



# Pre-Service English Teachers' Motivations Toward the Teaching Profession

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## Abstract

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**Keywords:** *McClelland's theory; motivation; pre-service English teachers; teaching practicum.*

*This study investigates the motivations of pre-service English teachers at Esa Unggul University, Indonesia, after completing the teaching practicum. A mixed methods approach was employed, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative questionnaires with 36 pre-service teachers. Additionally, in-depth insights were gained from interviews with ten participants. McClelland's motivation theories - the need for power, affiliation, and achievement - guided the analysis. The findings indicate a strong inclination toward the need for achievement, emphasizing personal growth, academic excellence, and continuous learning. Pre-service teachers are dedicated to improving their teaching skills and positively impacting students. The need for power showed moderate motivation, reflecting interest in making an impact and seeking leadership roles. The need for affiliation demonstrated moderate motivation, highlighting the importance of positive relationships and collaboration. The teaching practicum significantly influenced pre-service teachers' motivations and commitment to a teaching career. Implications for teacher education programs underscore the necessity of supporting and recognizing pre-service teachers' motivations for a successful teaching profession.*

## INTRODUCTION

The role of the English teacher is pivotal in facilitating language learning and is influenced by various contextual factors, including the educational setting, learners' objectives, and the broader socio-cultural environment. Extensive research has focused on understanding the multifaceted responsibilities of English teachers, delving into aspects such as their competence, identity, perceptions, and motivation. Notably, Soepriyatna (2016) conducted a comprehensive study in Indonesia, exploring the domains of competence exhibited by EFL teachers and shedding light on the crucial skills needed for effective



language instruction. Additionally, Song (2016) provided valuable insights into how emotional responses can impact teachers' professional identity and practices. Furthermore, Aydin (2013) investigated EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the integration of computer technology in language learning and teaching. The realm of motivational psychology, as proposed by Hagger & Chatzisarantis (2007), has offered a holistic framework for understanding the factors influencing teachers' performance, which has been substantiated by studies conducted by Pelletier, Séguin-Lévesque, & Legault (2002) and Taylor et al. (2008).

Teacher education programs play a crucial role in developing quality educators and preparing pre-service teachers to navigate the complexities of the teaching profession successfully. Among these programs, the teaching practicum or field experience stands out as a crucial component, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Extensive research has examined the significance of the teaching practicum as a measure of a teacher education program's efficacy. Haigh, Ell, & Mackisack (2013) explored the achievements and outcomes of a teaching practicum, providing valuable insights into its contribution to effective teacher preparation. During the teaching practicum, pre-service teachers gain hands-on experience and develop essential skills, including effective lesson planning, skillful implementation of teaching strategies, adept classroom management techniques, and personal and professional growth. Noteworthy studies by Bezzina & Michalak (2009) and Yook & Lee (2016) have illuminated the diverse competencies and skills that pre-service teachers acquire through their experiences in the teaching practicum. Ultimately, the primary aim of pre-service teacher education programs is to equip undergraduate students with comprehensive pedagogical practices, effectively bridging theoretical knowledge gained at the university level with its real-world application in diverse classroom settings, as highlighted by Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & Le Page (2005).

Effective preparation of pre-service English teachers requires a comprehensive understanding of the competencies essential for successful language instruction. This includes continual improvement in language knowledge, classroom management abilities, and assessment skills. Language knowledge competence involves the capacity to communicate fluently and effectively in the target language, enabling teachers to provide clear and accurate language models for their students. Furthermore, grammatical competence pertains to the mastery of the language code, encompassing proficiency in phonological rules, morphological rules, syntactic rules, semantic rules, and vocabulary (Santosa, 2019). Deardorff (2006) emphasizes the significance of language knowledge competence and its impact on students' language learning outcomes. Classroom management competence is another critical aspect that pre-service teachers need to develop as it directly influences the learning environment and students' engagement and behavior within the classroom. Everson & Weinstein (2006) have conducted extensive research on classroom management techniques, offering valuable insights into effective practices that foster a conducive and productive learning environment. Furthermore, assessing student performance is a crucial responsibility of classroom teachers. Mertler (2009) stresses the importance of fair and accurate assessment practices, which play a fundamental role in shaping students' progress and academic growth.



Pre-service teachers' motivation is a key determinant of their success and commitment to the teaching profession. It plays a significant role in pre-service teachers' career choices, as shown by extensive research exploring the multifaceted nature that revealed the correlation between motivation and professional selection (Clark & Newberry, 2019; Rots et al., 2014; Zarei & Sharifabad, 2012). Motivated teachers are more likely to remain dedicated and engaged in their roles, positively impacting student learning experiences. Studies by Bruinsma & Jansen (2010) and Gao & Trent (2009) have delved into the various factors that drive pre-service teachers to enter and persist in the teaching profession. The significance of motivation in influencing career decisions and professional trajectories is widely acknowledged in motivational psychology research, as discussed by Clark & Newberry (2019).

Motivations for choosing a teaching career among pre-service teachers can vary significantly from one individual to another, whether it comes from intrinsic, extrinsic, altruistic factors, and/or a combination (Lestari & Arfiandhani, 2019; Lee & Yuan, 2014; Sinclair, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2007). In Indonesia, several studies have emphasized the importance of understanding the motivations that underlie career choices among pre-service teachers. Notable research conducted by Maiza et al. (2020), Suryani (2020), and Lestari & Arfiandhani (2019) has shed light on the diverse factors that influence pre-service teachers' decisions to pursue a career in teaching. Some find joy in teaching and interacting with students, while others prioritize external factors like income or status.

