

EXPLORING THE PROCESS OF MOTIVATING UNDERGRADUATE ONLINE
STUDENTS FROM ONLINE INSTRUCTORS' PERSPECTIVES: A QUALITATIVE CASE
STUDY

by

Nicole Morin

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this case study was to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. The theory guiding this study was B.F. Skinner's reinforcement theory as it provided insight into how students are motivated using reinforcements. This is imperative to this study as instructors provide many of these reinforcements to their student population. This study was designed to answer a central question: How do online instructors describe the process of keeping their students motivated within the online classroom? Utilizing the prescribed data collection methods, a sample was derived from Cherry Hill College, an online college that operates throughout the United States, and used a convenience sampling size of 10 participants. Data collection was based on individual interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires to identify common themes and experiences amongst the instructors who participated in this study. The data analyzed was used to reflect on major themes that shaped the findings of this study regarding instructors' perspectives of student motivation in the undergraduate online classroom. The findings of the research study indicated instructors impact student motivation. With the ability to recognize motivated and unmotivated students, utilizing effective communication and methods of reinforcement with proactive outreach, the instructors could positively impact student motivation and retention rates.

Keywords: student motivation, online classroom, instructor perspective of student motivation, feedback, effectiveness of reinforcement in higher education

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Kaleigh, Victoria, Elijah, Samson, and Noah. No matter what obstacles you may face in your life, determination and perseverance will allow you to overcome them all.

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The completion of this study could not have been possible without the expertise and guidance from Dr. Gillespie, and for this I am deeply indebted. I would also like to extend my deepest of gratitude to Dr. Arbelo Marrero for participating as my committee member.

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Lastly, I would be remiss in not mentioning my family, especially my husband Matthew, my aunt Jan, my mother, my aunt Jane, and my children for their unwavering support, patience, and belief in me throughout my educational journey.

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List of Abbreviations

Face-to-Face (F2F)

Learning Management System (LMS)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

With nearly 30% of online higher education students dropping out within their first year of college, I looked to understand the ways online instructors could potentially motivate their students within the online classroom to promote higher attrition rates throughout the online higher education setting (Silver Wolf (Adelv unegy Waya, et al., 2017). Student engagement has shown to be a significant indicator of student attrition and academic success within the online model for higher education (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). According to Skinner et al. (2009), the motivational processes result in learners' engagement. The problem is that online students have lower completion rates than those studying on campus (Brown et al., 2020). The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. This qualitative case study is designed to answer critical research questions from an undergraduate online instructor's perspective. This study explores how undergraduate online instructors describe the process of keeping their students motivated in the online classroom. This chapter examines the problem the research will address, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, defines the central research questions, and provides definitions for terms utilized throughout the study. Chapter 1 contains background information about the historical context, the social context, and the theoretical context of the issue. This chapter will conclude with a detailed summary of the content of all pertinent information relating to this study.

Background

The problem being explored within this research study is the low completion rates of online higher education classes compared to their face-to-face counterparts (Brown et al., 2020).

With an upward trend in online classroom enrollments, it is crucial to analyze student motivation in the online classroom setting (Francis et al., 2019). It is imperative to explore the background of this problem through various lenses to gain a proper understanding of the problem at hand. Analyzing the problem from a historical context, social context, and theoretical context provides a more in-depth understanding of the problem and the importance of conducting further research on this topic area.

Historical Context

Online higher education closely resembles distance education that dates to the mid-1800s (Lee, K., 2017). Before the development of the internet and online modalities, mail was commonly utilized to have assignments delivered to learners who were not local to the instructors (Vincenzes et al., 2019). Once technology began to evolve, universities began implementing the use of new technologies in the world of academia. On November 22, 1916, the first class administered via radio took place at the University of Iowa (Slotten, 2007). As the years progressed and new technology emerged, the world of academia began to expand alongside it. Online education started to emerge beginning in the mid-1990, and with the availability of the internet, it has seen rapid growth within the last few decades (Lee, 2017). According to Vincenzes et al. (2019), “by 2002, there were 1.6 million students enrolled in online courses” (p.62). With the uptick in online enrollments, the research found discrepancies in critical thinking skills and motivation within the various age groups (Ransdell, 2010). Those who were born within the mid-20th century displayed more self-motivation and necessary thinking skills than their younger peers (Ransdell, 2010). When there was a notable shift to an online educational model, there was a wide range of emotions from instructors involved with the transition (Naylor & Nyanjom, 2020). As the years progressed and online education has risen in

popularity, strategies need to be developed to increase student engagement. However, there is confusion about what this terminology means (Brown et al., 2020). Research indicates that some believe e-learning will eventually replace its face-to-face counterpart (Lee, 2017). With the rapid growth of online course delivery within higher education, strategies to engage online learners are imperative (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). E-learning has steadily grown, and with this growth, new developments have come into the industry. Technological advances have played a key role in online classrooms, from the learning management systems (LMS) to how the student population and instructors interact (Avci & Ergun, 2019). Advances in this area include gamification, video feedback, and online discussion forums that promote student engagement and retention (An et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2022 Kwon et al., 2019). Institutions have developed various modalities to assist student retention and engagement. However, they indicate that they have only addressed a fraction of the issue present within online attrition (Glazier & Harris, 2020).

Social Context

Various stakeholders are directly impacted by student retention within their studies. The various stakeholders relevant to this research study are the student, online instructors and other institution faculty, management within the institution, and accrediting bodies (Blieck et al., 2018). Research indicates that 32% of students who enter a higher education institution drop out regardless of their degree path (Herbaut, 2020). Furthermore, research indicates that 28% of students who take out loans to pay for their studies drop out and do not obtain a degree (Xiao et al., 2020). This is a critical consideration as those who are not degree holders typically earn less and have a higher unemployment rate than those who hold a degree (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). Despite not being degree holders, they are still required to pay back the loans they have taken out, often leaving them to begin their professional life at a disadvantage both

educationally and financially (Xiao et al., 2020). Online undergraduate instructors are directly impacted by the extent to which online undergraduate students are engaged in their coursework (Brown et al., 2020).

Research suggests that student engagement is directly linked to student attrition within their programs (Brown et al., 2020). With online learning expanding rapidly and some indicating that e-learning may replace traditional classrooms, it is critical to evaluate student motivation to increase retention rates (Lee et al., 2018). While online instructors are impacted by student engagement regarding retention rates and instructor credibility, online undergraduate students are directly affected by the level of engagement within their courses (Glazier, 2016). Student engagement is encouraged by instructors through various methods, and student engagement is directly linked to the student's academic success (Mystkowska-Wjertelak, A., 2020). Skinner et al. (2009) points out the direct correlation between student engagement and student motivation, and it is imperative for online instructors to describe how they keep their students motivated within their studies. Both online undergraduate instructors and online undergraduate students will benefit from the research study being conducted. This research study analyzes how online instructors motivate undergraduate students within the online setting.

Theoretical Context

Researchers have explored the current issue of student motivation within various research studies. Skinner et al. (2009) indicated that student motivation is directly correlated to student engagement. The current issue has been explored extensively by researchers utilizing Bandura's sociocultural theory, and through using Skinner's (1953) theory, the current study will expand upon the current literature by using a different theological approach. Within Skinner's (1953) theory, the three themes found within this framework are reinforcement, punishment, and

extinction. These three themes are found throughout current research in relation to higher education, and current literature suggests reinforcement and punishment, seen as disciplinary actions in the higher education setting, can directly impact student motivation and retention. Reinforcement is the focus of the instructors throughout the institution, as current literature focuses on the impact of the instructor's role on students' academic success (Armstrong et al., 2020; Huanhuan et al., 2021; Xiaoquan, 2020).

Instructors and institutions consistently encourage their students to adhere to policies concerning academic honesty (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). When students choose not to follow these policies and do not adhere to the policies set in place, disciplinary action, or punishment as Skinner (1953) would coin it, tracks the inadherence, and the severity of the punishment will depend on the offense and the administrations decisions (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Current research involving Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement primarily focuses on the K-12 setting. This research study will expand upon the existing literature in the field regarding Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory, as there is a lack of literature that utilizes this theoretical framework. Current research in the field primarily looks at student motivation through Bandura's (1953) theoretical framework. A majority of the studies are focused on the student perspective, and they are concentrated in the sociocultural components of the student experience (Bolliger & Martin, 2018; Brown et al., 2020).

Problem Statement

The problem is that online students have lower completion rates than those studying on campus (Brown et al., 2020). Current research indicates a 10-35% lower retention rate within the online classroom than their F2F counterpart (Glazier & Harris, 2020). Few studies describe the role of faculty in academic motivation among undergraduate online students (Armstrong et al.,

2020). Skinner et al. (2009) indicated that student engagement is often a direct result of a student's motivational level. Current literature suggests that it is imperative to understand teachers' perspectives and identify the ways in which they support their students to increase student involvement and prevent disaffection within their studies (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). According to Naylor and Nyanjom (2020), "educators expressed frustration with students who did not engage in an online setting" (p.8). Furthermore, researchers found that due to the instructor's inability to reengage students within the online platform, the instructors ended up placing the responsibility of engagement back onto the student (Naylor & Nyanjom, 2020).

Current literature indicates that some instructors in the online setting were able to find success in developing techniques to reengage students. In contrast, other instructors tended to shift the blame to external factors (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Additionally, current literature has analyzed remotivating and reengaging students through the improvement of instructional design (Arghode et al., 2018). However, despite improving the instructional design within the online course setting, research determined that instructors need to understand the principles and motivation of learning to aid in re-engaging students (Arghode et al., 2018). Furthermore, researchers express that future studies must explore strategies to engage millennial students within the online classroom (Arghode et al., 2018). Students report that regularly interacting with their instructor improved their overall satisfaction with their course (Dhillal, 2017). With most of the research being conducted from the student perspective, researchers indicate that further research should be conducted to examine faculty perspectives of the online teaching experience from various institutions (Dhillal, 2017). Recent research analyzed different engagement strategies in an online setting and looked at student perception alongside instructor perspective. While they found that students and instructors agreed on the top two engagement strategies, I

indicate that further research should investigate the perceptions of online instructors in an undergraduate online setting (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). Utilizing an intrinsic case study approach, this research study will look to expand upon the current literature by describing online instructors' perspectives of motivating undergraduate online students within their studies.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. At this stage in the research, motivating undergraduate online students will be defined as meeting minimum weekly requirements within their course. The theory guiding this study is B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory as it focuses on critical themes that are critical to the online instructor motivating their online students. B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory of motivation is based on the three themes of reinforcement, punishment, and extinction. Skinner's (1953) theory is based on the assumption that all behavior is influenced by the consequences of said behavior; therefore, through reinforcement theory, behavior could be shaped by controlling the consequences of behavior.

Significance of the Study

B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory of motivation holds that the central themes of extinction, reinforcement, and punishment are imperative to an individual's learning experience. The research study expands upon Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory of motivation by applying it to the online educational setting. The research conducted is driven by the themes found within B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement and the information extracted through the various data collection methods will further expand upon the reinforcement theory of motivation.

Students, online instructors, and institutions with online programs are all stakeholders who will benefit from this research study. Student satisfaction within the online classroom is found to be linked with students' perspectives of their online instructors (Almahasees et al., 2021). Interestingly, literature indicated that online instructors are found to be less popular with students than their face-to-face colleagues (Guest et al., 2018). The current research study analyzes student motivation from online instructors' perspectives and explores methods by which online instructors can enhance the students learning experience. Research suggests that instructors should be cognizant of engaging their student population in the designated learning activities to enhance learner engagement (Arghode et al., 2018). The current study addresses the importance of student motivation from the online instructor perspective and expands upon the methods utilized to increase student engagement. This insight will give higher education online instructors additional perspectives on assisting their online students with engaging in the content within their courses. The reasons attributed to retention vary when evaluating faculty, administrators, and students. Therefore, this study expands upon current literature by providing necessary insight into the instructor's perspective regarding student engagement to fill the gap in the literature (McGee et al., 2017; Bolliger & Martin, 2018).

Research Questions

Utilizing B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory and the themes embedded within this theory of motivation, the following central research question, and its sub-questions expand upon the current literature. The research question and the sub-questions expand upon the themes within B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory regarding online student motivation via instructor perspective. Utilizing the themes of reinforcement, extinction, and punishment from B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory, the following questions were developed.

Central Research Question

How do online instructors describe the process of keeping their students motivated within the online classroom? The role of the instructor is imperative to students' success in the online classroom setting (Martin et al., 2020). Various instructor characteristics play a pivotal component in student achievements, such as level of experience, practical experience, education, and the level of online course training (Martin et al., 2020). Current literature suggests instructor interventions aided in protecting learners' sense of belonging and enhanced their overall academic performance (Adelv unegv Waya et al., 2017). However, when analyzing this issue in current literature, there is an evident gap. There is a lack of research that analyzes the instructors' perspective of student motivation (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020).

Sub Question One

How do online instructors describe the process of reinforcing their online student's participation within the online classroom? Within the online classroom, student engagement is imperative to the learner's success. When instructors provide their students with engaging instruction, current literature suggests that learners are more motivated in their studies (Arghode et al., 2018). Despite research providing this guidance to online instructors, retention within the online classroom setting continues to be a problem (Lee, 2017).

Sub Question Two

How do online instructors describe the effectiveness of punishment on student motivation and retention? All institutions hold their student population to the standard outlined in their academic honesty policies (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Despite there being hefty punishments when engaging in academic dishonesty, current literature indicates that rather than instructors trying to convince students to practice academic honesty, the instructors try to create a more engaging

learning environment that will motivate the student to engage in the course material (Fass-Holmes, 2017).

Sub Question Three

How do online instructors describe the methods utilized to promote the extinction of unmotivated behaviors within their online student population? For extinction to occur, the undesirable behavior must cease to present itself (Skinner, 1993). Current literature suggests that higher self-efficacy in the student population corresponds with higher levels of student motivation (Francis et al., 2019). This research study explores methods to promote the desirable outcome of student motivation while determining which methods promote the extinction of undesirable behaviors.

Definitions

1. *Academic Dishonesty*- Academic honesty is considered any deceitful or unfair act that is conducted in order to produce a more desirable outcome (Miller et al., 2017)
2. *Disaffection*- A negative dimension of disengagement (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020).
3. *Extinction*- When an unwanted behavior suspends itself (Skinner, 1993).
4. *Feedback*- A type of support a learner receives from an instructor (Huanhuan et al., 2021).
5. *Instructor Perspective*- Assumptions, expectations, opinions, and perceptions of the instructor (Dhillia, 2017, p.141).
6. *Motivation*- Reasons for engagement within the task (Francis et al., 2019).

7. *Online Learner Engagement*- Learner's ability to actively interact with and critically examine the course content on the cognitive, behavioral, and emotional levels (Arghode et al., 2018).
8. *Punishment*- The removal of positive reinforcers, conditioned or unconditioned (Skinner, 1993).
9. *Reinforcement*- An effective stimulus that promotes a desired behavior or outcome (Skinner, 1993).
10. *Self-efficacy*- The individual's belief in their ability to regulate and conduct the course of actions needed to conduct the probable states (Yildirim, 2021).

Summary

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. Within the field of online higher education, students have a lower completion rate than those studying in a face-to-face educational setting (Brown et al., 2020). While current literature explores student motivation, attrition, and engagement from a student perspective, there is an evident gap within the current literature regarding the online instructor perspective of motivating online undergraduate students (Kang & Zhang, 2020). Recent literature suggests that instructors are not able to reengage their student population adequately, and this research study will analyze themes in the research findings to help solve this issue (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). Since current research suggests that student engagement is linked to higher attrition rates and higher academic success, it is essential to analyze student motivation from all possible angles (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). By utilizing an intrinsic qualitative case study approach, the research provides

unique insight and builds upon the existing literature by producing data that will enhance the field.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. This includes both the instructor and the student's role in the process of motivation. This literature review examined previous research on the student's role in motivation in the online classroom, how student motivation compares to its face-to-face counterpart, and the various methods instructors utilize to enhance student motivation. By reviewing related literature and what conclusions have been made regarding student motivation, evident gaps will be exposed. Furthermore, the structure of this chapter provides the theoretical framework and theorist underlining this study, analyzes reinforcement, punishment, and extinction in higher education, as well as a comparison of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and student motivation in an online classroom versus the face-to-face setting. Furthermore, it covers the student perspective on the promotion of motivation in the online classroom, the instructors' role in student self-efficacy, online instructor feedback methods regarding student motivation, types of feedback instructors utilize, techniques for implementing feedback, timeliness of feedback, feedback literacy, gamification, and the impact of instructor misbehavior.

Theoretical Framework

B.F. Skinner's Theory of Reinforcement

B.F. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory is the theoretical framework for this research study. Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory focuses on the ability of an external source to motivate desired behaviors within an individual. B.F. Skinner (1953) expressed that within education, "some reinforcers may be available in the form of privileges" (p.405). These are

commonly seen as good grades, promotions within the education system, degrees, diplomas, certificates, medals, and more. These reinforcements are found throughout the current educational model and have historically provided extrinsic motivation to students (Skinner, 1953). Within higher education, these built-in reinforcements are still prevalent today.

Skinner's (1953) reinforcement theory has framed current literature within the education field. Kang and Zhang (2020) utilized Skinner's (1953) theory to frame their research study on student motivation. They expressed that Skinner's (1953) theory emphasized immediate feedback within the learning process, and this reinforces students' motivation and their learning engagement (Kang and Zhang, 2020). Within the current literature, researchers analyze instructors' accounts of online learners' engagement. Skinner (1953) emphasized that instructors will ramp up participation within the classroom. However, they do not notice any side effects on the student's emotional or cognitive engagement (Kang & Zhang, 2020).

Despite the educational model having these built-in reinforcements, Skinner (1953) mentions that "as more and more people are educated, the honorific reinforcements of education are weakened" (p.406). With these honorific reinforcements being weakened, this study expands upon B.F. Skinner's reinforcement theory within the field of education as it looks at reinforcers outside of honorific reinforcement. The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. This will build upon B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement and examines the instructors' perspective of motivating their online student population outside of what Skinner (1953) refers to as honorific reinforcements. The current study explores the instructor's perspective on motivating online students and utilizes B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of

reinforcement to bring to light gaps in the existing literature and expand upon the existing literature by providing a new perspective on online student motivation.

Related Literature

Current literature within the field of education addresses student motivation and how instructors can promote this motivation within their online studies. Recent research analyzes various methods that instructors can utilize within the online classroom to encourage motivation within their student body from both the student perspective and through analyzing a variety of approaches to instructor feedback. Cheng (2019) indicates that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is critical to understanding how to motivate an online student. Additionally, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation is embedded within Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement. Current research from the student perspective provides critical insight into the student experience and helps shape this recent study. Guest et al. (2018) indicates that understanding student satisfaction allows us to effectively analyze the student experience and the online classroom. Online instructor feedback has been indicated as an effective method for promoting student motivation (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018).

There are various methods to enhance online instructor feedback, including the use of digital badges within the online classroom (Besser & Newby, 2020). Another method where students can receive instructor feedback is by using discussion boards in the online setting. Online discussion forums are utilized throughout the online education field. Research indicates that feedback in the form of praise-oriented comments within discussion forums promoted student motivation (Kwon et al., 2019). Analyzing these various forms of motivation within the online classroom setting also remains critical to exploring the methods of motivating the traditional classroom setting (Filak & Nicolini, 2018). Exploring these motivational methods in

the conventional classroom could enhance the online classroom and adapt or alter the methods that motivate students in their studies (Yough et al., 2017). Glazier & Harris (2020) also expresses the need to explore the two different settings due to the high level of online student dropouts.

Reinforcement, Punishment, and Extinction in Higher Education

B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement focuses on three main underpinnings, reinforcement, punishment, and extinction. With his theory analyzing behavioral modification and how to achieve the desired outcome regarding behavior, it is a logical next step to implement this theory into this research study as the study analyzes the behaviors associated with student motivation from the instructors' perspective (Skinner, 1993). These three underpinnings are seen within higher education, and this research study will explore their effectiveness from the perspective of undergraduate online instructors.

