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Teacher Motivation for Staying in the Profession: Insights from Cambodia

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Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Abstract	6
I. Introduction	7
II. Results and Discussion	11
<i>Level of Motivation of Teachers to Remain in the Profession</i>	11
<i>Factors Relevant to Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession</i>	13
<i>Relationship between Factors of Motivation and the Level of Motivation of Teachers</i>	32
<i>Relationships between Other Indicators and the Level of Motivation of Teachers</i>	35
<i>Predictive Model of Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession in Cambodia</i>	44
III. Conclusion	47
References	52
Appendix	56

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Abstract

Examining teacher motivation is crucial for Ministries of Education to sustain a committed teaching workforce. Through a survey, this study explored the factors that affect teachers' motivation to remain in the teaching profession in Cambodia. Descriptive statistics revealed that teacher respondents view core and contributing motivational factors identified in the study positively. Inferential analysis highlighted significant associations between teacher motivation and indicators such as length of teaching experience, use of personal funds for professional development, adequacy of school facilities, educational attainment, and promotion history. A predictive model further identified a combination of motivational factors (e.g., salary, incentives, benefits, and perception of government policies) and demographic variables (e.g., gender, length of teaching, participation in school-based and peer learning) as significant predictors of motivation to stay in the profession. The results provide valuable insights for policies aimed at enhancing teacher retention by addressing both systemic and individual-level factors.

I. Introduction

According to the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) (MOEYS, 2025, p. 16), a total of 124,941 education personnel serve in the country's public and private pre-school, primary, and secondary education institutions during the 2023-2024 academic year. Teaching is widely regarded in the country as a noble profession. Teachers are respected for their instrumental role in educating the next generation and shaping the nation's future. In addition, teachers are also recognized as role models in society, with knowledge, skills, and commitment to befitting their stature. Despite these, many of them are underpaid, overworked, and lack access to training and resources (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2023).

The Kingdom of Cambodia made significant progress in restoring its education sector from the devastating impact of the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. In the decades that followed, the country rebuilt its teaching workforce and made tremendous efforts to hire teachers and develop their capacities (Pich, 2017). Although some schools have a surplus of teachers, Cambodia continues to face teacher shortages, particularly in rural and remote areas (MOEYS, 2024).

This context highlights the importance of examining teacher motivation. To sustain a committed teaching workforce, the MOEYS continues to seek effective strategies for motivating teachers to remain in the profession and deliver quality education. While definitions of teacher motivation vary across the literature, Han and Yin (2016) define it as “reasons that emanate from individuals’ intrinsic values to choose to teach and sustain teaching... influenced by a number of contextual factors” (p.3). Similarly, Richardson (2014, as cited in Mangaleswarasharma, 2017) describes it as “internal and external factors that stimulate desire or energy in teaching to be continuously interested and committed to make their best effort to support students’ learning goals” (p.2). These definitions highlight the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that help teachers to persist in fulfilling their roles.

In this study, teacher motivation refers to the factors that influence teachers to remain in the profession. Heavily based on Herzberg’s motivation-hygiene theory, this research also utilizes the *Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession*, which highlights core and contributing factors that influence teachers' decisions to stay in their careers (Umali et al., 2024). The core factors are primary drivers that support teachers to continue in their careers, consisting of a sense of purpose and fulfillment, interest and passion for teaching, and a sense of growth and development. On the other hand, contributing factors that enhance or support the core factors include a sense of being valued and respected, teacher well-being, school environment, salary, benefits and incentives, and government laws and policies (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession



Several studies also explored motivation among Cambodian teachers. Huot et al. (2024) developed a conceptual framework on factors that influence teaching career choices in the country. Motivation factors were identified, including the influence of others, the belief that teaching can be a fallback career option, and sociocultural factors. Altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations affected

individuals' decisions to enter the teaching career. On the other hand, Sambonin and Liu's (2017) research examined teachers' perceptions of motivation. Likewise, they determined incentives, family support, academic support and school environment as extrinsic motivation factors, while self-determination was seen as an intrinsic motivation factor. Moreover, Fukao's research (2016) explored the question "to what extent can incentives change Cambodian teachers' motivation?" His study found that basic needs, such as an adequate working environment and a sufficient salary, are not enough to satisfy most teachers. Critical factors that support motivation include school leadership support, community and peer recognition, especially for mid-career teachers, and opportunities for professional development for newly hired teachers.

Recognizing the critical role of teacher motivation in enabling student achievement, the Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH) of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), in partnership with the Regional Centre for Technical Education Development (TED) in Cambodia, collaborated on a Regional Teacher Motivation Study. The study aims to: 1) determine the relationship among the different factors that motivate teachers to stay in the teaching profession; 2) develop a per-country framework for the motivations of teachers in Southeast Asia to stay in the profession; and 3) provide policy recommendations.

The research utilized a quantitative approach. A survey questionnaire was developed based on the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession (Umali et al., 2024) and other relevant literature. It was validated by content experts and country representatives and translated into local languages as needed. Data were collected using SurveyMonkey. The survey questionnaire was shared with teachers using convenience sampling. In Cambodia, 352 valid responses were gathered from teacher respondents. Table 1

presents the profile of survey respondents. The data were then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Hierarchical regression analysis was also employed to produce the per-country predictive models.

Table 1
Profile of Survey Respondents in Cambodia

	Count	Percent
Age in years		
18-24	6	1.70
25-34	96	27.27
35-44	200	56.82
45-54	40	11.36
55-64	10	2.84
Gender		
Male	211	59.94
Female	139	39.49
Prefer not to say	2	0.57
Marital status		
Single	53	15.06
Married	282	80.11
Divorced/ Annulled/ Separated	7	1.99
Widowed	8	2.27
Prefer not to say	2	0.57
Highest educational attainment		
Primary Level	2	0.57
Secondary Level	42	11.93
Associate Degree	7	1.99
Bachelor's Degree	187	53.13
Master's Degree	111	31.53
Doctoral Degree	3	0.85
Type of school		
Public	333	94.60
Private	19	5.40
School location		
Urban	137	38.92
Rural	215	61.08
Length of teaching		
Early Career (1 to 5 years)	50	14.20
Mid-Career (6 to 10 years)	98	27.84
Experienced (11 years and Up)	204	57.95
Total	352	100.00

II. Results and Discussion

The section below highlights the key findings of the study in Cambodia. These include a presentation of teacher respondents' level of motivation to remain in the profession, their perception of the core and contributing motivational factors, the relationship between the motivational factors and level of motivation, and relationships between indicators and the level of motivation. The predictive model of teacher motivation in staying in the profession in Cambodia is also discussed afterward. The factors in this study pertain to the motivational factors that are shown in the regional framework (i.e., sense of purpose and fulfillment, teaching as interest and passion, sense of growth and development, sense of being respected and valued, teacher well-being, school environment, salary, incentives and benefits and government laws and policies) (see Figure 1). Indicators, on the other hand, are contextual variables that can be influenced by policies, such as professional development, career progression, working conditions, and salary, as well as demographic variables.

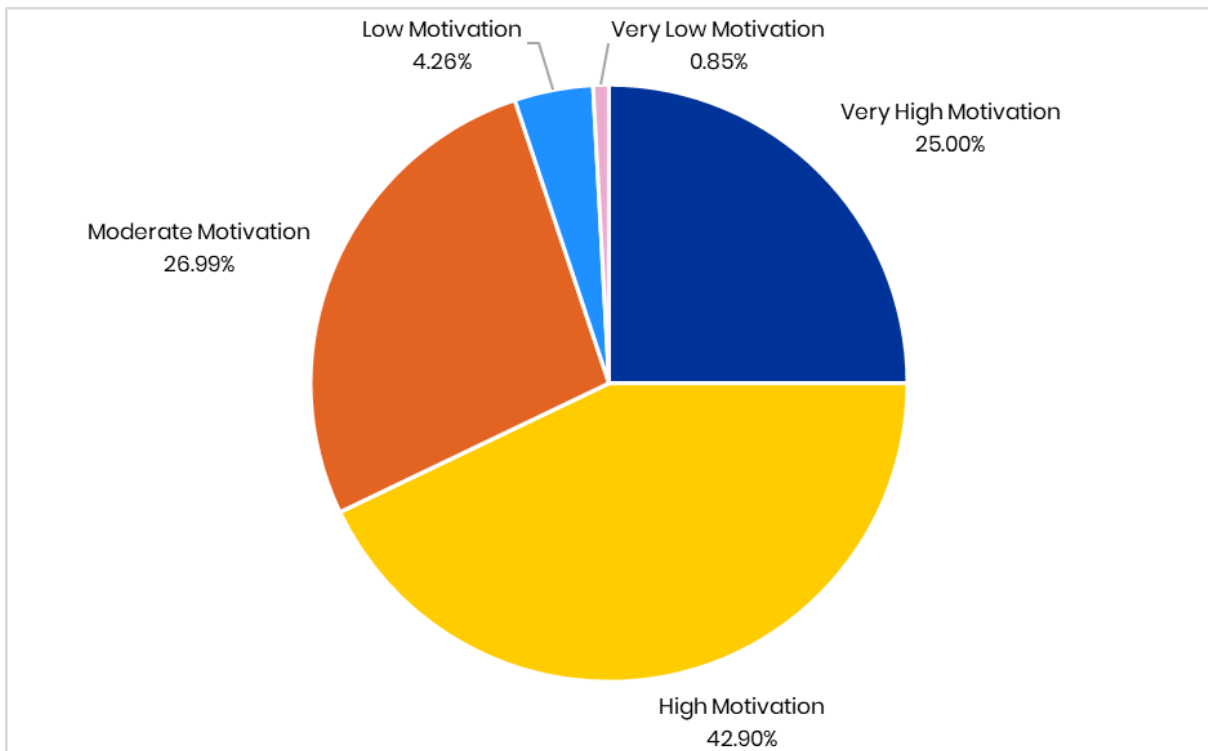
Level of Motivation of Teachers to Remain in the Profession

Cambodian teacher respondents were asked to rate their motivation in staying in the profession. Based on a rating scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, 25% of respondents expressed very high levels of motivation (ratings of 9-10), while the majority of them (42.90%) have high motivation levels (ratings of 7-8). More than a quarter (26.99%), however, have moderate levels of motivation (ratings of 5-6), while the rest have low (4.25%) (ratings of 3-4) to very low (0.85%) motivation levels (ratings of 1-2) (see Figure 2). The mean score for Cambodia is 7.22, indicating an overall high level of motivation for the country, based on researchers' identified range for a 10-point Likert scale (see Table 3 in the

Appendix). This finding suggests that a substantial proportion of Cambodian teacher respondents remain motivated to continue in the teaching profession. It is also aligned with the results of Fukao’s research (2016), which discovered that more than 50% of their survey respondents were highly satisfied with their work, and most were also satisfied. Within the context of their study, satisfaction is one of the subconstructs used to measure teacher motivation.

Figure 2

Percentage of Cambodian Teacher Respondents According to their Level of Motivation to Stay in the Profession



Factors Relevant to Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession

The survey examined the factors relevant to teacher motivation in staying in the profession. Using a six-point scale from 1 to 6, where 1 corresponds to "strongly disagree" and 6 to "strongly agree", teacher respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements related to the eight motivational factors.

Core Factors of Teacher Motivation. The following portions describes teacher respondents' level of agreement with statements related to the three core factors of motivation to stay in the teaching profession, namely, 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', 'teaching as interest and passion', and 'sense of growth and development'. Contextual data are also shared when available, drawn from the survey results.