McClelland's need theory further explores the motivations of pre-service teachers (Kreitner & Kinicky, 2014). It encompasses three needs: the need for achievement, the need for affiliation, and the need for power. Teachers with a high need for achievement are driven to accomplish challenging goals and seek recognition for their achievements (McClelland, 1961). They set ambitious objectives, take calculated risks, and persist in the face of obstacles. Such teachers actively seek opportunities to enhance their skills and attain excellence, impacting their approach to setting learning objectives for both themselves and their students. They value receiving regular feedback on their progress and accomplishments, fostering continuous improvement in their teaching practices. Teachers with a strong need for affiliation actively seek a sense of belonging within the educational community (McClelland, 1961). Collaboration and a positive school climate play a significant role in enhancing their engagement and professional growth (Ronfeldt et al., 2015; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). These teachers may tend to go along with group preferences, balancing multiple goals and drawing upon different types of knowledge. They also have a preference for stability and structure in the learning environment, fostering engagement in classroom activities. Teachers with a high need for power desire to control and influence others, particularly their students (McClelland, 1961). They may enjoy competition, win arguments, and derive satisfaction from status and recognition (Wang & Buck, 2018; Goegan & Daniels, 2022). However, it is crucial to balance the pursuit of power with ethical considerations and a genuine concern for the well-being of others (McClelland, 1975).

Understanding pre-service teachers' motivations, including their need for achievement, affiliation, and power, can inform the design of effective teacher education programs. By recognizing these motivations, educators can create strategies that cater to the diverse needs



of pre-service teachers in teacher education programs, fostering engagement and success in the teaching profession (Jeong, 2016).

To design effective teacher education programs and ensure a successful transition into the teaching profession, understanding the characteristics of pre-service teachers is crucial. Previous studies have extensively examined these characteristics. Yook & Lee (2016) define pre-service teachers as individuals undergoing training to acquire knowledge and skills in teaching, encompassing both theory and practice. Pawan et al. (2017) emphasize their participation in various placements during the undergraduate program to apply theoretical concepts. Pre-service teachers engage in a teaching practicum, requiring direct interaction with students (Ghufron et al., 2022). Taking pre-service teachers' characteristics into account is vital for designing effective programs, preparing them as educators, and acknowledging the importance of the teaching practicum.

Another aspect to consider is the pre-service teachers' readiness to become professional educators, which can be enhanced by practicum (Lee et al., 2012). An effective practicum helps identify practical teaching experience, observation of experienced teachers, and building relationships with fellow teachers (Brown et al., 2015). The teaching practicum holds immense significance within teacher education programs, offering pre-service teachers a valuable opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the classroom before embarking on their professional careers (Trent, 2013). This phase is considered one of the most pivotal and influential in such programs, as it allows pre-service teachers to apply their theoretical knowledge in actual classrooms, contributing to the improvement of their motivation, attitudes, and engagement toward the teaching profession (Fajardo & Miranda, 2015). Moreover, the teaching practicum enables pre-service teachers to apply their beliefs about learners, language, and learning to real teaching contexts (Cheng et al., 2010).

The teaching practicum experience plays a crucial role in providing pre-service teachers with a practical understanding of their responsibilities as educators (Tuli & File, 2009). It equips them with the qualifications required for the teaching profession, making it an essential component of pre-service teacher education (Cheng, 2013). The teaching practicum serves as a developmental process, where classroom assignments and supervised teaching experiences enhance their teaching knowledge and skills while critically examining their values and perspectives (Grudnoff, 2011; Cheng, Cheng, & Tang, 2010; Gebhard, 2009). By engaging in supervised teaching experiences, pre-service teachers gain valuable real-world practice and develop a deeper understanding of the teaching profession.

Despite its valuable significance, the teaching practicum also presents challenges for pre-service teachers. These challenges include decision-making, organizing the classroom, adapting to the school environment, student discipline, motivation, and selecting appropriate teaching methodologies (Macías & Sánchez, 2015; Yunus et al., 2010; Fives, Hamman, & Olivarez, 2007; Hsu, 2005). The challenges encountered in the teaching practicum are associated with varying levels of learners, language use, learners' expectations of teacher-centeredness, ability to teach, lack of content knowledge, and uncertainty regarding suitable teaching methods (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Kabilan & Izzaham, 2008; Siti Zohara Yassin, 2005). To improve the effectiveness of the teaching practicum, various strategies have been proposed. Pre-service teachers should employ diverse, profound, and adaptable classroom



strategies to cultivate professional experiences (Soini et al., 2010). Additionally, cognitive strategies can assist pre-service teachers in addressing classroom challenges and fostering the development of students' learning strategies (Saariaho et al., 2016). Digital competencies (Park et al., 2016), emotional competencies (Palomera et al., 2008), and effective communication skills (Gibson, 2010) are also among the crucial competencies for pre-service teachers to become competent educators. Awareness of these challenges and the solutions can inform the development of effective support systems and strategies to better prepare pre-service teachers for a successful transition into the teaching profession.

Yet, while teacher education programs are essential for developing competent educators, the role of motivation is often overlooked. Thus, this study seeks to explore pre-service English teachers' motivations toward the teaching profession post-activities of teaching practicum programs in relevance with McClelland's motivation theories. The study's findings could provide insights into the factors driving career choices among English Language Education students, offering implications for teacher education policies and strategies to attract and retain passionate educators.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach utilized in this study is mixed methods research, which involves the integration of qualitative and quantitative research methods to gather and analyze data, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Creswell, 2012). Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Qualitative data were primarily gathered through interviews with pre-service teachers, while quantitative data were presented using numbers and percentages to ensure a thorough and reliable outcome.

