

Motivations And Realizations Of Non-HUMSS English Preservice Teachers

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Abstract — The purpose of the study is to explore and understand the motivations and realizations of non-HUMSS English pre-service teachers, with the aim of providing insights that may aid in the improvement of educational practices and policy development. A phenomenological qualitative research design was employed in this study. The research was conducted in Cebu and involved second-year Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English students from a state university, selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through face-to-face interviews using validated interview guides. Ethical standards were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes. Findings revealed that students' motivations were influenced by practicality, self-interest, and intellectual growth. Participants also experienced challenges such as burnout, emotional pressure, and academic difficulties due to course mismatch. Despite these struggles, they reported positive realizations, including personal development and strengthened resilience. Peer support and a positive learning environment were also found to play a significant role in helping students cope and adjust to their academic paths. The study concludes that both internal motivations and external support systems significantly shape the experiences of non-aligned students. It recommends collaborative efforts among schools, parents, and peers through career guidance programs, counseling services, and emotional support initiatives to help students align their academic choices with their interests and abilities while promoting well-being and intellectual growth.

Keywords — course mismatch, English pre-service teachers, motivations, realizations, non-HUMSS strand

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is often considered to be a stepping-stone to a person's success in life. Although it is not always the factor that leads to someone's success, it still plays a vital role in determining how an individual's life will turn out. With this, it is evident that education is important which is why government agencies put in huge efforts into crafting a curriculum that will not only cater to the learning needs of the students but also prepare them for their chosen career path, hence, the implementation of the K–12 curriculum. Through adding two extra years in basic education, one of the main goals of the K–12 program is to ensure that every senior high school graduate is prepared for tertiary education by providing students with an option to choose among four specialized academic tracks including academic, technical-vocational-livelihood, sports, and arts and design [1]. Thus, students are expected to choose an academic strand that is correlated with their desired college program. However, there are instances where students from a certain strand pursue a college program that is unrelated to their senior high school strand. According to Mohammad et al. (2023), this kind of phenomenon will give students a myriad of difficulties and struggles in college.

Despite existing research on non-HUMSS English preservice teachers, there is still a significant gap concerning the particular reasons why senior high school graduates take an undergraduate program that is not aligned with their senior high school track. Previous studies by Romansh (2019), Briones et al. [2], and Caballes et al. [3] indicated certain factors affecting this transition but did not provide a thorough understanding of these motivations. These studies do not go further into the personal and academic aspects that influence these graduates' decision-making processes. Moreover, existing studies do not sufficiently address the negative realizations, specifically the mental health impact that these graduates encounter as they transition from their senior high school track to a non-aligned college program. Furthermore, coping mechanisms implemented by BSEd English graduates when dealing with their new academic paths are not extensively studied [4]. The gaps in previous studies shed light on this study, which aims to gain sufficient information in understanding the process and transition between students' senior high school track and college courses. With the aforementioned research gap, the overall purpose of this study aims to look into the motivations and realizations of non-HUMSS English preservice teachers in Cebu City during the academic year 2024–2025. By exploring this, the study contributes valuable insights that can influence both individual student choices and institutional strategies. This aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on Quality Education, which aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all, promoting lifelong learning opportunities and eliminating disparities in access to education [5]. This study aligns with the goal by aiming to improve teacher preparation programs and overall educational quality through identifying ways to improve educational pathways, ensuring equitable opportunities and better outcomes for students and future educators.

This will be beneficial for students as it provides understanding into how SHS strands match with college programs, helping them make better decisions about their education. In addition, this study will benefit school administrators by providing insights into the senior high school strands they offer and how these can be effectively aligned with college programs. Future studies on the senior high school program may utilize the data generated by this research. This study will also contribute to the ongoing development of the senior high school curriculum. Therefore, the study will help in aligning senior high school strands with appropriate college programs, ultimately improving curriculum development and guiding future educational policies.

