

# **A DUAL PERSPECTIVE ON 7TH GRADE STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING: A CASE STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

Motivation and self-regulated learning (SRL), interconnected constructs, are fundamental for students', not only for their academic success but also for their lifelong learning. Educators play an essential role in enhancing student motivation and nurturing SRL skills, particularly during the formative adolescent years. This qualitative inquiry investigates teachers' and students' perceptions and practices regarding motivation and SRL within the context of a single case study. Data collection comprised interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations involving three teachers and nine seventh-grade students from a Romanian Adventist school. Findings reveal contrasting perceptions between teachers and students regarding student motivation, with teachers often perceiving low motivation levels. Teachers' motivation and their ability to cultivate strong student-teacher relationships emerge as influential factors for enhancing student motivation. Furthermore, the study underscores the limited knowledge among teachers regarding SRL, emphasizing the critical need for training to effectively integrate SRL instruction into classroom practices.

## **Keywords**

Student motivation, teacher's motivation, classroom practices, SRL skills, teacher-student relationship

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## INTRODUCTION

Do these words by a middle school teacher sound familiar to you? “What can we do? How can we motivate students who have stopped trying and challenging themselves? They are fundamentally lacking. They have cabbage patch heads. ...” (Zeffren, 2017, p. x). In the ever-evolving landscape of education, motivation stands as a critical component in teaching and learning (Hornstra, 2013; Mourshed et al., 2017; Woolfolk, 2015) and is a quintessential driver of academic achievement and personal growth (Hattie, 2008, 2023). Motivation, referred to by Gottfried (2001) as *enjoyment of school learning* is the outcome of an intricate interaction of ideas, perceptions, beliefs, interests, and behaviors (Lai, 2011) closely related to self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning (SRL), a fundamental conceptual framework, relates to the cognitive, metacognitive, motivational, behavioral, and affective behaviors that learners employ in purposeful manners (Alvi & Gillies, 2020). SRL has garnered substantial interest in scholarly sources throughout recent decades, as studies have demonstrated its ability to forecast a notable degree of variability in both student achievement and motivation across various academic fields (Kitsantas & Cleary, 2016). Self-regulated learning is especially important throughout the formative years of adolescence when self-regulated learning skills are expected to be fully developed (Pintrich et al., 1994). The seventh-grade students, nestled within the pivotal transition period from childhood to adolescence, represent a juncture in which their learning motivation becomes an indispensable indicator for their educational journey (Somerville et al., 2010).

Although children’s perceived competence and intrinsic motivation are assumed to be very high at the outset of schooling (Bouffard et al., 2003), they seem to decline across middle-school ages through late adolescence (Gottfried et al., 2001). The decline of students’ motivation across the school years has

become an alarming pattern for the academic world therefore, it is still an area to be explored from various angles, using different approaches. Consequently, this study focused on exploring 7th-grade students' motivation and self-regulated learning aims at shedding new light on its effect on their learning experience in order to better understand the current situation. What hides behind this trend? and why does it occur? are issues at the heart of this research. This qualitative study follows a single case study design. The article is organized in four sections, as follows: the introduction, the literature review which discusses the major theories and research, the methodology presents the data collection process as well as the results and discussion of the data analyzed, and the last section conclusions and implications for further research.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The most important theory of motivation is Ryan and Deci's Meta-Theory which aims to explain how human need, motivation, and well-being are influenced in the social context (Reeve et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

One of the mini-theory included in it Basic psychological needs theory suggests that people have three fundamental needs: autonomy—the desire to be self-directed, competence—the need to feel effective in one's interactions with the environment, and relatedness—the aspiration for meaningful connections and relationships with others (Reeve et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The second mini-theory relevant to the present study is the most recent addition to SDT theory: Relationship motivation theory. It outlines the key components of fulfilling interpersonal relationships, especially the reciprocity of autonomy and autonomy support. Enhanced relationship satisfaction, attachment security, and overall well-being are the results of both partners providing and receiving autonomy support, in contrast to defensiveness, insecurity, decreased

well-being, and dissatisfaction within the relationship as results of partners attempting to exert control or pressure over one another. This theory explains why students feel close and secure with some teachers, but distant and defensive with other teachers (Reeve et al., 2018).

