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Pre-service Teachers' Perspectives: Motivation, Emotions, and Life in General

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Description of the project: Dr. Lia Daniels (University of Alberta) and Professor Robert Klassen (The University of York, UK), and a research team of graduate students were interested in exploring motivation and emotions as experienced by university students. The purpose of this study was to collect quantitative data on three related constructs: motivation, emotions, and life goals. It is broadly grounded in Arnett's (2010) Emerging Adulthood Theory (<http://www.jeffreyarnett.com/index.htm>), which suggests that adolescence is expanding well into the 20s and thus shaping motivation, emotions, and life goals in different ways.

Procedure: A total of 144 students were recruited through a participant pool completed one online survey in approximately 40 minutes in exchange for one research credit. The majority of participants (98.7%) went on to participate (for an additional research credit) in a connected study that involved four short-form questionnaires administered online at approximately three weeks apart: early October, mid-late October, mid-November, and early December. For a summary of short-form results, please refer to: *A study of students' emotions and motivation during a semester (Fall 2012)*.

Data summary: The remainder of the document is intended as feedback to our participants. Thank you so much for your willingness to complete this survey. We have included examples of our findings that we hope you find interesting and informative. If you would like further information please contact: Dr. Lia Daniels at lia.daniels@ualberta.ca

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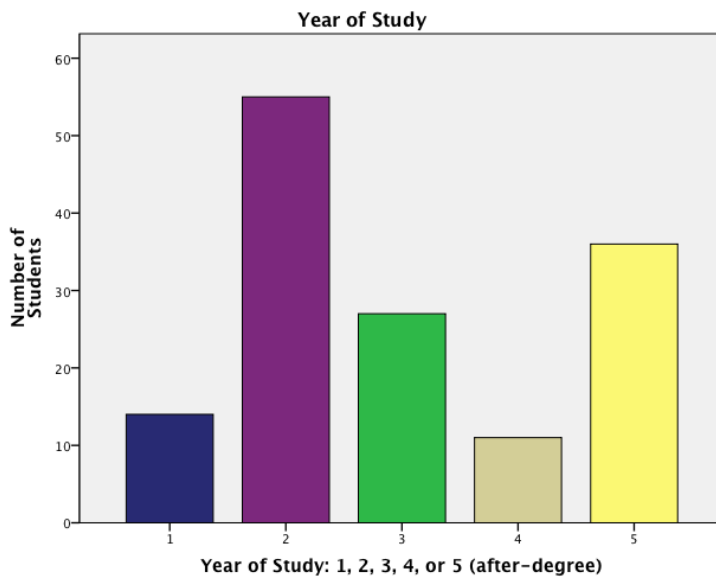
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Description of Participants

Participants were **144 students**

- 76.4 % female; 23.6% male
- Average age of 22.98.
- Ages ranged from 17 to 50 years old (115 students were between 17 and 25 years old).

As displayed through Figure 1, over half of participants were currently enrolled in their second year of study or in an after-degree program.



Participants were enrolled in one of two programs:

- elementary program (36.4%)
- secondary program (63.6%).

Figure 1. Number of students by year

We also invited participants to indicate whether they were currently working and to identify the major source of funding for their university education. Most participants were either working part-time or not at all and depended on personal funds, family support, or a student loan.

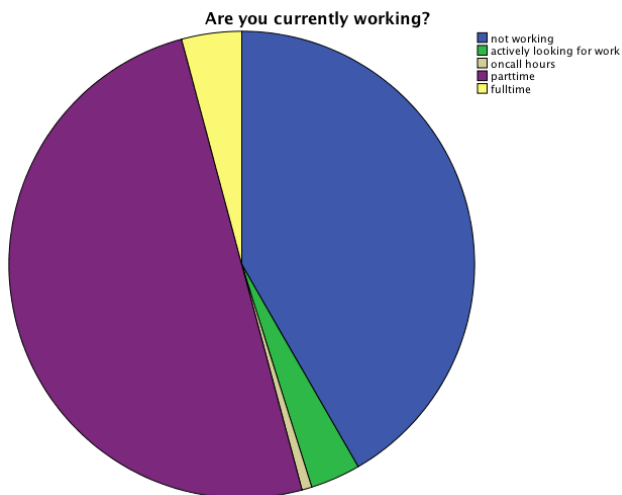


Figure 2. Student Employment Status

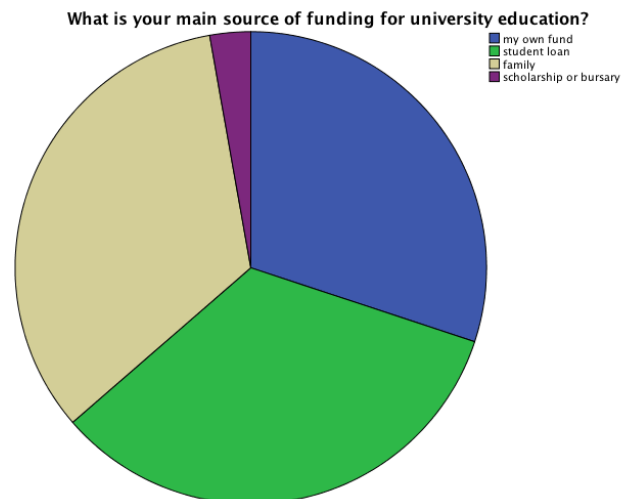


Figure 3. Source of Student Funding

Participants’ selected their **current career goal** (from a list of 12 options), revealing:

- a majority (**75.1%**) with **preschool to Grade 12** teaching aspirations
 - 1.4% preschool
 - 28.5% elementary
 - 5.6% middle school
 - 39.6% high school teacher
- 18% with career goals in a variety of **education-related roles** (e.g., overseas educator)
- 6.9% that were **undecided** at the time of the questionnaire

When asked to indicate their current purpose for pursuing a degree in education, **47.9% had always wanted to be a teacher**, 39.6 were open to exploring other job options, and 12.5% cited a variety of reasons.

Section A: Experiences as University Students

Emotions

On a scale of 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), participants’ responses to items on **enjoyment** were higher (*Mean* of 3.43) than items related to feelings of **anger** in the classroom (*Mean* of 2.11). As expected, there was a statistically significant negative correlation between enjoyment and anger – meaning the more enjoyment a student reported, the less likely he or she reported feeling angry in class.

Engagement

Figure 4 displays participants’ moderate ratings of engagement reportedly related to a current course. Engagement was measured by responses to items such as, *When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to class* (Vigour), *My studies inspire me* (Dedication), and *Time flies when I’m studying* (Absorption).

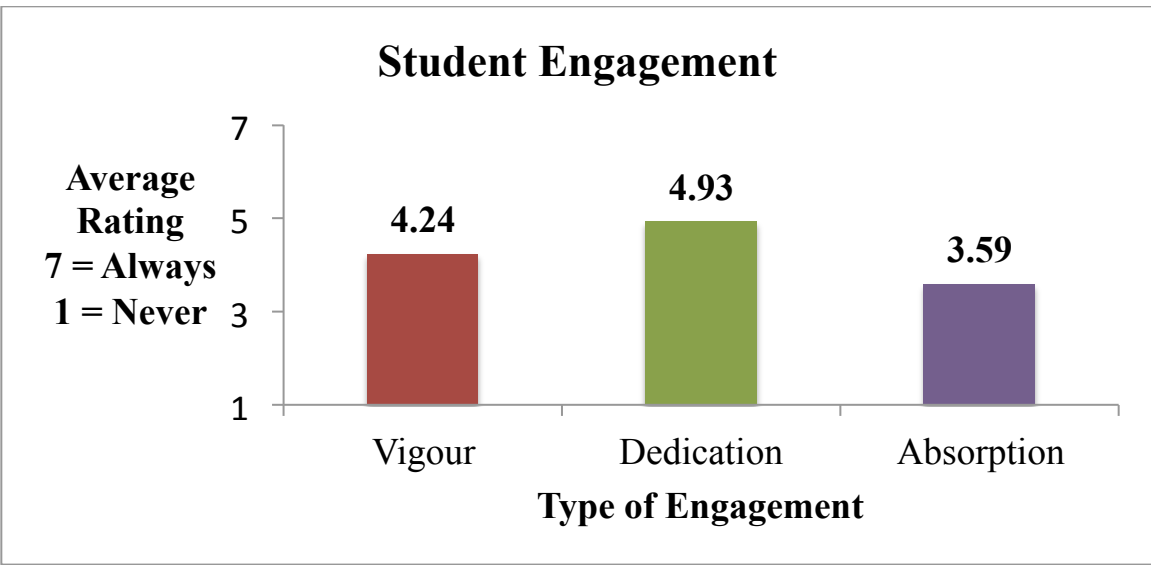


Figure 4. Student Engagement

Section B: Experiences as Pre-service Teachers

Commitment to the Teaching Profession

Participants revealed a *Mean* of 4.19 (on a 5-point scale) in response to the commitment item “**A career in teaching is an ideal profession for me.**” Preliminary analyses revealed statistically significant relationships between a number of **future-oriented goal statements** (e.g., *I sense the direction I want to take in my life will really suit me*) and items on **satisfaction with teaching** as a potential profession (e.g., *This is an excellent time for me to become a teacher*).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy refers to individuals’ **beliefs about their capabilities to carry out a particular course of action**. Researchers studying educational psychology have found that teachers’ self-efficacy influences their teaching behaviours and their students’ motivation and achievement.

Participants were invited to indicate how confident they felt in their capabilities to impact student learning as a teacher. On a scale of 1 (*Not At All Confident*) to 9 (*A Great Deal of Confidence*), participants revealed a **fairly decent level of teaching self-efficacy** (*Mean* = 6.73, *SD* = 1.19). This result offers some indication that there is room for pre-service teachers early in their training to feel more confident in their teaching abilities; this will likely come as they proceed through the education program and gain classroom experiences through practicum placements.

