

Taking the Road Less Traveled : Prospective Special Education Teachers' Career Motivations

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Abstract: This study investigated the career motivations of prospective special education teachers. Descriptive-qualitative research design was utilized in this study in which purposive sampling was used to select participants in order to investigate their career motivations. Thematic analysis was done to analyze the data and the results were grouped into eight themes namely, the need to help family members with special needs; the condition of the children in the province; opportunities abroad and high salary; the love of teaching children; inspiration from other teachers; fulfillment in teaching students with special needs; discovery of unique skills; and influence from parents. The results reveal that the prospective special education teachers have high levels of career motivation. The findings in this study can be utilized as basis for further quantitative investigation.

Keywords: Prospective Special Education Teachers, Career Motivations, Inclusive Education

Introduction

Every child has the right to have similar opportunities as others, no matter how challenging life becomes (Lao et al., 2022; Pil et al., 2022, Siason et al., 2022). Children with learning difficulties benefit greatly from special education because it allows them to receive a high quality education that is in line with their particular requirements (Mills, 2021). Thus, they can achieve their full potential and obtain a high level of independence through special education.

The crucial role of special education makes nations all over the world create a variety of systems to enhance child care, education, and life quality in general. That is why, several laws have been passed to appropriately address and resolve the issues facing children with special

needs in order to reach that objective. For instance, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act became the first special education law aimed to help students with physical and mental disabilities, passed by Congress in 1975. According to the law, public schools must provide children with special needs with the same educational opportunities as other children. It also mandated that any public school receiving federal funds provide one free meal per day to these children. Another one is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA), initially enacted in 1975, which required public schools to offer all children a free, suitable public education. In line with that, with the presence of children who have special needs, the search for competent teachers in this field is deemed more than necessary to ensure that they are not deprived of quality education.

However, Billingsley and Bettini (2019) claimed that the mandate is not being met for many special education children since there are currently not enough competent special education instructors working in public schools. Moreover, the turnover rates of special education teachers are a cause for concern for a number of reasons, including those listed below for educators, administrators, and parents. There has been a growing scarcity of qualified special education teachers. Over the last 20 years, the turnover rate for special education teachers has been close to 25%, which has only added to the growing shortages (Mrstik et al., 2019). The current shortage of teachers for special education has had a negative impact on students' progress as unqualified individuals have filled these classroom positions. Some studies have shown that teachers want students with special needs in their classrooms, but they are not prepared to fully address these students' educational needs (Walsh, 2018). Some students with disabilities were not receiving the supports they required from the educational system and their social and educational requirements were also neglected (Billingsley & Bettini 2019). More precisely, Lambert & Schuck (2020) listed reasons special education teachers quit in their classroom as being overburdened by the workload, working without much assistance, and dealing with demanding parents. Hester et al. (2020) also argued that teacher' burnout and a sense of being overwhelmed have been linked to their perceptions of being under supported, overworked, and underpaid.

That is why, researchers have strongly stated the necessity for additional research into the incentives that cause teachers to get motivated and remain in their current roles in light of these findings (Billingsley, 2004; Stewart, 2017; Viel-Ruma et al., 2010). Having this in mind, it is indeed still unclear what motivates some teachers to continue working in the field despite the noted troubles.

Therefore, this qualitative study aims to examine the career motivations of prospective special education teachers in the Philippines despite the many challenges encountered in this field of specialization. This is very essential knowing the fact that this topic is not yet well-researched specifically in Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City, Philippines. Lastly, this study seeks to understand what drives them to choose special education program despite the presence of many courses in their university.

Review of Related Literature

Special Education

Special education is the practice of educating students in such a way that their individual differences, disabilities, and special needs are accommodated (Walsh, 2018). These children are identified as having mental, emotional, physical, or social needs, which may necessitate therapeutic intervention or special care from qualified specialists following a diagnosis (Foreman, 2009). Thus, special education is needed as it provides students with identified disabilities with specialized instruction tailored to their specific learning needs, allowing them to reach their full potential.

Students with disabilities were traditionally separated from the general student population and placed in self-contained special education classrooms that only housed special education students. Special education practices today are vastly different from those of the past. A series of significant historical events profoundly influenced special education practice. President Gerald Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (National Education Association of the United States, 1978) in 1975. It mandated that public schools provide free education to children with mental and physical disabilities. This law ensured that special education services were available to children in need and that decisions about services for students with disabilities were fair and appropriate. It also established specific special education management and auditing requirements, as well as federal funds to assist states in educating students with disabilities (Block & Carter, 2016).