Another idea introduced by self-determination theory is that the five qualitatively different types of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) are placed along a continuum from self-determined (i.e., autonomous) to non-self-determined (i.e., controlled) (Ryan & Deci, 2000, 2020). Autonomous motivation is considered essential for students' learning, as it has been linked with all the good things like creativity, adaptive coping strategies, deep conceptual learning strategies and academic achievement (Ahn et al., 2021). Students who are more autonomously motivated than others tend to have higher achievement, including grades and test scores. In contrast, controlled motivation is linked to adverse consequences such as negative emotions, maladaptive coping mechanisms, and lower academic performance (Ahn et al., 2021; Stroet et al., 2015).

International research has documented a gradual decline in students' intrinsic motivation and self-regulated learning abilities as they progress through the educational journey (Gottfried et al., 2001; Pintrich & De Groot, 1990). This decline in motivation and self-regulated learning has been observed in various educational contexts, including classroom academic performance (Pintrich & De Groot, 1990), reading and writing skills (Wehmeyer et al., 2017), online learning environments (Nguyen & Chen, 2023), and during the COVID-19 pandemic (Pelikan et al., 2023; Phan et al., 2023). The decline in motivation among early adolescents (Gottfried et al., 2001) is mainly caused by reduced autonomous motivation (Stroet et al., 2015). This can lead to controlled motivation or even amotivation, especially when students lack basic need support or when teachers are not motivated themselves (Ahn et al., 2021). Studies have shown that intrinsic motivation is a key factor in

students' engagement and investment in learning activities (Gottfried, 2016). Intrinsic motivation leads to higher levels of effort and self-regulation in learning (Nguyen & Chen, 2023). On the other hand, amotivation, which is the absence of motivation, has been found to negatively impact students' knowledge improvement (Nauzeer & Jaunky, 2021). Factors such as self-determination, self-efficacy, and autonomy also play a role in students' motivation and self-regulated learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory suggests that students' belief in their own control over their learning (self-determination) and their confidence in their ability to succeed (self-efficacy) are important for maintaining motivation and self-regulation (Schunk et al., 2020).

The fulfillment of basic psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) and autonomy-supportive environments as proposed by SDT lays the foundation for effective self-regulation in learning contexts. Self-regulated learning (SRL) concerns the process whereby learners actively take charge of their own learning. They actively monitor their learning process and outcomes, and are able to regulate and adapt their behavior, cognition and motivation when necessary to optimize their learning outcomes as they go through the phases in the SRL model proposed by Zimmerman (2002). School performance is significantly influenced by the competence of self-regulated learning (Popa, 2015), highlighting the crucial need for students to receive appropriate support from teachers to develop these skills effectively in the classroom.

There has been little research related to learning motivation and self-regulated learning in Romania. In the past half-century, Romanian education has evolved from state control and an industrial focus pre-1989 to slow post-communist reforms, marked by decentralization and an increase in private schools. However, resource limitations, the gradual shift from communist-era to reformed textbooks, and the persisting influence of the communist intelligentsia have hindered progress

(Pierson & Odsliv, 2012). Amid these changes, there has been insufficient attention to student needs, particularly in terms of motivation. Also, the authoritarian education system in Romania obscured the individual's right to education due to compulsory attendance. Consequently, the need to develop motivational mechanisms was not considered a pedagogical priority as all children and young people were obligated to be students (Popenici & Fartusnic, 2009).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Design**

A single case study research design (Yin, 2016) was chosen, since it affords an excellent way to explore the inner experiences of participants as well as to take a holistic and comprehensive approach to the study of phenomena.