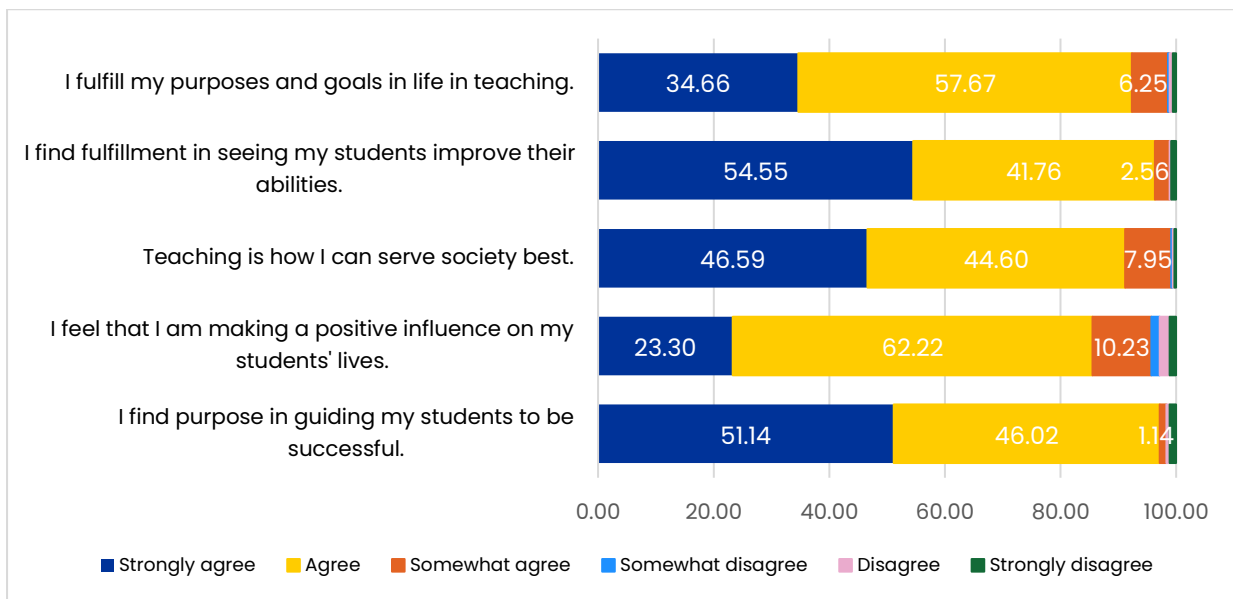
Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment. The first core motivational factor, 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', pertains to teacher respondents' perception of their impact on their learners. This factor also looked into their feelings about their contribution to national and societal development.

On average, a large majority of teacher respondents in Cambodia resonate with the factors 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: "I fulfill my purposes and goals in life in teaching" (98.58%), "I find fulfillment in seeing my students improve their abilities" (98.86%), "I find purpose in guiding my students to be successful" (98.30%), "Teaching is how I can serve society best" (99.15%) and "I feel that I am making a positive influence on my students' lives" (95.74%). Overall, the mean score for this factor is 5.30 (rated as 'strongly agree'), using the 6-point

Likert scale interpretation (see Table 4 in the Appendix), suggesting its relevance from the Cambodian teachers’ perspectives, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment



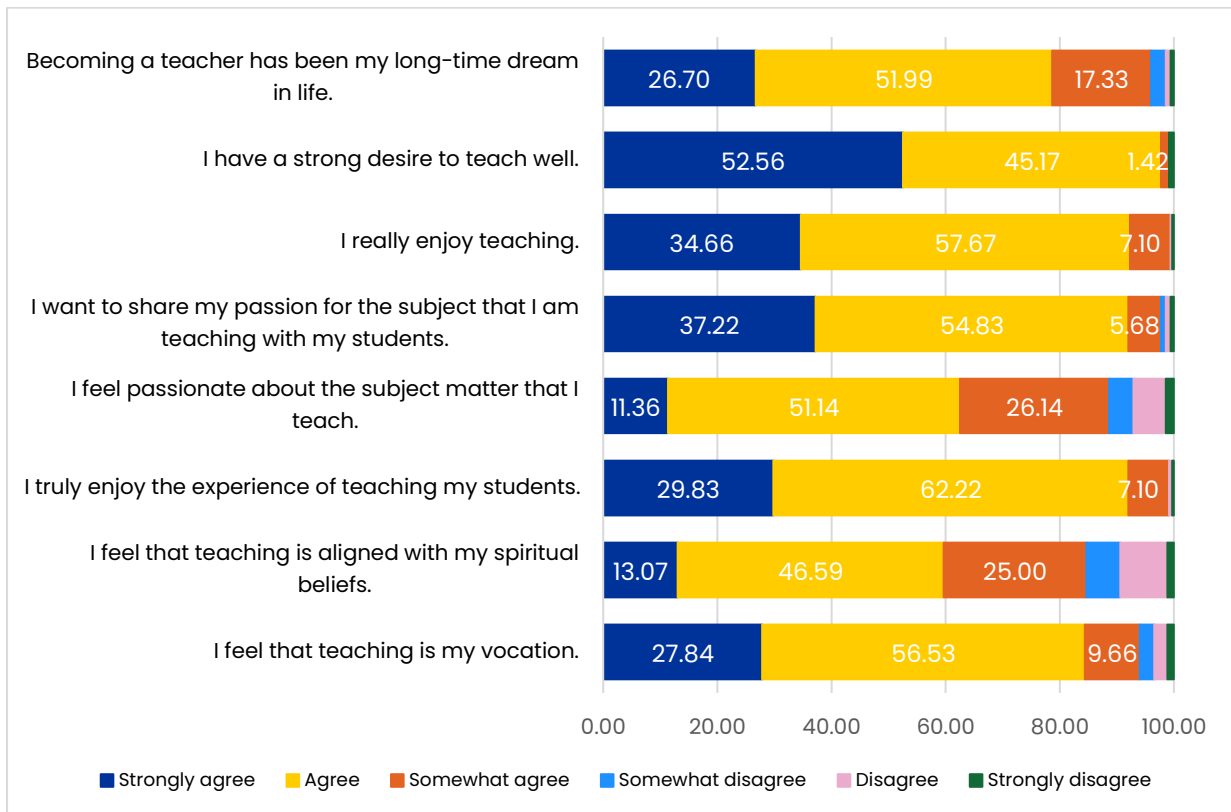
Teaching as Interest and Passion. The core factor ‘teaching as interest and passion’ examines teacher respondents’ childhood aspirations to become teachers and how these align with their professional work and belief systems. It also deals with their love for the craft, the subject matter, and their learners.

More than 94% of teacher respondents in Cambodia perceive teaching to be their interest and passion through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “Becoming a teacher has been my long-time dream in life” (96.02%), “I have a strong desire to teach well” (99.15%), “I really enjoy teaching” (99.43%), “I want to share my passion for the subject that I am teaching with my students” (97.73%) “I feel passionate about the subject matter

that I teach” (88.64%), “I truly enjoy the experience of teaching my students” (99.15%), “I feel that teaching is aligned with my spiritual beliefs” (84.66%), and “I feel that teaching is my vocation” (94.03%). Figure 4 shows respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the factor ‘teaching as interest and passion’. The mean score for this factor is 5.03 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 4

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of Teaching as Interest and Passion

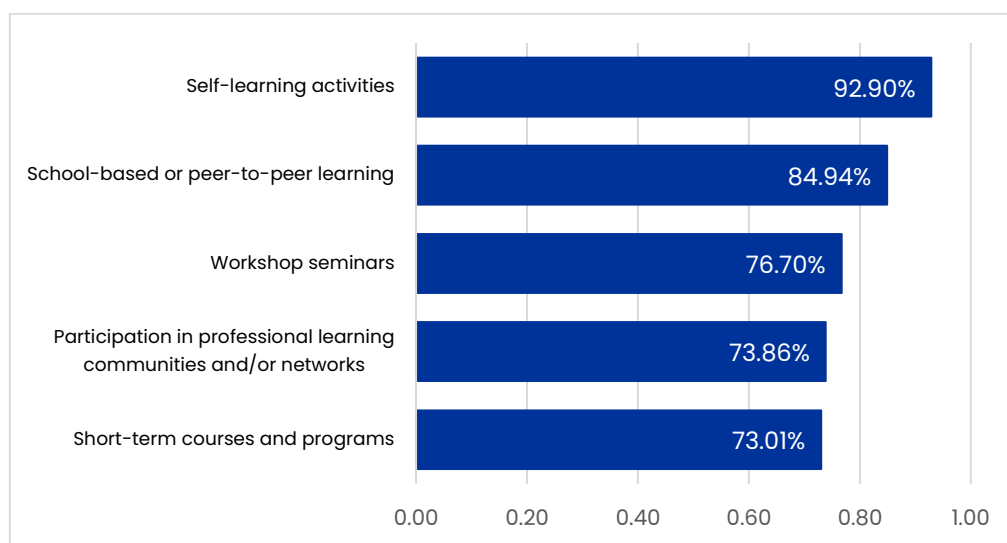


Sense of Growth and Development. The last core factor, ‘sense of growth and development’, refers to teacher respondents’ desire to be better at their work. This connotes having opportunities for professional development and seeing challenges as opportunities for growth.

Figure 5 presents the percentage of teacher respondents engaging in professional development, indicating that a significant proportion participates in these activities. Additionally, 23% are currently pursuing graduate studies. Of those taking graduate studies, 46.91% received scholarships for their courses.

Figure 5

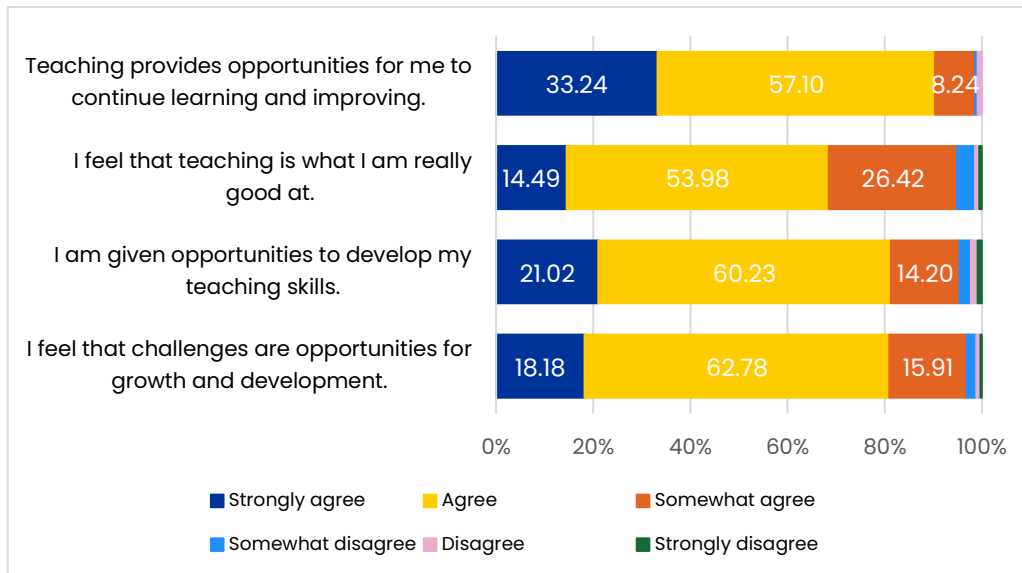
Percentage of Teacher Respondents Engaging in Professional Development



In addition, on average, more than 96% of Cambodian teacher respondents feel a ‘sense of growth and development’ through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “Teaching provides opportunities for me to continue learning and improving” (98.58%), “I feel that teaching is what I am really good at” (94.89%), “I am given opportunities to develop my teaching skills” (95.45%), and “I feel that challenges are opportunities for growth and development” (96.87%). Figure 6 shows respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the ‘sense of growth and development’. The mean score for this factor is 4.97 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 6

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Sense of Growth and Development



These findings are in contrast with a few studies that suggest limited opportunities for professional development among Cambodian teachers. For instance, data from a decade ago (MOEYS, 2015, 2016, as cited in Pich, 2017) indicate that less than a thousand teachers received formal pedagogical training. In-service training was not yet systematized during that time and was provided irregularly (Pinh, 2014, as cited in Pich, 2017). Additionally, teachers worked with very minimal support from their peers (Tan & Ng, 2012, as cited in Pich, 2017). Similarly, only a little more than half of the teacher respondents in Koem and Srisontisuk’s paper (2018) participated in professional development activities. Their engagement is affected by educational attainment, teaching level, and funding availability. The limited opportunities for in-service training were also noted by Fukao (2016), despite it being one of the key incentives in motivating teachers, especially newly hired ones.