Reinforcement

Higher education commonly utilizes the method of reinforcement to keep students engaged and retained (Skinner, 1993). Some forms of reinforcement in higher education are grades, diplomas, certificates, and income following graduation (Skinner, 1993). However, the main form of reinforcement commonly utilized within the higher education setting is feedback. Feedback plays a critical role in students' self-efficacy and motivation levels as it can be both a positive or negative reinforcement (Skinner, 1953; Huanhuan et al., 2021). Feedback being provided by instructors could either be critical or uplifting in nature. Students may find some instructors' responses motivating and help them propel forward academically; however, there are instances where students find the feedback provided by instructors to be brief and unhelpful (Agricola et al., 2019).

On the contrary, negative, or critical feedback often can be considered helpful for students if they have strong self-efficacy. If the negative feedback is provided to the student in a constructive manner and the student has feedback literacy, then it could be beneficial for learning and motivation for future academic performance (Sung-il et al., 2018). Reinforcement is also commonly seen in the online classroom setting through the utilization of badges (Besser & Newby, 2020). Online badges can be automatically issued when specific criteria are met, but in addition to this, instructors also have the ability on many platforms to manually issue badges (Stefankiak, & Carey, 2019). Through these various forms of feedback within the higher education setting, instructors help to promote student motivation within the online classroom, and through these efforts, there is a hope to enhance retention rates, reduce academic dishonesty, and improve student satisfaction within their online studies (Agricola et al., 2019; Huanhuan et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2021).

Punishment

Punishment occurs when positive reinforcers are removed, whether they are conditioned or unconditioned. Punishment in higher education is commonly seen when students are not practicing academic honesty (Skinner, 1993). Policies surrounding academic honesty are constructed to provide students guidance in relation to how to avoid punishment for dishonest behaviors (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Some forms of dishonesty commonly seen within higher education are plagiarism and cheating (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Instructors are often a first-line defense in combating academic dishonesty, and one form of punishment that instructors utilize to discourage academic dishonesty is failing grades (Chirikov et al., 2019). Current literature does suggest that punishment is an effective deterrent to academic dishonesty (Zhao et al., 2021).

Additionally, literature has identified a relationship between motivation, feedback, and academic dishonesty. Research suggests that students who display low motivation in their academic studies and those who have low self-efficacy tend to be more inclined to partake in dishonest behaviors (Etgar et al., 2019). However, even high achievers may find themselves susceptible to academic dishonesty. Current literature suggests that high achievers internalize tremendous amounts of pressure to excel within their academic careers. Between this immense pressure and potentially critical feedback, these students may find themselves falling into academic dishonesty (Miller et al., 2017). All students who find themselves partaking in academic dishonesty put themselves at risk of receiving punishment (Taylor & Bicak, 2019).

Extinction

A goal of having policies of academic honesty and punishments associated with these policies is extinction (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). The main objective of extinction is to eliminate an undesired behavior, and in higher education, this unwanted behavior comes in the form of dishonesty (Skinner, 1953, Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Institutions throughout the world are plagued with academic dishonesty within their student population, and through these various policies and the punishments that are implemented upon violation of these policies, institutions strive to make dishonesty extinct (Skinner, 1953; Brown et al., 2020; Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Administrators within institutions have expressed that they have been able to curb dishonesty by using punishments for dishonest behavior. However, the desired goal would be extinction (Chirikov et al., 2019). Another method that researchers have analyzed to make academic honesty extinct is through utilizing interventions that are built to deter students from engaging in academic dishonesty (Djokovic et al., 2022). Unfortunately, the limited research that has been conducted on utilizing these interventions has shown that these forms of interventions have not been

successful in deterring students from engaging in unethical behavior; however, the literature indicates that there is a direct correlation between student motivation and their engagement in academic dishonesty (Djokovic et al., 2022).

Intrinsic Versus Extrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two primary forms of motivation found within the educational setting. It is important to have a complete understanding of both forms of motivation to effectively navigate ways in which an instructor can enhance motivation (Wijsman et al., 2019). Student motivation has been found to be directly linked to student achievements, such as higher grades and test scores (Ahn et al., 2021). A study conducted by Cheng (2019) indicates that an individual's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relates to the person's sense of self. Intrinsic motivation is driven by internal forces such as pleasure or a challenge, whereas extrinsic motivation is when an individual is motivated by external rewards or pressures (Cheng, 2019). While numerous studies point to the need for a student to possess both forms of motivation within their academic journey, there are research studies that disagree with this notion (Amponsah et al., 2018). Serin (2018) indicated within her research that extrinsic motivation is a primary motivator for many students, and it is something that instructors need to be cognizant about. However, Cheng (2019) placed equal emphasis on both forms of motivation. Current research indicates that extrinsic and intrinsic motivation encourages students to engage in the classroom, which is critical to online students' academic success (Serin, 2018).

It is vital for instructors to understand what their students' motivations are to effectively navigate the promotion of motivation within their student population (Zheng et al., 2020). Amponsah et al. (2018) expresses that the participants in his study were extrinsically motivated through the quality of instruction, curriculum quality, relevance, and timely feedback. These are

all areas that instructors can capitalize on to motivate their student population effectively. Instructors have the innate ability to work with students to find what their student is passionate about, and doing this will help ignite their motivation (Serin, 2018).

Instructor engagement within the undergraduate setting has been shown to influence students' intrinsic motivation (Shin & Bolkan, 2020). Research indicates that students who experience an instructor who is engaging, intellectually stimulating, challenging, and can demonstrate transformational leadership, ignite higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Shin & Bolkan, 2020). These traits within an instructor can assist in the development of a strong teacher-student relationship, and research supports that stronger teacher-student relationships equate to higher student motivation (Xerri et al., 2018). Additionally, instructors can assist in building a student's extrinsic motivation through motivators such as extra credit (Alvero et al., 2019). B.F. Skinner (1953) put an emphasis on extrinsic motivation within his theory of reinforcement, and this is important to consider when analyzing online student motivation.

Student Motivation in an Online Classroom Versus Face-to-Face Setting

With the online classroom being relatively new within the educational industry and enrollments climbing in 2002 (Vincenzes et al., 2019), it is essential to analyze student motivation within the online classroom against the face-to-face (F2F) classroom setting. Current literature indicates a lack of research regarding issues relating to student motivation in the online environment (Filak & Nicolini, 2018). Upon comparing face-to-face motivation to its online classroom counterpart, there were findings that were not consistent with the original notion of F2F instruction having higher levels of student motivation than online students (Yough et al., 2017).

Within the online classroom, many students who do not possess the self-driven motivation often end up feeling alone or isolated in their studies (Covelli, 2017). Instructors have indicated that they usually have a difficult time providing support to those who are struggling within the classroom in an online setting (Covelli, 2017). Despite these notions, student motivation within the online classroom could be encouraged through instructor interaction (Glazier, 2016). When an instructor within the online setting works to build rapport with the student, it often improves the student's success and retention rates (Glazier, 2016). While live face-to-face instruction may not be an option within the online classroom setting, there are opportunities to utilize video feedback, or instruction, in its place (Alharbi, 2017). Not only is it a possibility, but students indicated that the video formatting provided them with a better understanding of the feedback and, overall, a better online learning experience (Alharbi, 2017).

Research studies have indicated significantly lower levels of motivation within the online classroom setting compared to its F2F counterpart (Filak & Nicolini, 2018). It is also imperative to indicate that self-motivation has been reported as a critical component for success within the online educational setting. Therefore, it is essential to understand how to promote student motivation within this environment (Filak & Nicolini, 2018). It is critical to evaluate the face-to-face classroom setting and the approaches utilized to promote successful student motivation to understand the methods that could potentially be adopted within the online classroom setting (Filak & Nicolini, 2018). A standard adaption found within the face-to-face classroom is utilizing a flipped classroom approach. This is when students spend their class time analyzing what they were supposed to have learned during their individual time studying (Yough et al., 2017). The reason this method is typically found within a face-to-face classroom setting is that research suggests it promotes student motivation (Yough et al., 2017). Researchers indicate that

with there being a significant transition into the online environment, there needs to be an increase in self-determined motivation to see success within the online classroom (Filak & Nicolini, 2018).

When looking into the current literature, there is a general agreement that student motivation is the driving force to successful academia within the online classroom setting (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018). Motivation is directly correlated with student success within the online classroom (Li et al., 2020). Numerous research studies indicate that instructor feedback effectively promotes student motivation within the online education classroom (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018). Research also indicates that instructor feedback does have downfalls that can often be overlooked (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Additionally, current literature suggests that the online classroom setting does not promote student motivation in the same way as the traditional classroom (Francis et al., 2019). Analyzing this current literature brings inconsistencies and general agreements on the topic of student motivation to life, prompting the need for further research.

In the study conducted by Francis et al. (2019), the researchers indicated that there was no difference between motivation levels in F2F classroom settings and the online classroom setting per student response. Within Kalman et al. (2020) research study, she indicates that students within the online classroom often are faced with increased distractions and found that when the student is in an online classroom setting, they have less motivation than when in a F2F classroom setting. A direct style of instruction has been found to be particularly useful in motivating large groups of undergraduate online students (Zavyalova, 2020).

Student Perspective on the Promotion of Motivation in the Online Classroom

Understanding the student experience is critical to promoting student motivation at the instructor level. A student's motivation level is a central predictor of intention throughout e-learning, which can inform instructors on adapting and designing instruction that will lead to student academic success (Kew et al., 2018). Understanding how the students view online courses is imperative as it assists the institutions in making pedagogical decisions (Guest et al., 2018). When an instructor interacts with their students, the students then perceive a sense of belonging (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). This interaction also gives the student an understanding that their instructor is accessible (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). Considering the student perspective, students report that building a relationship between student and instructor plays a significant role in their motivational level (Kalman et al., 2020). Students who feel they have a strong relationship with their instructors from the beginning of their class tend to show higher instances of engagement throughout their time within the course (Skinner, et al., 2008). Students within the undergraduate online setting indicate that a directing style of instruction is particularly helpful for igniting their motivation. This could be due to the students being new to the online academic experience, and this direct style allows those who are not confident in themselves to become motivated (Zavyalova, 2020). Researchers also indicated that drive and passion tended to be a driving force for motivation within the online student body, and instructors should take time to find out what the student's driving force is and aid them within that process (Kalman et al., 2020).

Most of the research studies that analyze student motivation are from the student perspective. One area that has not been thoroughly addressed is the instructor's perspective regarding motivating the student population in the online undergraduate setting. The current

research focuses heavily on the student experience, which in turn relies heavily on the student's feedback on the various processes being examined. In order to effectively analyze student motivation, there is a need for instructors' perspectives on the process of motivating students in the online setting (Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020).

The Instructor's Role in Student Self-Efficacy

It has been indicated that there is a strong correlation between a student's motivation level and self-efficacy (Agricola et al., 2019). With a strong correlation being reported, it is imperative to explore the instructor's role in the undergraduate student's self-efficacy for the purpose of this study. Students who have low self-efficacy tend to have little confidence in their abilities within the classroom. However, it is critical to note that their self-efficacy increases for students who receive immediate feedback continually (Agricola, et al., 2019). Furthermore, the method in which feedback is provided to the student does not impact the student's self-efficacy; all forms of feedback are equally valuable when instructors are trying to build their student populations' self-efficacy levels (Agricola et al., 2019). In addition to feedback playing a critical role, convincing people that they have what it takes to accomplish a task has been shown to increase self-efficacy (Yildirim, 2021). Those students who display a higher level of self-efficacy have a tendency to work harder within their studies and preserve longer than their peers with low self-efficacy (Aloia, 2020).

To help foster an environment that promotes the growth of self-efficacy in the undergraduate classroom, instructors should create an environment where the student can succeed. To make this type of environment, instructors should avoid situations where the student may feel as though they are frequently failing (Yildirim, 2021). When students are in an environment that promotes self-efficacy and student connectedness, it will facilitate the student's

engagement in the course as well as encourage student motivation (Aloia, 2020). Instructors can help promote self-efficacy in their student population by instilling confidence within them (Fatima et al., 2019).

Those students with high self-efficacy tend to display more self-regulation through goal setting, evaluating their progress within their courses, and monitoring their learning. Students' self-efficacy and self-regulation tend to run parallel to each other and assist the student in being successful in their academic careers (Duchatelet & Donche, 2019). When students have a higher level of self-efficacy, they also have a higher likelihood of producing honest work, and they tend to set more demanding academic goals for themselves (Fatima et al., 2019; Aloia, 2020). In an effort to foster higher self-efficacy in students displaying lower levels, instructors should ensure they have strong communication with their student population (Yildirim, 2021). When helping to build the student population's self-efficacy, the instructor is also making the students' motivation level (Duchatelet & Donche, 2019).

Online Instructor Feedback Regarding Student Motivation

Instructor feedback is a primary method for promoting student motivation, and there are a variety of techniques that instructors can utilize, depending on their institution, to enhance the feedback experience. Feedback is critical for a student to develop competency; therefore, it is used heavily within the online classroom setting (Huanhuan et al., 2021). How students perceive feedback from their instructor is directly correlated with their motivation level. Suppose a student perceives the feedback as negative, they have a higher instance of becoming unmotivated, whereas if the student feels the feedback is positive, they have a higher instance of increased motivation (Hill et al., 2021). Motivation is the driving force to successful student engagement within their online courses (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018). With dropout rates being a

concern for online instructors, feedback could be utilized to mitigate dropout rates and motivate students to maintain enrollment while meeting coursework requirements (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018). Within the online classroom setting, teacher feedback is a primary source of student motivation (Xiao et al., 2020). Online feedback provided by instructors increases student satisfaction which transcends into the student experience and enhances motivation levels (Xiao et al., 2020). One component of feedback that must be considered is that the level the student is engaged with the feedback plays a significant role in their behavior following the feedback (Lim et al., 2021). While feedback was seen for many years as just assisting the student in their academic performance, it has evolved and is now seen as motivating the student, and reinforcement, and is informational (Chan & Luo, 2021). There are various types of feedback given to online students via their instructors, and these forms of feedback can aid in increasing student motivation (Huanhuan et al., 2021). The range of effectiveness of these various forms of feedback can be influenced by the way a student perceives the feedback provided (Huanhuan et al., 2021).

Interestingly, most staff and faculty tend to report they are satisfied with the quality of feedback they provide to their student body; however, substantially less of the student population feels as though they receive adequate feedback (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015). If a student feels as though the feedback was negative in nature, they are more likely to feel like a failure resulting in a decrease in motivation (Hill et al., 2021). While providing feedback to students, instructors should be cognizant of their tone, nature, timeliness, and the content of the feedback being provided (Lim et al., 2021). Additionally, instructors should be cognizant that they are providing effective feedback and not just providing the student with grade justification (Winstone & Boud, 2020; Zhan, 2019). Not all students are motivated to complete their coursework in the online

classroom setting; however, instructors should equip their students with various skills and strategies to assist them with tackling the online environment (Randi & Corno, 2021).

Types of Feedback Instructors Utilize

Current literature suggests that instructor feedback is a critical component of promoting student motivation within the online classroom (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018). Instructor feedback can either promote motivation or hinder a student's motivation (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). As an instructor, it is critical to keep the student's perspective in mind when delivering feedback (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Especially since research suggests that faculty and staff feel that students do not have an interest in feedback provided, and their outlook is primarily negative (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015). Not all students will receive feedback the same way, so it is imperative to offer feedback in a constructive light. One way this can be done is when delivering negative feedback to a student to ensure that the instructor is providing guidance on how to improve upon their current efforts (Hill et al., 2021). In addition to the type of feedback being provided, it is crucial to take into consideration how well the student is able to comprehend the feedback. If the student has issues comprehending the feedback provided, it will make it difficult for the student to act upon this feedback (Glover & Brown, 2006). Despite this potential downfall, feedback must include corrective information to reduce the likelihood of the instructor feedback being perceived in a negative light (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). When constructive corrective information is found within feedback, it is more likely to be well received by the student and increase their motivation levels within their studies (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Within the online classroom, an instructor can utilize various forms of feedback to promote motivation within their student population (Huanhuan et al., 2021).

Feedback for Improvement

This form of feedback is utilized to assist the student in improving their work quality (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Often these forms of feedback can be seen when instructors are providing constructive feedback on their students' writing. This can often be in the form of correcting spelling errors and grammar within students' papers (Knight et al., 2018). When instructors provide this form of feedback to their student population, it provides the student with guidelines on how to improve their current work to meet the learning outcomes within the course (Watson et al., 2017). This form of feedback works well when the instructor provides the correction that they would have liked to see the student utilize but then provides insight into why they would have wanted to see the student use their correction (Johnson et al., 2018). Students have reported that they prefer direct feedback that helps to facilitate improvement in future works (Knight et al., 2018). In an effort to achieve this direct feedback, instructors have reported that utilizing digital feedback for improvement has numerous advantages. Some of these advantages include the ability to be precise when indicating where a revision should take place; additionally, instructors report that this form of feedback is helpful in maintaining formal electronic records in the event they are needed (Johnson et al., 2018). The goal of improvement-focused feedback is to assist the student in closing the gap between their actual performance and their desired performance (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015).

Motivational Feedback

Motivational feedback is found when an instructor's feedback to a learner is designed to help motivate the student within their academics (Huanhuan et al., 2021). One way an instructor can ensure they are encouraging their students when utilizing motivational feedback is by personalizing their feedback to each individual student (Wang & Lehman, 2021). A form of

direct feedback that falls within this category often in the form of encouragement (Huanhuan et al., 2021). When instructors interact with their students regularly, it is simple to incorporate motivational feedback into their communication (Watson et al., 2017). In addition to direct feedback, instructors often provide indirect feedback to their students. This indirect feedback is often in the form of highlighting the value of the learning tasks, providing the normative referential formation of assessment results, showing positive expectations toward learners' incoming work, and clarifying the goals of the tasks (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Motivational feedback should be intertwined with other forms of feedback in order to promote the exchange between instructors and students (Knight et al., 2018). Motivational feedback is considered to be a characteristic of effective feedback (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015).

Connective Feedback

This feedback method is found when instructors connect their feedback to various tasks and instructions found within the lesson or course (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Providing this formal guidance will allow the student to gain confidence throughout the learning process and inevitably enhance their motivation level (Watson et al., 2017). Within student feedback, instructors have the ability to point their feedback directly to the lesson or instructions found for an assignment (Watson et al., 2017). This helps the student to connect the lesson and instructions with the assignment. Often students are faced with learning gaps, and this can be seen when a student has difficulty applying knowledge from lessons into their assignments or assessments (MD & Krishnamoorthy, 2021). Providing learners with effective feedback gives them the opportunity to understand what they could have done differently and an understanding of how to improve their future work (Ryan, et al., 2020).

Methods for Implementing Feedback

Instructors utilize various forms of feedback to provide their student population with guidance and motivation within the online classroom setting. While the form of feedback provided in the online classroom may differ from its F2F counterpart, students indicate that they prefer their feedback to be delivered via electronic submission (Johnson et al., 2018). This is an important consideration as some believe online students are not able to have the same quality experience as their F2F classroom peers, and this is also a result of lessened F2F feedback (Yough et al., 2017). Students have indicated that they prefer both typed individual feedback and face-to-face feedback (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015). Considering these various forms of feedback, there are numerous methods instructors can implement to provide feedback to their students. These methods include automated digital badges, discussion forms, peer-to-peer feedback, video feedback, and traditional written feedback on assignments.

Digital Badges for Automated Feedback

Within the online learning industry, many institutions have automated feedback for students in the form of digital badges to enhance student motivation (Besser & Newby, 2020). Digital badges can be a significant motivator for students in the online classroom (Besser & Newby, 2020; Shields & Chugh, 2017). The use of digital badging is a newer practice that is found within classrooms utilizing gamification (Stefaniak & Carey, 2019). This form of motivating students is found within Mastery Learning by Bloom (1968), and these badges are a continuous form of communication between the student and instructor (Besser & Newby, 2020). The use of digital badges has multiple purposes, one of which is to incentivize learners to engage in positive learning behaviors and engage in their studies (Shields & Chugh, 2017). Instructors can implement the use of badges and set their parameters (Shields & Chugh, 2017). This gives

the instructor the ability to modify the badge parameters to align with learning outcomes while increasing the student's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Stefaniak & Carey, 2019). The use of the digital badge system assists in promoting both the student's intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Stefaniak & Carey, 2019). These badges are a reward, or micro credential, that students obtain when they meet specific criteria, and the badges are utilized to keep the online student active and involved in their studies (Stefankiak & Carey, 2019). Digital badging allows instructors to maximize their feedback practices (Besser & Newby, 2020). While they do not replace direct instructor feedback, digital badging can enhance the overall student experience by providing another form of feedback to enhance student motivation (Besser & Newby, 2020). The use of digital badges within the online classroom has had positive feedback within higher education (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017). Students who expressed a positive experience with the badges during their higher education experience, felt they had achieved something more tangible and that the badge system supported their desire for ongoing professional development (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017).