The study focuses on identifying three basic motivations among pre-service teachers: power, affiliation, and achievement, and how these motivations shape their attitudes and behaviors (McClelland, 1961). The research instruments used for data collection were a close-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. A total of 36 pre-service teachers pursuing a major in the English education program at Esa Unggul University in Jakarta participated as the questionnaire respondents. There are seven male (19%) and 29 female (81%) participants, aged between 18 and 38 years. The Google Forms-based questionnaire, distributed via WhatsApp, utilized a Likert scale with four points to assess participants' perceptions of the statements. Additionally, ten of the selected participants got involved in the recorded one-on-one interview aiming to obtain more in-depth data regarding the participants' motivations in the post-activities of the teaching practicum. The interviews were later transcribed for data analysis.

In the data analysis procedure, the data collected from questionnaires and interviews were analyzed. Responses related to pre-service teachers' motivations in the teaching practicum were categorized based on the need for power, affiliation, and achievement. Tables and charts were created to represent each motivation category, allowing the researcher to identify the motivations of pre-service teachers in the teaching practicum and their implications for long-term commitment to the teaching profession.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Findings

#### Questionnaire Results

##### a. Female

The chart below displays data on 29 female pre-service teachers and their motivations measured on a scale of 1 to 4. The motivation types analyzed are "Need for Power," "Need for Affiliation," and "Need for Achievement," with average scores of 3.54, 3.26, and 3.54, respectively. The chart visually compares the average scores for each motivation type, with the vertical axis representing the scale values and the horizontal axis denoting the three motivation types. The height of each bar shows the average score, making it easy to identify differences. The data suggests that, on average, pre-service female teachers scored highest in "Need for Power" and "Need for Achievement," indicating a strong inclination towards exerting influence and accomplishing goals. The lowest average score was observed for "Need for Affiliation," suggesting a relatively lower desire for social connections compared to the other motivations.

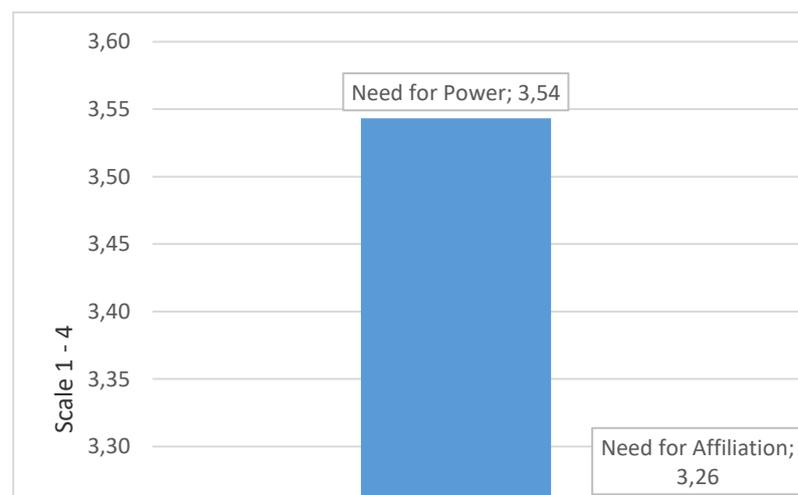


Chart 1. Motivation Types of Female Pre-Service Teachers

The chart below presents data on 29 female pre-service teachers and their motivations related to the "Need for Power." "Significant Impact" scored the highest (3.72), followed by "Showcase Skills" and "Decision Participation" (both 3.62). "Community Contribution" received 3.55, while "Recognition Satisfaction" and "Leadership Role" both scored 3.52. "Educational Influence" obtained 3.38, and "Social Involvement" scored 3.41. Overall, the data shows their strong desire for influence and recognition, with a moderate interest in leadership and decision-making opportunities.

