stakes testing inadvertently creates teacher-centered teaching and learning where students are not encouraged to explore opportunities to direct their learning. Moreover, Ilhan and Teker (2021) reiterate that high-stakes testing relegates the importance of school assessments from the perspective of learners and their parents as the focus shifts to standardized tests. Similarly, school administrators and teachers shift their focus from improving pedagogy to increasing average test scores in standardized tests (Ilhan & Teker, 2021; Nahar, 2023). This study agrees that the number of standardized tests could be reduced to leave more time for instruction and improve learning experiences, thereby reducing the pace of the curriculum to student and educator-friendly levels.

In addition to addressing the issues of curriculum and standardized testing, school administrators may need to review their policies to accommodate teacher autonomy in developing and implementing student motivation strategies. Although some oversight is necessary when allowing this autonomy, it is crucial to ensure that bureaucracy and stringent rules do not derail teachers' efforts to motivate their learners. Effectively, studies by Kengatharan (2020), Yang et al. (2022), and Zhang et al. (2022) have positively identified student engagement as an outcome of teacher autonomy and supportive work environments. Moreover, despite the positive impacts of initiatives like 'hero points' in motivating learners to maintain appropriate

behavior within schools and learning spaces, it is equally important to incorporate intrinsic motivation strategies through seminars, conferences, counseling, and student involvement and autonomy strategies.

Implications for Practice

This study informs teachers and educators about the antecedents of student motivation in the classroom. The findings of the study are aligned with current literature by Jasmi and Hin (2014) and Koca (2016), who suggest that teachers must at least begin their student motivation efforts by establishing positive and caring relationships with their learners and then incorporate appropriate teaching methods depending on the demographics of the learners. Secondly, the results of this study point out that student involvement, genuine concern for student well-being, and the use of real-world examples cannot be divorced from the process of bolstering student motivation in secondary schools. These findings are backed by empirical research which identifies student involvement (Fuertes et al., (2023), genuine care for the learner (Jasmi & Hin, 2014), and activity-based teaching (Anwer, 2019) as some of the tenets of bolstering student motivation in 21st-century pedagogy. Teachers and educators may benefit from these results by engaging in evidence-based research about each aspect and finding the appropriate strategies based on specific classroom requirements. Thirdly, this study has highlighted significant gaps between teacher training and practice. For instance, it was found that currently trained teachers need to be adequately equipped to deal with issues like student diversity and the use of devices and social media within learning spaces.

Arguably, although 21st-century organizations and institutions are responsible for ensuring their employees' growth and development, it is equally essential for individual educators to seek opportunities for their growth. As such, the findings of this study implore

teachers to identify their areas of weakness or inadequate training and seek appropriate professional growth. Lastly, the findings of this study indicate that student motivation is a collective effort, bringing all stakeholders like teachers, parents, administrators, the community, and the students together. These findings bring these stakeholders closer to each other and inclusively brainstorm the appropriate ways of motivating learners.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

This study was founded on the need for adequate knowledge about how secondary school teachers describe their student motivation strategies. Before the study, it was only known that there were dwindling levels of student motivation, as evidenced by unprecedented numbers of disengaged learners in secondary schools. Against this backdrop, the empirical implications section examines whether there was a notable alignment between current literature and study findings as far as the state of student motivation in U.S. secondary schools is concerned from the perspective of the study participants. Furthermore, this study was founded on self-determination theory (SDT) and self-efficacy theory (SET). Effectively, this section appraises the study's findings from the perspective of these two theories.

Empirical Implications

The participants of this study were asked to rate the perceived state of student motivation in the classrooms specifically. According to Nora, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 representing "extreme motivation," "I am gonna say about a. A 2? The 2. I do try to do things to, you know, change up the lesson, not just, you know, the traditional brick and mortar." These sentiments were echoed by Maya, who regarded motivation in her classroom as dwindling, and Olivia, who reported low motivation among her learners. These findings were consistent with current research like De Loof et al. (2019 and Hornstra et al. (2015), who found reluctance among

students in U.S. secondary schools to participate in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This study, having concluded that students in U.S. secondary schools are lowly motivated, is also consistent with researchers and scholars like Collier (2015), Mazepus (2017), and Robinson (2018), who found that at least 40% of all learners in U.S. secondary schools are chronically disengaged from learning.

Despite their currency, most of these empirical findings needed to engage in an in-depth analysis of rich data from educators. Instead, these scholars and researchers relied on quantitative surveys conducted with either teachers or learners in many learning institutions around the country. However, this study delved into understanding how teachers describe the state of student motivation in their schools and classrooms, as well as their personal and collective student motivation efforts. In other words, this study provides much-needed confirmation about the rate of student disengagement in U.S. schools. Resultantly, the findings of this study can be used by scholars and researchers to conduct further research, such as the solutions to this low level of student motivation.

The study also confirmed the lack of structure and collective effort in motivating secondary school students in U.S. schools, as highlighted by Vanlommel et al. (2017). For instance, Charlotte noted, "Student motivation doesn't just come from the teacher. It comes from the school, from administration, from the secretary, from staff, from the cafeteria…" There was also a feeling among the participants that parents and school administrations have left teachers to deal with the issue of student motivation. Furthermore, these teachers are not adequately trained to understand the dynamics of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and are, therefore, overly reliant on the extrinsic typology. Froiland et al. (2012) point out that student motivation should be a collective effort involving professionals like school psychologists and counselors to give a

roadmap to parents, teachers, and administrators. Ultimately, this study's findings align with the current literature, which recommends a collective approach to student motivation instead of overburdening educators with this task. Scholars and researchers can use these findings to conduct more research into the ways of building teams of stakeholders to bolster student motivation in U.S. secondary schools.

Theoretical Implications

The choice of SDT as a guiding theory in this study was informed by the meta-theory that regardless of background, gender, religion, or socioeconomic orientation, all human beings have an innate drive toward growth, mastery, and integration of new experiences (Guay, 2022). Judging from the responses of this study's participants, critics would argue that the premise of the innate drive towards growth and mastery in humans is either forced or does not apply to teaching and learning situations. Several participants noted that their students need more motivation to learn. At the same time, most responses about lack of motivation almost always pointed out an underlying cause. For instance, Amelia noted this lack of motivation because students fail to see the bigger picture—they only think about their grades. Olivia reiterated that this lack of motivation is due to the absence of required skill sets. Accordingly, Guay (2022) adds that although human beings are innately driven toward growth and mastery, this tendency must be nurtured in appropriate environments. As such, when learners see schools as prisons or do not see the value of education in general, this proactive nature of the human psyche is thwarted.

The findings of this study suggest that the facets of SDT, including competence, autonomy, and relatedness, have been abandoned or relegated, making it difficult for learners in U.S. secondary schools to develop self-determination. There is no better depiction of this

phenomenon than the concept that these learners must be offered extrinsic rewards to remain motivated. From a theoretical viewpoint, this study suggests that stakeholders have much to do to actively enhance student competence, autonomy, and relatedness to bolster their motivation in U.S. secondary schools. According to Guay (2021), the self-determination theory is still relevant in 21st-century pedagogy if teachers, educators, administrators, and policymakers know where to look. When the student's needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled, Guay (2021) argues that student motivation skyrockets accordingly.