### **Research setting**

The study was conducted in a Christian school, a K-8 Seventh-day Adventist school in Romania, which is founded on a holistic approach to education and values creative approaches to education. Located in a historical neighborhood in an urban area, the school has 160 students enrolled, with one class per grade, and 15-18 students maximum in a class with levels starting from preschool (beginner, middle, and upper levels), primary (P-4) and gymnasium (fifth grade to eighth grade). The teachers' team comprises 20 teachers, one for each level of primary and starting from fifth grade (first year of gymnasium in the Romanian system) one teacher for each subject. The school is accredited by ARACIP (the national accreditation institution, the Romanian agency for quality assurance in pre-university education) and is also currently implementing a pilot curriculum project approved by the government.

## **Participants**

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. According to Merriam (2016), this sampling method places emphasis on in-depth comprehension of information-rich cases. Information-rich cases are those cases from which much may be learned about topics that are essential to the investigation's goal, thus the phrase purposeful sampling. Three teachers and seven students that met the criteria listed below participated in this study.

### **Criteria for selecting participants**

Following Merriam's (2016) suggestions, the criteria for selecting the participants were the following: For the teachers (a) seventh-grade teachers with a minimum of 2 years of teaching, (b) those who may be better informants for the study, (c) teachers with at least 5 - 10 years of experience, and (d) willing to participate in the study. Whereas students needed to be aged 13-14 years (7th grade), and enrolled in a Seventh Day Adventist school since fifth grade (first year of middle school in Romania).

#### **Research Questions**

1. What are the seventh-grade teachers' perceptions regarding motivation in an Adventist school in Romania?
2. What are the seventh-grade teachers' perceptions regarding self-regulated learning in an Adventist school in Romania?
3. What are the seventh-grade students' perceptions regarding motivation and self-regulated learning in an Adventist school in Romania?

What are the current practices used by seventh-grade teachers regarding motivation and self-regulated learning in an Adventist school in Romania?

## Data collection

For the selected participants, qualitative data regarding the class and school context were collected through interviews, observation and documents (lesson plans, submitted by the teachers that agreed to do that). The instruments used for data collection were: semi-structured interviews, focus group, questionnaire. First, semi-structured teacher interviews were conducted (following an interview guide) which questioned their own learning motivation and self-regulated learning skill, their perception of their students' motivation and self-regulated learning, and the practice of activities at class and school level to promote motivation and self-regulated learning. Each interview, between 40 and 60 minutes long, was recorded and transcribed for analysis. Additional semi-structured interviews were conducted with the students to explore their perceptions of motivation and teachers' strategies. Prior to selecting students for the interview (focus group), a brief questionnaire was administered to the entire class. This questionnaire, designed as a graffiti activity, was essential in identifying students for further interviews, showing the students willing to answer in great detail the questions provided. Second, field notes were taken by the researcher during six classroom observations in three different subjects. Third, observation forms were filled in after classroom observations. The observation form was developed based on the items used by Cents-Boonstra et al. (2020) and focuses on collective student engagement, motivating teaching behavior, and demotivating teaching behavior. Fourth, teacher documents (lesson plans) were analyzed. Lastly, the literature review was used to validate results and demonstrate how they complement or add to the other ideas about the same phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

## Data analysis

The transcribed data was analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2013). Initially, the data was coded and organized to establish sub-categories, categories, and finally, common themes. To present the results from the data analysis and ensure the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were assigned to all. The data was organized into folders based on the type of source: one folder named “Interviews” (I), another named “Focus Group” (FG), another “Observations” (O), another for the questionnaire, named “Graffiti” (G), in which each graffiti page was numbered (G1, G2 etc.) and another one for “Documents” (D). Additionally, the lines in the files were numbered to facilitate quoting the participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were identified several themes during the analysis. These will be presented in the next section along with the research questions. They are also presented in a graphic form around the two main concepts, Motivation and SRL (Figure 1).

For research question 1, *What are the seventh-grade teachers' perceptions regarding motivation in an Adventist school in Romania?* two themes emerged: (a) Low student motivation and (b) Importance of teacher's role in students' motivation.