A common theme found within the higher education instructor community is an increased workload when these badges are implemented (Stefankiak & Carey, 2019). With many learning management systems (LMS) not able to issue badges embedded in the platform, instructors are forced to spend time on external platforms setting up the digital badge system (Stefankian. & Carey, 2019). However, once implemented, the only way there was a notable increase in workload for instructors was if there was a manual evaluation process versus an automatic evaluation process (Carey & Stefaniak, 2018). Furthermore, instructors who feel that feedback is utilized for an effective purpose tend to see the value in the digital badging system, whereas instructors who feel the purpose of feedback is for improvement have a tendency to reject digital

badges as an effective form of feedback (Chan & Luo, 2021). While digital badging can be an incredible addition to the various forms of instructor feedback, there are instances where these badges can become a demotivator for students (Coleman, 2017). Another area to consider is how the digital badges are being utilized within the classroom setting. Since these badges are tied directly to the institution the student is attending, they may not be acknowledged within other institutions (Dyjur & Lindstrom, 2017). Digital badges are a newer form of feedback that must be considered when looking into instructor feedback methods (Besser & Newby, 2020).

Instructor Feedback Using Discussion Forums

Discussion forums are commonly used within the online classroom to enhance the students' academic experience (Kwon et al., 2019). Online discussion boards are utilized to replicate what would be a face-to-face discussion within the online classroom setting (Champion & Gunnlaugson, 2017). Research has indicated that discussion forums enhance student motivation as instructors utilize their direct feedback to help the student to explore perceptions outside of their own (Kwon et al., 2019). Using discussion boards, students can debate, capitalize on different viewpoints from their classmates, as well as have the opportunity to converse with their instructors about the determined discussion topic (Scott & Turrise, 2021). Current literature expressed that feedback within discussion forums in the form of positive comments has helped drive student motivation (Kwon et al., 2019). Positive feedback, which is commonly found within instructor discussion forum responses, is utilized to enhance student motivation within the online classroom (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Another method to provide personalized feedback to the students within a discussion board is through a video format (Alharbi, 2017). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction have distinctive effects on a student's motivation in the online classroom (Wang et al., 2019). In a research study conducted by Li et al. (2020), the researchers found that there

was a statistically significant relationship between online students' motivation and having a sense of an online learning community. It is critical for a student to have a sense of community and belongingness to enhance their motivation within the online environment (Li et al., 2020). Within this online community, through utilizing discussion board threads, the instructors have the unique opportunity to build the student's motivation. Studies have shown that this is a statistically significant connection (Li et al., 2020). Not only are these discussion board threads able to directly motivate the student through the feedback and discussion given to students, but they also have the unique ability to assist in the growth of the student-teacher relationship (Covelli, 2017; Li et al., 2020).

While there are many positives to the online discussion board promoting student motivation, there are also less than ideal instances to consider. When classes are large, the instructor needs to either choose which students they want to respond to or they must keep their responses shorter which can compromise on the personalization (Li et al., 2020). Keeping the student experience in mind when participating in a discussion board within the online classroom is imperative. In an effort to build the students' engagement and to build their motivation, instructor replies should be timely as well as contain meaningful content (Scott & Turrise, 2021). With larger class sizes, this may be difficult for the instructor to achieve (Li et al., 2020).

Discussion forums are also a form of instructor feedback often utilized within the online setting. Research indicates that indicate instructor feedback within discussion forums helps to motivate the online student population within their studies. Usually, instructors within the online classroom are not individualizing feedback to their student body (Huanhuan et al., 2021). This has the potential to have a negative impact on the student's motivation level as opposed to building up the student's motivation within their coursework (Huanhuan et al., 2021). However,

instructor feedback within these discussion forms has a significant amount of research indicating that they promote student motivation (Kwon et al., 2019). When instructors utilize discussion forums as a method to provide feedback to the students within their classroom and ensure they are responding to their students' threads, it promotes student motivation (Champion & Gunnlaugson, 2017).

Utilizing Peer to Peer Feedback

Within higher education, it is often common practice to incorporate peer-to-peer feedback into the curriculum (Huisman et al., 2018). Peer-to-peer feedback commonly occurs when students are assessing their peers' work as an assignment with the intention that they will provide another lens to their peers while also gaining insight into learning strategies in the process (Ketonen et al., 2020). The purpose of this process is for the learners to engage and facilitate discussions surrounding performance and standards (Simonsmeier et al., 2020). This form of feedback is also utilized to encourage communication with the instructor, as the instructor will also provide feedback on not only the assignment in question, but also on the feedback the learner is providing to their peer (Ketonen et al., 2020; Huanhuan et al., 2021). Instructors leverage this form of feedback in their curriculum to help promote learner to learner interaction, which has been indicated as a predictor of student satisfaction within the online class setting (Bolliger & Martin, 2018). This form of feedback is commonly found within the online classroom as it is a dual-purpose activity. One purpose of the activity is for the learner to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught within the lessons. However, utilizing peer to peer feedback also helps in promoting a virtual community that promotes interaction, communication, and participation due to the lack of interaction within the online setting (Lee et al., 2018).

While peer-to-peer feedback commonly has a positive impact on students' academia, there can be biases present that impact the quality and honesty of the feedback provided (Dijks et al., 2018). Due to the biases and inexperience in providing feedback, research suggests that peer-to-peer feedback is the most successful when used in conjunction with instructor feedback (Fernandez-Toro, M. & Duensing, 2020). However, this form of feedback may provide more to the learner than what is seen at the surface level. Research also indicated that while there may be biases in the feedback that a student is providing, many students, after providing feedback to their peers, go back and modify their submissions which indicates this feedback method is successful in aiding the student to improve their performance (Huisman et al., 2018).

Video Feedback

With asynchronous learning, students do not have face-to-face instruction. Therefore, their feedback is not provided in a face-to-face format. While there is no face-to-face feedback in the online class setting, many instructors have started utilizing video recorded feedback to provide to their student population (Thomas et al., 2022). A clear benefit that video-based feedback has, even over its face-to-face counterpart, is that the student can revisit their feedback as needed (Ryan et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that video feedback positively affects student engagement and motivation (Mahoney et al., 2018). Instructors have a unique ability to provide more personalized feedback to their students when they utilize the video feedback method (Thomas et al., 2022). Another reason the student population prefers video feedback is because students reported feeling this form of feedback provided more important detail. Their instructor elaborated on their viewpoints instead of just providing corrective comments (Mahoney et al., 2018). While video feedback does not provide the student with the ability to conversate with

their instructor at the time feedback is provided, it does close give the perception that there is less distance between the student and the instructor (Mahoney et al., 2018).

With video, the instructor has the ability to articulate their emotions behind their feedback (Thomas et al., 2022). Having the ability to clearly express their feelings in relation to providing feedback to the student, this transparency can assist the student in building a stronger rapport with their instructors (Thomas et al., 2022). Building this rapport is critical in the instructor-student relationship as it has shown to increase student satisfaction as well as increase student retention (Matthews, 2019). Consequently, students applied the feedback that was provided in video format more often than text-based feedback (Bahula & Kay, 2021). In addition to increasing the student's application of the provided feedback, utilizing video feedback promotes open communication between the instructor and student (Bahula & Kay, 2021).

Despite research indicating that student performance and motivation are enhanced through utilizing video feedback, many instructors and markers are hesitant to implement video-based feedback. Instructors and markers report hesitancy, believing that this form of feedback will reduce their grading times (Mahoney et al., 2018). Additionally, instructors feel as though providing video-based feedback does not allow students to actively participate in the feedback process, hindering their ability to respond to the instructor's feedback (Mahoney et al., 2018). Furthermore, there are also issues in relation to the student and instructor having the knowledge and the equipment for both recording the video-based feedback and viewing the video-based feedback (Bahula & Kay, 2021).

Written Feedback

Written feedback is the primary form of feedback provided to students within any classroom setting, but especially the online classroom setting as students do not have the same

opportunity to meet with their instructor face-to-face as their synchronous peers (Agricola et al., 2019). Written feedback in the online classroom is digitized by utilizing software such as Word, where the instructor makes comments on the students' assignments (Johnson et al., 2018). For written feedback to be effective, instructors must be cognizant of the student's prior knowledge when providing written feedback (Knight et al., 2018). The instructor must ensure that they are clear, meaningful, and purposeful with their written feedback and ensure that the feedback given has the ability to transcend into future assignments (Knight et al., 2018).

Research indicates that through the use of writing, they were able to effectively identify what they need to adjust to enhance their academic performance (Sarcona et al., 2020).

Furthermore, students have indicated that written feedback is more time conscious than audio and video feedback (Sarcona et al., 2020). Students have reported that written feedback gives them the ability to easily navigate the feedback provided as opposed to the audio and video feedback formats, where the student would have to rewind and find where the instructor was providing the specific feedback they may be looking for (Alharbi & Alghammas, A., 2021).

While written feedback is the norm in higher education, it has been indicated that combining both written and audio or video feedback is preferred by students (Alharbi & Alghammas, A., 2021; Sarcona et al., 2020).

Timeliness of Feedback

While feedback is a critical component to instructors' helping students maintain their motivation within their course, it is also imperative to consider the timeliness of the feedback provided to the student (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015). When an instructor is delayed in providing the student with feedback, the student may then render it too late. Therefore, they deem it useless as they have already moved on to another topic area (Denton et al., 2008). Learners benefit from

feedback being provided as soon as possible, and this includes, but is not limited to, real-time feedback (Francis et al., 2019). Despite there being evidence that suggests feedback is the most effective when it is given as soon as possible, 15 working days is considered an acceptable timeframe in most cases (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015). While this may be an acceptable timeframe for many institutions, it is essential for the instructor to communicate their feedback turnaround timeframes with their student population at the beginning of their course (Arghode et al., 2018). Many institutions have recognized the importance of timely feedback for their students and have implemented the ability to utilize automated feedback within their systems (Glazier & Harris, 2020). Often, this type of automated feedback is integrated into the learning management system (LMS) that the institution uses and can be used as both feedback for assignments and utilized for automated rapport building between the instructor and student (Glazier & Harris, 2020). Despite feedback being provided promptly, there are times when either the student or the instructor is faced with a lack of feedback literacy, which can negatively impact the student's experience (Carless & Winstone, 2020).

Feedback Literacy

A critical area to discuss within this research paper is feedback literacy. Instructors are providing feedback to their student population in an effort to increase their motivation level and provide them with guidance for future works (Huanhuan et al., 2021). However, there are instances when the learners, especially in the undergraduate setting, are lacking feedback literacy (Zhan, 2019). When a learner has adequate feedback literacy, they are able to appreciate the feedback provided by their instructors and take appropriate actions moving forward based on this feedback (Carless & Winstone, 2020). Undergraduate students experience higher instances of discomfort than their graduate-level peers when faced with critical feedback from their

instructors (Carless & Winstone, 2020). There is often a misunderstanding regarding the purpose of feedback in the undergraduate setting. Many students feel as though it is the instructor's role to tell them what to do to receive a passing grade versus providing them with guidance on how to think critically and obtain a passing grade (Carless & Boud, 2018). In order to have adequate feedback literacy, the student must be receptive to the feedback provided by the instructor, as well as ready to utilize this feedback to aid in the development of their future works (Carless & Boud, 2018). While students must be open and willing to accept the feedback provided by their instructors, instructors are also responsible for maintaining a curriculum environment that is suitable for active learner participation, providing related guidance, and provide their student population with coaching and modeling (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Instructor feedback literacy is another critical component of students having the ability to digest effective feedback. Feedback literacy in instructors is defined as “the knowledge, expertise, and dispositions to design feedback processes in ways that enable student uptake of feedback and seed the development of student feedback literacy” (Carless & Winstone, 2020). Often, instructors provide feedback that diagnoses an error versus providing the learner with advice for improvement (Zhan, 2019). Without the action component of the feedback, the student has difficulty discerning the feedforward portion of the learning process (Ryan et al., 2020). One of the purposes of the instructors providing feedback to their student population is to help them see a perception that is outside of their own (Zhan, 2019). However, there is a significant lack of instructor feedback literacy, which in turn means feedback being provided often is not setting up the conditions for a student to appreciate and utilize the feedback given (Carless & Winstone, 2020).

Gamification

Gamification is an approach to learning that utilizes game elements and game-style thinking in an effort to motivate and engage learners (An et al., 2020). With gamification being a large part of many online classrooms and increasing in prevalence since 2014 (Huang et al., 2019), it is imperative to include this area within the literature review. Gamification has been utilized within the online classroom to improve low engagement rates and improve low completion rates (An et al., 2020). There is also the notion that gamification may reduce university drop-out rates (de la Peña et al., 2021). The use of gamification targets a learner's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation through the use of rewards and interactive content (Razali et al., 2020). Despite research indicating a positive correlation between students' extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, there are mixed reviews on whether instructors are for or against the use of gamification in the online classroom.

Instructor Perspective Regarding Gamification and Student Motivation

While gamification does a lot of the work to engage the student in their studies, teacher feedback while utilizing the gamification approach helped optimize the quality of the students' submissions (Huang & Hew, 2021). This even expands into discussion boards (Huang et al., 2019). This is a critical area to consider regarding student motivation, as discussion boards are where there is a large component of teacher-student interaction within the online classroom setting (Besser & Newby, 2020). When gamification is integrated within the classroom, learners have a tendency to post and engage more within the discussion forums (Huang et al., 2019). Additionally, by using gamification, instructors can alternatively stimulate their learners without the F2F interaction found in a F2F setting (Oliver, 2017). Research suggests that gamification was effective despite the demographic characteristics of the learner (Chapman & Rich, 2018).

Furthermore, research indicates that gamification supports global motivation, positively impacting both student and instructor motivation levels (Santos-Villalba et al., 2020).

Some instructors have displayed skepticism regarding the use of gamification within the online classroom and are hesitant about implementing it within their instruction (An et al., 2020). Overall, the younger generation of instructors has displayed a more open attitude toward gamification within their classrooms than their more tenured coworkers (An et al., 2020). This tends to be due to the more tenured instructors not having grown up in gaming environments and having a lack of experience in this area (An et al., 2020). Instructors have also expressed that there is a challenge regarding teaching learners how to use the gamified lessons, as well as the time required to build the lessons (Sánchez-Mena, A, & Martí-Parreño, 2017). Furthermore, research indicates that there is a negative correlation between gamification and students completing their coursework. However, this negative correlation is isolated to students who have indicated trouble utilizing technology, and this should be considered (Razali et al., 2020). Lastly, instructors report that gamification can negatively impact the learning atmosphere for the students, which can negatively impact student motivation within the classroom (Sánchez-Mena, A, & Martí-Parreño, 2017; An et al., 2020).

Gamification and Intrinsic Motivation

Extensive research has been conducted regarding intrinsic motivation and how it relates to gamification for online students. Research suggests that gamification is increasingly effective for intrinsically motivated students (Buckley & Doyle, 2014; Chapman & Rich, 2018; Saputro et al., 2019). Completing activities that are based on gamification provides the student with a sense of satisfaction (Razali et al., 2020). Research indicates that intrinsic motivation is directly correlated with self-determination, and this transcends into a student's learning motivation

(Razali et al., 2020). As discussed in the previous section regarding feedback, students tend to have more motivation when they obtain feedback in a short time frame (Mulliner & Tucker, 2015). Therefore, research suggests that there is a correlation between being intrinsically motivated in one's online course work and with participation in gamified courseware (Buckley & Doyle, 2014). Gamification has the ability to offer students immediate feedback impacting their level of intrinsic motivation positively (Razali et al., 2020). Research studies indicate that gamification lessons are built to primarily activate intrinsic motivation within the student population (Razali et al., 2020). With research suggesting that gamification appears to be most effective in those who are intrinsically motivated, it is essential to keep those who are extrinsically motivated in mind when developing gamification activities (Buckley & Doyle, 2014).

Gamification and Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is described as behaviors that satisfy a person's external demand, meet an externally set standard, or avoid externally imposed penalties (Buckley & Doyle, 2014). In many gamification lessons and activities, the learner earns some form of reward, typically in the form of points. This earning of rewards contributes to the learner's extrinsic motivation (Razali et al., 2020). Research indicates that there is a positive correlation between the various types of motivation and participation within coursework (Buckley & Doyle, 2014). Research indicates that extrinsic motivation is positively impacted when combining gamification elements with an interactive response system within student learning (Razali, et al., 2020). One of the reasons research finds students are extrinsically motivated to complete coursework in the form of gamification is due to the rewards previously indicated (Razali et al., 2020). Despite there being indications that extrinsic motivation is positively impacted by incorporating gamification into

online courseware, gamified lessons are typically built with intrinsic motivation in mind (Razali et al., 2020). Research suggests that when developing gamification style lessons, instructors and curriculum developers should move beyond focusing on intrinsic motivation and include a focus on extrinsic motivation within the design (Razali et al., 2020).

Impact of Instructor Misbehavior

Recent research indicates that online instructors are largely responsible for ensuring a positive learning environment (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2021). Instructor misbehavior has been shown to negatively impact online students' motivation (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2021). Instructor misbehavior is categorized as any form of instructor communication that interferes with the students learning (Kearney et al., 1991). When exploring how instructors can motivate their undergraduate students in an online setting, it is imperative also to evaluate how instructors can intentionally or unintentionally negatively impact student motivation. When instructor misbehaviors occur within the online classroom setting, they are associated with undesirable instructional outcomes (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2021). In a study conducted by Kauffman (2020), the researcher indicates that "when students perceive the instructors' communication as confrontational, biased, unfair and inequitable, they are more likely to report that the learning environment is unhelpful, not conducive to their welfare, unhealthy and not engaging" (p.191). Some behaviors that are considered instructor misbehaviors are ignoring a student's question, not building rapport with a student, and having poor communication, such as not responding to emails (Zayac et al., 2020).

While there may be instances where an instructor knows they are presenting misbehavior, there are also times that the instructors may be unaware of their behavior (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2021). In addition to there being instances where instructors are unaware of their behavior, there

are also instances that current literature has uncovered where instructors are not considering the repercussions of their actions. In turn, they may belittle or put their students down and create an evident roadblock in the students learning (Goodboy, et al., 2018). Despite the potential instances that instructors are not aware of these misbehaviors, the experiences of the learner are a contributing factor to student motivation (Randi & Corno, 2021). Current literature indicates that students will become disengaged from their classes when they have been impacted by a negative experience (Goodboy et al., 2018). Instructors' practices vary from student to student and from class to class, resulting in a different experience for each learner (Ahn et al., 2021). One misbehavior that instructors may unknowingly be presenting to their student population is poor communication (Lin et al., 2016). The primary goal of instruction is student learning, and student engagement is established through effective communication (Vallade & Kaufmann 2021; Arghode et al., 2018). How an instructor communicates to their student population directly impacts students' motivation toward learning (Lin et al., 2016). When an instructor's communication style comes across as aggressive or argumentative, it influences the level of student motivation within the classroom (Lin et al., 2016). One method suggested by current literature for instructors to overcome instructor misbehavior is to not only utilize their senior instructors' input for further development but also to identify which behaviors could be viewed as misbehavior and actively avoid engaging in such behaviors (Zayac et al., 2020). While research supports the notion of misbehavior negatively impacting student motivation, there is also a significant gap in literature exploring the same issue from an instructor's lens (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2021).