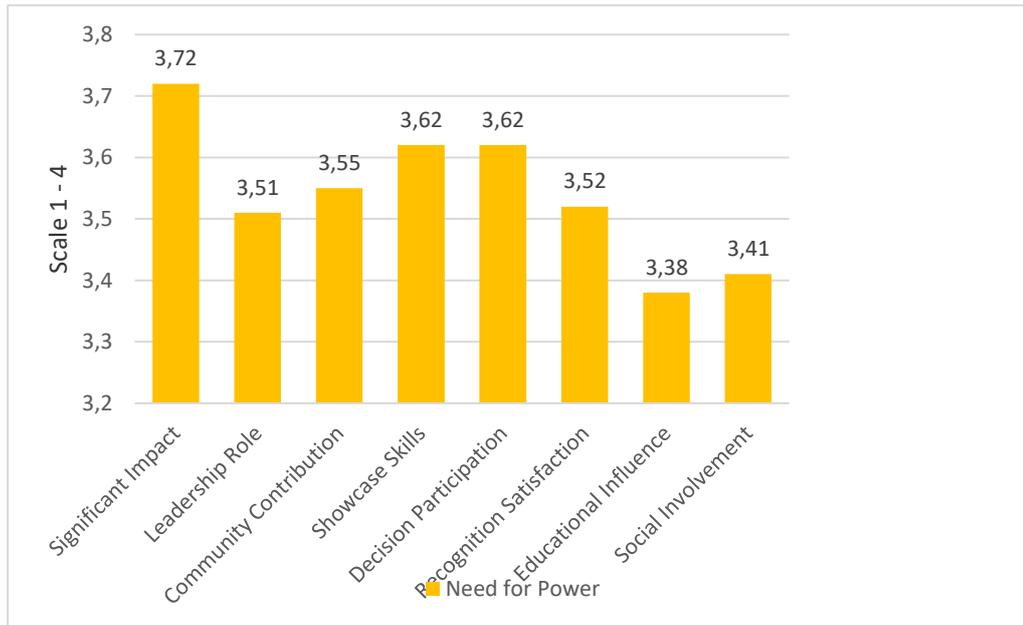


Chart 2. Motivation Types of Female Pre-Service Teachers: Need for Power

The chart below shows data on 29 female pre-service teachers and their motivations related to "Need for Affiliation." It indicates a strong desire for positive relationships (3.55) and creating a classroom community (3.52). They value peer bonding (3.31) and inclusivity (3.28). Collaborative teaching (3.14) and teamwork (3.10) are moderately important. However, "Social Interaction" received the lowest score (2.97). Overall, the data reveal their focus on fostering connections, inclusivity, and collaboration in educational settings.

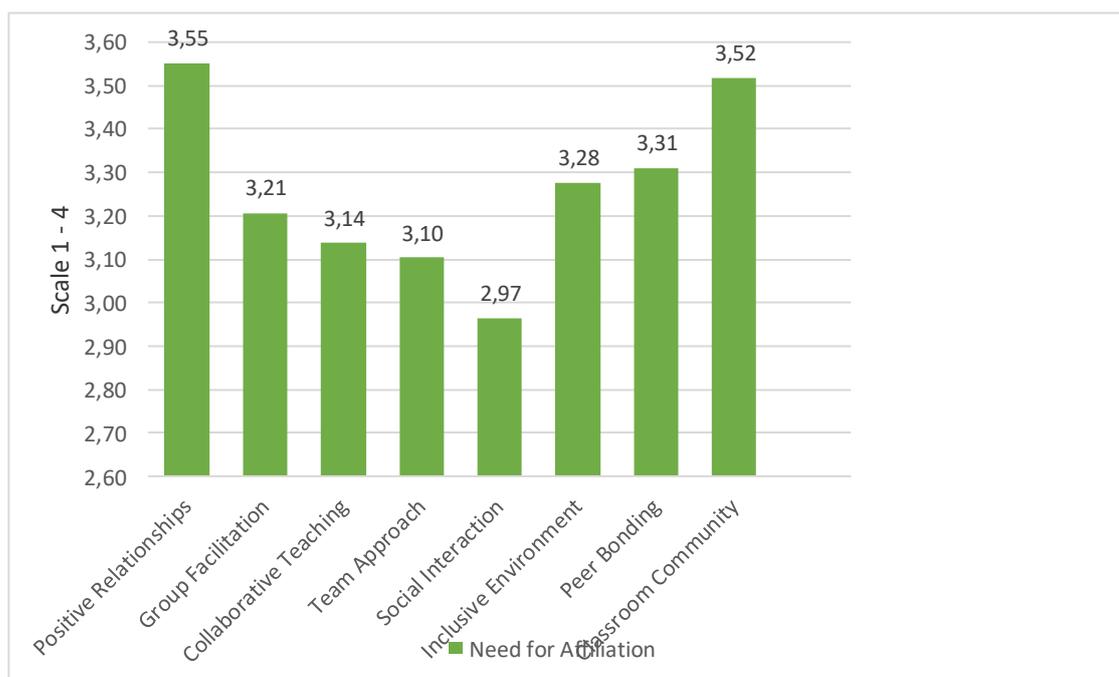


Chart 3. Motivation Types of Female Pre-Service Teachers: Need for Affiliation

The chart below presents data on 29 female pre-service teachers and their motivations related to "Need for Achievement." "Student Satisfaction" obtained the highest average score (3.69), followed closely by "Feedback Appreciation" (3.62) and "Personal Growth" (3.66). The aspects of "Continuous Learning" and "Personal Success" both scored 3.59. "Challenging Tasks" received an average score of 3.48, while "Academic Excellence" obtained 3.38. "Leadership Involvement" scored the lowest with an average of 3.38. Overall, the data shows their strong focus on student satisfaction and personal growth, along with a keen appreciation for feedback and continuous learning.