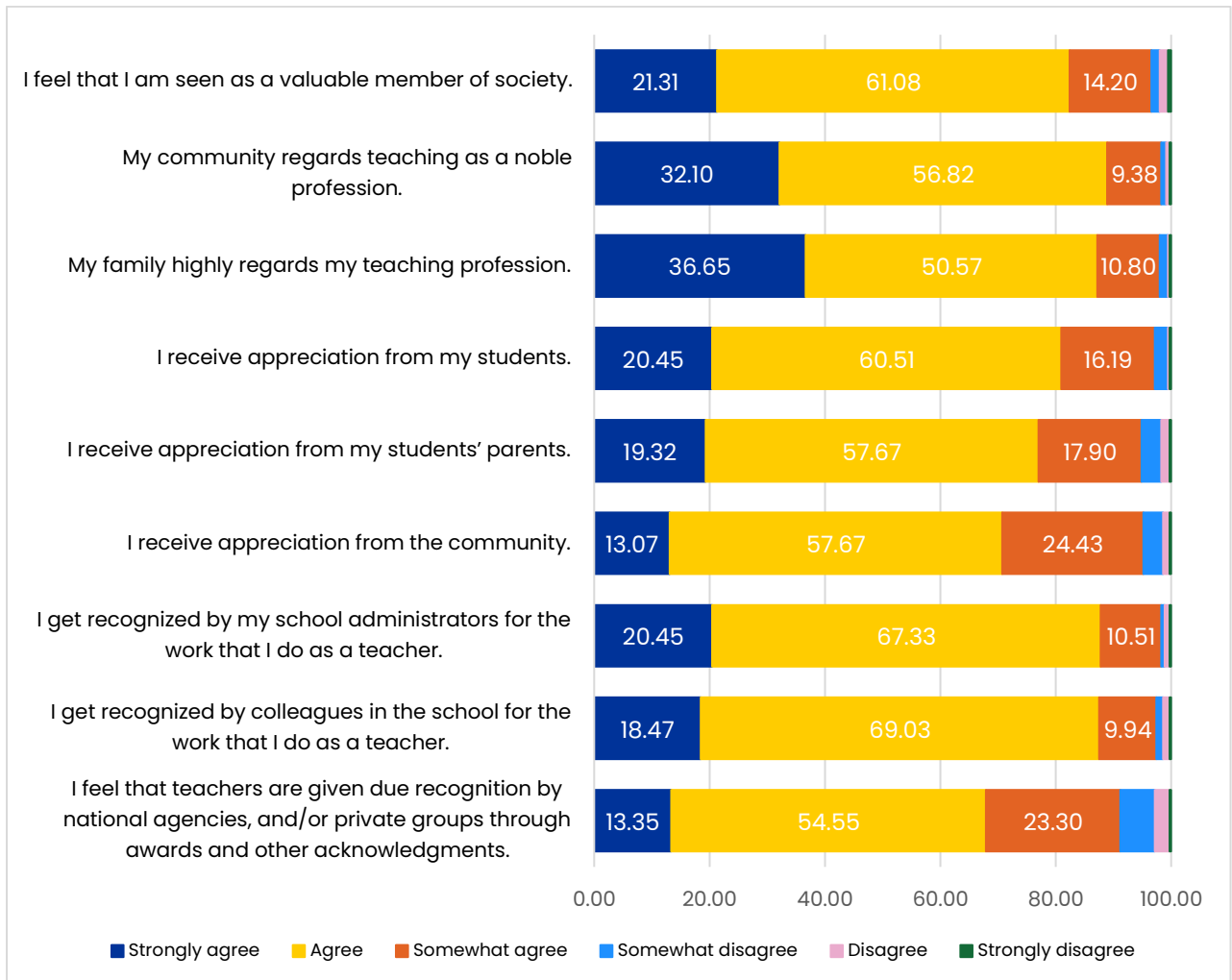
Contributing Factors of Teacher Motivation. The section below presents teacher respondents' agreement levels with statements related to the five contributing factors of teacher motivation to stay in the profession. Factors covered include 'sense of being respected and valued', 'teacher well-being', 'school environment', 'salary, incentives and benefits' and 'government laws and policies'.

Sense of Being Respected and Valued. The first contributing factor, 'sense of being respected and valued', deals with teacher respondents' perception of how valuable their profession is and society's regard for it. The factor also examines their feelings of being appreciated by their families, learners, parents, and the wider community, through awards and recognitions.

On average, more than 96% of Cambodian teacher respondents feel a 'sense of being respected and valued' through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: "I feel that I am seen as a valuable member of society" (96.59%), "My community regards teaching as a noble profession" (98.30%), "My family highly regards my teaching profession" (98.01%), "I receive appreciation from my students" (97.16%), "I receive appreciation from my students' parents" (94.89%), "I receive appreciation from the community" (95.17%), "I get recognized by my school administrators for the work that I do as a teacher" (98.30%), "I get recognized by colleagues in the school for the work that I do as a teacher" (97.44%), and "I feel that teachers are given due recognition by national agencies, and/or private groups through awards and other acknowledgments" (91.19%). Figure 7 shows respondents' agreement level with statements related to the 'sense of being respected and valued.' The mean score for the factor is 4.98 (rated as 'agree').

Figure 7

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Sense of Being Respected and Valued



Teacher Well-being. Teacher well-being typically refers to a broad set of psychosocial conditions. However, within the context of this study, this factor only revolves around work-life balance, having a flexible schedule, and home-school proximity.

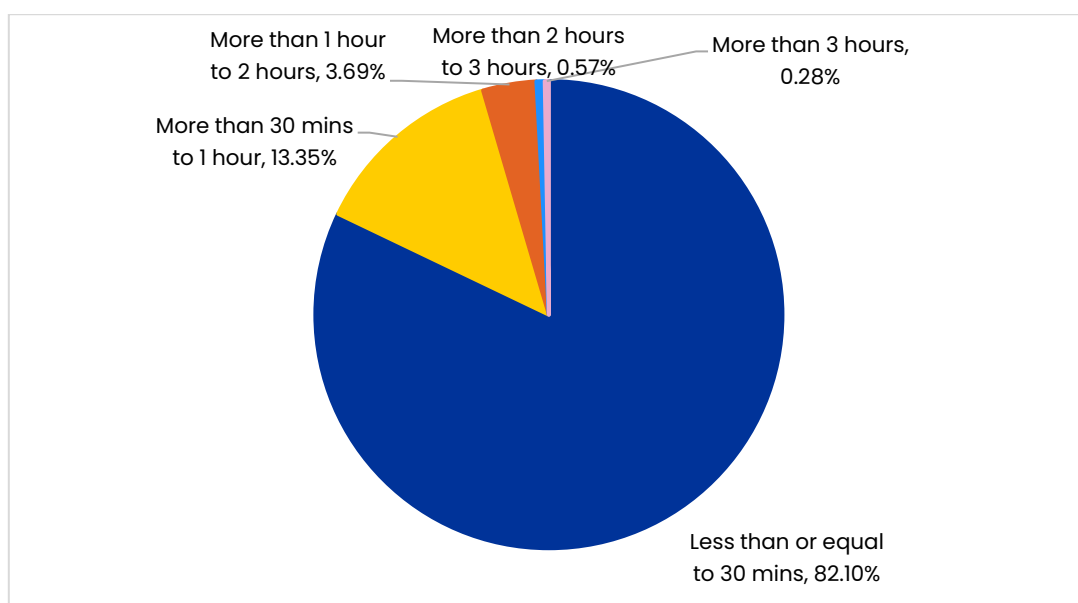
Considering teachers' work-life balance, teacher respondents in Cambodia spend an average of 16 hours per week teaching. A little more than half of them (50.85%) are also engaged in nonteaching-related tasks, spending an average of

16 hours per week on tasks, such as being assigned as classroom advisers, subject coordinators, club moderators, sports coaches, co-curricular and extracurricular committee members, project or program coordinators, community involvement services, and other school administrative committees (planning, facility management, etc.). The total number of working hours per week is somewhat aligned with the recommended number of teaching hours per week, which is 30 hours for preschool and primary education and 40 hours for lower and upper secondary education (MOEYS, 2019).

In addition, looking into home-school proximity, Figure 8 presents the proportion of teachers according to the time spent travelling to school. On average, teacher respondents spend 24.84 minutes per day travelling one-way to school. This finding is also aligned with the discovery in Fukao’s dissertation, in which 77.6% of teachers residing in urban areas spend at most 15 minutes on commute time. The same is also true for 67.7% of teachers living in rural areas.

Figure 8

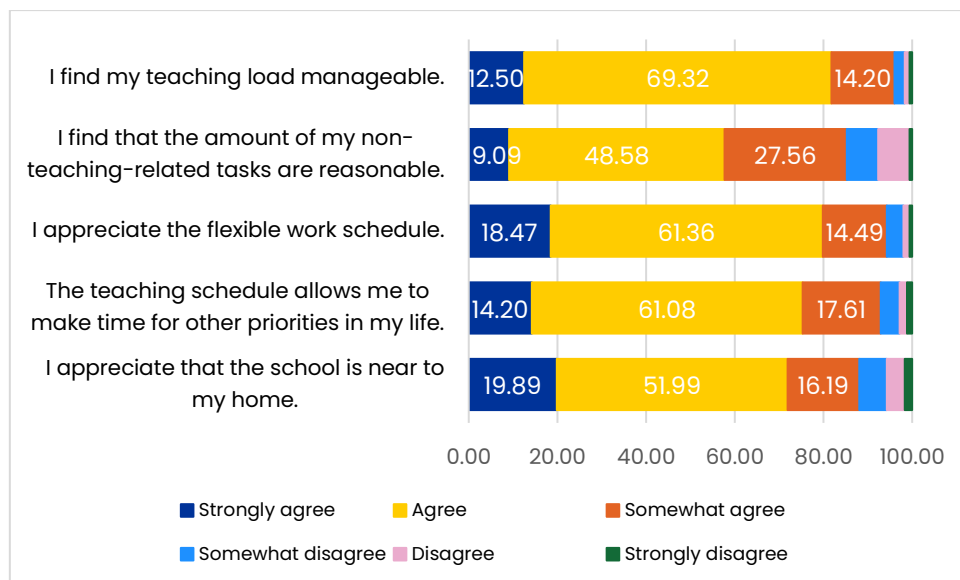
Percentage of Teacher Respondents Based on their One-way Travel Time to School



On average, more than 91% of teacher respondents in the country feel that their well-being is taken care of through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “I find my teaching load manageable” (96.02%), “I find that the amount of my non-teaching-related tasks are reasonable” (85.23%), “I appreciate the flexible work schedule” (94.32%), “The teaching schedule allows me to make time for other priorities in my life” (92.90%), and “I appreciate that the school is near to my home” (88.07%). Figure 9 presents respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the factor ‘teacher well-being’. The mean score for the factor is 4.75 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 9

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Sense of Well-being



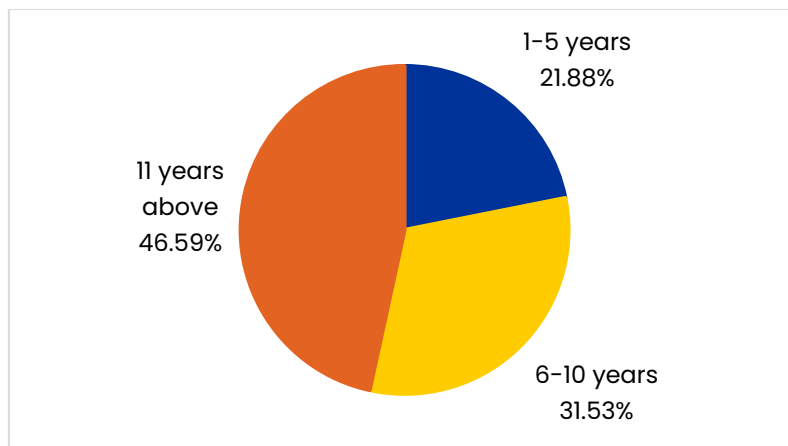
School Environment. The factor ‘school environment’ refers to having supportive school policies, practices, and activities, opportunities for self-

expression and innovation, good working relationship with colleagues and adequate facilities and resources.