The theory of self-efficacy was also rife in the findings of this study. This theory, as developed by Albert Bandura, describes how well an individual believes he or she can succeed in a given situation. In this study, participants were directly asked about the level of self-efficacy among their learners. Most participants reported that although most of their learners have high self-efficacy, others are unwilling to put in any effort. For instance, Amelia said, "I think that Most of them know that they can. I have a slight few. That just flat out refuse to even to try." Olivia reiterated, "You have students who know that they can do it, and they have a skill set to do it, and they go and do it. And then you have a few who are just like, I don't even know." Here, the participants agreed that most learners are self-efficacious, but some are not willing to put in the required effort. Although researchers like Abdolrezapour et al. (2023) found positive links between self-efficacy and student motivation, the overarching finding is that self-efficacy cannot be impactful in isolation. Some more inputs are required for success. For instance, a self-efficacious learner who puts in the required effort is likely to succeed compared to another with self-efficacy but low effort. From a different viewpoint, Morelli et al. (2023) argued that self-efficacy may be affected by external factors like social relationships. From a theoretical

perspective, this study suggests that teachers should understand the levels of self-efficacy among learners and match it with another prerequisite for success, like adequate effort.

Limitations and Delimitations

This section focuses on the delimitations and limitations encountered during the study. This section includes detailed descriptions of the delimitations of the researcher's choice to use a qualitative hermeneutic phenomenological design and the reasoning for choosing the design. Limitations, which could not be controlled, such as the gender of participants willing to participate in the study and the use of Zoom instead of face-to-face interviews, are explained in detail.

Limitations

The study had two main limitations—the gender of the participants and the COVID-19 pandemic. I sourced the participants from the administrations of five schools within the ISDT. Interestingly, seven of the contacts I received from the five schools were female, but the three male participants declined to participate in the study. When I consulted the schools again for a potential replacement for the three participants, I received three more female participants. Due to time limitations, I accepted an all-female sample. Although it appears to have a sampling bias, this limitation was mitigated by the fact that regardless of gender, all teachers deal with identical learners, meaning that gender alone could not significantly affect the findings of the study.

The other limitation was that the entire frame of this study was designed during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it was not possible to conduct one-on-one interviews. Inevitably, I was forced to abandon any possibility of conducting one-on-one interviews. However, due to the availability of Zoom and Skype, I could conduct the interviews virtually, the same way I would have done face-to-face interviews. The same was true for focus groups, which

were more challenging to manage than interviews, primarily based on questions and answers. These limitations were, therefore, mitigated by the fact that virtual interviews are not significantly different from face-to-face interviews if communication between the interviewer and the respondents is smooth.

Delimitations

The first study delimitation was in the design choice—hermeneutic phenomenology. I chose this design because it focuses on unearthing an individual's experiences with respect to specific study phenomena. As far as this study is concerned, I wanted a rich description of teachers' experiences with the dynamics of student motivation in their schools and classrooms, hence the choice of hermeneutic phenomenology. The second delimitation was the choice and selection of study participants. Although research ethics recommend using approaches like random sampling, the inclusion criteria for this study dictated the use of a more flexible approach like purposive sampling, which was appropriate for recruitment and data collection. Lastly, I deliberately chose to use a qualitative approach for this study because it was more appropriate for collecting rich data and participant experiences than quantitative methods, which are ideal for collecting numerical data. Put differently, the delimitations of this study were primarily methodological.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study highlighted various findings from the perspective of secondary school teachers in the U.S. Perhaps the main finding confirmed what is already in current literature—secondary school students in the U.S. are chronically disengaged. Although most causes of this disengagement and low motivation are known—fast-paced curriculum, flawed teacher-student relationships, cumbersome standardized assessments, lack of parental involvement, ineffective

teaching methods, and systemic barriers, researchers now have an opportunity to research to understand the perspective of learners. Arguably, if we are to develop highly motivated learners, we must first involve them in decision-making initiatives. Using the findings of this study, researchers and scholars can further study the causes, consequences, and solutions of student motivation based on the lived experiences of secondary school learners in the U.S.

Secondly, the findings of this study suggested that extrinsic motivation strategies are the mainstay in most secondary schools. This finding allows scholars and researchers to probe whether intrinsic motivation strategies are being employed in secondary schools. Lastly, for each of the six themes identified in this study, there is an opportunity to delve into more profound research to understand the dynamics of each and how it relates to student motivation. Concerning the research methodology, there is an opportunity to expand the sample used herein to include male teachers. Although I do not anticipate any changes in findings based on the participants' gender, I feel that a more gender-balanced sample would have yielded more dependable and generalizable findings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study is to highlight the extent of missing student motivation guiding principles by describing teachers' lived experiences in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States secondary schools. The study confirmed that student motivation levels were indeed low. Six themes (teacher-student relationships, teaching methods, socioeconomic aspects, student features, the education system, and school culture and administration) were identified. Moreover, the study found that teachers should focus on building relationships with their learners and then employing appropriate teaching methods to develop highly motivated learners. The study also highlighted the role of parental involvement

and teacher growth and development in bolstering student motivation. The overarching finding is that student motivation in U.S. secondary schools is low, with collective efforts from all stakeholders being imperative in any efforts to enhance it.

One major takeaway from this study is that students in U.S. secondary schools possess a low level of motivation. Several study participants such as Nora, Maya, and Olivia all reported low levels of motivation among their students. In alignment, findings by research scholars like Collier (2015), Mazepus (2017), and Robinson (2018) reported 40% of all secondary learners are seriously disengaged from the learning process. With a basis of the Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation was delved into to determine that the most important guiding principle to bolster student motivation is teacher-student relationships. Jasmi and Hin (2014) and Koca (2016) suggest that the first step in bolstering student motivation is to establish positive and caring relationships. One study participant, Olivia, referenced that students are motivated to do more for you as their teacher when they know that you care about them. It has been shown that positive relationships between teachers and students are a catalyst for bolstering motivation among secondary school students.

References

Abdolrezapour, P., Ganjeh, S. J., & Ghanbari, N. (2023). Self-efficacy and resilience as predictors of students' academic motivation in online education. *Plos One, 18*(5), e0285984.

Adams, B. (2022). Teacher Candidates and their Transformed Understanding of Diversity and Social Justice in a Teacher Education Program. *Critical Questions in Education*, 13(1), 60-78.

Adhabi, E., & Anozie, C. B. (2017). Literature review for the type of interview in qualitative research. *International Journal of Education*, 9(3), 86-97.

Aguinis, H., Gottfredson, R. K., & Joo, H. (2013). Best-practice recommendations for defining, identifying, and handling outliers. *Organizational Research Methods*, *16*(2), 270-301.