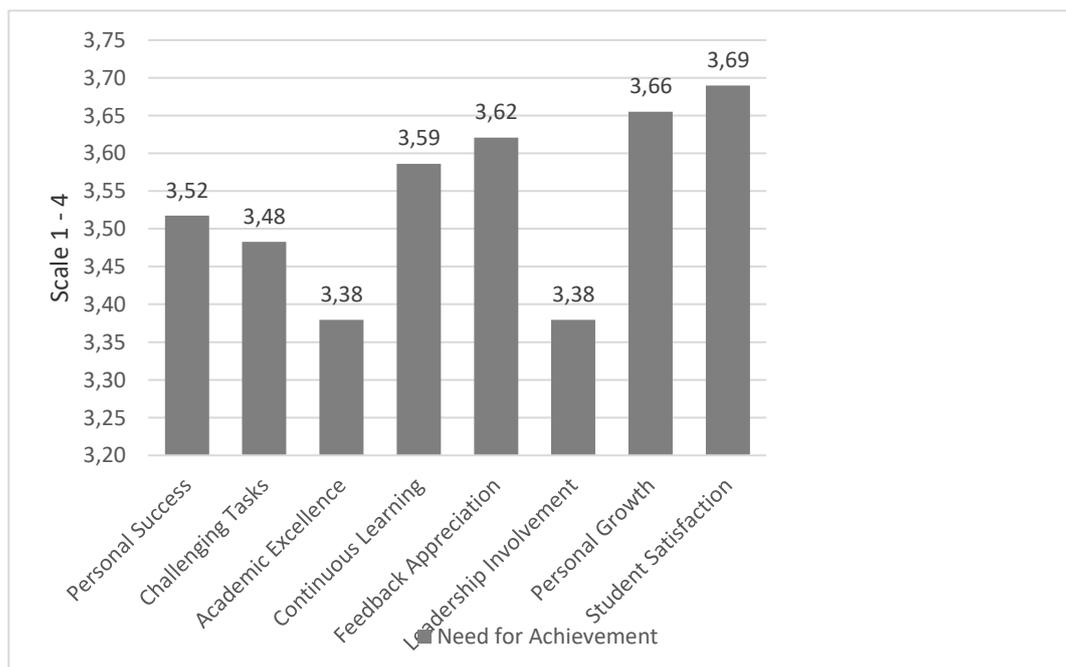


Chart 4. Motivation Types of Female Pre-Service Teachers: Need for Achievement

#### b. Male

The chart below presents data on 7 male pre-service teachers and their motivations categorized into "Need for Power," "Need for Affiliation," and "Need for Achievement." "Need for Achievement" received the highest average score (3.63), indicating a strong drive for challenging goals and academic excellence. "Need for Power" obtained an average score of 3.43, reflecting a moderate desire for influence and leadership roles. On the other hand, "Need for Affiliation" received the lowest average score (3.23), suggesting a relatively lower emphasis on social connections within their professional context. In summary, the data highlights the male pre-service teachers' strong focus on achievement-oriented pursuits, with a moderate interest in exerting influence and a relatively lower emphasis on social connections.

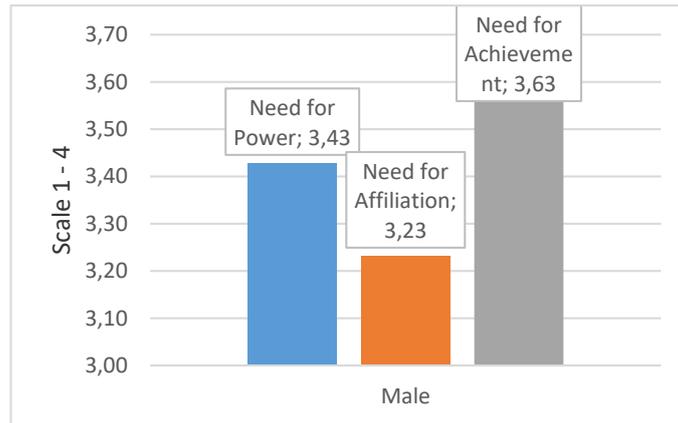


Chart 5. Motivation Types of Male Pre-Service Teachers

The chart below shows data on 7 male pre-service teachers and their motivations related to the "Need for Power." The highest average score (3.71) was for "Leadership Role," indicating a strong desire for leadership positions. "Community Contribution," "Showcase Skills," and "Decision Participation" scored 3.57, reflecting a drive to contribute, showcase abilities, and participate in decision-making. "Educational Influence" received 3.43, showing a desire to influence education. "Recognition Satisfaction" and "Social Involvement" scored 3.14, suggesting less emphasis on acknowledgment and social connections. Overall, male pre-service teachers prioritize leadership, community contributions, and decision-making, highlighting their need for power and authority in the educational context.