On average, teacher respondents in Cambodia have taught in their current school for about 12 years. Figure 10 shows that a large portion of them (46.59%) have served at their educational institutions for over ten years.

Figure 10

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Length of Teaching in Current School



Additionally, most respondents believe that their teaching materials and school facilities are adequate (see Figures 11 and 12), suggesting that the MOEYS has mobilized sufficient resources for the use of teachers.

Figure 11

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of Adequacy of Teaching Materials in School

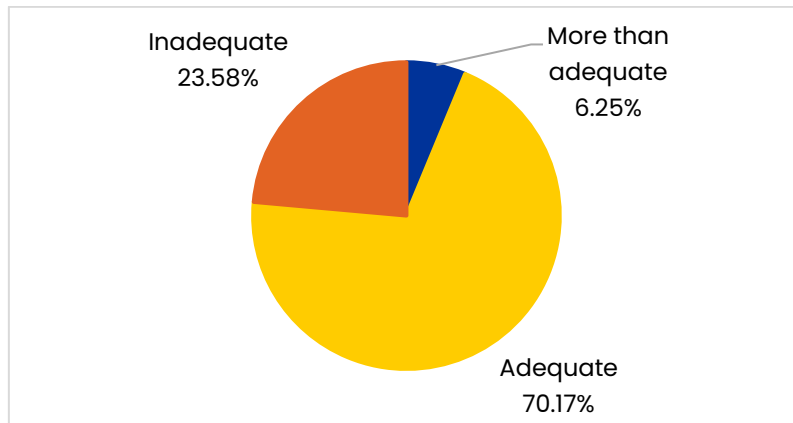
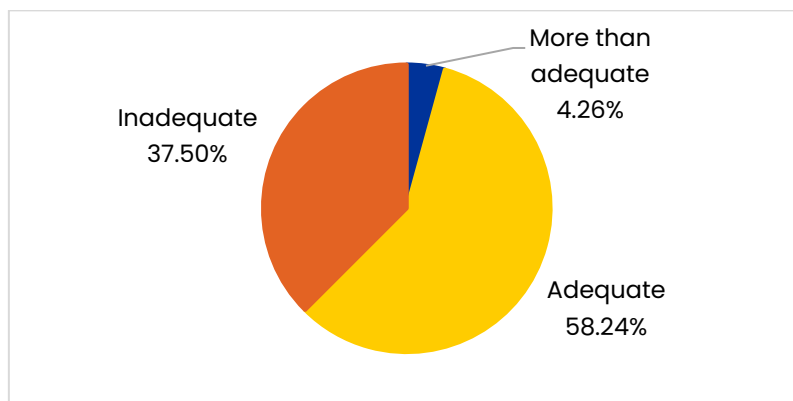


Figure 12

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of Adequacy of Facilities Available in School

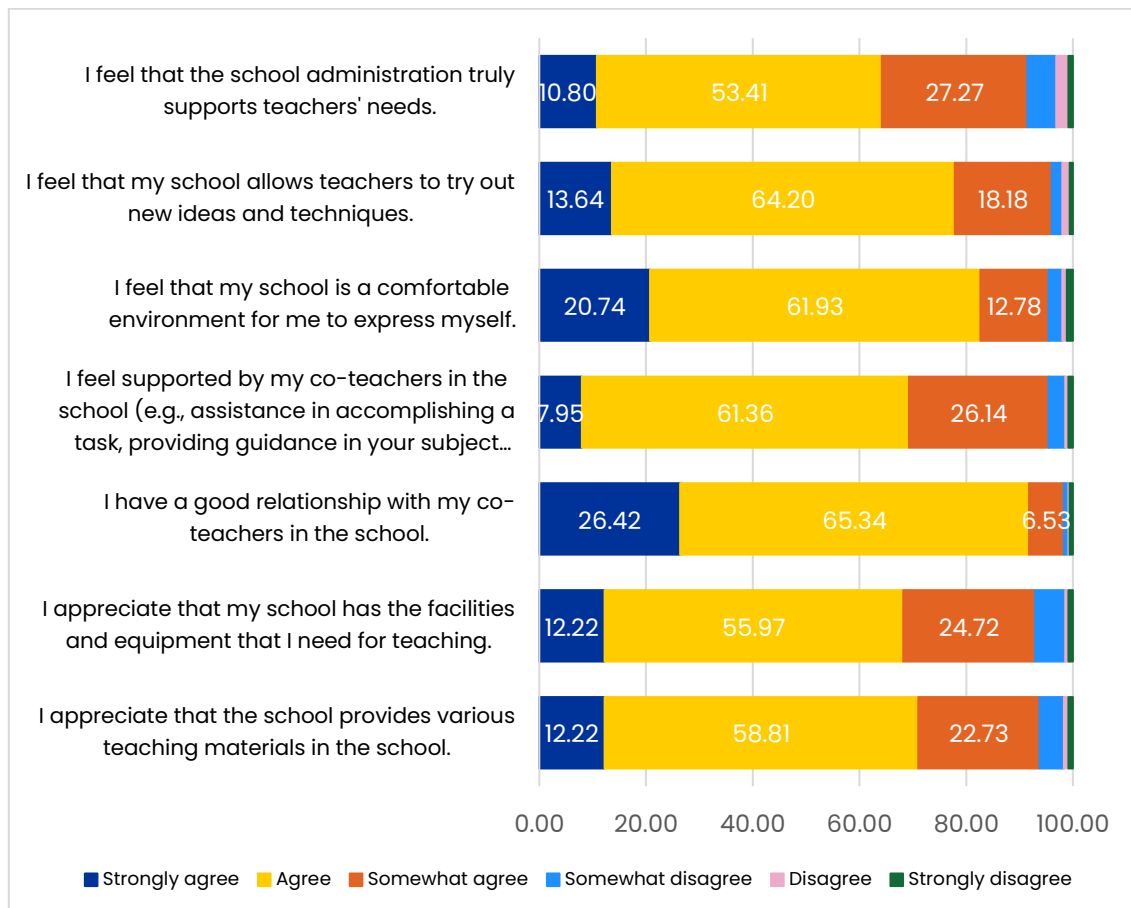


On average, more than 94% of Cambodian teacher respondents think positively of their school environment, as reflected through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “I feel that the school administration truly supports teachers' needs” (91.48%), “I feel that my school allows teachers to try out new ideas and techniques” (96.02%), “I feel

that my school is a comfortable environment for me to express myself” (95.45%), “I feel supported by my co-teachers in the school (e.g., assistance in accomplishing a task, providing guidance in your subject matter, or/ and pedagogical approach, and helping solve issues or concerns, etc.)” (95.45%), “I have a good relationship with my co-teachers in the school” (98.30%), “I appreciate that my school has the facilities and equipment that I need for teaching” (92.90%) and “I appreciate that the school provides various teaching materials in the school” (93.75%). Figure 13 depicts respondents’ agreement level with statements related to ‘school environment’. The mean score for this factor in Cambodia is 4.82 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 13

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of School Environment



Salary, Incentives and Benefits. On average, teacher respondents from Cambodia receive a monthly net income of USD 66. This figure is way below the USD 300.27 indicated in the Education Strategy Plan 2024-2028 (MOEYS, 2024). However, the figure acquired from the survey findings is close to the average monthly salary of USD 76.50 found in Fukao’s research (2016). He noted, however, that salary varies across different groups depending on career length. Regardless, the majority of respondents in this study (57.95%) were experienced teachers who have served for more than 11 years. Several researchers (Pich, 2017; Fukao, 2016, Sot et al., 2022, as cited in Sok & Heng, 2024) also note that this salary is lower compared to other professionals that require higher education degrees.

Moreover, most teacher respondents (94.60%) are also their family’s main providers, as shown in Figure 14. However, Figure 15 shows that 28.41% of respondents have no dependents, while 29.26% have 1-2 dependents, and 37.50% have 3-5 dependents.

Figure 14

Percentage of Teacher Respondents as the Main Financial Provider

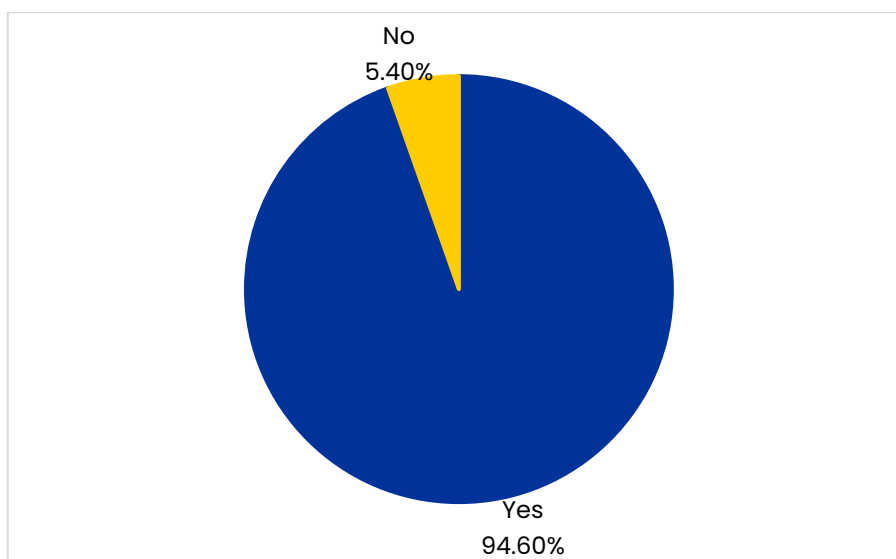
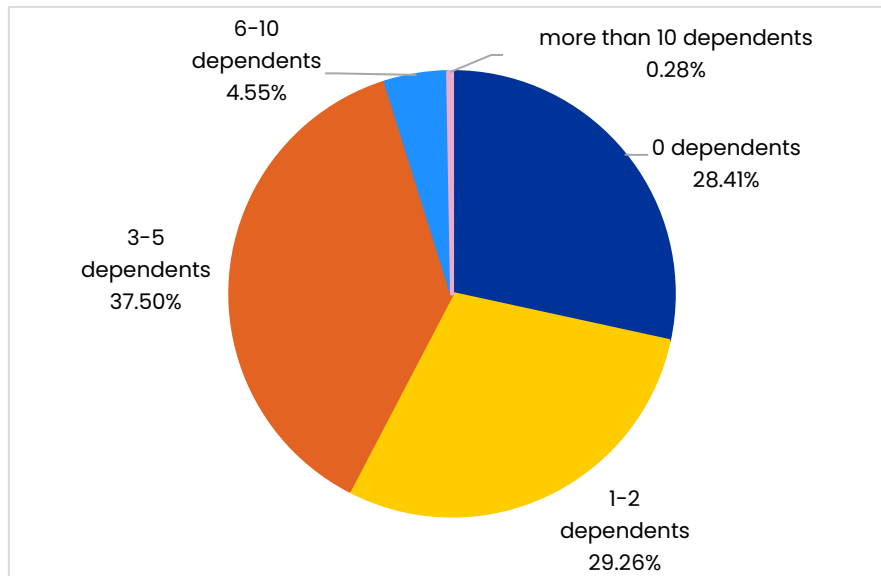