II. METHODS

This study used a phenomenological qualitative research design. By using this specific design, the researchers will be able to gain a greater understanding of the different factors, challenges, and coping mechanisms that shape the behavior of the participants upon examining their experiences. The study is conducted in Region VII (Central Visayas), specifically in the City of Cebu. Hence, the researchers aimed to gather responses from the students under the College of Teacher Education Department. Specifically, students majoring in English. The researchers used purposive sampling in choosing participants appropriate for this study. The participants were chosen based on criteria, including the year, degree program, and their senior high school strand. In particular, the focus was on second-year students enrolled in the BSED English program who had pursued a non-HUMSS strand during their senior high school education. First-year students were excluded due to their lack of experience. Third-year and fourth-

year students were excluded as well given their adaptation of the academic environment. There were nine participants selected using the aforementioned criteria and the final number of the participants shall be based on data saturation. After obtaining clearance from the ethics committee, a face-to-face interview was conducted with the participants, during which they were provided with informed consent and given a detailed explanation of the content and purpose of the study. Then, the researchers began the data collection process by using a prepared interview guide which contains questions that address the sub-problems. Each interview took approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour, allowing enough time for participants to provide thoughtful and detailed responses. The interview was conducted in person at the school to create an environment that encourages open communication. Responses were organized through thematic coding; Ethical standards are followed to guarantee that all participants are treated with respect and integrity. Any potential conflicts of interest will be addressed accordingly. Privacy and confidentiality was maintained with data anonymized to safeguard participants' identities.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1 -- Practicality and Self Interest

There are a lot of factors that motivate non-HUMSS graduates to choose a degree program that is not aligned with their senior high school strand, and among them are personal factors such as practicality and self-interest. The practicality that the participants refer to here is the choice of selecting a course that aligns with their financial capacity and the job opportunities that are currently in demand, as one participant noted that "CNU does not have a tuition fee, so probably financial issues, since accountancy is so expensive" [P2]. Similarly, opportunities for employment, especially abroad, influenced their decisions, with participants stating that "there are many opportunities abroad that offer a good salary" [P3], "there are more options such as ESL that give more opportunities to go abroad" [P4], and that their program "has a lot of opportunities, not just here in the Philippines but also abroad" (P5). On the other hand, personal interest refers to the participants' past hobbies that have developed into passions, as seen in their inclination toward reading and teaching, with one participant expressing, "I love reading, and I realized I'll give it a try because I feel like it's nice, and since education is practical" [P2], while another shared that they "like reading random stuff" and are "interested in literature" [P6]. Additionally, interest in teaching and working with children also emerged, as a participant stated, "I really like kids... I think I'm good at English, so I can impart my knowledge to them" [P8]. These responses highlight how both practicality and personal interest collectively shape their academic choices.

One of the primary motivations expressed by the participants is the practicality associated with their chosen degree programs, particularly the emphasis on securing job opportunities in the future. This practicality is often linked to the recognition that fields like English-related programs provide a clear pathway to stable and well-paying careers. Proficiency in English allows individuals to access international career prospects, expanding their opportunities beyond their native countries [6]. Additionally, the participants highlighted that their chosen degree program offers a clear pathway to ESL (English as a Second Language) teaching. The participants pointed out that the increasing demand for ESL teachers globally makes this a practical and attractive career option. An English degree opens up opportunities to work in the ESL field, both locally and internationally, providing graduates with valuable job prospects and the potential for international employment. This highlights the degree program's role in offering access to a high-demand profession with significant career opportunities. Moreover, one of the participants emphasized the advantage of being enrolled in a tuition-free institution, highlighting its practicality as a key benefit. Free college tuition programs have been shown to effectively address existing inequities in the education system. These programs contribute to higher college enrollment, reduced reliance on student loan debt, and improved graduation rates, particularly among students from lower-income backgrounds, students of color, and those who are the first in their family to pursue higher education [7]. This aspect not only reduces the financial burden associated with higher education but also allows students to allocate resources to other essential needs, such as learning materials and daily expenses. The participant noted that the absence of tuition fees makes pursuing a degree more accessible and manageable, enabling them to focus fully on their academic and career aspirations.