Akhtar, S., Hussain, M., Afzal, M., & Gilani, S. A. (2019). The impact of teacher-student interaction on student motivation and achievement. *European Academic Research, 9(2)*, 1201-122.

Akkuzu, N. (2014). The role of different types of feedback in the reciprocal interaction of teaching performance and self-efficacy belief. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39(3)*, 37-66.

Al-Azawei, A., Serenelli, F., & Lundqvist, K. (2016). Universal design for learning (UDL): A content analysis of peer-reviewed journals from 2012 to 2015. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 16*(3), 39-56. https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v16i3.19295

Aliyu, A. A., Singhry, I. M., Adamu, H., & AbuBakar, M. M. (2015). Ontology, epistemology and axiology in quantitative and qualitative research: Elucidation of the research

philophical misconception. *Proceedings of the Academic Conference: Mediterranean Publications & Research International on New Direction and Uncommon, 2(1)*.

Alkaabi, S. A., Alkaabi, W., & Vyver, G. (2017). Researching student motivation. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research, 10*(3), 193-202. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1147270.pdf

Al-Otaibi, S. A., Yusof, S. M., & Ismail, W. K. (2019). The influence of organizational culture on students' satisfaction in Saudi Arabia. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management Bang, 7*, 2195-2203.

Alvi, M. (2016). A manual for selecting sampling techniques in research. *Munich Personal RePEc Archive*.

Amrein, A. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2003). The effects of high-stakes testing on student motivation and learning. *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, 32-38.

Anwer, F. (2019). Activity-based teaching, student motivation and academic achievement. *Journal of Education and Educational Development, 6*(1), 154-170.

Arifin, R. B., Wahab, N. B., Teh, K. S., & Otman, M. S. (2018). Influence of social environment on student's behaviour. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences, 8*(7), 930-939. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i7/4520

Armstrong, M. (2014). *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice, 13th Ed.* Kogan Page.

Arulmoly, C., & Branavan, A. (2017). The impact of academic motivation on student's academic achievement and learning outcomes in mathematics among secondary school students in Paddiruppu Educational Zone in The Batticaloa District, Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 7*(5), 115-126.

Aslam, S., & Ali, M. S. (2017). Effect of Self-Efficacy on Students' Achievement in Science: A Case of Secondary School Students in Pakistan. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 3, 220-235.

Assefa, Y., Moges, B. T., & Kumar, T. (2023). Modelling the predictive effects of social media on the relationship between students' engagement and academic achievement in higher education institutions. *Cogent Education, 10*(1), 2207801.

Augustina, D., Worlu, R. E., Oluseye, O. O., & Harriet, E.-U. E. (2017). A conceptual examination of corporate culture and organizational performance. *The Social Sciences , 12*(3), 425-430.

Bandura, A. (1977a). Self-efficacy: toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215.

Bandura, A. (1977b). *Social learning theory.* Prentice-Hall.

Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action.* Prentice-Hall.

Barakat, A., & Othman, A. (2015). The five-factor model of personality and its relationship to cognitive style (rush and prudence) and academic achievement among a sample of students. *Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(35), 156-165.

Basith, A., Syahputra, A., & Ichwanto, M. A. (2020). Self-efficacy as a predictor of academic achievement. *P.I. (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia), 9*(1), 163-170. https://doi.org/10.23887/jpi-undiksha.v9i1.24403

Bastian, K. C., McCord, D. M., Marks, J. T., & Carpenter, D. (2017). A temperament for teaching? Associations between personality traits and beginning teacher performance and retention. *AERA Open, 3*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858416684764

Bernaus, M., & Gardner, R. C. (2008). Teacher motivation strategies, student perceptions, student motivation, and English achievement. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92(3), 387-401.

Bevan, M. T. (2014). A method of phenomenological interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research, 24(1)*, 136-144. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732313519710

Black, S., & Allen, J. D. (2018). Rewards, motivation, performance. *The Reference Librarian*, 59(4), 205-218. https://doi.org/10.1080/02763877.2018.1499164

Boothe, K. A., Lohmann, M. J., Donnell, K. A., & Hall, D. D. (2018). Applying the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) in the college classroom. *Journal of Special Education Apprenticeship, 7*(3), 1-13.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77-101.

Bray-Clark, N., & Bates, R. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs and teacher effectiveness: Implications for professional development. *Professional Educator, 26(1)*, 13-22.

Brophy, J. E. (2013). *Motivating students to learn.* Routledge.

Bustamante, J. (2019). K-12 school enrollment & student population statistics. https://educationdata.org/k12-enrollment-statistics/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20approximately%2056.6%20million,school%20in%20the%20United%20States.&text=Among%20the%2050.8%20million%20students,3.7%20million%20were%20in%20kindergarten

Cambon, L., Minary, L., Ridde, V., & Alla, F. (2012). Transferability of interventions in health education: A review. *BMC Public Health, 12*(1), 497. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-497

Carton, J. S. (1996). The differential effects of tangible rewards and praise on intrinsic motivation: A comparison of cognitive evaluation theory and operant theory. *The Behavior analyst*, 19(2), 237–255. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03393167

Chakravartty, A. (2018). s it heuristics in use or 'ritualistic and instrumentalist'in purpose? Neoliberal philosophy and the use of KAPS (Knowledge, Attitude and Practise Surveys) in a least developed nation. *The Open Public Health Journal, 11(1)*, 243-274. https://doi.org/10.2174/1874944501811010243.

Chang, R., Fukuda, E., Durham, J., & Little, T. D. (2017). Enhancing students' motivation with autonomy-supportive classrooms. In M. L. Wehmeyer, K. Shogren, T. D. Little, & S. J. Lopez, *Development of self-determination through the life-course* (pp. 99-110). Springer.

Cohen, M. Z., Kahn, D. L., & Steeves, R. H. (2000). *Hermeneutic phenomenological research: A practical guide for nurse researchers*. Sage.

Collier, L. (2015). Grabbing students: Researchers have identified easy ways to boost student success by increasing their engagement in learning. *Monitor on Psychology, 46*(6), 58. https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/06/grabbing-students

Cope, M. (2010). Coding transcripts and diaries 27. *Key methods in geography*, 440.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, D. J. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches 5th Ed* (4th ed.). Sage publications.

Davidsen, A. S. (2013). Phenomenological approaches in psychology and health sciences. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 10*(3), 318-339. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2011.608466

Dawson, M. E., & Furedy, J. J. (1976). The role of awareness in human differential autonomic classical conditioning: The necessary-gate hypothesis. *Psychophysiology*, *13*(1), 50-53. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8986.1976.tb03336.x

Dean, B. A. (2018). The interpretivist and the learner. *nternational Journal of Doctoral Studies, 13*, 1-8.

De Loof, H., Struyf, A., Pauw, J. B.-d., & Petegem, P. V. (2019). Teachers' motivating style and students' motivation and engagement in STEM: The relationship between three key educational concepts. *Research in Science Education*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-019-9830-3.