All teachers talked about their students' low motivation. Although not very optimistic about this, teachers notice even the little traces of it “it's clear that there is room for more, much room for more, but I don't see them at a zero level either” (Alex, I, 94-98). Another more pessimistic view compares the current state of students' motivation with that in the past “children with intrinsic motivation are unfortunately very rare. Even in the old days there weren't very many, I don't know if there were 10% of a class” (Morgan, I, 22-26). The

reality of today is perceived in rather pessimistic nuances: “children’s natural curiosity has decreased a lot” (Morgan, I, 29). Children who are more curious are perceived by the teachers as more motivated, attentive, persistent in learning, and they ask more questions (Jirout et al., 2018). At the same time, they can be better learners in school. Significantly, actively fostering children’s curiosity by parents has positive outcomes for both motivation and achievement, with these effects persisting for years. Therefore, the research underscores the critical importance of cultivating curiosity within classroom settings (Jirout et al., 2018).

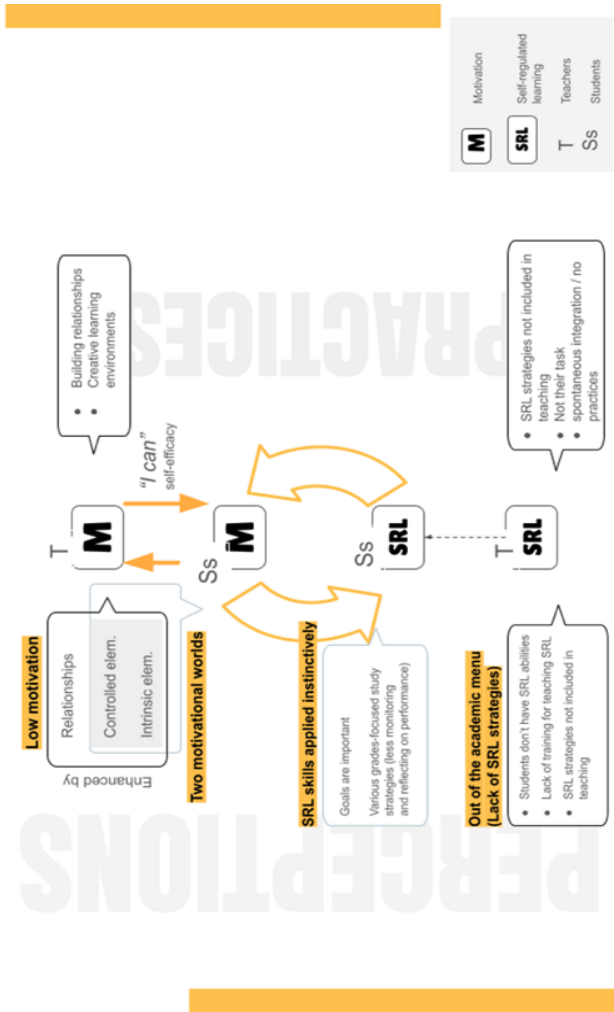
Teachers perceive students’ low motivation as something that can be improved through various ways. One of these is the significance of their relationships with students in fostering motivation: “I build our relationship and this relationship often motivates them” (Alex, I, 129-130); “This relationship is very important for motivation. Yes, because if you don’t have a relationship with him, why would he want to be motivated to learn what you want to give him” (Riley, I, 215-216). This aligns with observational data, where it was frequently noted that teachers who spent more time engaging with students individually tended to have more actively participating classes. Field notes indicate that in such classrooms, students appeared more enthusiastic and willing to engage in learning activities. This idea, one of the most important theoretical implications of the study, illustrated also in Figure 1, is supported by research that indicates that positive teacher-student relationships are more influential on adolescents’ motivation for learning than peer relationships (Wentzel, 2012; Wu et al., 2022).

In the same theme, teachers perceive students to be motivated by two different types of elements (two categories) external or controlling - like fear of punishment, and family rewards: “Some of them are motivated by the family, by their parents. Some of them know that if they get low grades, they have problems with their parents. They still learn, but because

of fear” (Morgan, I, 141-142); and intrinsic elements - enjoyment and fun: “...they are motivated by what they like” (Morgan, I, 135).