Summary

Current research analyzes online student motivation through various lenses. The recent research builds upon Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement as it reveals multiple methods that have the ability to enhance student motivation in the undergraduate online setting through reinforcement, extinction, and punishment. The various forms of motivation play a critical role in a student's success, and understanding these forms of motivation is crucial to an instructor having the ability to adapt their teaching style to encompass these motivation styles (Cheng, 2019). Current literature provides insight into the numerous methods instructors can utilize in an effort to enhance student motivation styles within the online classroom setting. Some of these methods include the various forms of teacher feedback, as research indicates that prompt instructor feedback is critical to enhancing the motivation of the online students (Vanslambrouck et al., 2018). Additional research regarding the utilizing gamification within the online classroom also has indicated an increase in student motivation and, through gamification utilizing digital badges to reinforce learners (Besser & Newby, 2020; Kwon et al., 2019). The use of gamification in the online classroom has positively impacted students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels, increasing the likelihood of students completing their course work (Besser and Newby, 2020; Buckley & Doyle, 2014; Razali et al., 2020).

Furthermore, it is imperative to consider how the instructor could be playing a role in student motivation through instructor misbehavior (Vallade & Kaufmann, 2021). When instructors display misbehaviors, whether intentionally or unintentionally, research suggests students are negatively impacted (Kearney et al., 1991). While current literature looks at student motivation from a variety of lenses, including the students' perspective and analyzing various

methods to enhance student motivation, there remains an evident gap in research regarding the instructor's perspective on the process of motivating students in an online classroom setting.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Chapter Three of this research study will cover the various data collection and analysis methods utilized throughout the research process. The purpose of this case study was to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. The research study utilized an intrinsic case study design, and it is composed of a sample population of online instructors from an online institution. The study used semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires to obtain data from participants. Using various methods, the research study was able to obtain trustworthiness, and it was evaluated through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This chapter explains the research design and a restatement of the research questions. It will also go over the setting, participants, my positionality, procedures, the data collection plan, and trustworthiness. It concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Research Design

The research design for this study was rooted within an intrinsic qualitative case study approach. An intrinsic case study approach was appropriate for this research study due to the need to develop an in-depth analysis of the process of motivating students in an online setting from online instructors' perspectives (Crowe et al., 2011). A qualitative approach provided the insight to formulate findings that will have the ability to be applied within this online educational setting. Crowe et al. (2011) express that case studies are useful when a researcher seeks an in-depth appreciation of an event, issue, or phenomenon in its natural context. According to Stake (1995), an intrinsic case study is when a researcher uses a case study approach to explore a specific group, occupation, department, or organization. Case study research designs date back to

Charles Darwin's biography in the 19th century (Harrison et al., 2017). Yin (2014) assisted in developing the case study approach as we know it today. He suggested the use of careful screening processes for participants and emphasizes precision, process, and practicality within his approach to the case study design (Yin, 2014). Merriam (1998) also made significant contributions to the case study approach from a pragmatic constructivist viewpoint. Merriam (1998) emphasized that the case study approach in qualitative research must be manageable, rigorous, credible, and applicable within the field. A final researcher that made great strides within the case study approach is Stake (1995). Stake (1995) took a relativist perspective, and within his approach to the case study, he emphasized the researcher's role. Together these researchers influence the design of the approach that will be taken in this study.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the strategies that online instructors use to motivate their students in the online classroom?

Sub Question One

How do online instructors describe the use of reinforcements in their teaching modality?

Sub Question Two

How do online instructors describe the use of negative and positive punishment within their teaching modality to increase student motivation?

Sub Question Three

How do online instructors describe the methods utilized to limit unmotivated behaviors within their online student population?

Setting and Participants

Participants within this study were undergraduate online instructors at Cherry Hill College, a pseudonym being utilized for the purpose of this study. The sample population provided a unique insight into the problem the research study was focused on. Using an intrinsic qualitative research approach with this sample population, it provided the field with new data to aid in resolving the problem being presented within the research study.

Setting

Upon conducting the research for this research study, it was imperative to find a research site that would provide a sample population that provides insight into the problem of student motivation from instructors' perspectives (Francis et al., 2019). Cherry Hill College is the pseudonym name used throughout the study to reference the college utilized when research was conducted for this case study to protect the participants within the study. Cherry Hill College was selected as the research site for the purpose of this research study. Cherry Hill College is a private online college whose faculty and staff operate from remote settings throughout the United States and Canada, with students based in the United States. The institution provided a unique insight into the perspectives of online instructors, as the institution offers multiple start dates throughout the semesters allowing for online instructors to have consistent access to new online students within their online classrooms. This private institution has multiple admissions teams, one student services department, and various other departments within the college's structure. There are multiple instructors within the student services department and designated graders. A unique reason why Cherry Hill College was selected for this research study is that instructors and designated graders within the institution may work in more than one academic program and have a consistently changing student population. This setting provided in-depth

insight into the instructor's perspective of motivating students in an online classroom, and according to Stake (1995), analyzing multiple individuals constitutes a collective case study.

Participants

The participants in this study were 12-15 online instructors who instruct or grade for the undergraduate programs at Cherry Hill College (Yin, 2014). These instructors have more than five years of experience teaching in an online capacity. The sample population size was composed of 12-15 online instructors. The participants in this study were between 25 and 60 years of age and were predominately female with various ethnic backgrounds. The participants were all instructors in an online capacity, and they were located in various regions throughout the United States. I utilized purposeful sampling to obtain the sample population for this research study as described by Check and Schutt (2012). The sample population provided insight into the clearly defined and limited group of online instructors within the undergraduate program (Check & Schutt, 2012).

Researcher Positionality

Using a pragmatist interpretive framework when conducting this qualitative case study, I had the opportunity to gain insight into how online instructors motivate their students in an online classroom setting. The three assumptions - ontological, epistemological, and axiological - are embedded within the research study. An in-depth analysis of my positionality provides insight into where I was coming from regarding the research study (Holmes, 2020).

Interpretive Framework

The interpretive framework that guided this case study was pragmatism. While conducting the research for this study, I analyzed how online instructors motivate their online students. According to Gross (2018), pragmatism is primarily based on the foundation of habit.

From a pragmatism perspective, I focused on the research outcomes and looked to see what works to help find a solution to the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Nowell (2015) expresses that “the emphasis of practical usefulness and consequences of ideas and statements” are at the center of a pragmatism interpretive framework (p.143). Within the research, I looked at different online instructors’ truths and looked to find underlying themes within these truths to identify strategies to ameliorate attrition in online courses. In addition to identifying these instructors’ actualities and learning about their experiences, I explored where they may have fallen into a habitual nature of motivating their students and how this may be impacting their student’s motivation.

Philosophical Assumptions

I brought in various philosophical assumptions into the research study. Ontological assumptions focus on versions of reality, and I explained how they hold a universal reality as opposed to holding a position in favor of multiple realities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, there was an epistemological assumption that explored knowledge and what constitutes knowledge. I explored how becoming an insider into the world of an online instructor would give a vantage point on building data from exploring the participants' experiences (Carnaghan, 2013). Finally, there was an axiological assumption. This assumption investigates my values, and I explore any biases I may bring into the research study, for example, how I currently works within the higher education industry on curriculum design developed to engage students (Lawrence et al., 2019).

Ontological Assumption

The positionality I held regarding an ontological assumption was that there is one universal reality. While there is one reality in which we all exist, everyone who participated in the research had a different perspective on this reality. Upon conducting research for this study, I had to embrace the idea of multiple realities and explore these various realities through the evidence and individuals' experiences and perspectives (Carnaghan, 2013). Upon conducting this research, I reported on these various realities through the study results. I acknowledged that while there may be multiple perspectives on reality, there is only one universal reality.

Epistemological Assumption

Knowledge within this research study was based on the subjective experiences of the participants of the study. By spending time getting to know the participants through various data collection methods, I had the ability to become an insider within the world of online instruction (Carnaghan, 2013). This allowed me the opportunity to obtain subjective evidence utilized for the case study and thus gained an understanding of what the participants were conveying within the explanation of their experiences. These claims to knowledge were justified within the understanding that this knowledge was achieved through the participants' lived experiences (Yin, 2014).

Axiological Assumption

The value which I brought to this study was that they were an online student who believes that there are circumstances in which the instructor could help to motivate the online students by utilizing various techniques. According to Hines et al. (2020), motivation from students is a result of effective instruction. While I was an online student at a different institution than the institution utilized within the study, I also worked within an online institution within the

curriculum department. Having an inside knowledge of how and why a curriculum is developed in an online setting, and its role regarding student motivation, brings conflicting thoughts to their experience as a student. As a student, they believed there are various strategies online instructors could utilize to motivate their students. The curriculum developer component of their background brings a different set of biases. From the role of a curriculum developer, it seemed as though the curriculum is developed to engage the students from the beginning to the end of their course (Lawrence et al., 2019).

Researcher's Role

As the human instrument within this study, it was imperative to provide an explanation of my role within the research site, as well as their relationship with the participants. I was a curriculum developer within the institution where the participants were employed. While I worked within the same institution as the participants, they had limited contact or no with the online instructors within their current role at the institution throughout the duration of the study or prior to the study. Within their position at the institution, I build programs for the institution and works with the Director of Curriculum to brainstorm and implement ways to enhance the curriculum and its processes for their student body, as well as aid in the development of new programs through research and data analysis. With utilizing a case study research design, the bias they held going into the research study was the potential for interviewer bias. With individual interviews being conducted as a component of the data collection, there was the possibility that their body language or tone of voice could have influenced the interview process. This interview bias could potentially impact the way the participants answered the interview questions that were asked.

Procedures

The various permissions required are outlined within the procedures section of this chapter. Permissions include Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix A), permissions for soliciting participants, and the site permissions to do so (Appendix B). Additionally, the procedure portion of this chapter investigates the recruitment plan utilized within the research study. It explores the data collection and analysis plan and how this recruitment plan was able to achieve the necessary triangulation.

Permissions

Various permissions were required to complete the research study indicated. IRB approval (see Appendix A) was a necessary permission required to participate in the research process. In addition to the IRB approval, permission to contact employees of Cherry Hill College to obtain a sample population was necessary by asking permission from the Vice President of Academic Affairs (see Appendix B). I was able to conclude that those were the necessary steps for approval by asking the Director of Curriculum what steps were necessary to conduct research utilizing the staff at Cherry Hill College. Lastly, I received informed consent from each participant willing to participate in the research study (see Appendix E).

Recruitment Plan

The sample population was recruited from Cherry Hill College's online instructor population. The size of the sample pool from Cherry Hill College is 25 online instructors. The sample size consists of 12-15 online instructors from this sample pool, as the literature suggests it is imperative to understand the online instructor perspective in engaging online learners (Yin, 2014; Francis et al., 2019). Within this research study, I utilized purposeful sampling to identify the sample population so that the research effectively answers the research questions and the sub-

questions (Yin, 2014; Patton, 2015). Upon receiving the necessary permissions from the Vice President of Academic Affairs and obtaining consent to begin research via the IRB, I sent out a recruitment email (see Appendix D) to the online instructors within the institution to determine who would like to participate in the research study. Upon receiving responses from those who would like to participate in the research study, I set up a time to conduct individual interviews with each of the qualified participants at a time that worked for them. To qualify to participate in the research study, the online instructor needed to be a current online instructor within an undergraduate program and have at least five years of experience working with students in undergraduate programs, which was articulated in the recruitment email. The purpose of utilizing purposeful sampling within this research study was to ensure the research study participants may articulate insight that will expand upon the research questions (Patton, 2015). All participants needed to sign an informed consent understanding of any risks that are associated with the research study, as well as acknowledge that they agree to participate in the research study. This research study achieved triangulation by utilizing individual interviews, questionnaires, and a focus group to obtain the needed data for the research study.

Data Collection Plan

For this qualitative intrinsic case study, I utilized three forms of data collection. The first form of data collection was extracted utilizing semi-structured individual interviews. I was able to conduct 30–60-minute individual interviews with the participants within the study, the data was collected via video recording on the Microsoft Teams platform, transcribed via Trint®, and common themes were identified utilizing Atalas.ti (Gill & Baillie, 2018). The second form of data collection that was be used in this research study was in the form of group discussions with a focus group (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Through the collaboration within a focus group setting, I

was able to identify common themes and document them accordingly. In the final data collection method, I analyzed participant questionnaire responses. Questionnaires were distributed throughout the sample population via email, and once completed, I examined the answers provided by the participants to determine the themes embedded within utilizing Atlas.ti. I utilized these various data collection methods to obtain a holistic look into the instructor's perspective on student motivation in a qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Individual Interviews Data Collection Approach

The first data collection approach within this case study was the use of individual interviews. The purpose of the individual interviews was to collect data that supports the discovery of common themes online instructors use to motivate their online student population. Through conducting these interviews, I asked the interview questions in the Individual Interview Questions section below to each participant within the sample population. These interviews were semi-structured interviews allowing the interview questions to drive the conversation in a meaningful direction. The semi-structured interviews took place via video call on the Microsoft Teams platform. The interviews were digitally recorded to make it possible to transcribe the audio via Trint® and extract the data to answer the central research question and sub-questions. This form of the research aligned with the case study approach as it investigated the research questions and explored the meaning and perceptions of the sample population to better understand the research topic (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) (See Appendix F).

Individual Interview Questions

1. Please describe your educational background and your role with the institution.

2. Describe the different forms of communication you have with your students and what it entails. RQ
3. Describe a motivated student from your point of view. RQ
4. Please describe the ways you reinforce your students to engage with their coursework in an online setting. SQ1
5. Describe your challenges with motivating students to remain engaged in their coursework. SQ1
6. Describe any circumstances you may provide a student the opportunity to earn additional points toward their grade in your courses. SQ2
7. Describe any way that you utilize positive reinforcement with your students to increase motivation within their coursework. SQ2
8. How would you describe the effectiveness of negative reinforcement within your grading to encourage student motivation? SQ2
9. What else would you like to add to our discussion of motivating students to engage in their coursework that we haven't discussed? SQ2
10. Describe your challenges when trying to engage online students and increase their motivation. RQ
11. Describe the methods currently utilized to identify unmotivated students within the online classroom. SQ3
12. Describe successful methods you use in order to reduce unmotivated behaviors in your online students. SQ3

13. What else would you like to add to our discussion of increasing student motivation while promoting the extinction of undesirable behaviors within your online student population?

SQ3

These interview questions served to explore the central research question and the sub-questions within this case study. These interview questions are embedded with B.F. Skinner's reinforcement theory of motivation and were developed to expand upon the existing literature. These research questions all look to expose common themes found within the instructor's perspective of motivating their online student population.

Individual Interview Data Analysis Plan

Upon concluding the semi-structured interviews, I transcribed the interviews utilizing Trint® software. To ensure the correctness of the transcription, I listened to the audio while reading the transcription to ensure accuracy. After the transcription was completed, I worked through the manuscripts to find common themes within the interviews utilizing Atlas.ti. I conducted the study and worked through the data utilizing the winnowing approach as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The winnowing approach is a method used to code themes within transcribed interviews. I analyzed the data, looked for common themes within the interviews, and coded them accordingly (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I preserved the data and grouped the data into five to seven themes (Yin, 2014). Once these themes are grouped and identified, I who conducted this study utilized the data to formulate codes using sub-coding to effectively analyze the data obtained (Saldana, 2021). I analyzed the data and looked for codes that were found more than two times within the data set (Saldana, 2021). Upon coding these themes and identifying patterns within the data, I charted them within a table for clear interpretation and understanding (Saldana, 2021).

Focus Group Data Collection Approach

A single focus group was conducted to formulate a wholesome view of the various online instructors' perspectives on motivating online students. The focus group was conducted in an online format via the Microsoft Teams platform due to me traveling restraints, and the varying geographical locations of the participants. The use of a focus group within this research study was to unveil rich, in-depth data while uncovering agreements and inconsistencies (Gill & Baillie, 2018). Upon completing individual interviews, the collective focus group was conducted with the participants in the sample population. This focus group was utilized to allow conversation between the participants and provided a deeper insight into the research questions being asked (Stewart & Williams, 2005). I facilitated the focus group discussion and promoted insightful discussion using the focus group questions below. These discussions ultimately provided me with insights into the research topic by exploring the participants' collective perspectives, experiences, and attitudes (Gill & Baillie, 2018) (see Appendix G).

Focus Group Questions

1. Describe the various academic barriers that are removed for your student population to help with student motivation. SQ1
2. Explain the ways you feel the removal of academic barriers for students impacts your student population. SQ1
3. Explain the effect of providing feedback on areas of improvement on your student populations' motivation. SQ2
4. How does letting your student population know they are facing being dropped from their program (withdrawal) help to motivate them? SQ2

5. Describe the effectiveness of outreach to students who have fallen behind schedule in limiting future unmotivated behaviors. SQ3
6. Describe the effectiveness of proactive outreach to students in limiting the student becoming unmotivated. SQ3

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

Throughout the focus group, I recorded the group session and the discussions that took place. Upon completing the focus group, I utilized Trint® to transcribe the audio and Atlas.ti to assist in finding common themes. They then analyzed the data that was collected and identified and coded the themes embedded throughout the focus group interview (Saldana, 2021). While utilizing Trint® and Atlas.ti as tools to expedite the process of extracting the data gained I also worked through the data to code the themes found within the data collected. They charted them within a table for clear interpretation and understanding upon coding these themes.

Questionnaire Data Collection Approach

An open-ended questionnaire was provided to the online instructor participants. Each participant had the ability to answer in their own words without any external influences (Check & Schutt, 2012). The questions aimed to obtain data that provided additional insight into the central research question and the sub-questions within the study. The questionnaires were provided to all participants in the research study to complete via email (see Appendix C).

Questionnaire Questions

1. How would you describe a motivated student? RQ
2. How would you describe an unmotivated student? RQ
3. What are the strategies that you find effective in motivating students? Please explain the use of these strategies. RQ

4. What are the areas in the online classroom you find it most difficult to motivate students, and how do you overcome them? SQ1
5. What strategies do you want to utilize to motivate students in the online classroom?
Describe these strategies below. RQ
6. What are different methods you utilize in the online classroom to reduce unmotivated behaviors in your student population? SQ3
7. How do you encourage participation from your student population within the online classroom? SQ1
8. What do you feel is essential for me to know about your process for motivating students in your online classroom for this research study?

Questionnaire Data Analysis Plan

Upon obtaining the various completed questionnaires from the participants I utilized Atlas.ti to work through the questionnaires to find common themes. Once these themes have been identified and consolidated into five to seven themes, as Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicate, they coded these themes accordingly. Upon coding these themes, I charted them within a table for clear interpretation and understanding.

Data Synthesis

To accurately synthesize the data collected throughout the research process, I looked at the three forms of data collected and compared the findings. When coding the three different data collection methods, I utilized codes that are simultaneous throughout the data. This shows the common themes throughout the various data sets. Once the common themes were determined and where there was overlap within the data sets, I compiled the multiple datasets into one easy-to-read table. According to Cloutier and Ravasi (2021), tables are valuable tools that facilitate

comparisons between datasets and promote the ability to notice patterns, themes, and trends and indicate similarities and differences. This dataset has the coded themes displayed and contains a legend indicating what each of the codes means for interpretation purposes.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness throughout the research study, there was a need to investigate credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Using member-checking, peer debriefing, and triangulation, credibility is confirmed. Transferability and dependability are explored by giving other researchers the opportunity and ability to replicate the research study being presented. Additionally, confirmability is presented to ensure the findings are reflective of the data collected and not that of researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Utilizing multiple approaches to check the accuracy of findings is optimal to ensure a research study's accuracy (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I achieved credibility within this research study by utilizing three strategies. The three strategies used to ensure credibility are (a) member-checking, (b) peer debriefing, and (c) triangulation.

Member-Checking

A technique utilized within this research study to ensure credibility is the use of member-checking. Birt et al. (2016) indicated that the purpose of using member-checking as a validation method is to explore whether the participants' experiences resonate with the results I produced. Member-checking allows the participants to go over the findings and look at the various themes present when the final report is complete (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To ensure the research study is accurate, member-checking was be utilized. The opportunity for participants to

participate in a follow-up interview to provide direct feedback was an option for all participants and the focus group.