Figure 15

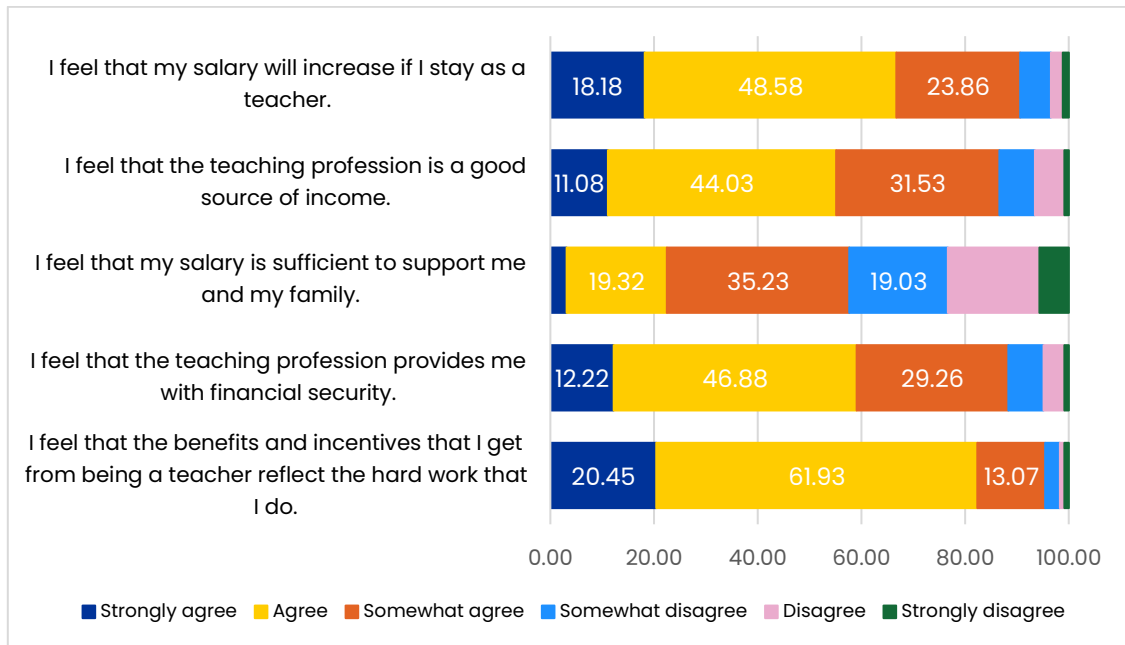
Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to the Number of their Dependents



On average, more than 83% of teacher respondents in the country perceive positively their salary, incentives, and benefits through their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “I feel that my salary will increase if I stay as a teacher” (90.62%), “I feel that the teaching profession is a good source of income” (86.65%), “I feel that the teaching profession provides me with financial security” (88.35%), and “I feel that the benefits and incentives that I get from being a teacher reflect the hard work that I do” (95.45%). However, a little less than two-thirds of the teachers indicated agreement with the statement “I feel that my salary is sufficient to support me and my family” (57.67%). Figure 16 presents respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the factor ‘salary, incentives, and benefits’. The mean score for Cambodia for this factor is 4.44 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 16

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of Salary, Incentives, and Benefits



Fukao’s (2016) study revealed that salary is not a significant factor in motivating Cambodian teachers. Though he acknowledged that teachers regard their salaries as low, he surmised that salary is not a sustainable motivator among teachers. Other factors may be stronger motivators for teachers to continue in their field.

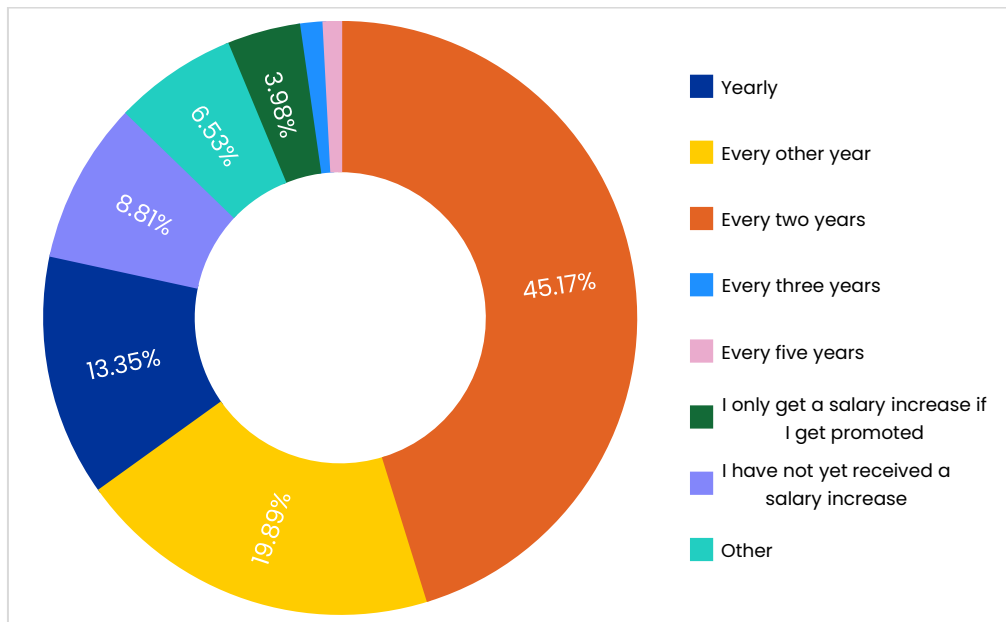
Government Laws and Policies. Six areas were examined in terms of the factor ‘government laws and policies’. These are benefits and incentives, salary, working conditions, career progression, professional development and teacher deployment.

The survey inquired about the frequency of salary increases among Cambodian teacher respondents. Figure 17 shows the percentage of teachers who

receive salary increases according to frequency. Most of them receive an increase every two years (45.17%). This is followed by those who receive increases every other year (19.89%), then by those who receive them yearly (13.35%). These findings are indicative of the efforts of the MOEYS to raise teachers' wages over the years. According to the MOEYS (2024), the minimum teacher salary in 2013 was USD 77.40. The figure was increased to USD 300.27 in 2019.

Figure 17

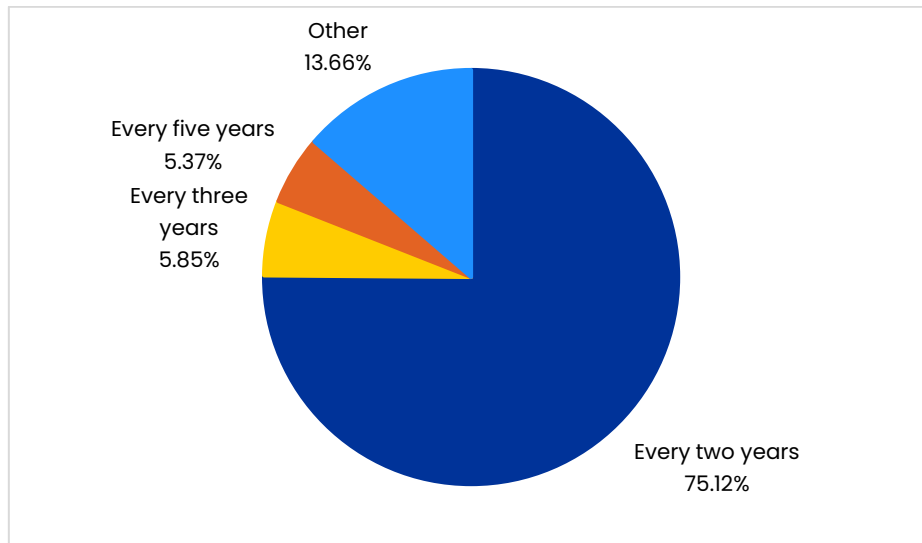
Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to the Frequency of Salary Increase



For career progression, more than half of the teachers (58.24%) have a history of promotion. Figure 18, likewise, shows their frequency of promotion.

Figure 18

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Frequency of Promotion



Regarding professional development, 96.02% of Cambodian teacher respondents have utilized their personal money for professional development activities. Figure 19 presents the percentage of teachers who use their own money for several in-service trainings. Also, Figure 20 shows the percentage of teacher respondents who use their personal funds according to professional development activity, with most respondents (89.49%) spending money on self-learning activities.

Figure 19

Percentage of Teacher Respondents Who Used Personal Money for Professional Development Activities

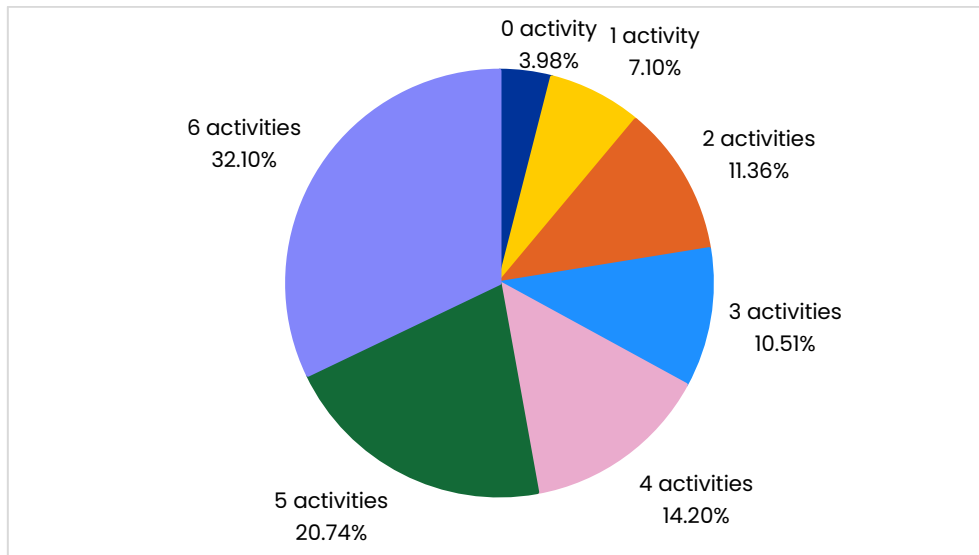
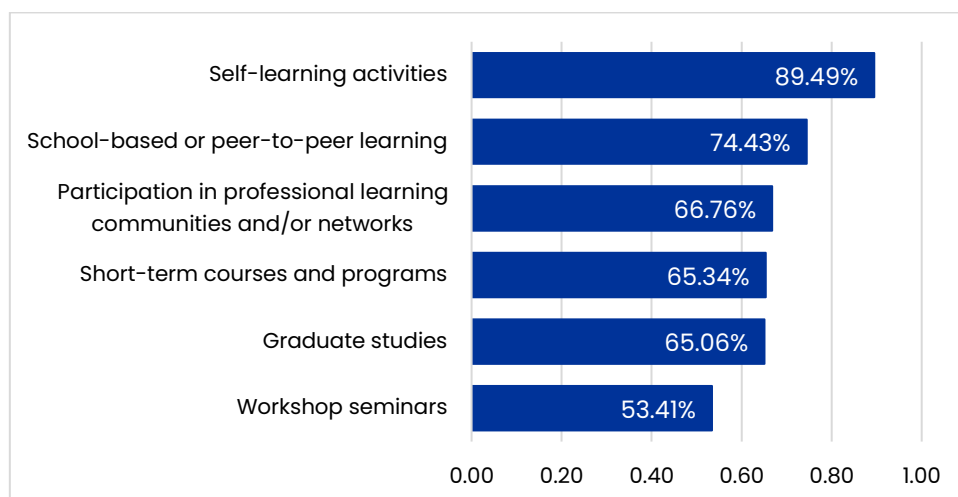


Figure 20

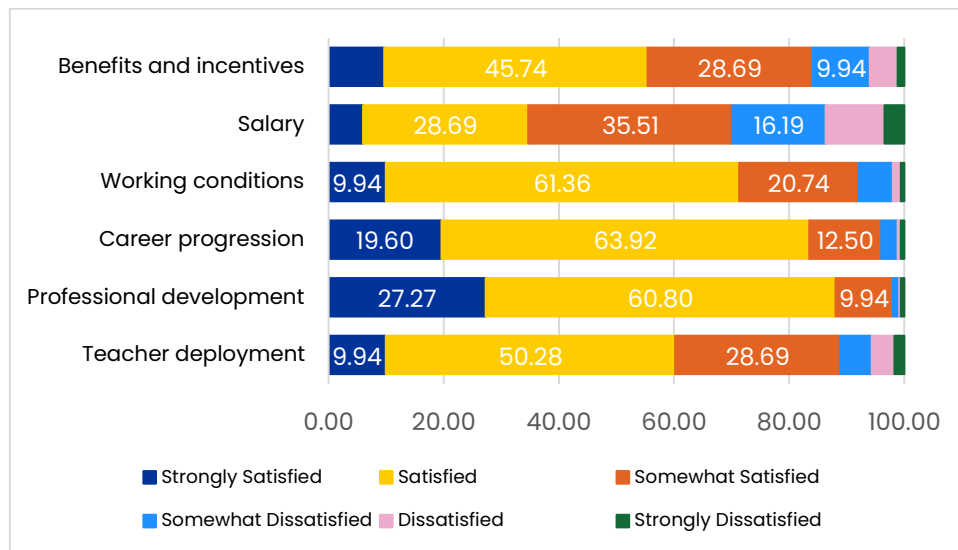
Percentage of Teacher Respondents Who Used Personal Money According to Professional Development Activities



On average, more than 88% of Cambodian teacher respondents are satisfied (strongly satisfied, satisfied, somewhat satisfied) with government policies that affect them. This is reflected in their responses to the following areas: “Benefits and incentives” (84.09%), “Salary” (70.17%), “Working conditions” (92.04%), “Career progression” (96.02%), “Professional development” (98.01%) and “Teacher deployment” (88.92%). Figure 21 shows respondents’ level of satisfaction with areas related to the factor ‘government laws and policies’. The mean score for Cambodia for this factor is 4.61 (rated as ‘satisfied’).