Another motivation of the participants are their personal interests. The participant pursued a degree in education, despite it not directly aligning with their senior high school strand illustrates the influence of personal interest on academic engagement and outcomes. This decision aligns with John Krumboltz's Happenstance Theory which states that careers are often shaped more

by unforeseen events and circumstances than by specific, deliberate plans [8]. The enthusiasm for reading and perception of education as both practical and enjoyable indicate that a strong interest in a subject enhances focus and learning efficiency. This led to a realization that education was a practical and enjoyable field, motivating to pursue it. Another motivation mentioned by a participant is the interest in interacting with kids. This indicates a clear intention to positively impact students' learning experiences, particularly in an educational setting.

Theme 2 -- Intellectual Growth

Another motivational factor that affected the participants falls under the academic category, more specifically due to the desire for intellectual growth. This term refers to expanding one's knowledge by exploring new fields that are unrelated to an individual's educational background. This shift often arises when hobbies or personal interests evolve into a strong drive for learning which fosters curiosity and naturally embracing challenges beyond their previous education. One participant shared that their sister encouraged them by saying they might "discover [themselves] in a different career choice," alongside the influence of peers who chose the same institution [P2]. Similarly, another participant emphasized that their decision was driven by "personal fulfillment" and the desire "to learn and grow as a person who learns the language" [P3]. These responses demonstrate a strong inclination toward self-improvement and intellectual exploration, highlighting how curiosity and the willingness to embrace unfamiliar fields contribute to their academic decisions.

The participants' responses reveal a shared emphasis on academic motivation, specifically on the intellectual growth in their academic choices. Participant 2 highlighted encouragement to explore a new academic strand, while Participant 3 emphasized a desire for personal growth through learning a new language. These responses demonstrate a drive for personal and intellectual fulfillment, leading to informed academic decisions that align with their interests and goals. Academically, these motivations are underpinned by two key theories. Self-Determination Theory suggests that individuals are driven by intrinsic motivations to satisfy their psychological needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness, leading to engagement in learning activities [9]. Furthermore, Krumboltz's Happenstance Theory emphasizes the importance of being open to new academic experiences and opportunities, which can lead to intellectual and personal growth [8]. The participants' motivations for intellectual growth and academic success are driven by a desire to enhance their skills and achieve personal fulfillment. These motivations align with the theories of intrinsic motivation and adaptability, emphasizing the significance of these factors in fostering academic achievement and intellectual development.

Theme 3 -- Burnout and Emotional Pressure

The negative realizations of the participants mainly center on the impact of the mismatch on their mental health. Specifically, it focuses on the burnout and emotional pressure of the participant. Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion that occurs when a person is overwhelmed, emotionally drained, or lacks passion [10]. On the other hand, the American Psychological Association defines emotional pressure as a type of stress that causes a negative response when someone experiences extreme emotion such as pressure [11]. The participant shows these characteristics, as expressed: "I actually underwent a lot of pressure because I had many doubts about my abilities" [P1], while another shared that being in an unfamiliar environment where others had prior knowledge "made [them] doubt if [they] chose the right path" [P3]. Feelings of internal struggle were also evident, as one participant admitted, "I think I still have issues within myself at the moment" [P4].

These feelings of stress and the constant pressure to meet academic expectations were significant factors contributing to their burnout. Participants revealed that their lack of passion for the course, combined with the overwhelming workload and the fear of not succeeding, added to their emotional burden. As a result, they felt disconnected from their chosen path, leading to deeper frustrations and self-doubt, as emphasized by the participants "really scared of public speaking" [P5] and feeling pressured by "many intelligent classmates" [P9]. These challenges contributed to burnout and loss of motivation, with participants revealing a lack of passion, stating, "I don't have much passion for it... I still don't love it even though I'm already in my second year" [P2],

experiencing regret as they “lose the spark” [P7], and feeling exhausted due to academic demands, saying, “I’m forced to read... I’m tired” [P9].

Many participants expressed that taking a course that did not align with their senior high school strand caused them to feel out of place and overwhelmed. One participant mentioned that the pressure increased because they were in an unfamiliar environment where others had more knowledge of the course, which led to self-doubt about their chosen path. A previous study found that this is a common problem among students who pursued courses that were not aligned with their senior high school strand, as they often have a hard time keeping up with the lessons that they are not familiar with [12]. Another participant expressed struggling with personal issues while navigating the demands of the course, while some felt anxious about public speaking and wished their strand had better aligned with their program. The pressure was also heightened by competition from smart classmates, making them feel even more stressed. These factors contributed to feelings of burnout, as many participants expressed a lack of passion for their chosen course, with one saying they didn’t enjoy teaching despite loving reading, while others described feeling drained by the overwhelming academic workload. This aligns with the Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that students unprepared for new environments often struggle to adjust, leading to stress and pressure [13]. This difficulty in coping can result in burnout and loss of motivation.