Section C: Goals and Plans

Professional Growth Plans

Participants were invited to consider a number of possible reasons for teachers’ professional learning and personally rate the value of each reason. Of the 7 reasons provided, “**Learning more about how to teach more effectively**” was considered *essential* by **78%** of participants. Participants’ responses will be compared to reports from practicing teachers through a separate study in the near future.

Formation of Self-identity

A high average score resulted from participants’ responses to a number of items related to the development status of self-identity. For example, participants generally agreed with the statement “**I sense that the direction I want to take in my life will really suit me**” which represents the *identity of commitment* (*Mean* of 4.17 on a 5-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The average (3.72) was slightly lower in response to “**I regularly think over a number of different plans for the future**” which represents *exploration in breadth*. The results also revealed a number of statistically significant relationships between self-identity development status and items relating to a **commitment to teaching as a chosen profession**.

Correlational analyses also revealed several significant relationships between different types of identity status and experienced emotions (e.g., **academic burnout**). For example, commitment making was associated with cynicism ($r = -0.28, p < 0.01$); identification with commitment was associated with emotional exhaustion and cynicism ($r = -0.19, p < 0.05$); ruminative exploration was associated with emotional exhaustion ($r = 0.19, p < 0.05$).

Beliefs about Well-being

Different people have different beliefs about what factors are involved in the experience of high well-being and ‘**the good life**.’ Participants were invited to indicate the degree to which each of the items was a *necessary and required aspect* of the experience of high well-being and living the good life. For example, an item related to the aspect of making *contributions to others* was: **The experience of well-being and the good life necessarily involves living in ways that benefit others.**

As displayed through Figure 5, participants expressed higher well-being beliefs through responses related to experience of pleasure, self-development, and contribution to others than beliefs around *avoiding negative experiences* (e.g., **The experience of well-being and the good life necessarily involves a lack of painful experiences**).

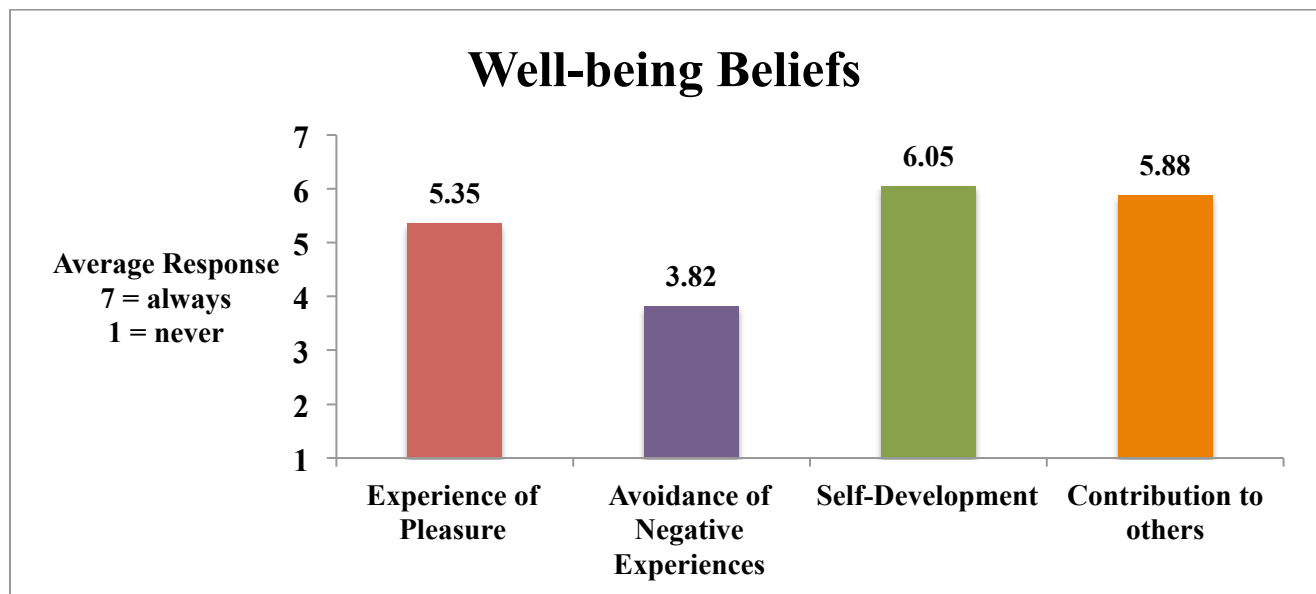


Figure 5. Level of importance participants placed on well-being beliefs

Emerging Adulthood and Well-being

Responses from participants aged from 17 to 25 years old ($n=115$) were selected to test an emerging adulthood theory. For the emerging adults in this study, the self-development approach to well-being was highly valued ($M = 6.05$) for leading to the ‘good life.’ This result is consistent with Arnett’s Emerging Adulthood Theory (<http://www.jeffreyarnett.com/index.htm>) which emphasizes a focus on self-development as one of the dominant psychological features among current emerging adults.