Figure 21

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of Government Laws and Policies



Summary. The results of the descriptive statistics indicate that Cambodian teacher respondents perceive all motivational factors relevant to this study in a positive light. For instance, they strongly agreed with statements related to the core factor ‘sense of purpose and fulfillment,’ while indicating ‘agree’ for statements connected to the rest of the motivational factors. These findings suggest that

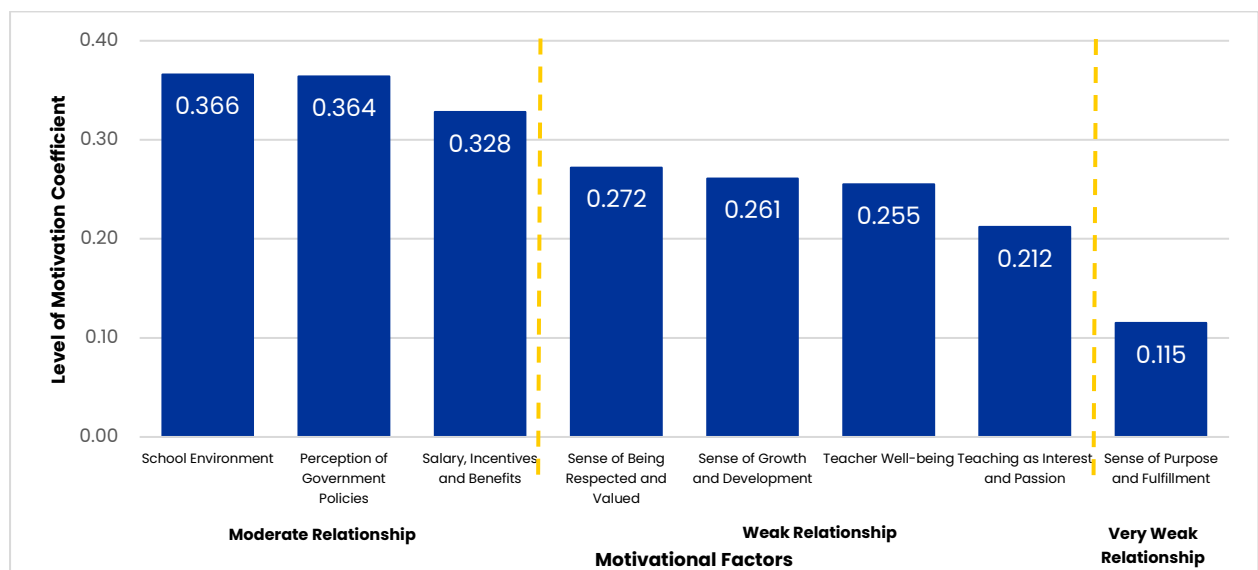
Cambodian teacher respondents resonate with all core and contributing factors of motivation and believe that these are relevant in encouraging them to remain in the teaching profession.

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and the Level of Motivation of Teachers

The results of the Spearman’s rho correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive associations between the core and contributing motivational factors and the overall level of motivation of teacher respondents in Cambodia (see Figure 22 and Table 5 in the Appendix). The strength of these associations ranged from very weak to moderate positive relationships, suggesting that each factor plays a meaningful role in influencing a teacher’s motivation to remain in the profession.

Figure 22

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teachers



Examining the factors individually, the results imply that as teacher respondents' perception of their school environment improves, they tend to have higher motivation levels to stay in the teaching profession. This suggests that improving the school environment is likely to contribute to higher teacher motivation and potentially reduce attrition. This is aligned with several studies noting that a conducive work environment that supports teachers in their roles affects their motivation (Salifu, 2013, Adelabu, 2005, Bennell, 2004, Mathew, 2005, Hooker, et al., 2003, Park, et al., 2007, as cited in Handayani, 2016). For instance, the support of school leadership was shown to be a positive incentive for teachers' motivation in Cambodia, based on Fukao's dissertation (2016), suggesting that the school directors have an impact on motivating teachers under their supervision. Their influence ranges from "job description management, setting parameters of responsibility and autonomy, and provision of instructional support" (p.211). Support for new teachers also increases their motivation and reduces their stress (Guarino et al., 2006, as cited in Fukao, 2016). In addition, the school's geographical location has a strong influence on working conditions. This affects teacher motivation and is especially evident in urban-rural disparities, where rural schools suffer from old infrastructure and fewer resources for teaching and learning (Fukao, 2016).

Statistically significant positive associations were also found for 'government policies', and 'salary, incentives and benefits'. As teacher respondents' view of government policies improves, their motivation to stay teaching also increases. Likewise, the more favorably teacher respondents perceive their salary, incentives and benefits to be, the more motivated they are to remain teaching. These findings hint that improving policies affecting teachers, including remuneration, deployment, professional development, career progression, and working conditions, may influence them to continue their service in education.

In addition, although the association is weak, as teacher respondents feel a stronger sense of being respected and valued, their motivation to keep on teaching also improves. Fukao's research (2016) highlighted the importance of community and colleagues' recognition as an incentive, especially for mid-career teachers, affecting their motivation. This finding is also aligned with Mattar's (2010) qualitative study, in which teachers in high-performing schools appreciate the recognition they receive from their school administrators and colleagues. This result suggests that facilitating an environment of respect for teachers and valuing their work and contributions from different members of society, including learners, peers, community, and government, may support them in becoming more motivated to stay in the teaching profession.

Similarly, as teacher respondents' sense of growth and development strengthens, there is a chance that their motivation levels also improve, suggesting that fostering teachers' resolve to be better at teaching and providing them opportunities for professional development may contribute to their staying in their education roles.

Furthermore, as teacher respondents' well-being becomes more positive, there is a likelihood that their motivation to remain teaching becomes higher as well. This finding implies that addressing their work-life balance, home-school proximity, and other aspects related to well-being may help teachers to keep on serving in their profession.

In a similar light, as respondents become more interested and passionate about teaching, their motivation to continue serving as teachers increases, hinting at the need to foster their love for teaching, the subject matter, and their learners to help improve their motivation.

Lastly, despite having a very weak relationship, the factor 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' is still statistically significantly associated with teacher motivation.

This means that as teacher respondents' sense of purpose and fulfillment becomes stronger, they tend to be more motivated to continue serving as teachers. This finding notes the need to cultivate their sense of mission to influence and impact their students and contribute to societal or national development.

Relationships between Other Indicators and the Level of Motivation of Teachers

Spearman's rho correlation analysis was done to determine the relationships among the indicators affecting teacher motivation in staying in the profession. In addition, the Mann-Whitney U test and ANOVA were performed to assess whether there are significant differences. For this portion, attention was given to indicators that have potential implications for policy recommendations, and findings with only significant results are reported. Table 2 shows the list of indicators examined.

Table 2
Indicators Covered in Inferential Statistical Analysis

Salary	Working conditions	Professional development	Career progression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequency of salary increase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Length of teaching* • Total grade levels taught • Hours spent teaching • Having nonteaching-related tasks • Hours spent traveling to school • Adequacy of teaching and learning resources • Adequacy of facilities in school* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of personal money for professional development* • Highest educational attainment* • Currently taking graduate studies* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of promotion* • Frequency of promotion

* indicators with significant results

Indicators Related to Salary. One indicator, the frequency of salary increases, was examined to determine the relationship between the salary-related indicator and teachers' level of motivation; however, it did not yield significant results. This result revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the

motivation of Cambodian teacher respondents in terms of the frequency of their salary increase.

Indicators Related to Working Conditions. Likewise, seven indicators were examined to determine the relationships between work conditions indicators and teachers' level of motivation; however, only the length of teaching, and availability of school facilities yielded significant findings.

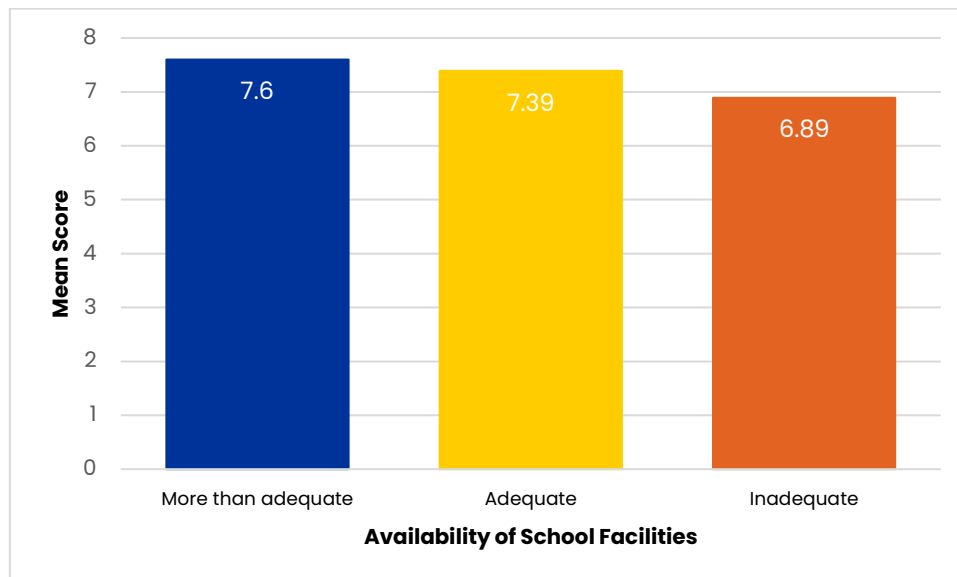
Relationship between Length of Teaching and Level of Motivation of Teachers. Analysis using Spearman's rho correlation of teacher respondents' length of teaching and level of motivation reveals very weak, though statistically significant, relationships between this indicator and teacher motivation ($\rho = 0.175$, $p < .001$) (also see Table 6 in the Appendix). The finding suggests that teachers with longer teaching experience are more likely to be motivated to stay in the profession. This result aligns with previous studies (Anghelache, 2014, 2015; Day et al., 2006) that have examined the relationship between teacher motivation and seniority. The length of teaching may influence teachers' motivation to remain in their educational roles as longevity in the service is usually associated with career advancements, higher pay, achievements, and possibly, others' recognition.

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Availability of Facilities in School. Figure 23 presents the statistically significant differences in teacher respondents' level of motivation based on how adequate they perceive the school facilities to be ($p = 0.029$, $p < .05$) (also see Table 7 in the Appendix). Teachers who reported that school facilities were more than adequate had the highest average motivation score ($M = 7.6$), followed by those who reported adequate facilities (M

= 7.39). Teacher respondents serving in schools with inadequate facilities reported the lowest motivation levels ($M = 6.89$). The effect size of 0.02 suggests a small effect of facility availability on motivation levels, indicating less distinct differences between mean scores.

Figure 23

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation based on Availability of Facilities in School



Tukey's post-hoc test was used to determine which pairs of group means are significantly different from one another. The results indicate that, among all pairwise comparisons, teachers serving in schools with adequate facilities ($M = 7.39$) have higher levels of motivation compared to those with inadequate ones ($M = 6.89$).

These findings suggest that teacher motivation is positively associated with the perceived availability of school facilities. The results are in agreement with Hülya and Kanatlar's research (2018), suggesting that a well-equipped school has

a positive effect on teacher motivation. While the effect size is small, the result carries practical implications for educational administrators aiming to enhance teacher retention. Improving the availability and quality of school facilities may contribute meaningfully to fostering a more motivated teaching workforce. This might be because the provision of these resources, such as sufficient classrooms, laboratories, libraries, among others, aids teachers in providing a conducive environment for learning for their learners and contributes to fostering a general positive experience (Matoke et al. 2015).