Theme 4 -- Effective Support System and Personal Development

The positive realizations of the participants focuses on their journey in adapting to the new learning environment. It specifically centers around the effective support system that the participants have in their journey and the personal development they have gained along the way. Effective support system refers to the encouragement and guidance provided by the peers of the participants which helped them to overcome challenges and gain personal development. Personal development, on the other hand, refers to the continuous growth of the participants upon overcoming challenges with the help of peer support. The participants emphasized that having a supportive environment helped them adjust more easily, saying that they “enjoy it because [their] classmates are very helpful and they don’t leave [them]” [P1], that they are surrounded by “open-minded people” who became their friends [P2], and that “we always help each other” [P8]. These responses highlight how a supportive environment fosters belonging and resilience.

These statements highlight how classmates and friends help create a supportive environment. They show that working together and forming friendships can make it easier to face challenges and adapt to new situations. Moreover, most participants noted that these experiences contributed significantly to their personal development: Furthermore, participants recognized their growth through these experiences, noting that stepping out of their comfort zones allowed them to “discover hidden talents” and new abilities [P3]. Others affirmed their alignment with their chosen programs, stating that they “really like this degree program—it fits [their] abilities and interests” [P4], while some acknowledged improved performance and motivation due to peer influence, saying they “can excel more than [they] thought” because of supportive classmates [P5]. Additionally, participants identified academic and personal gains, such as increased confidence in public speaking [P9] and enhanced engagement with English and literature, including exposure to new reading materials [P7], demonstrating how support systems and challenges contribute to their overall personal development.

Participants emphasized the importance of a strong support system in their adaptation and personal development. Many expressed gratitude for the positive relationships they have with their classmates and friends, noting that these connections fostered a sense of belonging, offering help and encouragement whenever needed. These interactions create an encouraging environment where individuals feel supported and motivated to overcome challenges. Thus, connecting to the idea of the John Krumboltz’s Happenstance Theory where students cope challenges through seeking support from family and friends. Many students find the transition from high school to university difficult [14], which is why feeling supported by friends and family can boost motivation and increase the chances of persistence [15]. These shared experiences of helping one another and building friendships not only ease the adjustment to new situations but also contribute significantly to personal development.

Furthermore, participants reflected on the growth and realizations they achieved through stepping out of their comfort zones. Several noted that exploring new opportunities helped them uncover hidden talents and interests. For instance, they discovered abilities they had not previously recognized and developed a deeper appreciation for their chosen degree programs, affirming that these align well with their skills and passions. This idea also connects to John Krumboltz's Happenstance Theory that adapting to a mismatched course, highlighting the importance of being open to new experiences and ready to seize opportunities that come along the way [16]. A supportive environment created by classmates also plays a significant role in building self-confidence, especially in public speaking. According to [17], students' motivation and positive relationships among classmates significantly contribute to their success in speaking tasks. Additionally, some participants recognized their academic advantages, such as proficiency in English and literature, as further validation of their choice of studies. These realizations collectively demonstrate how personal development and effective support system work together to foster success and self-fulfillment.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore the motivations and realizations of non-HUMSS preservice English teachers because while previous research has addressed educational mismatches, it has not specifically focused on the academic and personal factors, mental health impact, and adaptation of the BSED English students to the strand-course mismatch. This paper will provide students valuable insights, thereby aiding them in making well-informed decisions and offering a clearer understanding of the factors influencing their academic choices. The realizations emphasized in the findings emphasized the value of guidance and resilience in overcoming challenges associated with course mismatch. Despite these findings, the study overlooks the importance of institutional policies like academic counseling which may significantly influence course mismatch. Addressing these gaps can enhance understanding and develop effective strategies to support mismatched students.

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