Deniz, M. E., & Satici, S. A. (2017). The relationships between Big Five personality traits and subjective vitality. *Anales de Psicología, 33*(2), 218-224. https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.33.2.261911

Di Domenico, S. I., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). The emerging neuroscience of Intrinsic Motivation: A new frontier in self-determination research. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, *11*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2017.00145

Diu, M. L., Tinapay, A., Cortes, J. A., Tirol, S., & Samillano, J. (2022). Motivation and barriers to learning of students: The case of online education. *International Journal of Research, 9*(7), 301-311.

Doménech-Betoret, F., Abellán, L., & Gómez-Artiga, A. (2017). Self-efficacy, satisfaction, and academic achievement: the mediator role of Students' expectancy-value beliefs. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*(1193), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01193

Dörnyei, Z., & Csizér, K. (1998). Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study. *Language Teaching Research, 2*(3), 203-229.

Dost, E. N., & Hafshejani, N. K. (2017). The impact of teachers' personality on senior high school EFL learners' general English achievement. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences, 2*(3), 77-93. https://doi.org/10.24001/ijels.2.3.9

Đurišić, M., & Bunijevac, M. (2017). Parental involvement as a important factor for successful education. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal, 7*(3), 137-153.

Emerson, R. M. (1972a). Exchange theory, part I: A psychological basis for social exchange. *Sociological theories in progress*, *2*, 38-57.

Emerson, R. M. (1972b). Exchange theory, part II: Exchange relations and networks. *Sociological theories in progress*, *2*, 58-87.

Fernández-Espínola, C., Robles, M. T., Collado-Mateo, D., Almagro, B. J., Viera, E. C., & Fuentes-Guerra, F. J. (2020). Effects of cooperative-learning interventions on physical education students' intrinsic motivation: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17*(12), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17124451

Fink, A. S. (2000). *The role of the researcher in the qualitative research process. A potential barrier to archiving qualitative data*. Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research. https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-1.3.1021

Finkler, M., & Negreiros, D. P. (2018). Training x education, Deontology x ethics: rethinking concepts and repositioning professors. *Revista da ABENO, 18*(2), 37-44. https://doi.org/10.30979/rev.abeno.v18i2.561

Firestone, W. A. (1987). Meaning in method: The rhetoric of quantitative and qualitative research. *Educational Researcher, 16(7)*, 16-21.

Froiland, J. M., Oros, E., Smith, L., & Hirchert, T. (2012). Intrinsic motivation to learn: The nexus between psychological health and academic success. *Contemporary School Psychology*, 16, 91-100. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03340978

Fuertes, H., Jr, I. E., Marcellones, I. J., & Bacatan, J. (2023). Student engagement, academic motivation, and academic performance of intermediate level students. *International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning, 10*(1), 133-149.

Furtak, E. M., & Kunter, M. (2012). Effects of autonomy-supportive teaching on student learning and motivation. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 80(3), 284-316.

Gandhimathi, S. N. S., & Devi, A. (2016). Learner autonomy and motivation: A literature review. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 6(3), 80-83.

Garcia, T. (1995). The role of motivational strategies in self-regulated learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*.

Garcia, T., & Pintrich, P. R. (1996). The effects of autonomy on motivation and performance in the college classroom. *Contemporary educational psychology*, 21(4), 477-486.

Gbollie, C., & Keamu, H. P. (2017). Student academic performance: The role of motivation, strategies, and perceived factors hindering Liberian junior and senior high school students learning. *Education Research International*, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/1789084

Gentles, S. J., Charles, C., Ploeg, J., & McKibbon, K. A. (2015). Sampling in qualitative research: Insights from an overview of the methods literature. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(11), 1772-1789.

Gess-Newsome, J., Southerland, S. A., Johnston, A., & Woodbury, S. (2003). Educational reform, personal practical theories, and dissatisfaction: The anatomy of change in college science teaching. American Educational Research Journal, 40(3), 731–767. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312040003731

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal, 204*(6), 291-295. doi:10.1038/bdj.2008.192

Girmus, R. L. (2012). How to motivate your students. *Online Submission*, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED534566.pdf

Göncz, L. (2017). Teacher personality: A review of psychological research and guidelines for a more comprehensive theory in educational psychology. *Open Review of Educational Research, 4*(1), 75-95. https://doi.org/10.1080/23265507.2017.1339572

Goodman, C. L. (2018). *Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2017-18. IDRA Report.* Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA).

Gormezano, I., Prokasy, W.F., & Thompson, R.F. (1986). Classical Conditioning (3rd ed.). *Psychology Press*, 1, 385-420. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315802404

Guay, F. (2021). Applying self-determination theory to education: Regulations types, psychological needs, and autonomy supporting behaviors. *Canadian Journal of School Psychology, 37*(1), 75-92.

Guay, F. (2022). Sociocultural contexts and relationships as the cornerstones of students' motivation: Commentary on the special issue on the "other half of the story". *Educational Psychology Review, 34*(4), 2043-2060.

Guillen, F., & Elida, D. (2019). Qualitative research: Hermeneutical phenomenological method. *Journal of Educational Psychology-Propositosy Representaciones, 7*(1), 201-229. https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2019.v7n1.267

Gunawan, J. (2015). Ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Belitung Nursing Journal, 1*(1), 10-11.

Hall, E., Chai, W., & Albrecht, J. A. (2016). A qualitative phenomenological exploration of teachers' experience with nutrition education. *American Journal of Health Education, 47*(3), 136-148. https://doi.org/10.1080/19325037.2016.1157532

Handy, C. (1981). *Understanding organizations.* Penguin Books.

Harrell, M. C., & Bradley, M. A. (2009). *Data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups.* Rand National Defense Research Institute.

Harrison, R. (1972). Understanding your organizations character. *Harvard Business Review, 50*(3), 119.

Hasan, M. Z., Hossain, T. B., & Islam, A. (2014). Factors affecting self-efficacy towards academic performance: A study on polytechnic students in Malaysia. *Advances in Environmental Biology 8*(9), 695-706.

Hassan, Z. A., Schattner, P., & Mazza, D. (2006). Doing a pilot study: why is it essential? *Malaysian Family Physician, 1*(2-3), 70–73.

Heale, R., & Forbes, D. (2013). Understanding triangulation in research. *Evidence-based nursing*, 16(4).

Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology, 63*(6), 597-606. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2772990

Honarzad, R., & Rassaei, E. (2019). The Role of EFL Learners' Autonomy, Motivation and Self-Efficacy in Using Technology-Based Out-of-Class Language Learning Activities. *JALT Call Journal*, 15(3), 23-42.

Honicke, T., & Broadbent, J. (2016). The influence of academic self-efficacy on academic performance: A systematic review. *Educational Research Review, 17*, 63-84. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.11.002

Hornstra, L., Mansfield, C., Veen, I. V., Peetsma, T., & Volman, M. (2015). Motivational teacher strategies: The role of beliefs and contextual factors. *Learning Environments Research, 18(3)*, 363-392. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-015-9189-y.