According to a case study conducted by UNESCO, children and youth with special needs are given access to educational opportunities that help them realize their potential and prepare them to contribute to society and lead meaningful lives in a country like the Philippines, which guarantees equal rights to all of its citizens. Moreover, two provisions of the Philippine Constitution from 1987 can be used to infer the existence of special education in the Philippines. Article II, section 17, mandates that the state give priority to education, and Article XIV, section 1, ensures that everyone has access to that education. Moreover, the 1997 Magna Carta for Disabled Persons, as amended in 2007, requires the state to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to quality education, making special education provision capable of serving various types of impairments, particularly the visually impaired, hearing impaired, those with intellectual disabilities, and other types of exceptional children across the country.

In line with the aforementioned statements, it is therefore imperative to analyze the pivotal role of special education in schools and universities. Understanding special education program undeniably provides a strong ground in establishing a foundation for continuous improvement in the field.

Career Motivation

Career motivation is defined as people updating their career plans, improving themselves through education and experience, and striving to achieve their career objectives (Söylemez & Kaya, 2020). Career motivation is essential for students to have specific goals, achieve these goals, and thus successfully pursue academic studies (Voitkane, 2006), because students can achieve their future goals through career choices and career objectives (Ivantchev, 2015).

Many previous studies have been conducted to investigate the career motivations of pre-service teachers in various countries in terms of their interest in teacher training programs. Meanwhile, Azman (2013) claimed in his research on teacher motivation in Malaysia that two studies found that pre-service teachers were motivated to become teachers by a desire to make a positive contribution to their society and countries. Malaysian pre-service teachers also believed they had a responsibility to educate young people. On another note, Australian pre-service teachers were motivated to become teachers by a desire to work with young learners and young people.

M. A. Pizarro & J. G. Laborda (2017) also conducted a study of 73 university juniors' career motivations. The findings indicated that the participants were primarily motivated by intrinsic reasons, as they saw teaching as a naturally interesting profession. The second dominant motive was altruistic, which generally demonstrated the possibility of contributing to society and shaping children's futures as their motivations to become teachers. Extrinsic motivation had the least influence on pre-service teachers' decision to pursue a career in education. Furthermore, K. O. Jeong (2016) conducted a study to investigate the motivations of 102 Korean pre-service EFL teachers who chose teaching as a career. The findings indicated that pre-service teachers were motivated to become EFL teachers out of a desire to help and guide their students. They were also intrinsically motivated because they loved teaching in English. They were extrinsically motivated by the idea that teachers had long vacations and a stable income.

The different types of motivations mentioned above truly drove pre-service teachers in their respective courses. However, there is not enough research conducted to investigate the career motivations of prospective special education teachers. Hence, it is very crucial to investigate their motivations to pursue their career, no matter what kind of motivations they possess.

Methodology

Research Design

This study used a cross-sectional and descriptive-qualitative research design to investigate the career motivations of prospective special education teachers. It is a method of investigation that acknowledges the subjective aspect of phenomena as well as the experiences and outlooks of the participants and presents the findings in a way that primarily corresponds to the research-interview questions (Bradshaw et al., 2017 as cited in Doyle et al., 2020). Moreover, this is a method-based investigation that includes the interpretation of an occurrence in order to understand how people draw conclusions from their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In other words, it carefully aims to explore, describe, and comprehend a situation or issue in order to provide a reliable account of events or experiences. This is done in order to obtain all relevant information about the topic of the study, where the researchers examine the subject using secondary sources such as other individuals who are experts or have explored the topic in a more careful way (Kim et al., 2017).

Participants

Purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study in order to investigate their career motivations. The current study used this method to identify and select participants who

were knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest and had personal experience with it (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011 in Palinkas et al., 2015). Furthermore, Aina & Ogegbo (2021) argued that this method allows researchers to identify and select participants who can provide rich data for the study. So, there were 10 participants who participated in the study and they were the prospective special education teachers enrolled in Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City. Furthermore, the following inclusion criteria were established to ensure that participants provide the necessary information to achieve the study's objectives: they must be regular students enrolled in WMSU, they must have integrity in answering the questions, and they must be competent in English language.