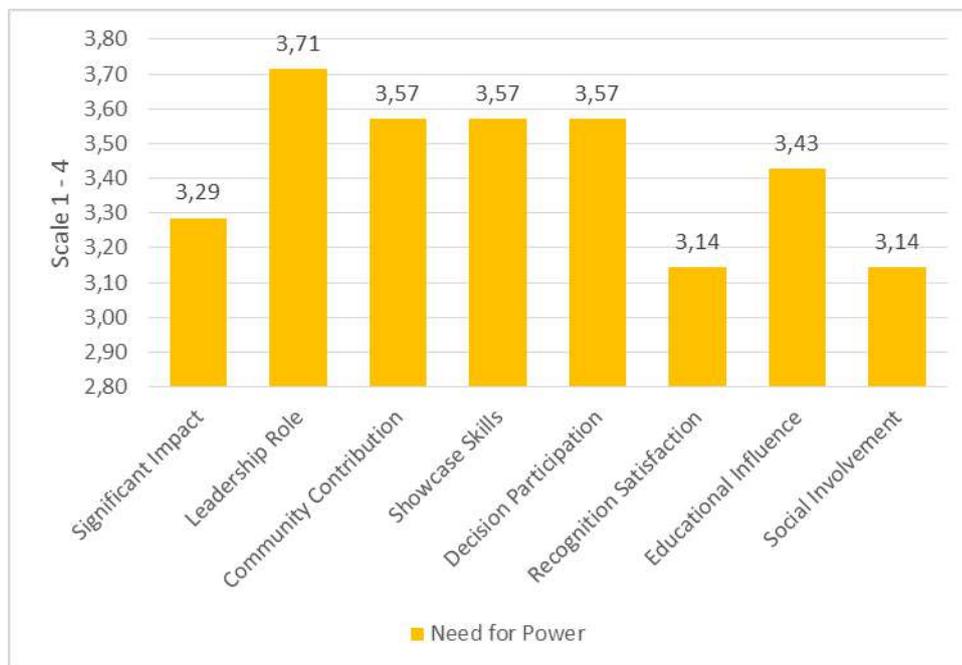


Chart 6. Motivation Types of Male Pre-Service Teachers: Need for Power

The chart below shows data on 7 male pre-service teachers and their motivations related to the "Need for Affiliation." "Classroom Community" and "Peer Bonding" received the highest average scores (3.71 and 3.57), reflecting their strong emphasis on creating a sense of community and forming peer bonds. "Positive Relationships" and "Collaborative Teaching" scored 3.14, indicating their value for positive interactions and teamwork. "Group Facilitation" and "Team Approach" obtained scores of 3.14 and 3.0, respectively. The aspects of "Social Interaction" and "Inclusive Environment" received the lowest scores (3.0 and 2.86). Overall, male pre-service teachers prioritize classroom community, peer bonding, and positive relationships, highlighting their need for social connections and a supportive environment.

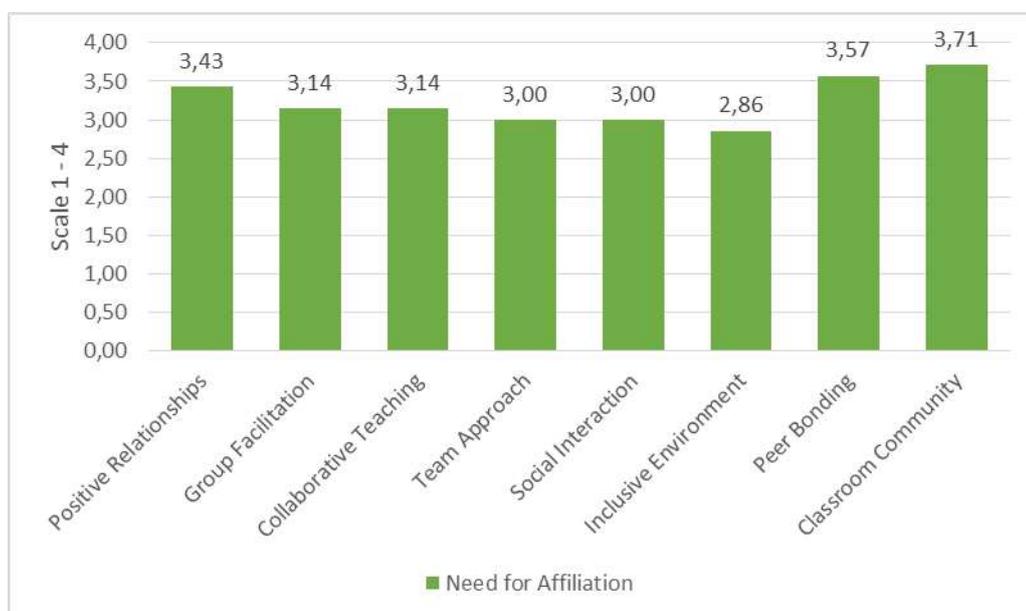


Chart 7. Motivation Types of Male Pre-Service Teachers: Need for Affiliation

The chart below displays data on 7 male pre-service teachers' motivations related to "Need for Achievement." "Continuous Learning," "Feedback Appreciation," and "Student Satisfaction" received the highest average scores (3.86, 3.71, and 3.71), indicating their priority for professional development, recognition, and student success. "Academic Excellence," "Personal Success," and "Personal Growth" scored 3.57, reflecting their strong inclination towards excelling and improving themselves. "Challenging Tasks" received a score of 3.43, showing their preference for demonstrating capabilities and achieving success. "Leadership Involvement" obtained an average score of 3.43, indicating their moderate interest in seeking leadership roles. In conclusion, the chart provides valuable insights into male pre-service teachers' motivations related to "Need for Achievement," emphasizing their dedication to continuous learning and creating a positive learning environment for their students, along with their drive for personal growth and academic excellence.