Husman, J., & Lens, W. (1999). The role of the future in student motivation. *Educational psychologist*, 34(2), 113-125.

Ibrahim, M., Baharun, H., Harun, H., & Othman, N. (2017). Antecedents of intrinsic motivation, metacognition and their effects on students' academic performance in fundamental knowledge for matriculation courses. *Malaysian Journal of Learning and Instruction, 14*(2), 211-246.

Ilhan, M. N., & Teker, G. T. (2021). Views of teachers on the potential negative effects of high stake tests. *International Journal of Assessment Tools in Education, 8*(2), 394-408.

Jahangiri, M. (2016). Teacher' personality and students' learning motivation. *Academic Journal of Psychological Studies, 5*(3), 208-214.

Jasmi, A. N., & Hin, L. C. (2014). Student-teacher relationship and student academic motivation. *Journal for Interdisciplinary Research in Education (JIRE), 4*, 1-8.

Jimenez, L., & Boser, U. (2021). The way forward for state standardized tests. Future of testing in education. *Center for American Progress*.

John, O. P., Naumann, L. P., & Soto, C. J. (2008). Paradigm shift to the integrative Big Five trait taxonomy: History, measurement, and conceptual issues. In O. P. John, & R. W. Robins, *Handbook of Personality: Theory and research* (pp. 114-158). Guillford Press.

Jones, C. (2022). The purpose of parents: School personnel perceptions of the role of parents in secondary schools. *School Community Journal, 32*(1), 85-104.

Jurczak, I., & Jurczak, E. (2015). Personality of the teacher as an important element in the educational process of the child. Pedagogika Rodziny, 5(2), 79-88. https://doi.org/10.1515/fampe-2015-0020

Kadam, P., & Bhalerao, S. (2010). Sample size calculation. *International Journal of Ayurveda Research, 1*(1), 55-57. https://doi.org/10.4103/0974-7788.59946

Kaushik, V., & Walsh, C. A. (2019). Pragmatism as a research paradigm and its implications for social work research. *Social Sciences, 8(9)*, 255. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8090255.

Kawulich, B. B. (2005). Participant observation as a data collection method. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 6(2)*, 43.

Kengatharan, N. (2020). The effects of teacher autonomy, student behavior and student engagement on teacher job satisfaction. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice, 20*(4), 1-15.

Keumala, M., Samad, N. M., Abdul, I., & Samad, N. R. (2019). The influence of socio-cultural and educational background on EFL learners' motivation. *Indonesian TESOL Journal, 1(1)*, 67-77.

Khalilzadeh, S., & Khodi, A. (2018). Teachers' personality traits and students' motivation: A structural equation modeling analysis. *Current Psychology*, 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-018-0064-8

Kim, L. E., Dar-Nimrod, I., & MacCann, C. (2018). Teacher personality and teacher effectiveness in secondary school: Personality predicts teacher support and student self-efficacy but not academic achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 110*(3), 309-323. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000217

Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education, 6(5)*, 26-41. https://doi.org/doi:10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26

Klein, A. (2015). No child left behind: An overview. https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/no-child-left-behind-overview-definition-summary.html

Koca, F. (2016). Motivation to learn and teacher-student relationship. *Journal of international Education and Leadership, 6*(2).

Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes.* New York: Mountain Scholar.

Kudo, H., & Mori, K. (2015). A preliminary study of increasing self-efficacy in junior high school students: Induced success and a vicarious experience. *Psychological Reports*, *117*(2), 631-642.

Kusurkar, R. A., Croiset, G., & Ten Cate, O. T. J. (2011). Twelve tips to stimulate intrinsic motivation in students through autonomy-supportive classroom teaching derived from self-determination theory. Medical teacher, 33(12), 978-982.

Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(3), 21-35. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303

The Learning Network. (2019). What students are saying about how to improve American education. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/19/learning/what-students-are-saying-about-how-to-improve-american-education.html

Lee, J. S. (2014). . The relationship between student engagement and academic performance: Is it a myth or reality? *The Journal of Educational Research, 107(3)*, 177–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.2013.807491

Lee, K., & Krauss, S. E. (2015). Why use qualitative research methods to understand the meaning of clients' experiences in healthcare research? *International Journal of Public Health and Clinical Sciences*. 2(4), 1-6.

Legault, L. (2016). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 1-4. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1139-1

Li, X., Bergin, C., & Olsen, A. A. (2022). Positive teacher-student relationships may lead to better teaching. *Learning and Instruction, 80*, 101581.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry.* Sage.

Lukaszewski, A. W. (2020). Extraversion. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 1514-1519. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1071-1

Lungu, M. (2019). Motivation as part of the educational process. *Educația Plus, 22*(1), 141-149.

Luo, Y. (2023). Parental involvement in senior pupils' learning in the context of the implementation of China's double reduction policy. *Science Insights Education Frontiers, 14*(1), 2039-2049.

Lutfi, A. R., & Razzak, A. (2016). Cultural factors impacting student motivation at a health sciences college in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. *Cogent Education, 3(1)*, 1153214. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1153214

Mahdiuon, R., Salimi, G., & Raeisy, L. (2020). Effect of social media on academic engagement and performance: Perspective of graduate students. *Education and Information Technologies, 25*(4), 2427-2446.

Malinen, O.-P. H., Xu, J., Nel, M., Nel, N., & Tlale, D. (2013). Exploring teacher self-efficacy for inclusive practices in three diverse countries. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 33*, 34-44. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2013.02.004.

Malmberg, L. E., Hagger, H., & Webster, S. (2014). Teachers' situation-specific mastery experiences: teacher, student group and lesson effects. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *29*, 429-451.

Mantiri, O. (2013). The Influence of culture on learning styles. *SSRN Papers*, https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2566117

Martela, F., & Riekki, T. J. (2018). Autonomy, competence, relatedness, and beneficence: A multicultural comparison of the four pathways to meaningful work. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 1157. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01157

Marzano, R. J. (2012). *The two purposes of teacher evaluation.* Educational Leadership. https://eric.ed.gov/?q=teacher%2Bevaluation&id=EJ1002836.

Mata, L. I. (2018). Parental support, student motivational orientation and achievement: The impact of emotions. *International Journal of Emotional Education, 10*(2), 77-92.

Maymon, R., Hall, N. C., & Goetz, T. (2018). When academic technology fails: Effects of students' attributions for computing difficulties on emotions and achievement. *Social Sciences, 7*(11), 223. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci7110223

Mazepus, A. (2017). Challenges in education: Engaging the disengaged students. https://youth-time.eu/challenges-in-education-engaging-the-disengaged-students/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20National%20Research,are%20chronically%20disengaged%20from%20school.

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, J. P. (2008). Empirical and conceptual bases of a personality theory. In J. S. Wiggins, *The five-factor theory of personality: Theoretical perspective* (pp. 159-181). Guilford Press.