Research Tool

To collect data for this study, semi-structured interviews with a total of 3 open-ended questions were used as the research tool. These are part of an interview protocol as they serve as set of guidelines for gathering detailed and extensive information from the participants, as well as ensuring an appropriate flow during the interview. The interview questions were also validated to ensure that the career motivations of prospective special education teachers could be examined very carefully. Lastly, the researchers devised specific questions in order to elicit responses from the participants (Airasian, Gay & Mills, 2012; Christenson & Johnson, 2012).

Pre-Testing

Before the actual data collection, the interview questions included in the study's interview protocol were pre-tested by interviewing two respondents who were chosen based on the inclusion criteria. Fortunately, no error was discovered in the process. The interview then utilized standard English as a medium of communication. Moreover, it must be made clear that pre-testing is required in research as it would determine the viability and suitability of interview questions prior to actual or final data collection (Mikuska, 2017).

Data Collection

As has been stated, the goal of the current study was accomplished through the use of a semi-structured interview. According to Rubin (2005, as cited in Ruslin et al., 2022), a skilled interviewer would generate a theme-based structure with a harmony of questions related to the main interview questions. After the conduct of pre-testing, the researchers obtain permission from the prospective special education teachers in the College of Teacher Education to participate in the study. After their approval, the researchers inform the participants about the objective of the study. The researchers then scheduled a one-on-one interview with each participant at their most convenient time. During the interview, the researchers adhered to the interview protocol's flow. Beginning with greetings and consent, progressing to the main questions, and concluding with an expression of gratitude. The greetings and consent are required because interviewees must be aware that the interview is being recorded using an audio recorder, which is necessary for the researchers to produce an accurate transcription of the participants' responses and for the interviewees to agree and indicate their consent to the recording. To produce a thoughtful discussion in the study, common themes were identified, combined, and examined. In other words, relevant ideas were reorganized into clusters or

themes in order to form general conclusions. Lastly, an overall description of the meaning and significance of the career motivations of the participants has been developed.

Methods of Analysis

This present study made use of thematic analysis to carefully examine the collected data. According to Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, (2017), thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be applied to a wide range of epistemologies and research questions. To reduce confusion caused by the data's extensive content, the researchers then presented the data in the form of tables, which Alhojailan (2012) asserted has a greater potential for comprehensive analysis, comparison, and identification of major themes when tables and charts are used. This is truly an effective method for analyzing respondents' responses (Clarke, 2006; King, 2004 as cited in Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, (2017).

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Career Motivations of Prospective Special Education Teachers

Themes	Excerpts	Percentage
The need to help family members with special needs	<i>"I have a nephew who belongs to special children. My nephew motivated me because if there's a person who is willing to give patience and tolerance, that would be his uncle, his blood related. We know special children need a compassionate educator or guidance." (Participant 1)</i>	4 out of 10 or 40% of the respondents
	<i>"...I have this one neighbor at my age who has visual impairment, she has potential on singing that I wanted her to be noticed by everyone and that motivates me more to take up this course." (Participant 5)</i>	
	<i>"My major is ECE, Early Childhood Education, so meaning, they are still children at this, so they still need guidance, they will be like my children, because I will be teaching and taking care of their development and growth." (Participant 6)</i>	
	<i>"It was really my younger cousin that motivates me to pursue this program because she is one of the sped learners. She is autistic. But we don't usually bond that well but I noticed some things her parents can't handle, Sir. They cannot understand her very well, but I can, with the help of the knowledge I learned from my course..." (Participant 9)</i>	
The condition of children in province	<i>"However, not so long after I have visited one of the schools that offers SPED program in our province, Basilan. And sadly, I saw how decreased the number of teacher who could teach</i>	3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents

those students. That day, I had a vision that someday I could extend a help to the children.” (Participant 3)

“The youngsters in my province have a high percentage of special children. That fuels my desire to assist people in comprehending and experiencing life while they live their own constrained lives...” (Participant 5)

“The desire to understand my mission in life in order to influence those youngsters to further grow and expand their potential or to uncover their gifts along the route. One can sing, another can dance, and another can beatbox. This spurred me because I wanted to help these unique youngsters enjoy life.” (Participant 5)