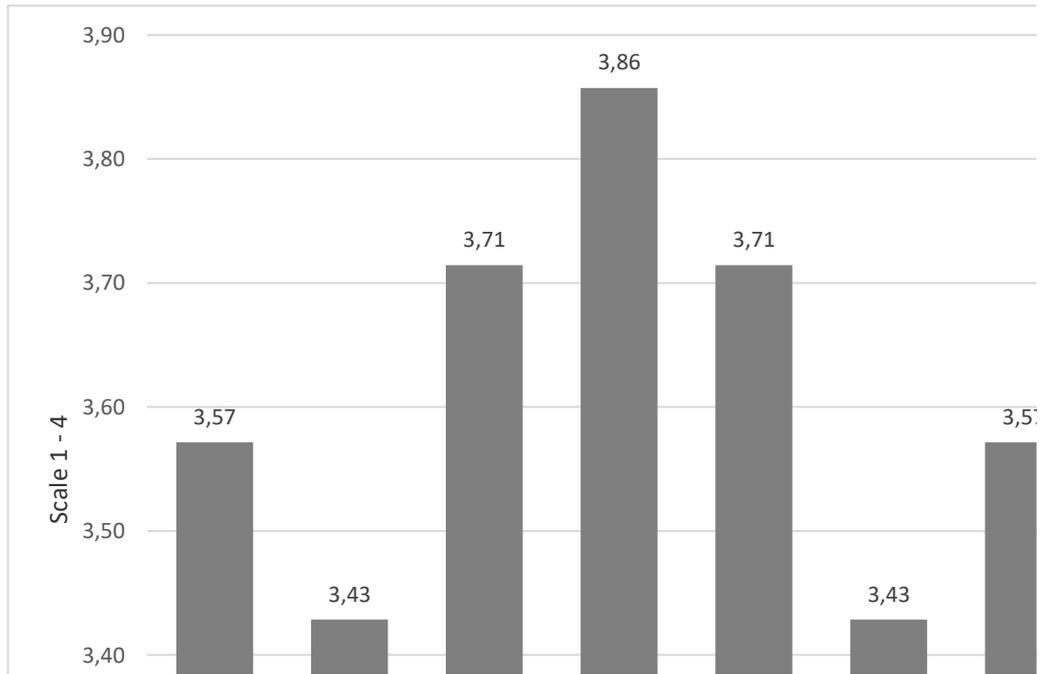


Chart 8. Motivation Types of Male Pre-Service Teachers: Need for Achievement

*Interview Results*

*a. Need for Power*

The chart below summarizes interview data from 10 pre-service teachers, focusing on their motivations related to "Need for Power." The data is categorized into three characteristics: "Autonomy and Control," "Leadership Opportunities," and "Making a Difference." "Making a Difference" received the highest number of statements (23), indicating a strong desire to positively impact students and the education community. "Autonomy and Control" had 14 statements, reflecting a significant value placed on independence and decision-making in their teaching practices. "Leadership Opportunities" received the fewest statements (6), suggesting a smaller subset expressing interest in leadership roles. Overall, the chart reveals their strong inclination towards making a difference and valuing autonomy, while some also show interest in leadership opportunities.

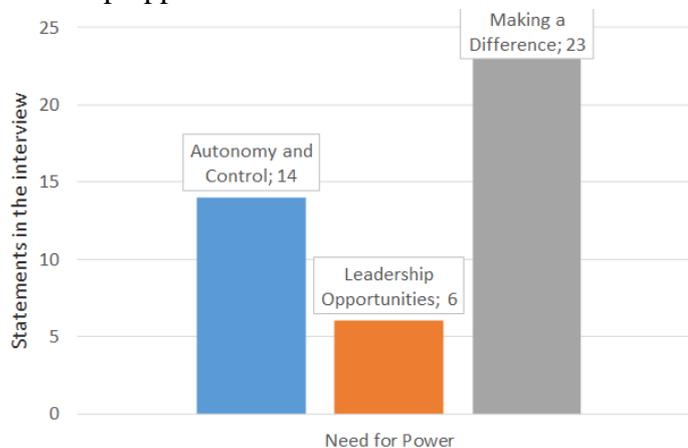


Chart 9. Interview results: Characteristics of the Need for Power

### b. Need for Affiliation

The chart below presents interview data from 10 pre-service teachers, focusing on their motivations related to "Need for Affiliation." The data is categorized into three characteristics: "Collaborative Environment," "Sense of Belonging," and "Supportive Network." "Supportive Network" received the highest number of statements (14), indicating a strong desire for a support system and a network of individuals who can provide guidance and encouragement. "Collaborative Environment" had 13 statements, reflecting the value placed on teamwork and cooperation. "Sense of Belonging" received the fewest statements (4), but still emphasizes the importance of creating an inclusive and welcoming environment. Overall, the chart highlights their strong inclination toward seeking support, collaboration, and inclusivity within the educational community.

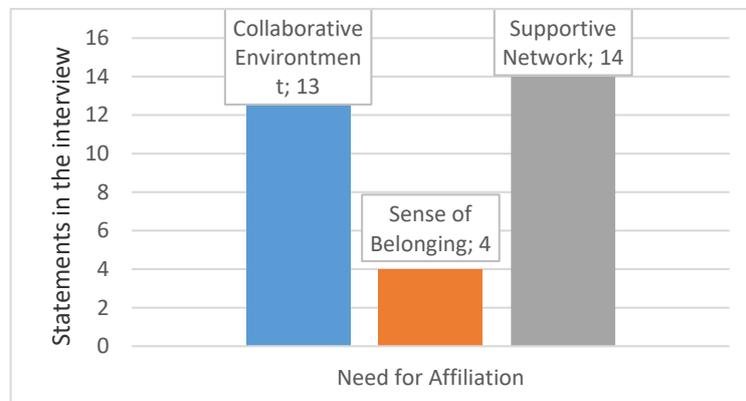


Chart 10. Interview results: Characteristics of the Need for Affiliation

### c. Need for Achievement

The chart below presents interview data from 10 pre-service teachers, focusing on their motivations related to "Need for Achievement." The data is categorized into three characteristics: "Feedback and Recognition," "Goal-Oriented," and "Personal Growth." "Personal Growth" received the highest number of statements (23), indicating a strong desire for continuous development and improvement in their teaching careers. Both "Feedback and Recognition" and "Goal-Oriented" obtained the same number of statements (12), highlighting the value placed on acknowledgment and setting goals for their teaching practices. Overall, the chart emphasizes their strong inclination towards personal growth, commitment to improvement, and the importance of feedback and recognition in their journey as educators.