McEvoy, G. M. (2011). Increasing intrinsic motivation to learn in organizational behavior classes. Journal of Management Education, 35(4), 468-503. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562911408098

McFarland, J., Cui, J., Holmes, J., & Wang, X. (2020). *Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 2019 (NCES 2020-117).* National Center for Education Statistics.

Mertens, D. M. (2016). Assumptions at the philosophical and programmatic levels in evaluation. *Evaluation and Program Planning, 59*, 102-108. https//doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2016.05.010.

Mohajan, H. K. (2018). Qualitative research methodology in social sciences and related subjects. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People, 7*(1), 23-48.

Mohamadi, F. S., Asadzadeh, H., Ahadi, H., & Jomehri, F. (2011). Testing Bandura's theory in school. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 12*, 426-435. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.02.053.

Moon, K., Brewer, T. D., Januchowski-Hartley, S. R., Adams, V. M., & Blackman, D. A. (2016). A guideline to improve qualitative social science publishing in ecology and conservation journals. *Ecology and Society, 21*(3), https://doi.org/10.5751

Morelli, M., Baiocco, R., Cacciamani, S., Chirumbolo, A., Perrucci, V., & Cattelino, E. (2023). Self-efficacy, motivation and academic satisfaction: The moderating role of the number of friends at university. *Psicothema, 35*(3), 238-247.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Sage Publications.

Moyano, N., Quílez-Robres, A., & Cortés Pascual, A. (2020). Self-esteem and motivation for learning in academic achievement: The mediating role of reasoning and verbal fluidity. *Sustainability*, 12(14), 5768. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12145768

Murphy, M. (2016). Population definitions for comparative surveys in education. *Australian Council for Educational Research*, 1-33.

Nahar, L. (2023). The effects of standardized tests on incorporating 21st century skills in science classrooms. *Integrated Science Education Journal, 4*(2), 36-42.

Nasir, M., & Iqbal, S. (2019). Academic self efficacy as a predictor of academic achievement of students in pre-service teacher training programs. *Bulletin of Education and Research, 41*(1), 33-42. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1217900.pdf

Nayir, F. (2017). The relationship between student motivation and class engagement levels. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research, 71*, 59-77.

Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 8*(2), 90-97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2

Nicu, A. (2016). The importance of mastering pedagogy knowledge in initial teacher training. *The European Proceedings of Social & Behavioural Sciences*, 773-780. https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2017.05.02.94

Nightingale, A. (2018). Developing the organisational culture in a healthcare setting. *Nursing Standard , 32*(21), 53-63.

Nob, R. M. (2021). Dimensionality of social persuasion and its relationship with academic self-efficacy. *Psychological Studies*, *66*(1), 49-61.

Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence-based nursing*, 22(3), 67-68.

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence-based Nursing, 18*(2), 34-35. https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054

Noreen, S., Ali, A., & Munawar, U. (2019). The impact of teachers' personality on students' academic achievement in Pakistan. *Global Regional Review, 4*(3), 92-102. https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2019(IV-III).11

Nowak-Brzezińska, A., & Łazarz, W. (2021). Qualitative data clustering to detect outliers. *Entropy, 23*(7), 869.

Nyumba, T. O., Wilson, K., Derrick, C. J., & Mukherjee, N. (2018). The use of focus group discussion methodology: Insights from two decades of application in conservation. *Methods in Ecology and evolution*, 9(1), 20-32.

Ode, D. (2018). Effect of extrinsic motivation on secondary school students' academic achievement in social studies. *International Journal of Education (IJE), 6(3)*, 1-7. https://doi.org/10.5121/ije.2018.6301

Orji, F. A., Vassileva, J., & Greer, J. E. (2018). Personalized persuasion for promoting students' engagement and learning. *Proceedings of the personalization in persuasive technology workshop, persuasive technology 2018* (pp. 76-85). CEUR Workshop Proceedings.

Ortega-Arranz, A., Er, E., Martínez-Monés, A., Bote-Lorenzo, M. L., Asensio-Pérez, J. I., & Muñoz-Cristóbal, J. A. (2019). Understanding student behavior and perceptions toward earning badges in a gamified MOOC. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, 18(3), 533-549.

Özen, S. O. (2017). The effect of motivation on student achievement. In E. Karadağ, *The factors effecting student achievement* (pp. 35-56). Springer International Publishing.

Pierce, W. D., Cameron, J., Banko, K. M., & So, S. (2003). Positive effects of rewards and performance standards on intrinsic motivation. *The Psychological Record*, 53(4), 561-578.

Popovska Nalevska, G., & Kuzmanovska, M. (2020). Teaching methods as a factor of students' learning motivation. *Education, 2*(3-4), 40-50.

Poth, C. N., & Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches 4th Edition.* SAGE Publications.

Raut, V., & Patil, P. (2016). Use of social media in education: Positive and negative impact on the students. *International Journal on Recent and Innovation Trends in Computing and Communication, 4*(1), 281-285.

Ravikumar, T., Anuradha, R., Rajesh, R., & Prakash, N. (2022). Smartphone usage, social media engagement, and academic performance: Mediating effect of digital learning. *Education and Information Technologies*, 351-364.

Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of educational psychology*, 98(1), 209.

Rehman, A. A., & Alharthi, K. (2016). An introduction to research paradigms. *International journal of educational investigations, 3*(8), 51-59.

Robinson, J. (2018). Academic ranking may motivate some students, alienate others. https://www.gallup.com/education/239168/academic-ranking-may-motivate-students-alienate-others.aspx

Rodríguez-Izquierdo, R. M. (2020). Perceptions of linguistically responsive teaching in language specialist teachers and mainstream teachers. *Porta Linguarum, 35*, 25-41.

Ryan, G. (2018). Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. *Nurse Researcher, 25(4)*, 41-49.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and wellbeing. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68-78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Sari, A. B., Dardjito, H., & Azizah, D. M. (2020). EFL students' improvement through the reflective YouTube video project. *International Journal of Instruction*, *13*(4), 393–408. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13425a

Sarı, M. H., & Yüce, E. (2020). Problems experienced in classrooms with students from different cultures. *Journal on Efficiency and Responsibility in Education and Science, 13*(2), 90-100.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research methods for business students* (5th ed.). Essex: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

Schein, E. H. (1984). Coming to a new awareness of organizational culture. *Sloan Management Review, 25*(2), 3-16.

Schunk, D. H. (2019). *Learning theories an educational perspective eighth edition.* Pearson.

Sebold, L. F., Locks, M. O., Hammerschmidt, K. S., Fernandez, D. L., Tristão, F. R., & Girondi, J. B. (2017). Heidegger's hermeneutic circle: a possibility for interpreting nursing care. *Texto Contexto Enferm, 26*(4), e2830017. https://doi.org/10.1590/0104-07072017002830017

Shailashree, V. T., & Mlemba, E. (2016). Impact of national culture on organisation culture. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Modern Education (IJSRME), 1*(1).