Opportunities abroad and high salary	<i>“Practically speaking, it is because this course can make me work abroad and land job. It is easier to get accepted abroad. The salary abroad is higher.” (Participant 1)</i>	4 out of 10 or 40% of the respondents
	<i>“We were oriented by our adviser and he told us about the things that could be offered in this program when we graduate, and he said that our course is really in demand, so it motivates me to continue this course and I also want to go abroad especially that students taking up this course have a good chance of getting a job abroad.” (Participant 4)</i>	
	<i>“The salary motivates me and also because of the new knowledge that I learned, it motivates me to take special education.” (Participant 8)</i>	
	<i>“One thing that also motivates me is the fact that this job is like in demand abroad because other countries give importance to students with special needs. There are lots of programs that help the students with their needs.” (Participant 10)</i>	
The love of teaching children	<i>“Yes, one is I love teaching. I love children. At first, I only wanted to take up anything as long as it is in the teaching field. But when I knew that BSNEED is advantageous compared to other majors, I chose it. It has an advantage because like you can easily go abroad, the salary is high, and this course is always in demand.” (Participant 1)</i>	3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents

	<i>"Because the curiosity of children with special needs is there. They love learning something new and I love them teaching also." (Participant 1)</i>	
	<i>"Also sir, one of the reasons why I chose this course is I want to help those children with special needs." (Participant 2)</i>	
Inspiration from teachers	<i>"A special education teacher introduced and encouraged me to take her course in college, the BSNEDE. So, without hesitation, I decided to take since I learned it was very in demand abroad." (Participant 3)</i>	3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents
	<i>"There was this Prof. whom I recently met. Every time he starts with his discussion, I always looked forward for words of encouragement which he never failed to mention every time. He teaches the subject, "Teaching Profession" so it really motivates me to become like him in the nearest future. Like he said, time will pass and my love for this course would be bigger. Someday, if not today, I hope to see myself doing the best of my ability to teach children not because I was told to, but because I want to." (Participant 7)</i>	
	<i>"What motivates me to take up this course is like the things that my Aunt told me like she is a special education teacher and she shares her experiences while teaching students with special needs and from what she said, I was inspired and motivated to teach the students because yes, it is true that it is tough, difficult, exhausting and challenging, but then, when the students like, when you are able to help them learn new skills or develop skills and acquire new knowledge, it is rewarding for you as a teacher. That is why this is the main reason that really motivates me to continue this course." (Participant 10)</i>	
Fulfillment in teaching students with special needs	<i>"Soon I realized how fulfilling it would be to see yourself being able to help regular children to learn, what more would it be to be able to provide the needs of those special children." (Participant 3)</i>	3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents.
	<i>"Maybe considering that you will be teaching, touching lives of special children, it was not that easy, it will take a lot of strength, dedication and patience to do so. That's what makes it fulfilling, when you will be able to finish this course, and pass the board exam. That's it." (Participant 6)</i>	

	<p><i>"My passion is to really help my students as a teacher, that's why I'm really motivated to finish this course. It's not just because I can get a job abroad or here also in the Philippines, it's not really my main reason, but it's to help these children."</i></p> <p><i>(Participant 10)</i></p>	
Discovery of unique skills	<p><i>"I think I could add as well the unique skills that I could gain or hone from this program sir. I mean, no course in CTE could offer what BSNEED could, so imagining how lucky I am to be part of this program. I could learn both teaching strategies for regular classes and at the same time for learners with special needs."</i> (Participant 3)</p> <p><i>"Such as communication skills sir, I mean most children with special needs don't communicate in a way that is the same as ours. We have to do it in a more special and unique way. Such as learning sign language, the use of braille, to name some. Therefore, learning these unique ways of communicating, improves my skills in communicating, and I find it "unique" as for me sir."</i> (Participant 3)</p> <p><i>"As we all know, students with special needs, they are quiet different from the ordinary students that we always deal and interact with, because special education students, they have different or unique abilities, needs and strengths, that's why, it is challenging or tough to teach and handle them. It really requires patience and passion to really teach them."</i> (Participant 10)</p>	3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents
Influence from parents	<p><i>"I think my parents' sacrifices and that I should study hard. I stand for this course since I am already here, it's God will, and I'm studying it already. Also, every time my major prof. told us that it was fulfilling when you're already in the field of teaching children with special needs, so I became motivated to study, just positivity."</i> (Participant 6)</p> <p><i>"My family and myself give me motivation to learn and to study special needs education program because it's my dream to become a teacher someday. That's why I would study hard and pursue my career as a future educator."</i> (Participant 3)</p> <p><i>"Touching the lives of students, because you will be like their second mother, you will be teaching them basic skills, to write, to read, to pronounce, to draw. You will be one of the most influential persons in their lives."</i> (Participant 6)</p>	3 out of 10 or 30% of the respondents

When asked “what are your career motivations in special education program?”, participants shared a variety of answers which explain what motivates them in their career.