**Figure 1**

*7th grade student motivation and self-regulated learning: Perceptions and Practices*



Along with low student motivation, teachers agree on the importance of teachers' role in students' motivation: "I think it is crucial" (Alex, I, 36); "Automatically, [the teacher] has a main role [in motivating students] (...) I believe that students' interest in learning depends on how the teacher presents the lesson" (Riley, I, 35-39); "Yes, [teacher's role is important] and we, as teachers should awaken their pleasure for our subject, not just because they have to learn it or because it will be useful to them in life." (Morgan, I, 149-150). So, they all believe in teachers' essential role in motivating students, even if they are not all confident, they are able to do it. Consequently, an interesting finding at this point is related to the third category in the theme "Low student motivation": "the reinforcement loop". Teachers perceive that students' motivation influences their motivation: "I think it's a circle. It would motivate me the most to see them [the students] motivated, then I would also be more motivated and I would do more..." (Alex, I, 168-169); Results seems to indicate that teachers' motivation is mediated through self-efficacy or the belief in their own capability of motivating their students. While one of them expresses confidently the ability to motivate the students, "At this moment, I consider that I have managed to intertwine the two, and I am doing quite well on the motivation part: both to manage to motivate myself, but especially the students. I motivate myself to plan good motivation, to seek good motivation." (Riley, I, 152-154), the other teachers express indirectly, in a subtle way, their lack of confidence in their motivating skills: "[talking about videos, movies, documentaries, content creators in general]... We can't compete with them because either they are professionals, or they are very talented in what they do there, and it's very difficult." (Morgan, I, 29-30). Findings from the data suggest that teachers with low self-efficacy are less motivated for teaching and subsequently less able to motivate their students. This reinforcement loop of motivation is another significant theoretical implication of the study. It is

illustrated in Fig.1 by the bidirectional arrows between Teachers (T) at the top and Students (Ss) below, indicating the mutual influence where teachers' motivation affects students' motivation and vice versa.

Research supports these ideas: Firstly, when teachers are autonomously motivated themselves, it helps their students' learning and motivation. Teachers who are autonomously motivated in their work tend to use practices that support the satisfaction of students' need for autonomy and competence (Ahn et al., 2021). Secondly, research consistently shows that when teachers believe in their ability to motivate students, it boosts student motivation and achievement. So, teachers' motivation and confidence play a big role in students' success (Mazlum et al., 2015; Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012; Thoonen et al., 2011).

Turning to research question 2, *What are the seventh-grade teachers' perceptions regarding self-regulated learning in an Adventist school in Romania?* One theme has been identified: Out of the academic menu, with three categories: (a) students don't have SRL abilities, (b) lack of training for teaching SRL, and (c) SRL strategies not included in teaching.

Teachers perceive that many students lack developed self-regulated learning skills: "I think some of them don't have any ability, some of them don't seem to know how to self-regulate their learning. And I think they are not even aware of this need" (Morgan, I, 51), while also acknowledging that self-regulated learning strategies are not integrated into teaching practices: "We don't have that. It's clear that it should exist but the reality is that it doesn't exist, it doesn't happen" (Alex, I, 62-66, 68-72). This perception was corroborated by classroom observations, where it was noted that students often required direct guidance and prompts to stay on task. Field notes also reflected a lack of structured SRL instruction during lessons, supporting teachers' assertions that SRL strategies are not systematically included in their teaching practices. Scholars suggest that some teachers lack diagnostic competences in

self-regulated learning (SRL), as they struggle to accurately assess students' SRL abilities (Karlen et al., 2024). Additionally, many teachers interpret off-task behavior, underachievement, and disengagement as indicators of deficient SRL, although these cues may not always be accurate assessments of SRL, as they can stem from various other factors (Callan et al., 2022; Karlen et al., 2024). Studies have shown that teachers rarely integrate self-regulated learning into their everyday classroom teaching and tend to provide limited direct instructions on SRL strategies (Šimić Šašić et al., 2023).