Peer Debriefing

To ensure that the research was grounded in data, a technique utilized within this research study is peer debriefing. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), peer debriefing allows an individual who is outside of the research study to read over the study and ask questions; this enhances the validity of the study. Within the study, I will frequently ask peers familiar with online instructors and their role within the online institution, to look over the research being conducted. This will enhance the study's credibility and ensure the research is grounded within data.

Triangulation

Triangulation is a technique utilized within this research study to ensure the study is credible. Triangulation occurs when a researcher can examine evidence from various courses to establish various themes and gather different participant perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For this research study, three different forms of data collection took place, resulting in triangulation. The first form of data collection was through conducting individual semi-structured interviews and analyzing the participants' responses. The second source of data collection was through facilitating a focus group led by me. The final form of data collection was through questionnaires completed by the participants. These questionnaires gave the participants the ability to openly elaborate on the questions in a written form, allowing me to look for common themes through the transcription of their thoughts. The use of triangulation can lead to more valid interpretations of the data (Birt et al., 2016).

Transferability

Transferability indicates that the findings within the present research study can apply in other contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The ability to achieve transferability is primarily due to thick descriptions when describing the findings within a research study (Geertz, 2008).

Throughout this research study, I provided in-depth descriptions of the processes utilized to conduct the research. These in-depth descriptions provide individuals with the ability to replicate the study within other context areas. While additional research studies have investigated the student perspective surrounding student engagement, there is a lack of research regarding the instructor perspective (Dhilla, 2017). Further studies may look to replicate this research study within other sample populations or parameters to gain further insight into the online instructor's perspective of student motivation in the online classroom.

Dependability

Dependability indicates that the findings within the research study are consistent and can be replicated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The processes utilized within this research study are direct and simplistic in nature. Due to the relative simplicity of the research study and its processes, as well as the study is rooted in literature, the study could easily be replicated by other researchers within other institutions looking to evaluate instructor perspectives on online student motivation. In addition to having the ability to be replicated within different institutions, the processes are simple enough that the research can be replicated in other areas as well. My committee thoroughly reviewed the research study alongside the Qualitative Research Director to determine my mastery of these subject areas.

Confirmability

Confirmability is a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). To ensure confirmability for this research study, I utilized triangulation as described above, audit trails, and reflexivity. Triangulation resulted from using three different data collection methods and analyzing these methods. Audit trails and reflexivity will also assist in ensuring confirmability through detailed recording methods and maintaining a reflexive journal.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this research study is voluntary, and participants have the right to decline participation and remove themselves from the research study at any time. Confidentiality is maintained using site and participant pseudonyms. I emphasized that all participant data will remain confidential; however, with the research study utilizing a focus group as a part of the data collection process, I cannot guarantee that others within the group will maintain confidentiality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I emphasized the importance of each participant by respecting the confidentiality of the other participants within the study; however, confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. All electronic data is secured in an encrypted folder to ensure confidentiality for three years. The electronic data is backed up onto two separate encrypted external hard drives. This ensures that if there is a technological mishap with one of the external drives, there is a second backup drive with the data protected. There were minimal risks within this research study for the participants. However, some considerations were emphasized. While I took all precautions to protect the individuals, the participants may communicate amongst themselves about participating in the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Summary

This research study was founded on an intrinsic case study approach. To understand the instructor's perspective of motivating online students within their coursework, a sample pool of 15-20 instructors were utilized in obtaining a sample population of 12-15 online instructors for

the data collection process (Yin, 2014). The data collection processes used in this study were semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and a focus group (Gill & Baillie, 2018). The data collected was coded into themes that uncovered agreements and inconsistencies within the data (Saldana, 2021; Gill & Baillie, 2018). Upon collecting the data from each individual collection process, I compiled and synthesized the data into tables that compare the themes embedded within the datasets. Through triangulation, I will validate and ensure the trustworthiness of the study (Yin, 2014).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this case study was to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. This chapter discusses the description of the research participants and a summary of the research results. This summary includes themes that were unveiled based on the data analyzed from the individual interviews, focus group, and questionnaire. There were six themes that emerged from this analysis with 34 sub-themes throughout. The themes and sub-themes identified assist in conveying the information that addresses the central research question and the sub questions. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a brief summary of the information found within this chapter.

Participants

The 10 research participants who agreed to partake in this case study (see Table 1) were all undergraduate instructors for Cherry Hill College. The participants were all female, who were provided a pseudonym upon consenting to the research study. Each of the participants completed a questionnaire, individual interviews, and seven of the participants were able to partake in the focus group session. The pseudonyms provide the participant the ability to remain anonymous throughout the case study.

Table 1
Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Gender	Education level	Area of instruction
Ann	Female	Bachelors	Allied Health
Madison	Female	Masters	Allied Health
Mary	Female	Associates	Allied Health
Elizabeth	Female	Associates	Allied Health
Lisa	Female	Masters	Business
Sophia	Female	Masters	General Education
Janet	Female	Doctorate	Business
Barbara	Female	Masters	Allied Health
Angela	Female	Masters	Allied Health
Carolyn	Female	Associates	Allied Health

Ann

Ann is the Director of Instruction for Cherry Hill College. She has her bachelor's in business administration with a concentration in Marketing. She started at Cherry Hill College as a part-time employee and has since worked in various roles before being promoted into her current position. In her current position, she oversees two instructional teams, manages the student database, and manages particular cohorts of students. During her interview, Ann expressed that she is the individual who works with students who are at-risk for programmatic withdrawal, and this is a primary form of communication she has with the student population within the institution. Ann's transcript revealed that she is eager to help motivate students and help them to navigate the life of an online student in any way possible.

Madison

Madison is an adjunct instructor with Cherry Hill College and works at three other undergraduate level institutions. She obtained her master's degree in Instructional Technology. Madison is currently the lead student support instructor with Cherry Hill College. Madison expressed during her interview that she utilizes the LMS heavily within her instruction and is an advocate for proactive outreach in her student population. Madison's transcript uncovered that she has a passion for ensuring that there is a consistent line of open communication between the instructor and their students, and this can impact student motivation levels.

Mary

Mary has been with Cherry Hill College for over six years, and she began her career with the institution as a student advisor. She is currently a manager with Cherry Hill College and oversees six instructors and is the instructor for one of the certificate programs within the institution. Mary has two associate degrees, and numerous certifications. Within Mary's transcript, it was unveiled that she works hard to meet her student population where they are at regarding their schooling and strives to ensure her students have a positive learning experience which, in turn, impacts the student's motivation level.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is currently the lead instructor for one of Cherry Hill College's certificate programs. She began her career with Cherry Hill College in the Curriculum Department as a subject matter expert auditing the curriculum, and throughout her tenure she has since transitioned her role into an instructor position. Elizabeth has an associate degree from her local community college and has completed two different medical billing and coding programs in two different community colleges. Elizabeth works intimately with her student body and has contact

with her students through various methods. There was a clear indication within Elizabeth's transcript that she places great emphasis on positive communication, encouragement, and the necessity of trying various methods to motivate her student population.

Lisa

Lisa has her bachelor's degree in political science with a prelaw concentration. She has multiple master's degrees, one in public administration and one in human resources and employment and employee relations. Lisa is the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and she is the instructor for one of the certificate programs Cherry Hill College offers. She oversees various departments including, but not limited to, instructional support, registration, the instructional team, and student success coordinators. According to Lisa's transcript, it is evident she emphasizes having an understanding of the students' extrinsic motivators and draws on these in an effort to encourage her student population to persevere.

Sophia

Sophia's highest level of education is a master's degree in business administration. She began working for Cherry Hill College while she was still pursuing her education. She started working in the Admissions Department, moved into an employee training and human resources position, and finally her role shifted into managing three of the instructional teams and instructing one of the associate level general education courses. Sophia's transcript had a substantial emphasis on the importance of proactive outreach to her student population. The findings in her transcript revealed that she feels providing a safe space for her students is imperative to enhancing student motivation.

Janet

Janet has a doctoral degree in English literature, a master's degree in English, and a bachelor's degree in philosophy. At Cherry Hill College, she was responsible for assisting the Curriculum Department in strengthening the curriculum offered to students, tracking achievement outcomes, overseeing the externship process, managing the Career Services department, and instructing two of the courses the institution offered. A review of Janet's transcript revealed she emphasizes the importance instructor awareness and engagement within their courses and with their student. Through this awareness and engagement, the instructor has the ability to impact student motivation.

Barbara

Barbara has worked in a teaching capacity for 24 years and is currently working at Cherry Hill College teaching in the allied health programs. In addition to her role as an instructor, Barbara also works alongside the curriculum team to review courses to ensure a user-friendly experience and evaluate the content for accuracy. She obtained a bachelor's degree in education, and she holds a master's degree in health science administration. An analysis of Barbara's transcript revealed that she seeks to reinforce her students while alleviating any barriers within her control.

Angela

Angela has worked in the higher education sector for 20 years and has been with Cherry Hill College since 2022. She has obtained her master's degree in business administration with a concentration in health service administration, and she also has an associate of science degree in medical assisting. She is currently the lead instructor for one of the certificate programs within Cherry Hill College and works intimately with the student population within that program. A

review of Angela's transcript shows that she supports the notion of instructor motivation level. The instructor level of engagement with the student population directly correlates to a student motivation level (Lin et al., 2016).

Carolyn

Carolyn has an associate of science degree and associate of arts degree in health information management. She has been instructing in an online capacity for seven years and has been working with Cherry Hill College for two and a half years. She currently works as an instructor for one of Cherry Hill College's allied health certificates. An analysis of Carolyn's transcript uncovered that she believes in finding the root of the students' extrinsic motivation, and utilizing this as a reminder alongside consistent outreach, can aid in building a student's motivation.

Results

While exploring student motivation through the instructor lens, various themes were unveiled. Purposeful sampling and snowball sampling were utilized to provide in-depth data of student motivation from an instructors' perspective. After analyzing the data collected from the questionnaire, individual interviews, and the focus group session, six themes emerged, and 34 sub-themes surfaced to answer the central research question and the sub questions. To analyze the data collected, interviews were recorded from the Microsoft Teams platform, and then the mp4 files were transcribed via Trint® software, and manually checked for accuracy. The data were then coded, organized, and charted utilizing Atlas.ti, and this formed an interpretation of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Table 2 presents the alignment of the research questions to the questions in the questionnaires, individual interviews, and the focus group session.

Table 2
Alignment of Research Questions to Questionnaires, Individual Interviews, and Focus Group

Question	Questionnaire Questions	Interview Questions	Focus Group Questions
What are the strategies that online instructors use to motivate their students in the online classroom?	1, 2, 3, 5	2, 3, 10	
How do online instructors describe the use of reinforcements in their teaching modality?	4, 7	4, 5	1, 2
How do online instructors describe the use of negative and positive punishment within their teaching modality to increase student motivation?		6, 7, 8, 9	3, 4
How do online instructors describe the methods utilized to limit unmotivated behaviors within their online student population?	6	11, 12, 13	5, 6

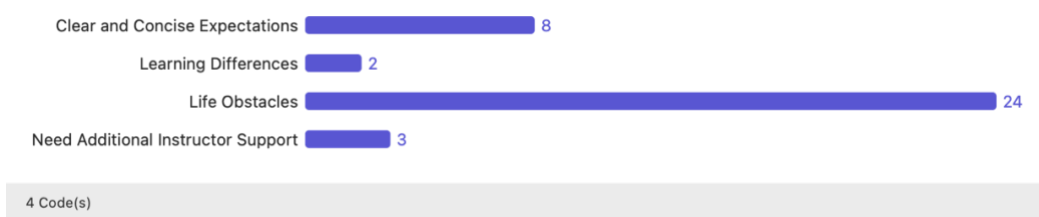
Theme 1: Barriers to Student Motivation

A prominent theme that was found consistently throughout the data were barriers to motivation for the student population. Collectively the instructors at Cherry Hill College expressed that students often were perceived to be what many would consider unmotivated, but in actuality they were facing barriers regarding their learning experience. Janet expressed in her

interview that “oftentimes I think the things that have made them unmotivated are barriers that they perceive as unchangeable”. In Figure 1, the various sub-themes found in theme one are charted in a bar graph indicating the frequency in which each sub-theme was found throughout the data.

Figure 1

Barriers to Student Motivation Sub-Theme Frequency



Clear and Concise Expectations

Within the theme of barriers to student motivation, clear and concise expectations was present eight times throughout the data. The sub-theme of clear and concise expectations was multifaceted. When the participants were asked what methods they utilize to reduce unmotivated behaviors, one participant responded with “set clear guidelines and expectations”. Another participant expounded upon this by stating, “it has to become part of the culture of the college and of the learner. Having experience or expectation in one course is simply not enough”. The need for the institution and instructors to have clear and concise expectations was reported as imperative to the student learning experience, and therefore, it can be a barrier to student motivation. Providing clear and concise expectations was reported to be an area of opportunity in various areas within the students learning experience. Instructors report students having difficulty with discussion forms, the learning technology, and assignments. One participant

stated, “It has to become part of the culture of the college and of the learner. Having that experience or expectation in one course is simply not enough”.

Learning Differences

Learning differences were indicated as a barrier that students face that can be perceived as lack of student motivation. The data indicates that often times students who face learning differences are perceived as unmotivated students. However, the data indicates that these learners are not necessarily unmotivated, but they are not able to interact and complete assignments in the same manner as their neurotypical peers. Barbara indicated, “we’re expecting them (students with learning differences) to engage in conversation and they really don’t know how”.

Additionally, Angela stated, “A lot of our students are nontraditional learners, and they are just not tech-savvy”.

Life Obstacles

Almost all the participants indicated that life obstacles are the largest barrier to student motivation. With the highest frequency in theme one, Lisa stated, “They may have been motivated to do this because they thought they wanted this, but that life happens in the middle has derailed them and that’s a challenge”. Mary elaborated on this within her interview explaining “it is hard because students come to you with very, very difficult things in their lives”.

There were various life obstacles indicated by the participants, and these include, but are not limited to, loss of a family member or friend, illness, caring for loved ones, and moving.

Elizabeth provided further insight into this when in her individual interview she stated, “I run into a lot of students who work, have kids, maybe a husband or a wife, and then they have school and maybe they’ve had a loss in their family, or all of their kids are sick”. Barbara stated, “It’s

typically something going on in their personal life, that is the reason why they're not engaging in the class".

Need Additional Support

Needing additional support is the final sub-theme indicated within theme one. This sub-theme indicates the students are in need of additional instructional support. This instructional support ranges from needing more instructor engagement to the student picking up on the lack of motivation the instructor has for instructing. Angela explained in her interview that sometimes "they want more interaction with their instructors". She continued to expand upon this and explained that sometimes "instructor motivation could be a factor in motivating students". Regarding the need for additional support, the data supports the notion that consistent and effective communication is imperative. Janet indicated, "They (students) want more interaction with their instructors. If a student sends an email, I know they expect a reply back. There are instructors out there that just don't communicate effectively".

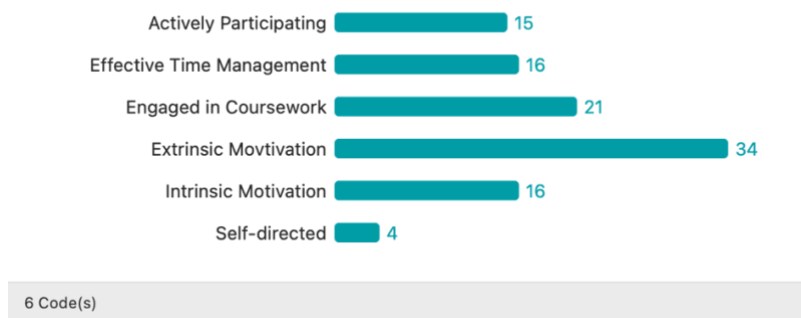
Theme 2: Motivated Student Identifiers

In order to detect motivated students, instructors should determine identifiers students possess that indicate they are a motivated student. This theme had six sub-themes present, and the participants were in agreement regarding what student identifiers are commonly associated with a motivated student. Barbara indicated in her interview, "If they are struggling, they do as much as they can, but they're not afraid to reach out for help". The participants were in agreement that motivated students fall into the following sub-themes: actively participating, effective time management, engaged in coursework, are extrinsically motivated, are intrinsically motivated, and are self-directed. In Figure 2, the various sub-themes found in theme three are

charted in a bar graph indicating the frequency in which each sub-theme was found throughout the data.

Figure 2

Motivated Student Identifiers Sub-Theme Frequency



Actively Participating

Students who are actively participating in their courses are ones the participants in the research study indicate as a motivated student. Upon analyzing the data, it can be concluded that the participants believe actively participating means that the student is engaging with their instructors and peers. Madison expressed in her interview, “asking questions is huge” and added to this by explaining that students who are “actively submitting” can be perceived as motivated. Sophia also indicated in her individual interview that “a motivated student is somebody that can ask questions”. The students are posting substantial discussion form threads and responses, they are submitting assignments and activities, and they are willing to revise their work. One participant mentioned in the questionnaire that students who are “actively engages and completed activities on time” are perceived as motivated. Another participant, expanding on this, explains that students perceived as motivated “participate in class”. Janet indicated when a motivated student completes an assignment, they “will often reach out and ask how they could do better, or If they could revise it and resubmit it even if they got a good grade”.

Effective Time Management

The data indicates that the research participants collectively agree that students who display effective time management skills are often motivated students. Ann expressed in her interview that a motivated student “shows ambition by really kind of wanting to be ahead of their schedule”. Mary indicated a similar perspective stating that motivated students “finish something ahead of schedule”. Effective time management can be identified by the student ensuring that their assignments and coursework are completed on or before the deadline. Lisa supported this in her interview by stating that motivated students “stay on schedule”. These participants indicate that students who display effective time management are often meeting deadlines despite being faced with barriers to student motivation. Elizabeth provided an example of a student who has effective time management and awareness of deadlines by stating a student may “work 10 hours a day and they still managed to take a quiz that evening”.

Engaged in Coursework

Another identifier of a motivated student that the data indicates the participants are in agreement on is students being engaged in their coursework. Janet expressed in her individual interview that “a motivated student is engaged in the discussion forms”. The participants were in agreement that this engagement comes in the form of substantial discussion form initial responses and when engaging with their peers in the discussion forms, their replies are additive to their peers’ thread. Mary stated that motivated students “engage with other students and share how they perceive the forms with other students and share their ideas”. Within the questionnaire, the participants stated that a motivated student “actively engages and completes activities on time” and these individuals “engage with peers and the instructor”.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation was the sub-theme with the highest frequency within theme 2. Participants emphasized the importance of extrinsic motivation within the student in order for the student to continue to persevere through what they termed as life obstacles. The extrinsic motivators that the participants identified included job opportunities post-graduation, grade point average (GPA) goals, the desire to become a degree holder, enhance their position in their life, and increasing their current income. Mary stated that she focuses on helping them to “look forward to hitting small milestones throughout being in the program; whether that’s their GPA or their grades or finishing something ahead of schedule”. Another participant expressed “a student who understands the importance of their education to help them achieve a goal or goals they have set” aid in helping the student remain motivated. Madison elaborated on this notion explaining, “I don’t want them to forget why they started”. A unique component of extrinsic motivation that was brought to light by a participant is how paying for your education, or the repayment of tuition later plays a role in extrinsic motivation. Lisa stated that when “you’re paying for something yourself, or you’re going to be paying for something yourself, you’re a little more motivated to make sure that you do what you need to get done”.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation had a lesser frequency than extrinsic motivation but was still present in majority of the participants’ conversation. There were a few key terms that were mentioned in relation to students displaying intrinsic motivation. These terms were driven, passionate, determined, accomplished, excited, and driven. A participant in the questionnaire described those intrinsically motivated students as “eager to learn”. One participant describes a motivated students as an individual “who understands the importance of their education to help them

achieve a goal or goals they have set and feels accomplishment from completing tasks and relates that to getting closer to their goal”. Lisa explained in her interview that students who are motivated have “something driving them, something significant, driving them to do what they’re doing academically right now”. Janet expanded on this by stating “I am good at motivating the students who already have that little seed of motivation in them, you know, because if you can see it and build on it, that’s great”.