Shillingford, S., & Karlin, N. J. (2013). The role of intrinsic motivation in the academic pursuits of nontraditional students. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, 25(3), 91-102. https://doi.org/10.1002/nha3.20033

Shousha, A. I. (2018). Motivational strategies and student motivation in an EFL Saudi context. *International Journal of English Language Education, 6*(1), 20-44. https://doi.org/10.5296/ijele.v6i1.12535

Smith, D. W. (2013). Phenomenology. In E. N. Zalta, *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy.* Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University.

Spencer, N. F., Grimmett, M. A., & Kambui, H. A. (2015). A phenomenological study examining African American parent involvement towards student academic achievement: Implications for school counselors. *VISTAS Online, 91*, 1-15.

Spratt, M., Humphreys, G., & Chan, V. (2002). Autonomy and motivation: Which comes first?. *Language teaching research*, 6(3), 245-266.

Stukalina, Y. (2014). Identifying predictors of student satisfaction and student motivation in the framework of assuring quality in the delivery of higher education. *Business, Management and Education, 12*(1), 127-137. https://doi.org/10.3846/bme.2014.09

Sukor, R., Mohd Ayub, A. F., Norhasnida, Z., & Nor Khaizura, A. R. (2017). Influence of students' motivation on academic performance among non-food science students taking food science course. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development, 6*(4), 104-112. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v6-i4/3528

Sumanasekera, I., Hamid, J., Khatibi, A., & Azam, S. M. (2021). Involvement and Style of Parents on Student Motivation towards Student Performance with the moderating effect of Academic Causal Factors: Development of a Conceptual Model. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research*, 21(1).

Surmiak, A. D. (2018). Confidentiality in qualitative research involving vulnerable participants: Researchers' perspectives. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 19*(3), 12.

Suseno, B. R. (2018). The influence of school environment, teachers' attitude and personality on students' motivation at SMK Nusantara Lubuk Pakam with students' self-concept as the intervening variable. *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research, 7*(6), 111-117.

Sutton, J., & Austin, Z. (2015). Qualitative research: Data collection, analysis, and management. *The Canadian Journal of Hospital Pharmacy, 68*(3), 226–231. https://doi.org/10.4212/cjhp.v68i3.1456

Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology; how to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management (IJARM), 5*(2), 18-27.

Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2023). Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR). https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/perfreport/tapr/tapr_srch.html?srch=C

The Texas Tribune. (2019a). *Killeen ISD*. https://schools.texastribune.org/districts/killeen-isd/

The Texas Tribune. (2019b). *What does "at risk" mean?* https://schools.texastribune.org/about/#at-risk

Tokan, M. K., & Imakulata, M. M. (2019). The effect of motivation and learning behaviour on student achievement. *South African Journal of Education, 39*(1), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v39n1a1510

Tsai, K. C. (2012). Play, imagination, and creativity: A brief literature review. Journal of Education and learning, 1(2), 15-20. https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v1n2p15

Uçar, R., & İpek, C. (2019). The relationship between high school teachers' perceptions of organizational culture and motivation. *Journal of Education and Training Studies, 7*(7), 102-116. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v7i7.4198

U.S. Department of Education. (2005). No Child Left Behind: Expanding the Promise. Guide to President Bush's FY 2006 Education Agenda. https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget06/nclb/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (2021). Parental involvement in U.S. public schools in 2017-18. *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)*.

U.S. Department of Education. Institute of Education Sciences; National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). *Highlights of U.S. PISA 2018 Results Web Report (NCES 2020-166 and NCES 2020-072).* National Center for Education Statistics.

Usher, A., & Kober, N. (2012). Student motivation: An overlooked piece of school reform. Summary. *Center on Education Policy*.

Usman, Y. D., & Madudili, C. G. (2019). Evaluation of the effect of learning environment on students' academic performance in Nigeria. *Online Submission*, 1-9.

Vanlommel, K., Gasse, R. V., Vanhoof, J., & Petegem, P. V. (2017). Teachers' decision-making: Data based or intuition driven? International Journal of Educational Research, 83, 75-83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2017.02.013

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy. SUNY Press.

Van Rooij, A. J., Ferguson, C., Van de Mheen, D., & Schoenmakers, T. (2017). Time to abandon Internet

Addiction? Predicting problematic internet, game, and social media use from psychosocial well-being and application use. *Clinical Neuropsychiatry*, 14, 113–121.

Voke, H. (2002). Motivating students to learn. Infobrief (ASCD), 1–10. *References and Resources for Further Reading*.

Vollstedt, M., & Rezat, S. (2019). An introduction to grounded theory with a special focus on axial coding and the coding paradigm. *Compendium for early career researchers in mathematics education*, 13(1), 81-100.

Walker, K. (2004). Teachers and teacher world-views. International Education Journal, 5(3), 433-438. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ903868.pdf

Wang, C. J., Liu, W. C., Kee, Y. H., & Chian, L. K. (2019). Competence, autonomy, and relatedness in the classroom: understanding students' motivational processes using the self-determination theory. *Heliyon, 5*(7), e01983. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e01983

Weiner, B. (1990). History of motivational research in education. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 82*(4), 616-622.

Williams, K. C., & Williams, C. C. (2011). Five key ingredients for improving student motivation. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 1-23.

Wilson, C., Woolfson, L. M., & Durkin, K. (2020). School environment and mastery experience as predictors of teachers' self-efficacy beliefs towards inclusive teaching. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 24(2)*, 218-234. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1455901.

Woodbury, S., & Gess-Newsome, J. (2002). Overcoming the paradox of change without difference: A model of change in the arena of fundamental school reform. Educational Policy, 16(5), 763–782. https://doi.org/10.1177/089590402237312

Woolfolk Hoy, A., Davis, H. A., & Anderman, E. M. (2013). Theories of learning and teaching in *tip*. *Theory Into Practice*, *52*(1), 9–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2013.795437

Wubbels, T., Brekelmans, M., Den Brok, P., Wijsman, L., Mainhard, T., & Van Tartwijk, J. (2014). Teacher-student relationships and classroom management. *Handbook of classroom management*, 2, 363-386.

Xu, M. A., & Storr, G. B. (2012). Learning the concept of researcher as instrument in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 17, 42.

Yang, D., Chen, P., Wang, H., Wang, K., & Huang, R. (2022). Teachers' autonomy support and student engagement: A systematic literature review of longitudinal studies. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1-12.

Yilmazsoy, B., Kahraman, M., & Utku, K. (2020). Negative aspects of using social networks in education: A brief review on WhatsApp example. *Journal of Educational Technology and Online Learning, 3*(1), 69-90.

Yoon, B. (2023). Research synthesis on culturally and linguistically responsive teaching for multilingual learners. *Education Sciences, 13(6)*, 557.

Yoshimoto, H. K., Murakami, D. Y., & Osamu, Y. (2023). The influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and achievement: Perspective from Japan. *Journal of Education, 6*(2), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4157.

Yunus, M. M., Osman, W. S., & Ishak, N. M. (2011). Teacher-student relationship factor affecting motivation and academic achievement in ESL classroom. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 15*, 2637-2641.