Indicators Related to Professional Development. Three indicators were examined to determine the relationships between indicators related to professional development and teacher respondents' level of motivation. These include teachers' use of personal money for professional development, highest educational attainment, and engagement in graduate studies. The first two indicators yielded significant results.

Relationship between Use of Personal Money for Professional Development and Level of Motivation of Teachers. Spearman's rho correlation was conducted to explore the relationship between teacher respondents' use of personal funds for professional development and their motivation levels. The results reveal statistically significant, albeit very weak, associations between Cambodian teacher respondents' levels of motivation and their use of personal funds for professional development ($\rho = 0.133$, $p < .001$) (also see Table 8 in the Appendix). The finding suggests that motivated teachers are more open to using their finances to access professional development. Additionally, those who have developed their teaching skills using their own resources may tend to feel that they

have invested more in their careers and, therefore, are not easily swayed to shift to a different one.

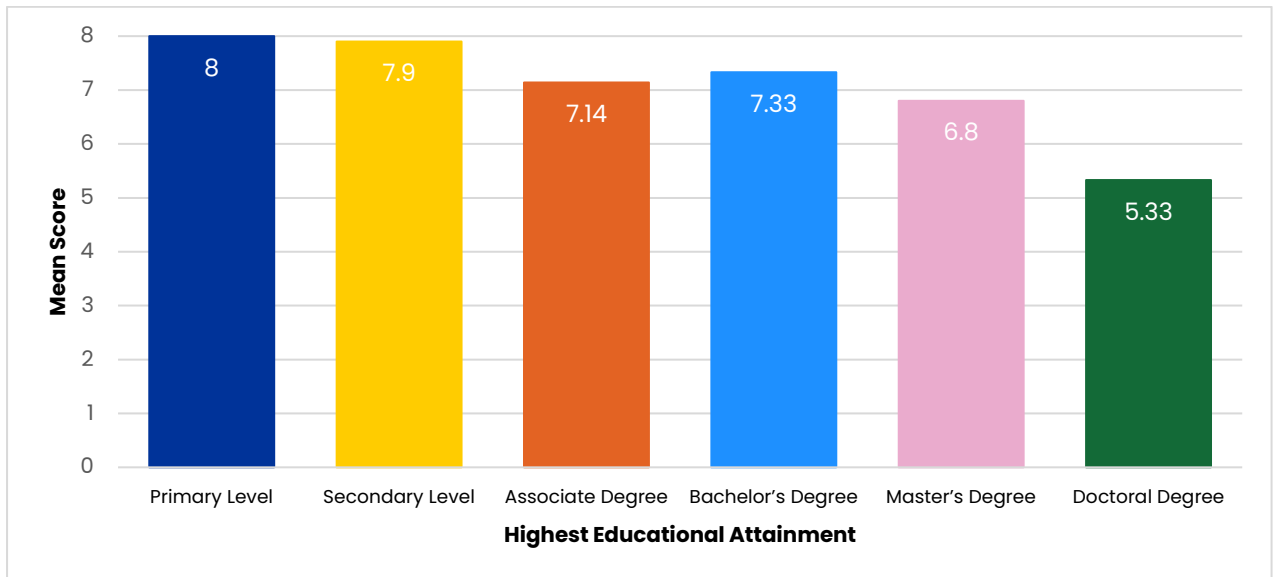
Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Highest Education

Attainment. According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS, 2010, as cited in Phin, 2014), approximately 80% of Cambodia's teaching workforce was lost during the 1970s Khmer Rouge regime. To address the severe shortage of educators in the 1980s, the Cambodian government recruited survivors of the conflict, many of whom had limited literacy skills, to serve as teachers. As such, some teachers, especially in rural areas, continue to teach without formal pedagogical training. Additionally, many educators hold minimal academic qualifications, often having only completed lower secondary or primary education, and in some cases not even finishing primary school. To help strengthen the qualifications of teachers, Cambodia is working on teacher qualification upgrading, with the support of partners (MOEYS, 2022).

Figure 24 shows the statistically significant differences in teachers' level of motivation based on their highest educational attainment ($p = 0.005$, $p < .01$). Teachers who graduated from the primary level reported having the highest mean motivation score ($M = 8$), followed by those who graduated from secondary level ($M = 7.90$), then by those with bachelor's degree ($M = 7.33$), associate degree ($M = 7.14$), master's degree ($M = 6.80$) and finally by those with doctoral degrees ($M = 5.33$) (also see Table 9 in the Appendix). The effect size of 0.049 suggests a small effect of educational attainment on motivation levels, indicating a less distinct difference between mean scores.

Figure 24

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Highest Educational Attainment



Trying to determine which pairs have significant differences of means, Tukey's post-hoc test indicates that, among all pairwise comparisons, the level of motivation to remain in the teaching profession differs significantly between teachers who graduated from secondary level ($M = 7.90$) and those with a master's degree ($M = 6.80$).

These findings suggest that teacher motivation has, to a limited extent, a negative association with the highest educational attainment. The equity theory of teacher motivation may explain this trend. The theory suggests that teachers weigh the outcomes of their jobs and institutions and the inputs they contribute (Seniwoliba, 2013). More educated teachers in Cambodia may feel that their inputs, through attaining higher educational degrees, do not yield the expected outcomes for their careers, such as compensation, among others. This imbalance influences, to a small extent, their motivation to continue teaching.

Indicators Related to Career Progression. Two indicators, history and frequency of promotion, were examined to determine the relationships between them and Cambodian teacher respondents' level of motivation. Only the former indicator yielded significant results.

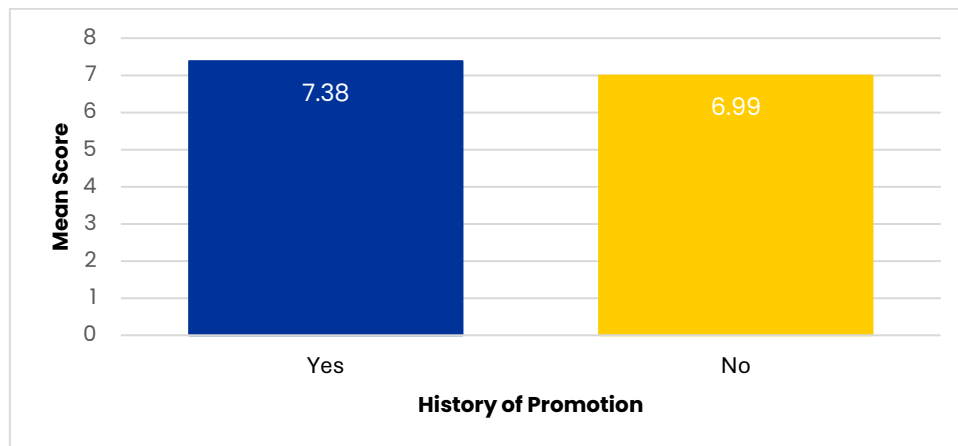
Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on History of Promotion.

Cambodia instituted a Teacher Career Pathways Policy in 2018, which has been under review (MOEYS, 2019). Three tracks are available to teachers: teacher pathway, education management pathway, and education policy specialist pathway (BO, 2019). There are three levels in the teacher pathway, with criteria that consider academic qualifications, work experience, continuing professional development activities, and performance appraisals (MOEYS, 2019).

Figure 25 depicts the statistically significant differences in teacher respondents' level of motivation based on their history of promotion ($p = 0.025$, $p < .01$) (also see Table 10 in the Appendix). Teacher respondents who had been promoted reported a slightly higher mean score ($M = 7.38$) compared to those who were not ($M = 6.99$). The magnitude of differences between the two groups is small, as indicated by the rank-biserial correlation of 0.138, suggesting limited real-world application.

Figure 25

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation based on History of Promotion



This finding suggests a small trend where teachers with a history of promotion feel more positive about remaining in their teaching careers. This result coincides with existing research that highlights the influence of promotion on teacher motivation (Herzberg’s theory, 1919, as cited in Ramzan & Khurram, 2023; Torrington, et al., 2005, as cited in Matoke et al., 2015).

Summary. The correlation analyses revealed that all core and contributing factors of motivation relevant to this study (see Figure 1) have statistically positive associations with teacher respondents’ motivational score to stay in the teaching profession. These findings suggest that as their perception of the motivational factors becomes more positive, their motivation to remain in the teaching service improves as well. The same applies otherwise, meaning that if their perception of the factors weakens, there is a tendency for their motivation to continue serving as teachers to also weaken.

Correlation analyses also showed that length of teaching and use of personal money for professional development have statistically, but very weak,

associations with the level of motivation of teacher respondents. These results imply that as teachers spend more time serving the education sector, they become less motivated to leave the profession. Likewise, as teachers invest more resources in enhancing their professional skills, they become more motivated to continue in their teaching careers.

Lastly, tests of difference of means revealed that the motivation levels of teacher respondents are statistically different according to their perception of adequacy of school facilities, highest educational attainment, and history of promotion. Teachers who reported having more than adequate facilities in schools are more motivated to stay as educators. Similarly, teacher respondents who have earned promotions are more motivated compared to those who have not. Curiously, those with higher educational attainment reported having lower mean motivation scores, which may be linked to their perception that their efforts to acquire more credentials have not resulted in them gaining more positive outcomes at work, such as compensation and benefits.

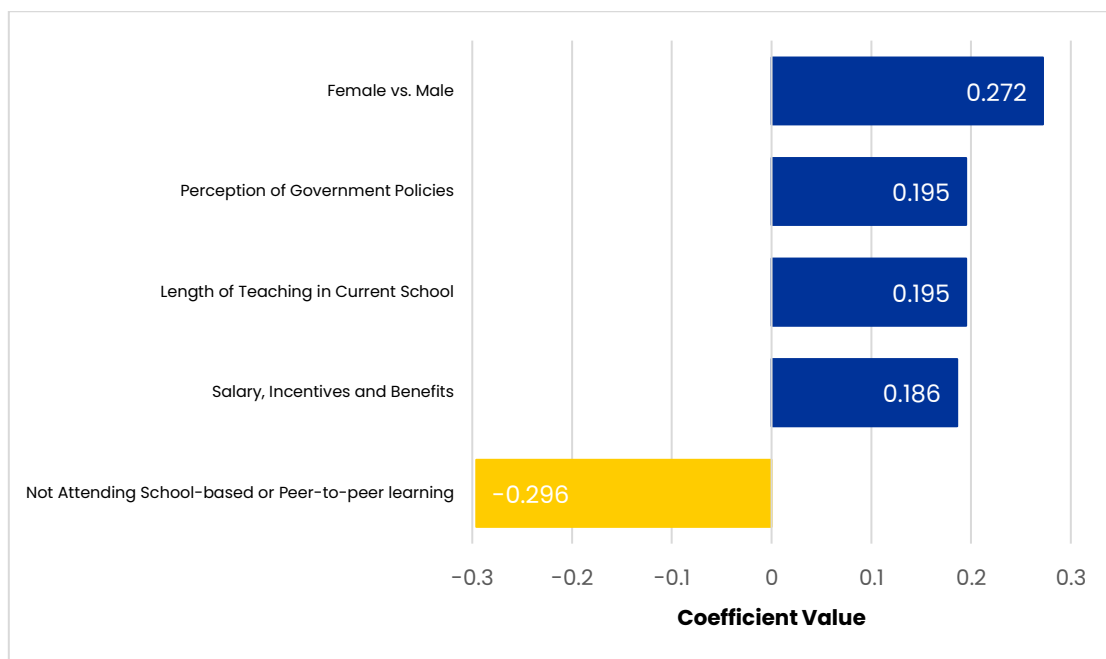
Predictive Model of Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession in Cambodia

Figure 26 presents the combination of factors and variables that predict the motivation of Cambodian teacher respondents to stay in the profession. The regression analysis reveals that, among the motivational factors, two contributing factors, particularly 'salary, incentives and benefits' and 'perception of government policies', are statistically significant predictors (also see Table 11 in the Appendix). This finding on the former factor seems contrary to Fukao's (2016) results; he discovered that salary is not a significant factor in motivating Cambodian teachers. However, he covered other incentives in his study that were found to be

critical, including the school director’s support, community and peer recognition, and professional development opportunities.