Teachers interviewed also report a lack of training in the area of self-regulated learning (SRL) and express the need for training before being able to effectively teach students in this regard: “The big problem is that most of us don’t know [how to teach it]” (Alex, I, 72); “...some training sessions would be needed for teachers as well, because if they were aware that it is part of their role...” (Riley, I, 310-312). This finding aligns with existing research, which emphasizes the importance of teachers possessing comprehensive knowledge about SRL dynamics and creating a conducive learning environment that fosters SRL (Boekaerts, 1999; Boekaerts & Boscolo, 2002). Furthermore, teachers require substantial content and methodological knowledge about SRL, as well as the skills to properly assess students' SRL abilities (Karlen et al., 2024).

However, teachers generally perceive it as not their main responsibility to explicitly teach students these skills, instead prioritizing the role of the school counselor, main class teacher, or parents: “A school counselor, a class main teacher who can have as a teaching theme learning strategies problems (...) I don’t know how much time we would have to do this... here the class teacher, parents and a school counselor would have an important role” (Morgan, I, 80-82); “If there is no subject in which students are taught how to learn, or what strategies they should employ, someone needs to do it, and this can be done by parents or the class teacher, but it is advisable

for the teacher to do it during their class because there are different subjects and different strategies are needed for them, and although some can be used in a general manner” (Riley, I, 58-62). Research indicates that implementing self-regulated learning skills development plans within teacher training programs can significantly improve teachers’ abilities to nurture SRL in students and therefore make teachers feel more confident in teaching these skills (Linde et al., 2023).

Research question no. 3 shifts the focus to students’ perspectives on both concepts studied. Thus, two themes emerged: (a) “Two Motivational Worlds” and (b) SRL skills applied instinctively.

Students discuss similar motivational factors to those discussed by the teachers, but in a contrasting theme with two categories: (a) personally relevant (intrinsic) and (b) school-related (controlled), reflecting their self-reported high motivation: “I consider myself a self-motivated person and I always try to do my best...” (Laura, FG, 59-60); “I like to learn new things” (Nora, FG, 75). The primary motivators identified include grades, school-related tasks, and class competition: “yes, [grades motivate me] especially the grades of other classmates” (Laura, FG, 145), “I started studying from the sixth grade because Student X was the best and I wanted to be better than him” (Nora, FG, 106). These motivators are often fueled by negative input from significant adults such as criticism and scolding: “I am motivated by the fact that mom and dad scold me at home if I get bad grades” (Mia, FG, 112); “what motivates me the most is criticism or the fact that someone tells me I can’t” (Laura, G1) but also what is enjoyable, and is meaningful, and practical in personal life: “I see myself motivated in make-up and nails services because I like to see girls happy because of my work and I like to help other people too” (Mia, G1); “Developing” (Lucas, G1), “Sports” (Jacob, G1); “I want to earn money to be able to travel around the world” (Nora, G1). Despite some overlapping aspects, there is a notable

contrast in the perceived level of motivation compared to what teachers perceive in their regard.

These findings are supported by research indicating that students' perception of autonomy in learning depends on their ability to find personal value or interest in their schoolwork. Autonomy-supportive teaching involves empathizing with students' perspectives and offering explanations when their choices are limited, helping them establish meaningful connections between their learning tasks and personal goals while avoiding feelings of control. It's important that the goals students reference are intrinsic, providing satisfaction on their own merits, rather than feeling externally imposed (Stroet et al., 2015).

On the other hand, students report utilizing various self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies in their studying and learning, particularly focusing on the performance phase, such as memorization (theme (b) SRL skills applied instinctively): "I re-write the lesson in my own words" (Nora, FG, 28), "I read the lesson or I explain it to someone else..." (Laura, FG, 343) "I summarize key aspects on a sheet of paper then read them many times" (Mia, FG, 381), "I try to memorize from the classroom, by repeating in my mind everything the teacher says." (Emma, FG, 385-386), "I make some flashcards and ask my dad to pick one for me to say." (Lily, FG, 401) However, there is less emphasis on the forethought (planning and goal setting) and reflection (assessment and revision of goals) phases in the model. Goals are perceived important but only at a general level, not particular, applied to specific subjects or learning: "Goals are important because they motivate us to reach some objectives" (Sofia, G1); "Goals are very important in life" (Lily, G1); "Yes, [goals are important] because I have to be organized" (Alexander, G1); "I don't assess my schoolwork, I just do it and at school it is correct most of the times". (Nora, FG, 278); "I don't really evaluate my homework. If I happen to evaluate my homework, I evaluate it with my