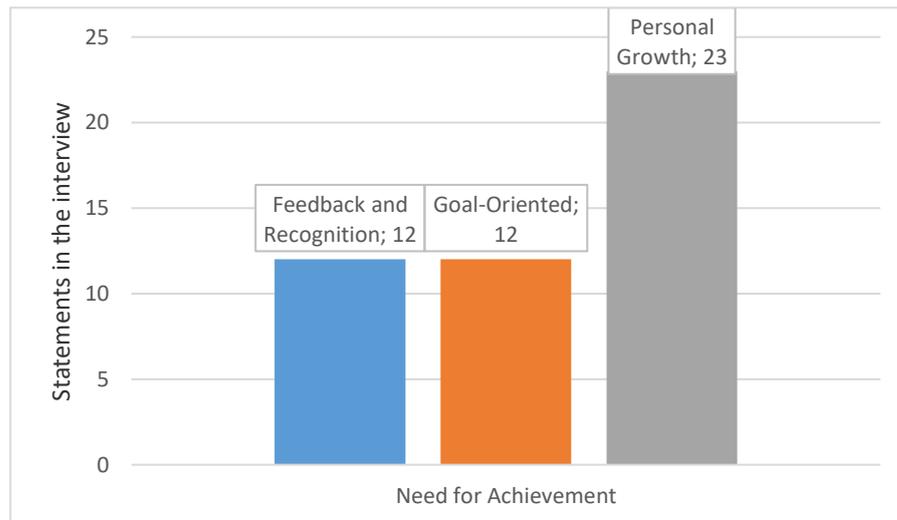


Chart 11. Interview results: Characteristics of the Need for Achievement

## B. Discussion

Based on a questionnaire analysis of 36 pre-service English teachers at Esa Unggul University, three types of motivation were explored: Need for Power, Need for Affiliation, and Need for Achievement. Each motivation type was characterized by specific traits. In the Need for Power motivation type, pre-service teachers scored highest in traits like Significant Impact (average scale of 3.63). This aligns with research by Cohen (2011), excellent teachers are believed and anticipated to do more than just improve students' test results; they are also expected to create emotionally nurturing settings that foster students' social and emotional growth, handle classroom conduct, deliver precise subject matter, and encourage critical thinking.

In the Need for Affiliation motivation type, the highest scores were seen in the Classroom Community (average scale of 3.56). This aligns with research by Barr (2016), who emphasized that establishing a strong connection between teachers and students is crucial for fostering a positive classroom environment and ultimately results in improved student outcomes. In the Need for Achievement motivation type, pre-service teachers had the highest scores in Student Satisfaction (average scale of 3.69). This finding aligns with research by Zahoor (2018), which demonstrated that teacher proactivity has a notable positive impact on student satisfaction and loyalty. On average, pre-service teachers showed the highest motivation in the Need for Achievement (average scale of 3.56) and the lowest in the Need for Affiliation (average scale of 3.25). This suggests a strong inclination towards personal growth, achievement, and academic excellence, with a moderate emphasis on social connections.

Moreover, based on interviews with 10 pre-service English teachers, the Need for Power motivation type highlighted a desire to "Make a Difference" in teaching practices. Participant 1 stated, "I consider it a success in teaching when during lessons, I put in my best effort to make them understand the material." This finding is consistent with research by Irjus (2014), which emphasizes the teacher's role is crucial in enhancing the quality of education.



The Need for Affiliation showed an emphasis on a "Supportive Network". Participant 6 mentioned, *"The students are close to me like they often ask if something is via WhatsApp or not. We can communicate freely, share jokes, and have fun together."* This finding is consistent with research by Wenger et al. (2011), which highlighted supportive learning networks encompass both online and offline environments where participants connect ideas, exchange problems and insights in a constructive manner, and relate to familiar concepts while utilizing newly developed knowledge, which is collaboratively constructed through dialogues and social interactions.

The Need for Achievement demonstrated a strong drive for "Personal Growth". Participant 9 mentioned, *"Initially, I was uncomfortable, especially since I find it difficult to connect with young children. I observed how other colleagues approached students, so I tried to follow their lead by engaging in conversations and asking if they understood the lessons."* This response reflects their commitment to continuous self-improvement in their teaching practices, which aligns with research by Muir et al. (2021), highlighting that personal growth was facilitated by external input and collegial experimentation, enabling teachers to identify significant improvements in students' achievements.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study aimed to explore pre-service English teachers' motivations at Esa Unggul University regarding their career choices and engagement with teaching programs after their teaching practicum. The research identified three main motivation types: Need for Achievement, Need for Power, and Need for Affiliation. Pre-service teachers demonstrated a strong inclination toward the Need for Achievement, showing a drive for personal growth, academic excellence, and continuous learning. They were committed to improving their teaching skills and positively impacting students' lives.

Moderate motivation was observed for the Need for Power, with pre-service teachers expressing interest in making an impact, participating in decision-making processes, and assuming leadership roles. This indicated their desire for broader influence in education. The Need for Affiliation showed moderate motivation, highlighting pre-service teachers' value for positive relationships and collaboration with students and colleagues. However, their focus was primarily on professional growth and student learning impact.

Positive experiences during the teaching practicum significantly influenced pre-service teachers' motivations and commitment to pursuing a teaching career. The practicum provided practical insights into the rewards and challenges of teaching, inspiring their journey toward becoming competent educators. These findings have implications for teacher education programs. Supporting and recognizing pre-service teachers' motivations can enhance their satisfaction and success in their teaching careers. Offering opportunities for growth, feedback, leadership roles, and fostering a supportive environment are essential for their development.

Understanding the motivations of pre-service English teachers can shape effective teacher education programs and contribute to a competent and motivated teaching workforce. By nurturing their desire for personal growth, academic excellence, and positive impact,



teacher education programs can empower pre-service teachers to become transformative educators who enrich the lives of their students and the educational community.

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