Figure 26

Combination of Factors and Indicators that Predict Teacher Respondents’ Motivation to Stay in the Profession



The results also suggest that both demographic and contextual variables play roles in shaping teacher motivation. For instance, gender emerged as a significant predictor (standard estimate = 0.272, $p < .05$), with female teachers showing higher motivation levels than males. This coincides with other studies that revealed female teachers are generally driven by internal motivation and show stronger commitment to their daily roles, including to remain in the teaching profession, whereas men are more often motivated by external rewards and incentives (Johnston et al. 1998, Jones, 1990, Scott et al. 1998, as cited in Fukao, 2016).

In addition, the length of teaching experience in their current school also positively influences motivation, indicating that teachers who have served longer

in the same school tend to be more motivated. This might be the case as teachers spend more time in their school, they develop stronger relationships with their school leaders, colleagues, and the community. They might also become more familiar with the day-to-day operations of the school and ways to address challenges. All of these contribute to reinforcing their motivation to continue rendering their teaching service.

One interesting finding is the negative association between motivation and the absence of school-based or peer-to-peer learning activities (standard estimate = -0.296, $p < .05$). Teachers who did not engage in peer learning reported significantly lower motivation. This highlights the motivational value of collaborative professional development at the school level.

The combined influence of the motivational factors and other variables accounts for 22.2% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.222$) in teacher motivation.

Summary. The hierarchical regression analysis revealed that a combination of motivational factors, demographic, and contextual variables may influence teacher respondents' motivation to stay in the teaching profession. Among all motivational factors, the contributing factors 'salary, incentives and benefits' and 'perception of government policies' are statistically significant predictors. Gender is also a predictor, with females reporting higher motivation levels than males. Length of teaching is also a predictor, with teachers who have longer teaching service tend to have stronger motivation to keep on teaching, while those who did not engage in school-based or peer-to-peer learning reported having lower motivational levels to continue serving as teachers.

III. Conclusion

The study examined the factors that affect teachers' motivation to remain in the teaching profession in Cambodia. The research aimed to determine the relationships among the different factors that motivate teachers to stay in their teaching careers, develop a per-country framework for teacher motivation for Cambodia to remain in their profession and provide policy recommendations.

The descriptive statistics revealed that Cambodian teacher respondents view all core and contributing motivational factors favorably. They expressed strong agreement with items linked to "sense of purpose and fulfillment," and general agreement with the remaining factors. This suggests that all factors of motivation play a role in encouraging continued commitment to the teaching profession.

Inferential statistics were also used to analyze indicators relevant to salary, working conditions, professional development, and career progression. Indicators suggesting an association with teacher motivation to stay in their careers include the length of teaching and the use of personal money for professional development. Significant differences in means were also observed in terms of perception of adequacy of school facilities, highest educational attainment and history of promotion.

In addition, a predictive model was also developed from the study, suggesting a combination of motivational factors such as salary, incentives and benefits, and perception of government policies, and demographic indicators, such as gender, length of teaching in their current school and engagement in school-based and peer learning, as predictors of teacher motivation in remaining in the profession.

In conclusion, although the research findings are only applicable to its sample due to the use of the convenience sampling method, Cambodian teacher respondents are highly motivated to stay in the teaching profession. Their motivation is shaped by a complex interaction of internal values, work conditions, financial and policy-related variables. The results from the inferential statistics and the predictive model presented in the study may serve as inspiration for determining possible measures that can further motivate teachers to remain in the education sector. Efforts to improve retention should therefore address both systemic issues and individual support mechanisms.

Based on the findings of the study, the following policy recommendations may be considered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia:

- **SALARY:**

Examine teacher compensation: The minimum salary of Cambodian teachers is USD 300.27 (MOEYS, 2024), below the average household monthly income in the country at USD 584.03. The average income of teacher respondents in this study is even lower, at USD 66. The teachers' minimum salary is also insufficient to meet the average monthly household consumption of USD 459.92 (National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, 2022). Though additional allowances are granted to teachers in remote and disadvantaged areas and those rendering extra teaching hours, it appears that the salary is inadequate for teachers in the country, considering that 66.86% have one to five dependents, based on this survey in this research.

- **WORKING CONDITIONS:**

Explore the circumstances that encourage teachers to continue serving in their current schools: The Teacher Policy Action Plan 2024-2030 of Cambodia took measures in "improving and/or creating enabling conditions for teachers" to

“attract and retain competent” educators (MOEYS, 2024, p.31). A few strategies mentioned include “organization of teacher appreciation and recognition events,” “improvement of support systems/ mechanisms for teachers” (MOEYS, 2024, pp.31-32). These are significant developments in the country. However, the MOEYS may further consider exploring the circumstances that motivate teachers to continue serving their current schools, as this is one indicator that predicts teacher motivation to remain in the profession.

Allocate or mobilize resources for the provision of school facilities: Under the Cambodian Education Strategic Plan 2024-2028 (MOEYS, 2024), the MOEYS set targets for education infrastructure, such as improvement of water supply and sanitation facilities in school (p.42), “construction, repair and renovation of school infrastructure, including school offices, school buildings, libraries, computer labs, science labs, teacher houses, toilets, lavatories, kitchens, dining-halls and other facilities” (p.59), and “connection of schools to electric and clean water networks and internet” (p.59). School facilities are also targeted such as “provision of classrooms with modern equipment (LCD, Smart TV, Smart Board, etc.)” (p.59), and “construction and renovation of sports grounds” (p.59). Although these improvements will entail significant capital investments, the provision and improvement of school facilities will contribute to providing quality education to Cambodian learners and enhance teachers’ motivation to stay in the profession. Partnerships with local authorities, the private sector, development partners, and funding agencies may help support this MOEYS initiative.

- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Institutionalize school-based teacher professional development activities: No and Heng (2017, as cited in Sok & Heng, 2024) observed that capacity-building initiatives are often fragmented and show limited evidence of lasting benefits for teaching practices. They highlighted the need for a restructured model for

professional development in Cambodia that better reflects teachers' needs and inspires greater motivation and engagement.

As one predictor of teacher motivation in staying in the profession, the MOEYS may consider institutionalizing teacher professional development activities within schools, as this is the education governance level most accessible to them. The MOEYS has initiated efforts in this direction through the 2019 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Framework for Teachers and Directors (MOEYS, 2019). Measures at the school level may be further strengthened through peer collaboration, mentoring, and coaching.

- CAREER PROGRESSION

Link teacher career pathways with salary adjustments: The curious case of Cambodia, wherein teachers with lower educational attainment seem to have higher motivation levels, suggests that teachers might feel that their efforts in pursuing graduate studies are not commensurate with the rewards they receive from teaching. Though the MOEYS has taken steps to develop teacher career pathways, with teachers choosing either the professional teacher, educational leadership, teacher educator, or education policy specialist pathways (MOEYS, 2019; BO, 2019), salary structures have yet to be adjusted in alignment with the teacher career pathways. Though teachers receive bonus pay based on their performance evaluations, an increase in base pay for teachers based on their career progression is worth exploring. This effort will also support the finding that revealed that teacher respondents with a history of promotion have higher motivation to stay in their careers.

- PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT LAWS AND POLICIES

Conduct policy reviews affecting teacher motivation: The factor 'government laws and policies' of this study showed the level of satisfaction of

Cambodian teacher respondents regarding selected areas that affect their lives (see Figure 19). Three aspects received the lowest satisfaction ratings: 1) salary (29.83%), 2) benefits and incentives (15.91%); and 3) teacher deployment (11.08%). As the top two are among the predictors of teacher motivation in staying in the profession, and teacher deployment may also influence another predictor, the length of teaching in the current school, the MOEYS may consider a more in-depth review of policies concerning these aspects.

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Appendix

Statistical Results of the Study

Table 3

Interpretation of the 10-point Likert Scale

Very High Motivation	8.20 – 10.00
High Motivation	6.40 – 8.19
Moderate Motivation	4.60 – 6.39
Low Motivation	2.80 – 4.59
Very Low Motivation	1.00 – 2.79

Table 4

Interpretation of the 6-point Likert Scale

Strongly Agree	Strongly Satisfied	5.17 – 6.00
Agree	Satisfied	4.34 – 5.16
Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Satisfied	3.51 – 4.33
Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Dissatisfied	2.68 – 3.50
Disagree	Dissatisfied	1.84 – 2.67
Strongly Disagree	Strongly Dissatisfied	1.00 – 1.83

Table 5

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teachers

Factors of Motivation	Level of Motivation		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Perception of Government Policies	0.364	< .001	Moderate relationship
School Environment	0.366	< .001	
Salary, Incentives and Benefits	0.328	< .001	
Sense of Being Respected and Valued	0.272	< .001	Weak relationship
Sense of Growth and Development	0.261	< .001	
Teacher Well-being	0.255	< .001	
Teaching as Interest and Passion	0.212	< .001	Negligible relationship
Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment	0.115	< .001	

p < .001

The interpretation of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was adapted from Dancey and Reidy (2004):

- $\rho \geq 0.70$ indicates a very strong relationship
- 0.40 – 0.69 indicates a strong relationship
- 0.30 – 0.39 indicates a moderate relationship
- 0.20 – 0.29 indicates a weak relationship
- 0.01 – 0.19 indicates no or negligible relationship

Table 6

Relationship between the Length of Teaching and the Level of Motivation of Teachers

	Length of Teaching		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Level of Motivation	0.175	< .001	Very weak relationship

p < .001

The interpretation of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was adapted from Dancey and Reidy (2004).

Table 7

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation based on Availability of Facilities in School

	Availability of Facilities in School				Effect size		
	M	df	F	P	η^2p	interpretation	
Level of Motivation	More than adequate	7.6	2	3.563	0.029	0.02	Small
	Adequate	7.395					
	Inadequate	6.894					

p < .05

Interpretation is based on National University's (2025) interpretation of ANOVA's partial eta-squared:

- $\eta^2p = 0.01$ indicates a small effect
- $\eta^2p = 0.06$ indicates a medium effect
- $\eta^2p = 0.14$ indicates a large effect

Source: <https://resources.nu.edu/statsresources/eta>

Table 8

Relationship between Use of Personal Money for Professional Development and Level of Motivation of Teachers

	Used Personal Money for Professional Development		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Level of Motivation	0.133	0.013	Very weak relationship

p < .05

The interpretation of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient was adapted from Dancey and Reidy (2004).

Table 9

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation based on Highest Educational Attainment

	Highest Educational Attainment	M	df	F	P	Effect size	
						η^2p	interpretation
Level of Motivation	Primary Level	8					
	Secondary Level	7.905					
	Associate Degree	7.143	5	3.451	0.005	0.049	Small
	Bachelor's Degree	7.332					
	Master's Degree	6.802					
	Doctoral Degree	5.333					

p < .01

Interpretation is based on National University's (2025) interpretation of ANOVA's partial eta-squared.

Table 10

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on History of Promotion

	With a	Without a	U	p	Rank- Biserial Correlation	Effect Size Interpretation
	History of Promotion	History of Promotion				
	M	M				
Level of Motivation	7.38	6.986	17153	0.025	0.138	Small

p < .01

Interpretation is based on DATATab's (2025) interpretation of Mann-Whitney U test effect size:

- effect size less than 0.3 indicates a small effect
- effect size between 0.3 and 0.5 indicates a medium effect
- effect size greater than 0.5 indicates a large effect

Source: <https://datatab.net/tutorial/mann-whitney-u-test>

Table 11

Regression Estimates of Factors Affecting the Teachers' Level of Motivation in Cambodia

Predictor	p	Stand. Estimate
Salary, Incentives and Benefits	0.003	0.186
Perception of Government Policies	0.002	0.195
Gender: Female – Male	0.006	0.272
Length of teaching in the current school	< .001	0.195
Engagement in school-based or peer-to-peer learning: No	0.007	-0.296

Model: $F(6, 345) = 16.4, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.222$



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