classmate X. (...)” (Sofia, FG, 289-290). This indicates a lack of efficient goal-setting and reflection on their performance. Importantly, these strategies seem to be employed instinctively and to be acquired from various sources.

Teachers play an essential role in facilitating students’ active engagement in learning by assisting their students in setting relevant goals, choosing suitable strategies for specific tasks, assessing their motivational levels, and adjusting their performance based on feedback. Research suggests that, although many teachers acknowledge the importance of fostering self-regulated learning in their students, a significant number of teachers express uncertainty about the practical methods to achieve this goal (White & DiBenedetto, 2018).

Regarding *research question 4*, three categories reflect teachers’ self-reported current practices: (a) building relationships, (b) creative and friendly learning environments and (c) spontaneous integration of SRL in teaching/no practices. As it might be expected, teachers’ classroom practices derive from their perceptions, in a mirror-like fashion. Because teachers consider the teacher-student relationship very important for motivation, they invest in building a trust-based relationship with their students: “we have activities that are not necessarily related to the subject class but simply to fellowship, (...) we eat together, sometimes we cook together, we play, we walk together... and this relationship is often motivating” (Alex, I, 129-133).

Also, on a more specific level, because students are perceived as motivated by what they enjoy, a creative learning environment becomes an important context to enhance students’ motivation: “I create an environment that helps them create, they like it ... I do things that ... bring them I don’t know, that gives them a good feeling and that satisfy them” (Alex, I, 119-121); “If they see me there, putting in effort and trying to prepare beautiful things for them, activities and

games, and if I have created a good relationship with them, I believe that motivates them” (Riley, I, 170-172);

Research supports these practices, suggesting that creative teaching strategies that involve students’ creativity can significantly enhance their motivation for learning (Horng et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2012; Manurung, 2012; Seechaliao, 2017). These strategies, such as active learning, practical application of knowledge, and problem-based learning, require the active participation of students and can lead to increased motivation (Manurung, 2012; Seechaliao, 2017). Furthermore, the development of students’ creativity and the promotion of high-level meta-cognitive processes can be achieved through these strategies, leading to increased motivation (Liu et al., 2012).

Corroborating field notes with documents and teachers’ self-reported data, classroom practices appear to be influenced by teachers’ self-efficacy levels: those with lower self-efficacy tend to utilize fewer motivational strategies compared to their more confident counterparts: “Yes, I have a multitude [of motivational strategies I use in the class]” (Riley, I, 219). Observations confirmed that teachers with lower self-efficacy were less likely to employ diverse motivational strategies, such as interactive activities and personalized feedback. Field notes also highlighted a discrepancy between teachers’ reported practices and students’ experiences, highlighting a contrast in perspectives.

Regarding SRL, teachers integrate SRL strategies spontaneously into their teaching: “I am convinced that each of us, then, integrates spontaneously: when we see a deficiency, we mention it” (Riley, I, 310).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study explored some of the complexities of motivation and self-regulated learning in seventh-grade students and their teachers in an Adventist school in Romania, offering valuable

insights into perceptions and practices around these two concepts. The findings emphasize the importance of creating and maintaining positive and close teacher-student relationships to enhance student motivation. Furthermore, the study suggests that for students to be more motivated, teachers need to improve their self-efficacy in motivating students, feeding the motivation reinforcement loop. Another highlight from the data is the need for SRL targeted interventions in students, alongside offering teachers comprehensive training for teaching and assessing these skills to effectively implement them in the classroom and at the same time, creating awareness for the importance of teaching SRL in enhancing student motivation.

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