Self-directed

Students being self-directed learners was a sub-theme that was present within theme 2. Barbara described self-directed learners as “one that has internal self-direction, they’re here for a purpose”. The participants collectively described these learners as individuals who present the traits of the other sub-themes within this theme and Barbara further described this learner as someone who is one who utilizes the resources within their courses to succeed. When asked in the questionnaire to describe a motivated student, the term self-directed was indicated by five participants.

Theme 3: Unmotivated Student Identifiers

In order for instructors to aid in motivating their student population, having the ability to recognize unmotivated students is imperative. One participant described an unmotivated student as an individual “who is not energized or excited about the process of learning the course materials”. There were nine sub-themes that were unveiled in this theme upon analyzing the data. These sub-themes are behind schedule, difficulty comprehending material, ineffective time management, lack of engagement, lack of extrinsic motivation, lack of intrinsic motivation, loss of confidence, minimal effort output, and unresponsive to outreach. In Figure 3, the various sub-

themes found in theme three are charted in a bar graph indicating the frequency in which each sub-theme was found throughout the data.

Figure 3

Unmotivated Student Identifiers Sub-Theme Frequency



Behind Schedule

The sub-theme behind schedule had the highest frequency of instances within theme three. The instructor participants frequently mentioned students being behind schedule is an indication that a student may be unmotivated. Ann mentioned that “a huge percentage of them (students) have not submitted anything in 21 days” when discussing students who are behind schedule. Mary added that there are “even students that are behind 30 days”. One participant spoke of an instance where she made contact with a student, and they mentioned they forgot they were enrolled in school because it had been a long time since she had been in the course completing coursework. The participants indicated that they receive a report that specifies which students are behind schedule and not achieving the course learning outcomes. One participant stated that these students “often need an instructor or student support individual to hold them accountable to deadlines or else work is often missed”. Carolyn stated when recognizing an unmotivated student, “it tells in their grades, if you look at their grades and they’re behind several assignments or some of them maybe behind the whole entire course”.

Ineffective Time Management

When discussing characteristics of unmotivated students, the participants in this research study indicated these students frequently have poor time management. Angela stated in her individual interview, “their problems are time management because they have a lot going on”. One of the participants explained “they often try to aid the student in learning effective time management skills in order to prevent them falling behind”. With Cherry Hill College’s unique approach to higher education, one participant stated, “we’re almost allowing too much choice for students who are not disciplined enough to make it happen”. Sophia brought up a valid argument within her individual interview, she stated “a motivated student is somebody who gets the work done in a timely manner, if you’re not motivated to do something, it tends to be procrastination. Procrastination tends to mean it either won’t get done, won’t get done well, or it gets done last minute”.

Lack of Extrinsic Motivation

In a stark contrast from a motivated student, data analysis showed that students who lack of extrinsic motivation were correlated with unmotivated students. Through analyzing the data, it indicated that students who lack extrinsic motivation have not indicated that they have any goals upon the completion of their program. One participant mentioned that the students who they spoke with “either haven’t set a goal for themselves or can’t find material in the course that excites or interests them”. Participants had a general consensus that students who have not set any goals to keep them extrinsically motivated, and this often leads to the tendency to procrastinate. Another participant stated, “students who don’t have any goals tend to be most difficult” when discussing difficulties motivating students in the online setting. One participant mentioned that while many individuals thrive in a more flexible environment, in the case of

students who lack extrinsic motivation “we’re almost allowing too much choice for the students who are not disciplined enough to make it happen”.

Lack of Intrinsic Motivation

In addition to a lack of extrinsic motivation, having a lack of intrinsic motivation was also a sub-theme as an identifier of unmotivated students within theme three. One of the research participants indicated that students who do not have a clear set of goals and sees how various tasks lead to a specific outcome or goal and “as a result, they lack intrinsic motivation to do their work, or they can easily become distracted” when life obstacles are present. When asked how they would describe a unmotivated student, one participant stated, “they lack intrinsic motivation to do their work or they can be easily distracted when life happens”. In the focus group, Lisa mentioned, “for whatever reason, the students aren’t as motivated for the academic piece. That’s when they’re out, when that happens, even though we have opportunities to save them from that point, they’re still done”.

Loss of Confidence

The data supports loss of confidence as a sub-theme for theme three. The data indicates that individuals who are perceived by instructors often display a lack of confidence. Janet explained that “a lot of times they (students) feel if they’ve gotten a bad grade or perceived that, they’re not doing well, and it’s very difficult to get them engaged again”; furthermore, Janet expressed how many times students who are faced with this mindset are afraid to try again because their second attempt may not be as successful, she went on to say “they don’t think they’re good enough”. Elizabeth expanded on this notion by explaining that students may be doing well, but then they reach a course that may be of challenge to them and “they just give

up”. The data further indicated that many times the students with a perceived loss of confidence will express their desire to drop out or withdrawal.

Minimal Effort

When analyzing the data collected, the sub-theme of minimal effort was indicated to be a significant theme throughout the dataset. There were various ways that minimal effort by the student population was described. Some of these descriptions included non-substantive responses in discussion forms, barely meeting the minimum requirements to pass the course, not willing to retake quizzes or exams, and unwilling to revise assignments. Ann explained that these students are active in their course, “but maybe they’re just doing a bare minimum kind of post”. Mary expressed that “responses are little bit cold and a little bit whatever and blasé”. Janet went on to explain that in discussion forms students “maybe doing one post instead of three” like they were supposed to. Expanding on this a participant explained in the questionnaire that unmotivated students work “may be meeting the minimum criteria for passing”. One participant stated that in response to her outreach a student stated, “it’s been so long, I didn’t even realize I hadn’t done anything”.

Difficulty Comprehending Course Material

Participants consistently indicated that students who have difficulty comprehending the course materials are individuals who are perceived as unmotivated. They indicated that many times individuals who do not comprehend the course material have poor grades which can be viewed as the student being unmotivated. Barbara mentioned that within one of the courses she is an instructor, oftentimes individuals have difficulty understanding one of the assignments in her course. She went on to express that many times due to the student’s non-comprehension, they submit an assignment in the incorrect formatting. Barbara stated, “that was a little un motivating

for them because they didn't understand". In addition to Barbara's example, Mary expressed a similar perspective and stated unmotivated students may be "students who maybe just simply misunderstood the assignment". Janet expanded on this explaining, "they (students) don't understand, but they don't want to ask the question". Lisa also explained that "it takes another layer of digging to find out if it is a motivation problem, if it is an academic, like they just don't understand something."

Lack of Engagement

The data collected indicated that lack of engagement by the student within their programs is a prominent sub-theme in theme three. Participants explained lack of engagement as lack of submission of their assignments, not providing meaningful engagement with their peers, disconnecting from the course and the material, a lack of participation, and in these instances the student can be perceived as lazy or that they do not care. Elizabeth expressed that oftentimes the lack of engagement is indicative of "the student just giving up". Ann expressed that she often is "trying to find out why they're not engaged". Janet explained that she notices this lack of engagement when students "have a low quiz score and they never go back to try and raise it" despite them having multiple attempts. One participant, when asked on the questionnaire to describe an unmotivated student used terms like "lazy" and "not focused". Angela tied the lack of engagement back to life obstacles by saying, "its typically always something going on in their personal life, that is the reason why they're not engaging in the class".

Unresponsive to Outreach

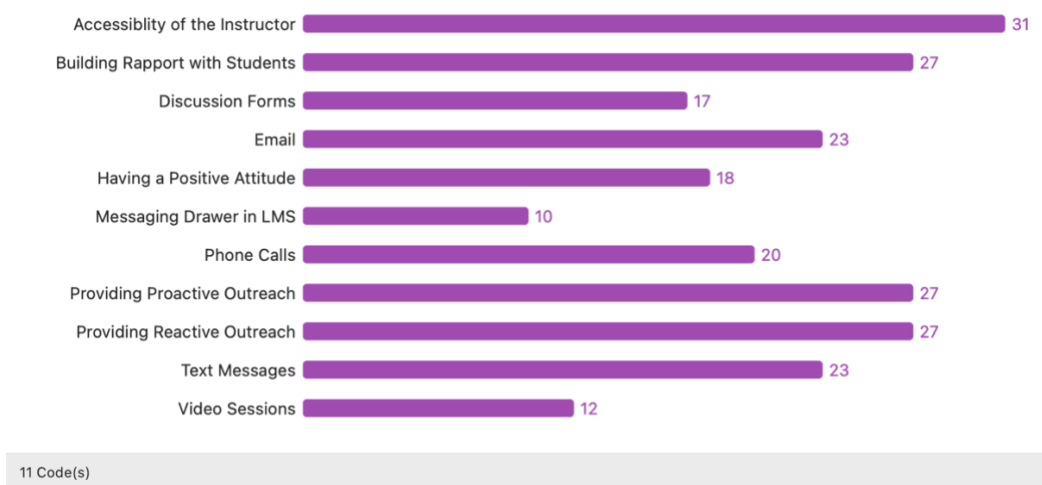
Upon analyzing the data collected, students being unresponsive to outreach had a significant frequency rate. The participants in the study indicated a major challenge they are presented with from their student population is the students unresponsiveness. Lisa mentioned

that “connecting with them, actually getting them to engage with us, that’s the challenge”. With the institution being online, the participants emphasized that virtual attempts are easy to ignore. Madison expressed it can be frustrating because they “don’t simply get back to you or they have totally different contact information and they you basically never hear from them again” she went on to state, “I just can’t reach them”. Some obstacles the participants mentioned are when the student does not reply to outreach attempts and change their number and do not notify the institution. Lisa stated in her interview, “I don’t have a lot of success getting people actually on the phone”. Sophia emphasized that due to the virtual setting, “virtual attempts to contact are very easy to ignore. It’s unfortunate”. Elizabeth even stated she has had students block her number to cease contact.

Theme 4: Instructor Communication

The various methods of instructor communication were a prominent theme throughout the data upon analysis. Communication with the students was indicated by the participants as a significant method to keeping their student population motivated. Madison emphasized that she “really tries to keep those lines of communication open” with her students. One participant also emphasized that being present is imperative, and Angela stated that “we as instructors have to be motivated”. There are 12 sub-themes that were evident within theme four. These themes include accessibility of the instructor, building rapport with the students, discussion forms, email, having a positive attitude, messaging drawer in the LMS, phone call, providing proactive outreach, providing reactive outreach, text message, and video session. In Figure 4, the various sub-themes found in theme four are charted in a bar graph indicating the frequency in which each sub-theme was found throughout the data.

Figure 4

Instructor Communication Sub-Theme Frequency***Accessibility of the Instructor***

Accessibility of the instructor was a prominent sub-theme throughout the data during analysis. The participants emphasized that students having the ability to easily access their instructors is critical for students to remain motivated. Madison stated, “I just really try to make myself available” and Ann expressed that she feels it is imperative to “let them know we’re here”. There were various methods identified for ensuring accessibility of the instructor to the student population. Some of these methods were being present and available in the course, keeping in contact with the student through outreach via phone, email, text message, video sessions, and through the messaging drawer in the LMS. Madison said that in an effort to ensure her students know she is accessible; she “encourages them to reach out about anything and everything”. Mary emphasized the importance of letting the student know your available as an instructor and ensuring they know your office hours. Ann emphasized that a method to reducing

unmotivated behaviors in the student population is to let the student know the instructor is there if they need them for anything.

Building Rapport with Students

Upon analyzing the data, building rapport with students was a prominent sub-theme throughout theme four. The participants generally concluded that building rapport with the student population increased the likelihood that the students would reach out, and in turn the instructors could help to motivate the students who are becoming unmotivated. Mary stated that it helps to “motivate students and encourage students, by just being human”. Each participant also brought an emphasis to professionally sharing their personal stories. Janet expressed that “when they get to know you, they are more likely to relate to you and see that something you’ve achieved is something they can achieve too”. Madison’s individual interview expressed a similar statement when she said, “I very much like to make students aware that I’m also human”. Lisa added more to this topic in her interview when she said, “I’m just really sensitive to how they’re feeling on the other end of that computer, sitting on the other end of the keyboard, and how insecure they may feel or just the whole life happens thing”. However, this sub-theme was not without challenges. Janet explained that “it is tougher to have those moments of connection, I think. And it’s tougher for me to get to know my students”. The data throughout this sub-theme was indicative of students retaining higher motivation when instructors are connected with their students and consistently cheering them on.

Discussion Forms

Discussion forms were dominate sub-theme in the theme of instructor communication. The data presented showed the importance of participating in discussion forms in the student’s program. Participants in the study expressed the importance of the students utilizing discussion

forms as a method of communication with their instructors and peers. Lisa explained that she tried to leverage discussion form to increase student motivation through positive reinforcement. Janet explained that she “communicated with them (students) in discussion forms” as a main form of communication. However, in addition to students leveraging the discussion forms, the data consistently shows the participants believe instructors need to utilize the discussion forms for communication as well. One participant mentioned they utilize the discussion forms to enhance dialogue about various topics related to the course. Janet stated she “encourages them by asking additional questions and let them know I am looking forward to their response”. Another participant elaborated in her questionnaire response saying, “I give them different ideas on how they can answer particular form questions, for example, encouraging them to come up with ideas regarding the question posed”.

Email

Email was a sub-theme within the instructor communication theme that was indicated as a primary communication modality for instructors to their student population. The data revealed that email communication from the instructors and the institution is the primary method of outreach. Madison indicated that within Cherry Hill she utilizes email communication most frequently, while in her other institution they primarily utilize the LMS. The participants in the study indicate that they utilize email for general outreach, for example about their assignments or general information. Sophia indicated in her individual interview, “I tend to use email or texting if I am pursuing a student”. However, they also indicated they utilize email as a means to communicating their words of encouragement and will send memes with praise and motivation. Angela stated, “I liked to send them little motivating memes, like great job, great work, or you’ve got this. I am always trying to come up with something different each week to send

them”. Angela brought up an important consideration regarding communication via email by stating, “if a student sends an email, I know they expect a reply back, and you know, there are instructors out there, not just at Cherry Hill College, but you know there are places that don’t communicate effectively, and I think communication is a key foundation to any successful relation, professional or personal”.

Having a Positive Attitude

The sub-theme of having a positive attitude regarding instructor communication was prevalent throughout the data. Characteristics of having a positive attitude the data revealed were kindness, uplifting, empathetic, compassionate, encouraging, upbeat, and exciting. Mary stated it is important to “just always stay positive”. One participant stated that she approaches her students “from an empathetic, positive, and real-world standpoint”. When asked to describe successful ways to motivating students, Lisa stated, “it’s just more of that positivity in my interactions with them (students)”. Sophia described her successful method as “getting to them ahead of time and that falls into having that personal connection, always giving positivity”. Mary emphasized that when she does outreach to her student population, she “always tries to approach it in the most positive mindset possible to try to uplift them in whatever they’re going through”. Another participant in this online questionnaire expressed that reducing unmotivated behaviors in her student population is effective when “I focus on the positive, whether it be when I am encouraging them to continue on with a graded activity or to point out positive changes”.

Messaging Drawer in LMS

The messaging drawer in the LMS is one of the communication methods the data presented as a sub-theme. The data revealed that the participants would primarily utilize this form of communication as outreach to students regarding course work. Ann stated she frequently

communicates via messaging through the LMS by “sending them a private message and encouragement that says, hey, I am just looking for a little more” regarding students who may need to provide a bit more substance in their assignments and discussions. Janet also explained that she “would message them (students) in the LMS” if they were struggling. In each instance the messaging drawer was mentioned, the participant was speaking in reference to providing feedback or assistance to the student in their assignments or the course material. Ann mentioned that when a student accidentally uploads the wrong assignment, or has a problem with their coursework, she does so through the messaging drawer in the LMS. Lisa stated, “I’ll often use the messaging system within the classroom to communicate with the student depending on what the issue is”. Barbara explained that she often utilizes the LMS messaging drawer to send her students encouraging messages.

Phone Calls

Phone calls were another primary mode of communication that the data analysis unveiled. The data revealed that phone calls are primarily utilized when an issue is present. Ann indicated, “If there is a problem that maybe needs a bit of attention, maybe someone needs a little extra handholding or something like that, that usually involves a phone call with the student”. Janet explained that when “students that I knew had stopped participating in the course, so I reached out to them by email and by phone”. Carolyn explained that when students “are behind schedule, I will reach out. Usually we (the instructors) try to call them”. While there were some instances where the participant mentioned they utilize phone calls to encourage their students, the overarching theme is that phone calls are utilized as the primary source of outreach when a problem is present. The problems varied, however. Some of the problems indicated in the

data are when a student is behind schedule, when the instructor senses the student is struggling, or the instructor notices the student has not logged into their course.

Providing Proactive Outreach

Providing proactive outreach was a prevalent sub-theme within theme four. Upon analyzing the data collected, proactive outreach is described as reaching out to students prior to their being a warning sign there is an issue present. Madison indicated in her interview that she plans her proactive outreach throughout the year and states in “those moments where I do outreach to them to just say her, you’re doing a great job, keep up the great work”. The data indicates that the first proactive point of contact at Cherry Hill College is their post-orientation where they reach out using various methods of contact. Mary expressed that making contact early on in their program is an important method for reducing unmotivated behaviors in the student body. Regarding successful methods in reducing unmotivated behaviors, Mary stated, “I would say the most successful method would be that post orientation contact at that first initial one” emphasizing a strong initial contact. One participant indicated that they do consistent weekly outreach using various contact methods, and another individual expressed that they “think proactive outreach to students just shows we (the instructors and institution) care more than reactive outreach”. Sophia stated that if she or her team had a student file open “and nobody has reached out to the student that week, especially if they saw something positive or good, they had to contact them and congratulate them for their good work” she expressed that this proactive outreach helps prevent the dread of the student seeing the institution is calling.

Providing Reactive Outreach

As a contrast to providing proactive outreach, providing reactive outreach had the exact same frequency within the data set. Reactive outreach found in the data is correlated with the

instructors reaching out to students after there is an issue present. The data indicated a heavy trend of instructors reaching out when students are behind schedule and when assignments do not meet standards. Ann mentioned in her individual interview, “if there is a problem that maybe needs a little bit of attention, maybe someone needs, maybe it’s a little extra handholding or something like that” is a time they ensure outreach happens. The data indicated the instructors and institution keep track of these instances through a report and follow up with the individuals on the report who are behind. Angela stated, “those are the students that I really try to focus on the most, because obviously we want our students to complete the program for several reasons”. Ann also mentioned in her interview that when they look through the report “we’re doing outreach that coincides with that to say hey, it’s been 14 days since you were last in the classroom. Don’t forget to login and complete an activity. Is there something I can do to assist you?”. Despite having a student management report, one participant indicated that it is difficult to keep track of students when they are struggling or go missing because the institution does not utilize traditional cohorts. Janet mentioned that “students who do well don’t often get a lot of feedback, whether it is positive or negative; students that consistently do well or pass, we often forget the middle of the road students because we’re trying so hard to engage with students who have fallen off the grid”. Sophia indicated that with the heavy utilization of reactive outreach as opposed to proactive outreach, the students feel as though they are only hearing from them when it is bad news and this in turn increases the rate of non-response.

Text Messages

The use of text messages as a form of instructor outreach within Cherry Hill College had a significant frequency. All of the participants in the study indicated that they utilize text messages as a form of communication with their student population. Within the questionnaire, a

participant explained that they will “text with them if they’re willing and if that helps them to succeed academically”. Carolyn indicated that “a lot of students don’t really like to take phone calls, they prefer a text”. Angela elaborated on utilizing text messages as a communication approach and stated, “for the students who do stay on track, I send them either a text message or an email saying, great job, I am so proud of you, keep up the good work, and other words of encouragement”. Mary explained that she likes to change up her method of contact, and that includes adding in text messages. Sophia mentioned that when she was managing instructors, she “introduced that everyone was required to send a certain number of text messages” to pilot the text messages from instructors. Janet also explained that she “allowed students to text message because they needed extra support to be able to continue”. Carolyn emphasized in her individual interview that when it comes to communication her students “prefer a text”.

Video Sessions

The final sub-theme in theme four is video sessions. This sub-theme was connected to instances where the participants mentioned either open office hours via the Zoom platform, or hosting a one-on-one with a student who may need further assistance. Sophia mentioned in her individual interview that this was to help the students “so that they could see the instructor face-to-face” since the college’s student population is fully remote. Despite this being a communication option, some participants indicated that this method of communication was utilized infrequently. One participant stated in the questionnaire that a strategy that could be implemented to increase student motivation is to “create more opportunities for one-on-one sessions”. Another participant mentioned in response to the same questionnaire question, that “meeting them in a Zoom meeting to discuss whatever issues they have in their coursework” is a strategy to motivating students. Angela noted that she hosts the new student orientation via

Zoom, and Sophia indicated that Cherry Hill College began to implement required office hours for instructors where students have the ability to join and see the instructor and peers in a face-to-face setting. Sophia stated, “in an online environment, the best way we found to personal connection is this one-on-one video”. While the data indicates it is a general consensus that this is an effective form of communication and the participants feel it motivates students, there is inconsistencies with its implementation. While some participants like Carolyn emphasize utilizing Zoom to go over their coursework, others like Elizabeth indicate it is utilized once in a while.

Theme 5: Effectiveness of Reinforcement

The theme of effectiveness of reinforcement was prevalent throughout the data. Reinforcement was both positive and negative in nature. Within this theme there were eight sub-themes present. The majority of the sub-themes were associated with positive reinforcement and consisted of being a source of encouragement, being relatable, empathizing with student, providing direct guidance, providing negative feedback, and providing positive feedback. The sub-themes that were consistent with negative reinforcement were remove stress of grading and revision opportunity. In Figure 5, the various sub-themes found in theme five are charted in a bar graph indicating the frequency in which each sub-theme was found throughout the data. The light green bars on the graph indicate positive reinforcement methods, whereas the light green bars indicate negative reinforcement methods.

Figure 5
Effectiveness of Reinforcement Sub-Theme Frequency



Being a Source of Encouragement

Within theme five, the sub-theme of being a source of encouragement was the most prevalent. Ann stated in her individual interview that “a lot of times we are these students, we are their only cheerleader”. Data analysis showed that there was a high instance of the participants indicating the effectiveness of providing the students with encouragement to help promote student motivation. Mary mentioned that when she is trying to motivate a student who has been identified as unmotivated, “I always tried to bring back their program and education as one positive thing in their life” as a source of encouragement. The participants frequently mentioned throughout the data how providing the student with positive words of encouragement can help to inspire the students and in turn motivate them. Sophia mentioned in the focus group that “the rule was always say something good, and also give compliments”. Ann mentioned that there are many times the instructional staff are the students only cheerleader and stated, “I know that if a student is kind of on the verge of this being motivated or not, if they can hear in your voice kindness and they can hear in your voice that you care and that you hear, then they hear the instructor hears that I have this problem and they're going to help me through it”. In addition to

praise, instructor encouragement was also found when the participants referenced feedback to the student. Janet mentioned in her interview that she would “try to encourage them to write more to get to the heart of the question” or that she would “communicate with them about strengths in their assignment” and she would encourage them to revise and resubmit for a higher grade if they wanted.

Being Relatable

Being relatable was a sub-theme that was a prevalent within theme five. Madison stated, “I try to tie in things I can relate to, like maybe they can relate too”. Participants indicated that providing the students with the sense of humanity from the instructor, and providing the student with areas they can connect with the instructor motivates and encourages the student. Mary stated instructors can “motivate students and encourage students by just being a human being”. Janet mentioned that “when they get to know you (instructor), they are more likely to relate to you (instructor) and see that maybe something you (instructor) achieved is something they (student) can achieve too”. One participant stated she “tries to inspire them to accomplish their goals amidst challenges and sometimes provide them with my own struggles I overcame as an example”. Carolyn summarized this by stating, “I try to just make sure that I’m relating to them in a way that is helpful to them”.

Empathizing with Student

The data unveiled empathizing with student as a prominent sub-theme throughout theme five. The participants continually mentioned the importance of being empathetic when connecting with their student population to enhance student motivation. Ann gave an example in her interview of what it is like to empathize with the student saying, “I had no idea you were going through this, kudos to you for continuing your education with all that you have going on”.

Madison stated it is important to “understand life happens” with a large portion of the student population having life obstacles. A participant stated in her questionnaire that it is important to “approach students from an empathetic, positive, and real work standpoint” in order to motivate them. This sub-theme was commonly seen in correlation to theme three, barriers to student motivation. Within Lisa’s interview, she stated, “I’m just really sensitive to how they’re feeling on the other end of that computer, sitting on the other end of the keyboard, and how insecure they may feel or just the whole life happens thing”.

Providing Direct Guidance

Within the theme, effectiveness of reinforcement, providing direct guidance was a sub-theme with high frequency. The participants emphasized that providing direct guidance often increased students motivation. Throughout the data, instances of providing direct guidance included helping the student to break their work into achievable tasks, suggesting to the student to revise specific information before retaking a quiz, directing the student to relevant resources, providing a list of next items to help the student get back on task, providing the student with various methods to aid in effective time management, and providing the student with examples of how to respond to peers in discussion forms. Barbara stated she often sees points being lost to grammar and spelling errors. To combat these points being lost, she stated, “I suggest that they use like Grammarly, or they type their discussion in a Word document and let it correct it, and then copy and paste it over to eliminate a lot of the errors”. Ann mentioned in her interview that when her degree students aren’t quite hitting the mark, she will message them and say something like “hey thank you for your contribution. However, we’re looking for just a little bit more. Here is an example of something more substantive in nature”. Mary explained that if she noticed her students not providing enough, she would “suggest maybe to review a chapter or a specific

exercise that has a lot of key points”. Lisa also provided an example of how she provides direct guidance to her student population within her course. She explained that the assignments in her course build upon each other and stated, “if it (one portion of the assignment) comes back to me and it is missing critical components that I need to see to make sure they really understand what’s going on, then I will communicate that to the student again, and ask them to go back to that first piece they did and guide them towards how they need to expand on that for the next one”. Within the questionnaire answers, one participant stated she will guide her students to break their work down into achievable tasks, whereas another participant offers methods to overcome life obstacles such as working with children. The participants also indicate that pointing them to areas in the course where the material is covered and providing ample resources to the student to guide them to success aids in enhancing student motivation.

Providing Negative Feedback

Providing negative feedback was prevalent within the data set; however, some of the participants indicated they would try to avoid this form of feedback due to it being ineffective with this student population. To keep the student motivated, the majority of the participants indicated they will avoid using negative feedback unless they have no other options. Ann mentioned that if she cannot avoid providing negative feedback, she will use a compliment sandwich for her delivery to lessen the negative connotation with the feedback. Ann also mentioned that when it comes to negative feedback being impactful, “I don’t know if I have ever used it like that because I don’t tend to work that way, and I don’t know that, especially with our population of students, that they would do well”. Lisa also expressed that she feels negative feedback is “ineffectual, especially given the challenges of our student population”. On the contrary, Mary stated, “I probably wouldn’t call it negative, but constructive criticism maybe,

and there are instances when a student clearly plagiarized, and we have to speak to that. It is effective to give them the critique that they need, even though that might not be positive, it is needed". Barbara also stated that she "always provides feedback, positive and negative. It lets them know where they stand".

Providing Positive Feedback

With the second highest frequency within theme five, providing positive feedback was indicated as an effective way to enhance student motivation by the participants. Mary mentioned in her individual interview, "I might mention that their last grade was an A, just bringing up the positives as often as you can, at least every week for my students" when discussing increasing student motivation with reinforcement techniques. Positive feedback was frequently paired with proactive outreach from theme four. One participant explained in their questionnaire response, "consistent, uplifting outreach! All students receive weekly/biweekly outreach. Active students receive recognition and encouragement to continue to do so. Inactive students receive an offer of assistance and encouragement as well as progress". In this response, you can see how the two sub-themes were often tied together. The instructors indicate they reach out to students and provide specific feedback regarding various assignments, grades, and achievements the student may have within the course. When speaking about communication with her student body, Janet stated in her interview, "I communicate with them about the strengths and their assignment..." emphasizing her use of feedback. Positive feedback was frequently mentioned to be delivered through email communication or within the instructor responses on discussion forms. Lisa stated, "I liked to make sure that in the public form I'm giving them praise for something specific, not just good just, like hey, I love how you highlighted this about social media influence and that is an interesting way to think about it. Then I will add in, have you thought about it from this

angle”. The participants indicated when providing this feedback and showing them how it correlates to accomplishing their goals, they often notice that the student is more motivated to complete the tasks.

Remove Stress of Grading

One of the negative reinforcement sub-themes evident within the data is the remove stress of grading. Cherry Hill College was frequently mentioned as a nontraditional higher education setting. Removing the stressor of grading is one of the methods the institution differs from other higher education institutions. Lisa spoke on the policy of multiple quiz attempts stating, “the idea that we allow the students to take them (quizzes) more than once. It is not to make their life easier...we want to make sure they are really learning”. The participants emphasized this as a way students will remain motivated throughout their program. Sophia elaborated on this by saying, “I would always allow them to redo it (coursework) because you should always have the chance to better yourself”. Mary addressed this sub-theme when she stated, “If a student’s discouraged with a low score in a form and we’ve gone through the process of giving them the feedback as to why they were scored as such, we also give them the opportunity to make additional posts to grade those and get a higher score”. The data consistently unveiled consistency in the participants emphasizing to the student they have the ability for multiple attempts. Ann stated she will often let the students know “if you want to try again, we will allow you to do that”.

Revision Opportunity

The final sub-theme in theme five is revision opportunity. The removal of traditional academic barriers was frequently mentioned in the form of allowing revision attempts. Lisa mentioned in her individual interview, “I try to let the student know what is missing (in their

assignment) and say, if you want an opportunity to increase this, then you need to get back to me and I will work with you on that”. The data consistently revealed instances where participants emphasized the ability for their student population to revise and resubmit their work for a higher grade, including quizzes and an additional attempt on their exams. Janet explained that she frequently explains to the students that they have the ability for an additional attempt and explained the opportunity for revision as “retaking the quizzes, pointing them to the study guides and saying hey, use a study guide, you can go back”. She moved on to emphasize that it is part of the institution’s policy to allow multiple attempts and revise their work for a higher grade. Elizabeth mentioned that she will speak with students that are awaiting their next course to unlock, and she explains to the student, “while you’re waiting for your next course to open, you could go retake a quiz or two after you do some studying and raise that grade even more”. Barbara emphasized in her individual interview, “they can always go back in and add more detail to their peer responses to bring their grades up”. The overall consensus regarding the opportunity for students to revise their work is regarded as a highly motivating advantage for the institution’s student population.

Theme 6: Effectiveness of Punishment

Punishment is commonly utilized in the higher education setting, and instructors play a role in the consequences students face when not meeting the standards outlined by the institution they attend. Instructors indicate that individuals who are facing punishment are those who are behind schedule and not submitting the required coursework. When discussing punishment, Mary indicated that students often want to be told exactly what to do and she mentioned that “sometimes the threat of being withdrawn or dropped...simplifies it for them”. In Figure 5, the

single sub-theme found in theme six was charted in a bar graph indicating the frequency the sub-theme was found throughout the data.

Figure 6

Effectiveness of Punishment Sub-Theme Frequency



Potential for Programmatic Withdrawal

The majority of the instructors within the study agreed that the threat of programmatic withdrawal led to the majority of students catching up in their studies. The instructors mentioned that consequently to the student falling behind in their coursework, the risk for programmatic withdrawal is commonly conveyed to at risk students. Ann conducts majority of the outreach for students who are falling behind and explained if they are not able to catch up “they are administratively non-started, or a traditional institution tends to call that a drop”. When discussing the impact of pending programmatic withdrawal, Carolyn stated. “a lot of times knowing they will be suspended from their program, it kind of entices them to go back and complete an assignment or whatever they have to do”. Lisa mentioned in her individual interview, “they understand what the repercussions are if they don’t complete (their work)”. Sophia elaborated explaining that the students know “there are already consequences for them not turning this in, they’re not meeting their goal”. Angela stated that “a lot of those who are behind schedule are typically placed on academic progress warning” and these students who fall behind are at risk for withdrawal. When the participants gathered for the focus group, one participant elaborated on how the potential for withdrawal motivated the student population. The participant stated, “Getting that email that says you are about to be suspended and a lot of the

time they really jump on board, and they'll go ahead and do it". Another participant jumped in and followed up with, "a lot of times knowing that they will be suspended from their program, it kind of entices them to maybe go back and complete an assignment or whatever they have to do".

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. This case study was designed to answer a central research question, as well as three research sub questions. The individual interviews, questionnaire, and focus group session analysis attempted to answer these four questions. See Table 2 for theme alignment with the four research questions.

Central Research Question

What are the strategies that online instructors use to motivate their students in the online classroom? The participants perspective of the strategies that are considered to be effective in motivating their online student population are centered around being positive in their correspondence with the student population, providing consistent encouragement, embracing a positive attitude, being accessible to the students, and maintaining consistent communication with the student population. In Madison's interview, she emphasized that when students know the instructor is available it helps their motivation and stated when they know the instructor is available "they don't feel like completely at a loss". Various communication methods were revealed when analyzing the data; these include, phone calls, text messages, video sessions, emails, discussion forms, and utilizing the LMS messaging drawer. In order to maintain a consistent stream of communication with the student and to aid in overcoming the barrier of the student becoming unresponsive, the institution utilizes each form of communication to reach the

student. One participant did emphasize on the questionnaire that they will utilize the method of communication the student indicates as their primary method of contact if it was notated.

The data exposed proactive outreach as being an effective method to maintaining the motivation in the student population. Despite this discovery, the data also unveiled that there is a higher emphasis on reactive outreach in order to aid in reviving the motivation of the portion of the student population that has fallen behind in their schedule. One participant in the focus group stated, “I think the opportunity to reach out to students that are behind to future motivate them would be an opportunity to bring positivity into that context as well”. While this perspective was consistently found in the participants responses, Sophia stated, “I feel like they are only hearing from us when it is bad news, and while not in volume, responses sometimes were, you only talk to me when it is bad”. This perspective supports another participants response in the focus group where they stated, “Proactive outreach from the beginning, it just says we care”. Overall, throughout the various methods of communication and outreach the instructors utilized, the two overarching themes that the participants emphasized as a method to motivate their student population in these communications is to maintain positivity while empathizing with the student and building rapport. In Elizabeth’s individual interview she stated, “I just always try to stay positive. I focus on the positive. I really, really, fully believe in positive reinforcement”. Another participant indicated on their questionnaire that when building rapport and creating a relationship with students, it helps to create the connection to the course they are in.

Sub-Question One

The first sub-question for this research study was: How do online instructors describe the use of reinforcements in their teaching modality? The participants in the study indicated eight methods they utilize reinforcement with their student population. Two of these methods were negative

reinforcement and the remaining six were positive reinforcement methods. The participants emphasized the importance of providing the student with encouragement and empathy. The data indicated that often times the student population this institution works with has a lack of support in their lives. The participants emphasized it is imperative to provide this support for the student because as Ann mentioned, “many, many times, they’re the only breadwinner at home, and there is no one cheering for them or rooting for them”. Additionally, feedback was an imperative portion of the reinforcement process for instructors. The data revealed the use of both negative and positive in correspondence with direct guidance for students were primary methods of reinforcement. Barbara stated in her individual interview, “I always give feedback. Positive and negative feedback. Just let them know where they stand”. Finally, the data indicated the participants often use negative reinforcement through removing the barriers that traditional institutions often impose on students in their instruction. This was indicated through removing the stressor of grading and providing ample revision opportunities for the student population. Elizabeth mentioned in her individual interview that there are times when a student may be stressed about having received a low grade on a gradable item in her course, and she is able to remove this stressor through letting them know they were still able to meet the course requirements to pass, they have the opportunity to revise their assignment, or they can retake their quizzes to obtain a higher grade.

Sub-Question Two

The second sub-question for this research study was: How do online instructors describe the use of negative and positive punishment within their teaching modality to increase student motivation? The data revealed that the threat of programmatic withdrawal is the main form of punishment for this student population. The students who fall behind in their schedule are those

who face academic warning according to Angela. In these instances, the students are facing the potential for academic withdrawal. The data from the focus group unveiled that the punishment of withdrawal from their academic program often motivated the students. One participant stated, “I think it is a huge motivator”. Another individual countered this point and stated “I think it just scares them. It’s not really motivation”. Despite these conflicting viewpoints, the overarching theme is that the majority of students who are facing punishment in the form of withdrawal understand what the consequences are and Barbara stated, “a lot of times knowing they will be suspended from their program, it kind of entices them to maybe go back and complete an assignment or whatever they have to do”.

Sub-Question Three

The third sub-question for this research study was: How do online instructors describe the methods utilized to limit unmotivated behaviors within their online student population? The data unveiled that proactive outreach is what the participants believe has the highest success in preventing a student from displaying unmotivated behaviors. One example a participant provided for the type of proactive outreach she has with her student population is saying, “I see you actively working in your program. I see your forward progress. I love the motivation. Keep up the great work!”. The data also revealed the importance of beginning proactive outreach early on in a student’s academic program, and then maintaining this proactive outreach throughout the course of their academic career. Sophia emphasized in her individual interview that proactive outreach is important, and instructors need to “make sure to not look over them just because they’re not an issue”.

The data revealed that instructor communication with the student population, often involves discussing the original goals set by the unmotivated student at the beginning of their

program. The participants indicated that there are times when an individual may seem as though they are unmotivated, but there may be obstacles they are facing which is giving the instructor or institution the illusion the student is unmotivated. Lisa explained in her individual interview that “a good 65% of our student population falls into a low socioeconomic demographic that has a lot of the life happens barriers going on”. Another participant stated, “I always try to respect the student’s individual situation and I work with that to show how they can accomplish their goals within their own situation”. The data revealed that once the instructor has the ability to determine the underlying source of the student’s motivational barrier, they often utilize reinforcement strategies to reinforce the student’s motivation.

Summary

Chapter four provided an in-depth analysis of the participant responses to further understand student motivation in the online undergraduate setting from an instructor perspective. Participants participated in individual interviews, a questionnaire, and a focus group session. An overview of the development of themes and sub-themes is presented with an in-depth description these themes and how the participants individual experiences were embedded into each theme and sub-theme. The six major themes that derived from analyzing the data were: (a) barriers to student motivation, (b) motivated student identifiers, (c) unmotivated student identifiers, (d) instructor communication, (e) effectiveness of reinforcement, and (f) punishment. These six major themes were supported by 39 sub-themes which were. Out of these sub-themes, the five sub-themes with the highest occurrence are being a source of encouragement, providing positive feedback, extrinsic motivation, accessibility of the instructor, and behind schedule. This chapter resolves with responses to the central research question and the sub-questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. Data collection methods consisted of a questionnaire, individual interviews, and a focus group. This chapter consists of five discussion subsections: (a) interpretation of findings, (b) implications for policy and practice, (c) theoretical and methodological implications, (d) limitations and delimitations, and (e) recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. This research study was conducted to address the gap in literature regarding student motivation from the instructor perspective in the online undergraduate student population which had not been analyzing in prior research. The results of this research study expanded upon previous research examined in Chapter Two regarding student motivation from the student perspective, the impact of instructor feedback and gamification, reinforcement methods in higher education, and how the instructor impacts student motivation from the student perspective. This section below focuses on the interpretation of findings, implications for policy and practice, theoretical and empirical implications, limitations and delimitations, and recommendations for future research.

Interpretation of Findings

This research study's theoretical framework was centered on B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement. Motivation was a central theme found within B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement, and student motivation is at the crux of the research study. Utilizing

Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement as the approach for this case study is critical to understanding the instructor's perspective of student motivation in the online undergraduate setting due to Skinner's (1953) emphasis on reinforcement and its place in education. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement was centered around the ability to modify behavior within individuals through reinforcement.

As outlined in the literature review, this theory aligns with this study due to the prevalence of reinforcement methodology within the higher education setting. This theory provides esteemed insight on how students are reinforced to remain motivated throughout the course of their academic careers. The findings in this research study suggested that student motivation is a multifaceted issue that involves consistent encouragement and motivation from instructors for this student population. The findings of this research study extended previous research by identifying various methods instructors promote motivation within their online undergraduate student population. The current study does not deviate from previous literature examined, but further expands upon the existing literature that aided in identifying six main themes that contribute to the field of study. These six themes help to unveil the methods instructors working with undergraduate students in an online capacity aid in motivating their student population within their studies. By focusing on the instructor perspective of student motivation in the online undergraduate setting, vital information was uncovered on the methodology of instructors promoting student motivation while providing insight into determining if a student is motivated or unmotivated as it pertains to their education.

This research study also provided empirical evidence by revealing that many students can be perceived as unmotivated when there are other factors at play. Leveraging the data collected from the questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus group session, the

present study analyzed the instructor perspective of student motivation in the online undergraduate setting. Previous research on student motivation was conducted through the lens of the students. Therefore, this research study expands upon the existing research and adds insights to student motivation in the online undergraduate setting. Previous research indicated the importance of analyzing student motivation through the instructor lens (McGee et al., 2017; Bolliger & Martin, 2018). Based on the findings within the research study, there were outcomes not previously emphasized in the existing literature regarding student motivation, which emerged as six major themes.

Summary of Thematic Findings

Theme 1: Barriers to Student Motivation. The theme, barriers to student motivation, was identified as an overarching theme throughout the research findings. This theme aligns with a study conducted by Kalman et al. (2020), which identified factors that contributed to ineffective learning for students in the online classroom. The findings uncovered within the data expand upon the current literature to include additional factors, or barriers, that hinder the student from giving the needed attention to their studies; this, often results in the student being perceived as an unmotivated. Kalman et al. (2020) identified family obligations as a barrier to student motivation and the findings of the study support this notion. However, the findings expanded upon the existing research by indicating that students often are faced with life obstacles, such as health concerns, lengthy workdays, homelessness, and the death of family or friends. Furthermore, learning differences, and the need for additional instructional support including, but not limited to, additional interaction from instructors, and ensuring instructor responsiveness when the student needs additional assistance can be perceived by the instructor and institution faculty as a lack of student motivation.

Theme 2: Motivated Student Identifiers. The findings within the data that unveiled the theme of motivated student identifiers, and this finding is in alignment with previous research conducted by Cheng (2019). Within Cheng's (2019) research study, the results indicated that American college students who have a strong sense of self can identify their thoughts and feelings which leads to a higher likelihood of recognizing the sources of their learning clearly. This translates into a student with a strong sense of self not needing to rely on extrinsic or intrinsic motivation to persevere in their academic career. The findings in this theme focused on how the participants can identify what they believe to be a motivated student. The participants discussed how displaying intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as showing self-directed behaviors, are indicators of a student who is perceived to be motivated. The research expanded on current literature by identifying additional characteristics notated in students perceived as motivated such as, displaying effective time management skills, maintaining engagement within their course(s), and participation in their coursework are characteristics of a motivated student.

Theme 3: Unmotivated Student Identifiers. As a counterpart to theme two, theme three, unmotivated student identifiers, aligns with a research study conducted by Randi and Corno (2021), which emphasized that not all students are motivated to learn and participate within an online class setting. This theme focuses on what instructors perceive to be identifiable characteristics in their student population that would be indicative of an unmotivated student. As Cheng (2019) indicated in his research, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation is critical to student persistence in their programs, and the data revealed that characteristics of an unmotivated student support this notion. Furthermore, Ahn et al. (2021) explained through their research that motivated students are identified through achievements such as higher grades, whereas unmotivated students can be identified through lower grades. Data analysis showed that the

participants revealed that they believe students who are not motivated often are behind in their coursework and put forth minimal effort in their studies which often results in lack of engagement. The participants indicated that this is often the result of loss of self-efficacy, ineffective time management, or difficulty with comprehending course materials.

Theme 4: Instructor Communication. The theme of instructor communication is prevalent throughout existing literature. Upon analyzing of the data collected, the various methods of instructor communication and how they impact student motivation was emphasized heavily. In Hill et al.'s (2021) research study, findings emphasized that feedback from instructors can either elicit motivation within the student population or hinder the motivation of the student population. Furthermore, current literature emphasizes that providing individualized communication with students is imperative to enhancing student motivation, and omitting personalization can negatively impact student motivation (Huanhuan et al., 2021). Current literature also indicates that if an instructor utilizes an aggressive or argumentative approach during communication, students may become unmotivated (Lin et al., 2016). The research presented by Lin et al. (2016) indicates that how instructors communicate with their students can directly impact a student's motivation level. The data from current research studies revealed the various methods of communication instructors utilize to aid in promoting student motivation and general correspondence, as well as the importance of accessibility and building rapport during these communications.

Theme 5: Effectiveness of Reinforcement. Reinforcement within higher education is prevalent in Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement. Skinner (1953) outlines the various methods reinforcement is utilized in higher education in order to shape the behaviors of the students. Current literature expresses that through the use of reinforcement, student motivation is

enhanced, and this increases the likelihood of student retention (Agricola et al., 2019; Huanhuan et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2020; Zhao et al., 2021). The data within the current research study builds on the concepts outlined in current literature by outlining methods the instructor can directly provide reinforcement to the student population in lieu of motivators such as external rewards and student achievements. These methods included humanizing the instructor through relatability, empathy, and consistent encouragement with this student population. Furthermore, the instructors would provide reinforcement through the removal of traditional academic barriers, direct guidance, and feedback.

Theme 6: Effectiveness of Punishment. Theme six, effectiveness of punishment, correlates into the research conducted by Skinner (1953). Research suggests that punishment in higher education often is the result of a student's nonadherence to academic policies (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Existing literature surrounding punishment in higher education suggests that the primary reason punishment is implemented is due to academic dishonesty (Miller et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2021; Skinner, 1993). Current literature indicates that there are various levels of ways instructors and institutions will combat failure to adhere to policies within the institution; one of the first lines of defense that students often face regarding academic dishonesty is when an instructor punishes the student with failing grades (Chirikov et al., 2019). As a result of this nonadherence, students are commonly faced with disciplinary actions, and depending on the severity this can include being administratively withdrawn (Taylor & Bicak, 2019). Current literature indicates that as a result of implementing punishment when academic policies are not followed, institutions have been able to curb dishonest behavior (Chirikov et al., 2019). Upon analysis of the current research, the data confirmed existing literature's notion that punishment is an effective reinforcement. The data indicated that punishment in the form of a drop, or

withdrawal, from the student's program is an effective method for motivating students. The feedback from instructors during data collection indicated that when a student has the threat of withdrawal, they will oftentimes persevere through challenges and are removed from academic warning.

Implications for Policy

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), online learning in the undergraduate setting is 97% higher than prior to the fall of 2019. With the online undergraduate community continuing to climb, it is imperative to analyze the policies and procedures at institutions offering online learning. In order to address the problem of this study, which was online students have lower completion rates than those studying on campus (Brown et al., 2020), institutions should reevaluate policies and practices implemented to better align with institutional and accreditor requirements and develop modern approaches that include practices based on the needs of the modern undergraduate online learner.

Implications for Policy

The overall findings of this study provide various stakeholders including, online instructors, institution faculty, and management within the institution vital information in determining how instructors view a motivated student within the online undergraduate setting. Institutional policy makers may use the results of this study to develop and implement policies that are standard across the institution for all instructors and employees who have responsibilities that require student contact. Having standardized policies ensures all students are receiving adequate opportunity for enhanced motivation surrounding their academic careers within the institution. These policies should enhance the student learning experience and foster student

motivation. Lastly, the findings from this study can be leveraged by instructors to enhance student motivation within their online population.

Implications of Practice

Upon analyzing the data collected in the current research study, participants indicated that proactive outreach was an effective method to promote student motivation. When evaluating recent literature, students report that building a relationship between student and instructor plays a significant role in their motivational level (Kalman et al., 2020). Adding additional proactive student outreach throughout the course of the student's learning would provide the student the opportunity to overcome perceived motivational barriers prior to becoming unmotivated. Participants indicated that there is a heavy focus on providing aid to students who are falling below benchmark and at risk for withdrawal in the form of reactive outreach, but less emphasis was placed on proactive outreach after the student completed their post orientation contact.

Implementing practices to enhance student motivation does not happen naturally within the learning environment. In order to implement practices that enhance student motivation, engagement is required from all stakeholders. As stakeholders increase their involvement in enhancing student motivation, the students will obtain a consistent learning environment throughout their studies that promotes the amplification of student motivation.

Theoretical and Empirical Implications

The purpose of this section was to address the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications based upon instructors' perspectives of student motivation in the undergraduate online setting. The findings for this research study were consistent with previous research and extended upon the existing literature by analyzing the perspective of a demographic group that had not previously been explored. This qualitative intrinsic case study's findings merited

recommendations for various stakeholders. These stakeholders include, but are not limited to, online instructors, institution faculty, and management within the institution.

Theoretical

The theory of reinforcement by B.F. Skinner (1953) theorizes that through reinforcement, individuals' behaviors are strengthened or diminished. The theoretical implications of this study indicate that through the use of reinforcement theory, online undergraduate instructors can both positively and negatively impact student motivation. Online instructors who are able to accurately assess a student's motivation level in the online setting have the ability to further impact the student's motivation through reinforcement techniques. The findings of this research study demonstrated how instructors utilize Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement within their instructional practices through their interaction with their student population. The participants in this study indicated the effectiveness of the various components to Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement and were required to draw from their own experiences and knowledge of the theories application in their instructional practices. The findings within this case study corroborates previous research indicating the online instructor has the ability to influence the student's learning outcomes. The findings of this research study enhance the research on student motivation by examining student motivation from an online instructor lens, and this has provided valuable insight into how instructors identify students who are motivated and unmotivated in their studies in the online setting, and methods to aid in enhancing the student's motivation while simultaneously identifying ineffective methods for motivating the online undergraduate student population. Based on the literature review and the findings of this research, it is recommended that online instructors in the undergraduate setting continually assess their student population's motivation level and take a proactive approach to student motivation. In addition to continually

assessing the student population's motivation level, instructors and institutional employees who have student contact should be well-versed in effective reinforcement methods that enhance the student population's motivation level.

Empirical

The empirical implications are that instructors felt practicing reinforcement with the online student population was an effective method to motivate the online student population. Participants were instructed to answer various questions founded in B.F. Skinner's (1953) theory of reinforcement and elaborate on the application with the undergraduate online student population. Understanding critical attributes of the implementation of the theory of reinforcement by online instructors contributes to the needs of online students through the ability to positively impact student motivation. The findings of this study enhanced the literature by examining how the participants view the use of the theory of reinforcement with their online student population to better understand the gap in literature that existed between student motivation and how instructors perceive student motivation in the online setting. Participants provided their perspectives by leveraging their experiences and challenges regarding student motivation in the online setting. These findings focused on student motivation through implementation of reinforcement methods by online instructors. This highlighted how motivated and unmotivated students are identified by the instructors in the online setting and how instructors proceed to communicate with their student population upon making these assumptions.

Limitations and Delimitations

For this case study, there were limitations and delimitations within the research. The limitations are potential shortcomings of the study that cannot be controlled. However, the

delimitations are decisions I purposefully made in order to limit or define the boundaries of the study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included the participant's demographics. The sample population for this research study were all female despite the sample pool having a mixture of demographics. Without having male participants, it is unknown if this would have changed the outcome of the research and omits important information related to the perspectives of male undergraduate instructors in the online setting. The second limitation is that the study was secluded to a single online institution. This limited the sample pool and could have impacted the outcome of the research study. A third limitation of the research study is the limited student population the instructors interact with. The student population was indicated as a majority in the low socioeconomic demographic and the majority of the student population seeks to focus their studies on the allied health field. The final limitation of this research study is the geographical location of the participants and myself. The participants in this study are located in various locations throughout the United States, and this hindered the ability for the research to meet with the participants in person.

Delimitations

Delimitations of this study included boundaries that were set in order to identify the potential participants (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018.) There were 10 instructors who have a minimum of five years instructing in an online setting. These participants had to be over the age of 18 years old, and currently employed at Cherry Hill College. These participants were ideal candidates for this study because there was limited research on student motivation in the online setting from an instructor's perspective. The goal was to explore student motivation from the

instructor perspective in the online undergraduate environment in order to leverage the findings of this study to aid in improving retention rates.

Recommendations for Future Research

Various recommendations for enhancing the understanding of student motivation in the online setting have been highlighted throughout this research study. Based off the literature, the findings, limitations, and delimitations, obtaining a clear understanding of student motivation in the undergraduate online setting is critical to enhancing student motivation and improving retention rates. The vast majority of the research conducted on student motivation has been through the lens of the student.

The first recommendation for future research requests further qualitative studies involving a more diverse demographic to provide a well-rounded perspective on how instructors view student motivation in the undergraduate online student population. Another recommendation for future research would be to replicate this qualitative case study with instructors of student bodies beyond the associate's level. As students' progress through their academic careers, student motivation may shift, as well as the instructor's methodology to addressing student motivation. The third recommendation for research is utilizing a quantitative approach to exploring student motivation from the instructor perspective. By utilizing a different research design, this could offer a more comprehensive analysis of the instructor perspective of student motivation. Furthermore, additional studies should be conducted to include various socioeconomic statuses of the student population. This research study was completed with instructors that primarily worked with students in a low socioeconomic status, and this may impact the results of the study. The research study conducted was limited to a single institution. Due to this limitation, future research should be conducted with a more diverse group of

instructors from more than one institution. Furthermore, future research may apply other experimental designs, and explore the research by utilizing different approaches, such as phenomenological approach (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Conclusion

The purpose of this case study is to describe the process of motivating online undergraduate students from the online instructors' perspectives at online institutions. The findings indicated that instructors have the ability to positively or negatively impact student motivation levels. Instructors utilize reinforcement throughout their communications with their student population; however, instructors utilize identifiers to indicate which students are motivated in their studies, and those who are identified as unmotivated receive additional support in comparison to the students who are identified as motivated.

This chapter summarized the findings and interpretations of the central research question and sub-questions, which leads to implications for future research of student motivation in the higher education setting. This study may not have identified finite indicators of motivation within the student population; however, the research outlined the student identifiers instructors indicate pertain to the motivated and unmotivated student.

As a result of the findings in this research, it is worthwhile to consider implementing policies and practices that have an emphasis on proactive outreach to the online student population as opposed to a heavy emphasis on reactive outreach. Similar studies have been conducted through different lenses, and future research should consider expanding upon these lenses and utilizing various research designs for a more comprehensive perspective of student motivation. Through leveraging reinforcement methods and improving instructor communication

and with the student population, ultimately this will enhance student motivation and in turn enhance student retention.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Date: 4-3-2023

IRB #: IRB-FY22-23-98

Title: EXPLORING THE PROCESS OF MOTIVATING UNDERGRADUATE ONLINE STUDENTS FROM ONLINE INSTRUCTORS' PERSPECTIVES: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Creation Date: 7-26-2022

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: [REDACTED]

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial

Review Type Limited

Decision **Exempt - Limited IRB**

Appendix B

Site Permissions Letter

Dear Jane Doe,

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Educational Doctorate degree. The title of my research project is Exploring the Process of Motivating Undergraduate Online Students from Online Instructors Perspectives: A Qualitative Case Study and the purpose of my research is purpose of this case study is to explore the process of motivating undergraduate online students from online instructors' perspectives.

I am writing to request your permission to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview, complete a questionnaire, and a focus group interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to xxxx@xxxx.xxx.

Sincerely,

The Researcher

Appendix C

Participant Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions descriptively and to the best of your knowledge. Thank you for your participation within this research study.

1. How would you describe a motivated student?

2. How would you describe a student who is unmotivated?

3. What are the strategies that you find effective in motivating students? Please explain the use of these strategies.

4. What are the areas in the online classroom you find it most difficult to motivate students and how do you overcome them?

5. What are strategies you want to utilize for motivating students in the online classroom? Describe these strategies below.

6. What are different methods you utilize in the online classroom in order to reduce unmotivated behaviors in your student population?

7. What are ways you encourage participation from your student population within the online classroom?

8. What do you feel is important for me to know about your process for motivating students in your online classroom for this research study?

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

Dear Online Instructor at Cherry Hill College,

As a student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for an Educational Doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to understand the process of motivating students in an online setting from an online instructor's perspective, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be and a current online instructor within an undergraduate program at Cherry Hill College with over 5 years of experience teaching in the online setting. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a questionnaire that will be completed via Google Forms, an individual interview with myself (approximately 30-60 minutes in length) conducted via the Teams or the Zoom platform, and it will be audio and video recorded. Additionally, the participant would be participating in a focus group via Teams or the Zoom platform, and it will be audio and video recorded. Additionally, complete member-checking to ensure that the results accurately reflect the provided information (approximately 30-60 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or email me directly at xxx@xxxxx.xxx

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent

document and return it to me before participation in the research study. Upon signing and returning the consent form via email, you will be emailed the questionnaire to complete.

Sincerely,

The Researcher

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form

Title of the Project: Exploring the Process of Motivating Undergraduate Online Students from an Online Instructor's Perspective: A Qualitative Study

Principal Investigator: The Researcher

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an undergraduate online instructor who has been instructing in an online setting for a minimum of 5 years. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

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

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

The purpose of the study is understanding the process of encouraging consistent participation of online students from an online instructor's perspective for in online undergraduate setting. The study will provide insight into the online instructor perspective of motivating students within the online classroom.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

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

1. Return this signed consent form via email prior to completing any of the following procedures.
2. Complete a questionnaire that will provide insight into the topic being researched and will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
3. Participate in an individual interview via Teams or Zoom that will take 30-60 minutes that will go over a set list of questions. This will be recorded.
4. Participate in a focus group via Teams or Zoom with other participants that will take 30-60 minutes and will go over a set of questions that will be based upon the individual interviews conducted. This will be recorded.
5. Participants will be asked to participate in member checking to ensure the study's validity. This will take 30-60 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

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

Benefits to society include a further understanding of the instructor's perspective on motivating online undergraduate learners.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

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

- Participant responses will be anonymous. Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms or codes. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on an encrypted external hard drive for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if members participating within the study decide to converse with each other about the research process and about participating within the study and as part of study participating within the focus group the researcher cannot guarantee confidentiality as other participants will be involved within the focus group.

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

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

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

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

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

The researcher conducting this study is Nicole Morin. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at xxx-xxx-xxxx or xxxxx@xxxxxx.xxx. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Name, at xxxxx@xxxx.xxx

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

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

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

Your Consent

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

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

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

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix F

Individual Interview Questions

2. Please describe your educational background and your role with Cherry Hill College.
3. Describe the different forms of communication you have with your students and what it entails. RQ
4. Describe a motivated student from your point of view. RQ
5. Please describe the ways you reinforce your students to engage with their coursework in an online setting. SQ1
6. Describe your challenges with motivating students to remain engaged in their coursework. SQ1
7. Describe any circumstances you may provide a student the opportunity to earn additional points toward their grade in your courses. SQ2
8. Describe any way that you utilize positive reinforcement with your students to increase motivation within their coursework. SQ2
9. How would you describe the effectiveness of negative reinforcement within your grading to encourage student motivation? SQ2
10. What else would you like to add to our discussion of motivating students to engage in their coursework that we haven't discussed? SQ2
11. Describe your challenges when trying to engage online students and increase their motivation. RQ
12. Describe the methods currently utilized to identify unmotivated students within the online classroom. SQ3

14. Describe successful methods you use in order to reduce unmotivated behaviors in your online students. SQ3
15. What else would you like to add to our discussion of increasing student motivation while promoting the extinction of undesirable behaviors within your online student population?
SQ3

Appendix G

Focus Group Questions

1. Describe the various academic barriers that are removed for your student population to help with student motivation SQ1
2. Explain the ways you feel the removal of academic barriers for students impacts your student population. SQ1
3. Explain the effect of providing feedback on areas of improvement on your student populations' motivation. SQ2
4. How does letting your student population know they are facing being dropped from their program (withdrawal) help to motivate them? SQ2
5. Describe the effectiveness of outreach to students who have fallen behind schedule in limiting future unmotivated behaviors. SQ3
6. Describe the effectiveness of proactive outreach to students in limiting the student becoming unmotivated. SQ3