Table 1 presents the career motivations of prospective special education teachers. There are eight (8) themes developed that would provide a substantial understanding as to what motivates the participants in their career.

First, the need to help family members with special needs. Three participants claimed that they took special education program because they have family members who have special education needs. The excerpt *“I have a nephew who belongs to special children. My nephew motivated me because if there’s a person who is willing to give patience and tolerance, that would be his uncle, his blood related. We know special children need a compassionate educator or guidance.”* provides evidence that the participant has a genuine heart to help her nephew who has a special needs.

Participant 5 also revealed that she happened to know someone near their house who has special needs. The excerpt *“...I have this one neighbor at my age who has visual impairment, she has potential on singing that I wanted her to be noticed by everyone and that motivates me more to take up this course.”* gives proof that she is in special education program for a reason, and that reason is to help her neighbor to have her talent noticed by everyone.

Participant 9 also argued that she wanted to help her younger cousin. The excerpt *“It was really my younger cousin that motivates me to pursue this program because she is one of the sped learners. She is autistic. But we don’t usually bond that well but I noticed some things her parents can’t handle, Sir. They cannot understand her very well, but I can, with the help of the knowledge I learned from my course...”* is already enough reason why she wanted to become a special education teacher. In a nutshell, she wants to utilize the knowledge and expertise she learns from her course to handle and take good care of children with special education needs especially her younger cousin.

Moreover, the participants also disclosed that they are motivated to take up their course because of the condition of children in their provinces. As has been stated by participant 1 in Table 1, she saw how small the number of teachers who cater special education program when she visited her province located in Basilan. The situation really made her feel sad and that is why she really wants to pursue special education program to be able to extend help in their province.

The following excerpt also supports their ideas:

Participant 5

“The youngsters in my province have a high percentage of special children. That fuels my desire to assist people in comprehending and experiencing life while they live their own constrained lives...”

In the case of participant 5, she revealed that her province has a high percentage of children who require special needs and that made her want to help people understand and experience life while living their own limited lives. She utilized the word ‘fuel’ to describe the intensity of his will to help out those children in dire need.

Participant 3

“However, not so long after I have visited one of the schools that offers SPED program in our province, Basilan. And sadly, I saw how decreased the number of teacher who could teach those students. That day, I had a vision that someday I could extend a help to the children.”

Participant 3 also shared her experiences while visiting schools in her province that cater special education program. She was saddened to witness how the number of teachers available to teach those students was diminished. Therefore, she made a decision to assist those children in the near future. That was indeed her motivation to become a special education teacher.

Furthermore, the participants also disclosed that they are motivated to pursue special education because of the opportunities they can get abroad and also the possibility that they can earn high salary from there.

The following excerpts corroborate their ideas:

Participant 1

“Practically speaking, it is because this course can make me work abroad and land job. It is easier to get accepted abroad. The salary abroad is higher.”

Participant 1 stated that what motivates her is the fact that special education course can provide her with a good chance of working abroad. She also noted that the salary is high and that is why she is really determined to pursue this program.

Participant 8

“The salary motivates me and also because of the new knowledge that I learned, it motivates me to take special education.”

Participant 8 revealed the same reason but she reiterated that salary alone does not serve as her sole career motivation, but rather, she was also after the learnings she can get from special education.

Another reason that moved the prospective special education teachers to pursue their career is that they have a strong affinity to teach children.

The following excerpt also corroborates their ideas:

Participant 1

“Yes, one is I love teaching. I love children.”

The participant shared that she really likes interacting with children and what makes her happy is when she can share her knowledge with them. That is why she pursued special education because she understands that there are a lot of children in this program.

Participant 2

“Also sir, one of the reasons why I chose this course is I want to help those children with special needs.”

This concern of participant 2 also reveals that she has a genuine interest in helping children with special needs. She wants to contribute to the betterment of their future because she understands that it is hard for them to learn alone.

In addition, the prospective special education teachers are also motivated in their career because of the influence of their teachers.

The following excerpt also supports their ideas:

Participant 3

“A special education teacher introduced and encouraged me to take her course in college, the BSNE. So, without hesitation, I decided to take since I learned it was very in demand abroad.”

Participant 3 argued that she was motivated to take up this course because she was inspired by her teacher in special education. Words are indeed powerful that it moved her to pursue this program. Likewise, she mentioned that she wants to work abroad since it is truly in demand.

Participant 7

“There was this Prof. whom I recently met. Every time he starts with his discussion, I always looked forward for words of encouragement which he never failed to mention every time. He teaches the subject, “Teaching Profession” so it really motivates me to become like him in the nearest future. Like he said, time will pass and my love for this course would be bigger. Someday, if not today, I hope to see myself doing the best of my ability to teach children not because I was told to, but because I want to.”

The participant 7 also made it clear that he was inspired by his professor even though he just met her. Because of what her professor taught her, she has now envisioned herself that one day, she will be able to see herself teaching the children genuinely without her being told by anyone else.

Furthermore, it was found out that fulfilment in teaching students with special needs is what keeps the participants motivated in their course.

The following excerpts support their claims:

Participant 3

“Soon I realized how fulfilling it would be to see yourself being able to help regular children to learn, what more would it be to be able to provide the needs of those special children.”

The participant 3 envisioned herself that one day, it would be so fulfilling to see herself in the service of extending help towards the children. She stated that it is even more satisfying if those children are in dire need of special education.

Participant 6

“Maybe considering that you will be teaching, touching lives of special children, it was not that easy, it will take a lot of strength, dedication and patience to do so. That’s what makes it fulfilling, when you will be able to finish this course, and pass the board exam. That’s it.”

Participant 6 also shared that she wishes to touch the lives of those special children by means of empowering them to discover their hidden talents despite their disabilities. She understands that it will not be easy to handle them, but she has faith she can make it. She also added that she wants to finish her course and pass the board exam so that she can finally be employed in service where she can apply what she has learned in special education program.

Moreover, the participants claimed that they were also motivated to take up special education because of the unique skills they would learn in the program.

The following excerpt also supports their claims:

Participant 3

“I think I could add as well the unique skills that I could gain or hone from this program sir. I mean, no course in CTE could offer what BSNED could, so imagining how lucky I am to be part of this program. I could learn both teaching strategies for regular classes and at the same time for learners with special needs.”

Participant 3 believes that she can acquire skills exclusive only in special education program. She is very happy that she belongs to this program as she can now learn both pedagogy while also being able to cater the basic needs of those children with special needs.

Participant 3

“...Such as communication skills sir, I mean most children with special needs don’t communicate in a way that is the same as ours. We have to do it in a more special and unique way. Such as learning sign language, the use of braille, to name some. Therefore, learning these unique ways of communicating, improves my skills in communicating, and I find it “unique” as for me sir.”

When asked about what participant 3 means by “unique skills”, she explained that she was referring to not just communication skills, but also learning sign languages and the utilization of braille. These are the things she can learn in special education program.

Additionally, the influence of their parents serve as their motivation to take up this program.

The following excerpt also supports their ideas:

Participant 6

“I think my parents’ sacrifices and that I should study hard. I stand for this course since I am already here, it’s God will, and I’m studying it already. Also, every time my major prof. told us that it was fulfilling when you’re already in the field of teaching children with special needs, so I became motivated to study, just positivity.”

Participant 6 made it clear that the sacrifices of her parents are what made her pursue special education program. She also added that it was God that puts her in this field. Therefore, she is now embracing it. She also made mention that she becomes motivated every time their professors explained how fulfilling it is to be an special education teacher.

Participant 3

“My family and myself give me motivation to learn and to study special needs education program because it’s my dream to become a teacher someday. That’s why I would study hard and pursue my career as a future educator.”

Lastly, participant 3 also added that her family is the one that gives her motivation in her career. She also clarified that she really wants to become a teacher someday to be able to help those children in need.

Conclusion

This present study investigated the career motivations of prospective special education teachers. Descriptive-qualitative research design was utilized and purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study in order to investigate their career motivations. One-on-one interview was done to acquire data from the participants and thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data gathered. The results showed that there were eight themes developed namely, the need to help family members with special needs; the condition of children in province, opportunities abroad and high salary; the love of teaching children, inspiration from teachers; fulfillment in teaching students with special needs; discovery of unique skills; and influence from parents. These findings only suggest that prospective special education teachers were motivated in their careers for different reasons. Hence, their career motivations should be examined, so that they would feel inspired to stay in their courses. Having these in mind, the school administrators in universities should support the career motivations of prospective special education teachers as this would serve as an avenue for ongoing improvement in their respective field of specialization.

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