Zamfir, A. M., & Mocanu, C. (2020). Perceived academic self-efficacy among Romanian upper secondary education students. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(13), 4689.

Zhang, X., Noels, K. A., & Sugita-McEown, M. (2022). The importance of an autonomy-supportive workplace and engaged students for language teachers' self-determination and engagement. *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning, 4*(1), e416022.

Zhou, M., & Brown, D. (2015). *Educational learning theories: 2nd Edition.* Education Open Textbooks.

Žukauskas, P., Vveinhardt, J., & Andriukaitienė, R. (2018). Philosophy and paradigm of scientific research. *Management Culture and Corporate Social Responsibility*, https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.70628.

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 13, 2022

Lakeita Lyles
Russell Yocum

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-901 Exploring the Lived Experiences of Secondary School Teachers Regarding Student Motivation Strategies: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Insight

Dear Lakeita Lyles, Russell Yocum,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Appendix B

Site Approval

[redacted]

RE: Interviewing Staff Status

To: lakeitalyles

September 21, 2022 at 1:32 PM

JP

I am pleased to inform you that your research proposal has been approved by the district. If your educational institution requires a letter from the district confirming our cooperation, please craft the letter to your educational institution with the necessary criteria included and send it to me. I will place it on district letter head, include my signature, and send it back to you for your submission.

Once you have completed the study, please send me a copy of methodology and findings section of your dissertation.

Thank you and best wishes.

[redacted] **Ed.D**
Executive Director
Special Education
[redacted] Independent School District
[redacted].org

[redacted]
WHERE
EVERY KID IS A GENIUS

Appendix C

Informed Consent

Title of the Project: Exploring the Lived Experiences of Secondary School Teachers Regarding Student Motivation Strategies: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Insight
Principal Investigator: Lakeita Lyles, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be a full-time teacher at any of the five public high schools in the Killeen Independent School District, have worked at your current school for at least two years, and be computer literate. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe the lived experiences of teachers in their efforts to bolster student motivation in United States' secondary schools. The findings of the study will allow educators and other stakeholders to deduce the structural and cultural sides of student motivation and how curriculum and instructional methods can be aligned to motivation goals.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Respond to interview questions via Skype or Zoom depending on your convenience. Audio/visual records of your responses will be extracted for transcription purposes. The estimated duration of the interview is one hour.
2. Be part of a focus group for an in-depth discussion of your student motivation strategies. There will be two focus groups featuring five participants each based on the same procedures as the interview but will be participant-led. The estimated duration of the focus group is two hours.
3. Fill in a questionnaire to unearth some of the most-used student motivation strategies. The estimated duration of this procedure is about two hours or less.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include understanding the structural and cultural changes needed in future reforms concerning the standards and principles of student motivation for secondary school learners. Arguably, if secondary schools can develop highly motivated learners using evidence-based strategies, then other issues like behavior, engagement, and academic performance will be easier to tackle.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, meaning they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews and the focus group will be recorded and transcribed. The recorded audio and visual data will be stored in a password-protected folder on the researcher's personal computer. This computer is used by the researcher alone, further minimizing the risk of leaking the data to third parties. After three years, all electronic recorded versions of the data will be permanently deleted.
  Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. However, focus group data will not be destroyed due to its nature, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw. Lastly, withdrawal from the questionnaire will not be possible after the data has been collected due to the anonymous nature of the procedure.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Lakeita Lyles. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [redacted]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Russell Yocum, at [redacted].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____
Printed Subject Name

_____
Signature & Date

Appendix D

Interview Questions

1. Please give me a detailed outline of your profile as a high school teacher.
2. What aspect of your profile makes you stand out in your teaching career?
3. What motivated you to choose the subject combination you are currently teaching?
4. What would you say is your biggest achievement in your teaching career?
5. Is there something else that you would like me to know about you?
6. Please describe your worldview regarding student motivation among secondary school students.
7. Please descibe your personal student motivation strategies, if you have any.
8. Research has shown that the rate of student motivation in the United States is dwindling, especially among secondary students. On a scale of your choice, how would you describe the rate of student motivation among your students, and why?
9. People typically derive motivation, intrinsically, or extrinsically. How would you describe the source of motivation for your students? Give reasons or examples why you chose that source.
10. Self-efficacy has been cited as a source of motivation for many learners. How would you describe the extent of self-efficacy among your students?
11. Theoretically, people are always soliciting attributions for their successes and failures. For your students, what are the main attributions for success and failure?
12. Please describe the main student motivation strategies employed at your school.
13. From your perspective, what are the strengths of your student motivation strategies?
14. How would you describe the weaknesses of your school's student motivation strategies?

15. Please describe some of the struggles you have experienced in your bid to bolster student motivation.
16. If you were a policymaker, what are some of the changes you would make in the curriculum to improve student motivation?
17. If you would do anything different as far as student motivation in your school is concerned, what would it be?
18. Lastly, is there something else you would like me to know about how your view of student motivation?

Appendix E

Focus Group Questions

Two focus groups, each containing five members will meet for 2 hours. The timeframe will be observed strictly. The members of each group will be selected randomly because all the participants are highly representative of the teachers of the school district.

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for making time to meet us. We intend to discuss your experiences in student motivation in no more than 90 minutes. There will be no right or wrong answers, just different points of view. All your information will be strictly confidential and will not be used for any purposes beyond this research.

Focus Group Questions

1. How have you been involved in any form of student motivation?
2. Think back over the past six months about the things you have done to motivate your students. What went well and why?
3. Do your colleagues use the same approaches as you for student motivation?
4. What are some of the areas that need improvement as far as student motivation is concerned?
5. Suppose you were in charge of your school and needed to change the approaches used in motivating students. What would you do?
6. Would you like to add anything about student motivation?

Appendix F

Questionnaire

This questionnaire requires you to agree or disagree with the provided statement as well as a reason for your choice. Please tick the applicable checkbox and fill in your reason for the choice.

1. I am always polite to my students

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. I create a friendly atmosphere in the classroom

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. I use a clear and loud voice during lessons and classroom activities

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. I vary classroom activities to allow learners to take part in lessons and classroom activities

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

   ☐Strongly agree

5. I use gestures, pictures, and illustrations to clarify concepts and content

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

6. I am enthusiastic about teaching, and I show it to my learners

   ☐Agree

   ☐Disagree

   Reason for your choice:

7. I listen to my learners keenly when they have problems

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

☐Strongly agree

8. I provide support to individual students to show that I care about them

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

☐Strongly agree

9. I allow my students to choose how and when they want to be assessed

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10. I allow my learners to choose their most-preferred classroom activities

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

11. I involve my learners in planning and organizing teaching and learning activities

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

☐Strongly agree

12. I use images, quizzes, songs, short videos, and games to introduce new topics in the classroom

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

13. I monitor each student's work individually, and I notice and celebrate every success

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

14. I use various reward methods to motivate my learners

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice:

☐Strongly agree

15. I use punishments to motivate my learners

☐Agree

☐Disagree

Reason for your choice: