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Teacher Motivation for Staying in the Profession: Insights from Lao PDR

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Abstract

Investigating the motivations of teachers in staying in the profession may support the Ministry of Education and Sports in retaining their existing workforce and contribute to addressing teacher shortage in Lao PDR. Through quantitative methodologies, this study explored the factors that influence teachers' motivation to remain in their teaching careers. The descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of Laotian teacher respondents have high motivation levels to continue serving as teachers. The respondents also view positively the eight motivational factors, namely, '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'. Inferential statistics showed that the use of personal money for professional development is positively associated, although to a very weak extent, with motivation to stay in the profession. The predictive model, on the other hand, identified a combination of motivational factors and socio-demographic variables that predict teacher motivation. These include the factors 'government laws and policies', 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', age, marital status, and engagement in workshop seminars and self-learning for professional development. The study also suggested a few policy implications that address system-wide challenges and intrinsic drivers.

I. Introduction

According to the Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS) of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), there are 68,418 teachers from early childhood to secondary levels in Lao PDR in 2022. Among them, 58.31% are female. Almost half of them (49.95%) teach the secondary level, while almost a third (31.48%) serve in primary schools. The rest are in early childhood education (12.66%) and pre-primary education (2.24%). This distribution is also reflected in the teacher-student ratio, wherein a primary education teacher manages 34.45 students per class, and a secondary school teacher handles 11.35 learners per class.

Teachers are perceived as nation builders in Lao PDR. Many are highly respected and admired in their communities. Despite the salary difference with private education institutions, public school teachers continue serving their schools, upholding their belief in their status as civil servants. They also see teaching as an honorable profession (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2023).

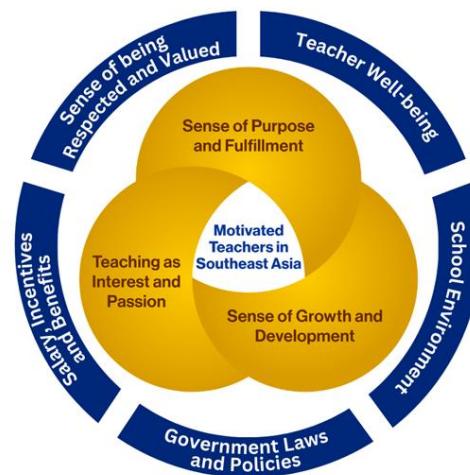
In 2023, the 5th National Assembly (NA) session highlighted issues related to teacher shortages in the country (Lapuekou, 2023). Low salaries result in a shortage of qualified teachers in many schools, leading to the closure of educational institutions and a negative impact on the standard of education being delivered. Lao's largest province also reported a need for 500 teachers due to retirement, high inflation, and rising living costs (RFA Lao, 2024). The threat of cuts in government positions further exacerbates the situation. There is also an imbalance in the distribution of teachers across the country, with a greater number serving in urban and semi-urban areas (MOES, 2021). Nevertheless, the Government of Lao PDR is trying to address the challenge by postponing the retirement of experienced teachers, hiring and providing equal pay to volunteer teachers, and requesting support from defense and security officials to serve as teachers, especially in remote areas (Lapuekou, 2023; Meadley, 2023; Chanthavong, 2025).

The situation in Lao PDR emphasizes the need to examine teacher motivation to remain in the teaching profession. Various sources of literature offer different definitions of teacher motivation. 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). Moreover, 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 illustrate how both internal motivations and external influences work together to support teachers in continuing to carry out their responsibilities.

Within the context of this research, teacher motivation is defined as the factors that influence teachers to remain in the profession. These factors were adopted from Umali et al.’s (2024) *Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession*. The framework notes that motivational factors are differentiated between core and contributing factors. Core factors are those that primarily drive teachers to stay serving in the education sector, including a sense of purpose and fulfillment, interest and passion for teaching, and a sense of growth and development. Contributing factors, on the other hand, are those that support the core factors, such as 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



Although studies on teacher motivation in Lao PDR are scarce, a few researchers have shed insights on the matter. Yano (2022) investigated the types and details of teachers' motivations in public primary schools in Vientiane based on the self-determination theory. His research determined that Laotian teachers' controlled motivation functions similarly to autonomous motivation, as both levels have high scores in relation to students' basic psychological needs, suggesting the belief in the 'importance of children' as highly relevant to teacher motivation. Also, several literature closely linked teacher motivation and work satisfaction (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2012, as cited in Viseu, et.al, 2016). Hongnou's thesis (2014) revealed that the job satisfaction of public secondary teachers in Vientiane is also high, except for salary, which was at a medium level. She also noted a positive relationship between school principals' leadership and teachers' job satisfaction. On the other hand, Sisouphanthong et al. (2020) examined the role of incentives in recruiting and retaining teachers in rural schools using discrete choice experiment with four sets of choices: rural location, classroom condition, nonteaching-related jobs, and indirect monetary incentives. The authors discovered that all attributes were significant. Access to a hospital is most crucial for teachers in terms of

location, indicating that health security is a main concern for teachers if they are to be assigned in rural areas. In terms of classroom conditions, potential teachers find it discouraging to join the profession if they are to teach non-Lao learners. This signifies that, as new teachers, they might find handling learners from different minority groups to be challenging, as it would require familiarity with their language and culture. Teacher trainees are also more attracted to teaching jobs, particularly in the public sector, as this is more aligned with their backgrounds. Lastly, access to continued education at universities was seen as the most important non-monetary incentive among potential teachers, suggesting their desire for career advancement.

Recognizing that teachers' roles are significant in shaping future generations, 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 Community Education Development (CED), collaborated on the 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 study employed a quantitative approach. Drawing on the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession (Umali et al., 2024) and other scholarly sources, a survey questionnaire was designed and validated by content experts and country representatives. The survey was also translated into local languages, as necessary. Data collection was facilitated through SurveyMonkey and distributed using convenience sampling. Table 1 presents the profile of survey respondents in Lao PDR, with 287 valid responses. The data were then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

Hierarchical regression analysis was also done to produce the predictive model for each country.

Table 1

Profile of Survey Respondents in Lao PDR

| | Count | Percent |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Age in years | | |
| 18-24 | 2 | 0.7 |
| 25-34 | 84 | 29.3 |
| 35-44 | 153 | 53.3 |
| 45-54 | 47 | 16.4 |
| 55-64 | 1 | 0.3 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 134 | 46.7 |
| Female | 150 | 52.3 |
| Other | 3 | 1.0 |
| Marital status | | |
| Single | 27 | 9.4 |
| Married | 247 | 86.1 |
| Divorced/ Annulled/ Separated | 4 | 1.4 |
| Widowed | 3 | 1.0 |
| Prefer not to say | 6 | 2.1 |
| Highest educational attainment | | |
| Primary Level | 1 | 0.3 |
| Secondary Level | 6 | 2.1 |
| Associate Degree | 122 | 42.5 |
| Bachelor's Degree | 65 | 22.6 |
| Master's Degree | 90 | 31.4 |
| Doctoral Degree | 3 | 1.0 |
| Type of school | | |
| Public | 287 | 100.0 |
| School location | | |
| Urban | 210 | 73.2 |
| Rural | 77 | 26.8 |
| Length of teaching | | |
| Early Career (1 to 5 years) | 5 | 1.7 |
| Mid-Career (6 to 10 years) | 39 | 13.6 |
| Experienced (11 years and Up) | 243 | 84.7 |
| Total | 287 | 100 |

II. Results and Discussion

Key findings of the study in Lao PDR are presented in the following sections below. Data on teacher respondents' level of motivation to stay in the profession, their perception of the core and contributing factors of motivation, as well as the relationship between motivation levels and relevant indicators, are examined. Lastly, the predictive model for Laotian teacher respondents to remain in their teaching careers is also discussed. The factors examined correspond to the core and contributing motivational factors highlighted in the regional framework (see Figure 1), while indicators refer to contextual variables—such as professional development, career advancement, working conditions, and compensation—that may be shaped by policy interventions. Indicators may also pertain to demographic variables such as highest educational attainment, school location, and grade level currently teaching, among others.

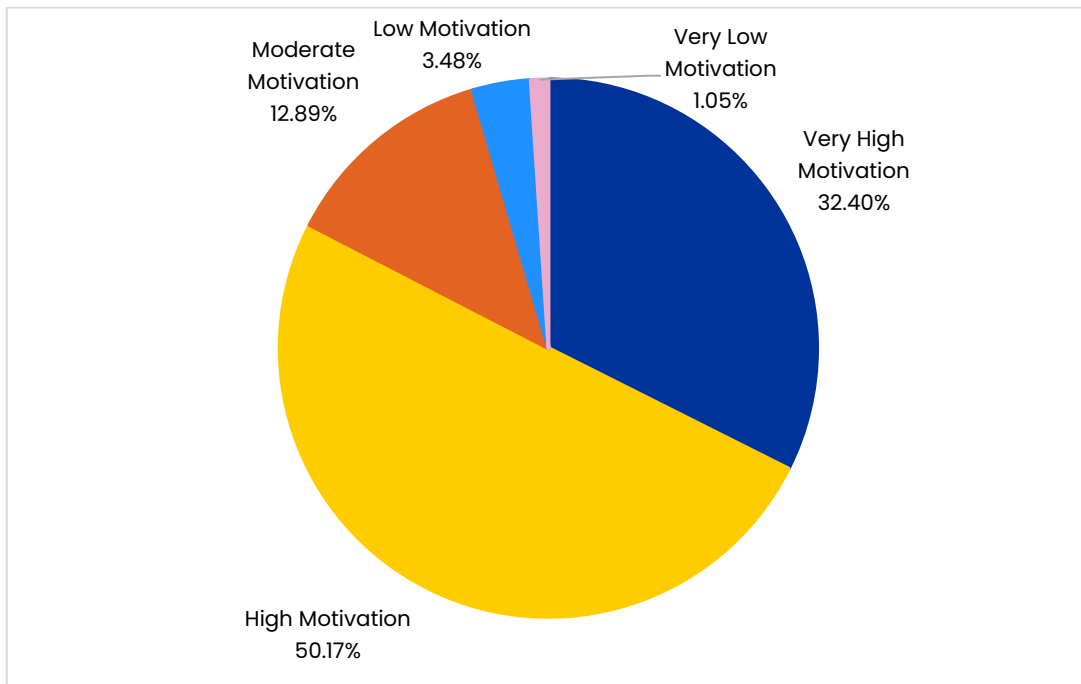
Level of Motivation of Teachers to Remain in the Profession

Teacher respondents in Lao PDR were asked to rate their level of motivation to stay in the profession. Based on a rating from 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest, half of the teachers (50.17%) have high motivation levels (rated 7-8). This is followed by those who rated themselves as having very high levels of motivation (32.40%) (rated 9-10), then by those with moderate motivation (12.89%) (rated 5-6). Only a small portion of the teacher respondents reported having low motivation (3.48%) (rated 3-4) and very low motivation levels (1.05%) (rated 1-2). Figure 2 presents the percentages of Laotian teachers according to their level of motivation. The mean score for the country is 7.79, which is considered high, based on the 10-point Likert scale interpretation (see Table 3 in the Appendix). These

findings suggest that a large proportion of teacher respondents in Lao PDR remain motivated to continue rendering their service as teachers in the country.

Figure 2

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



Factors Relevant to Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession:

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

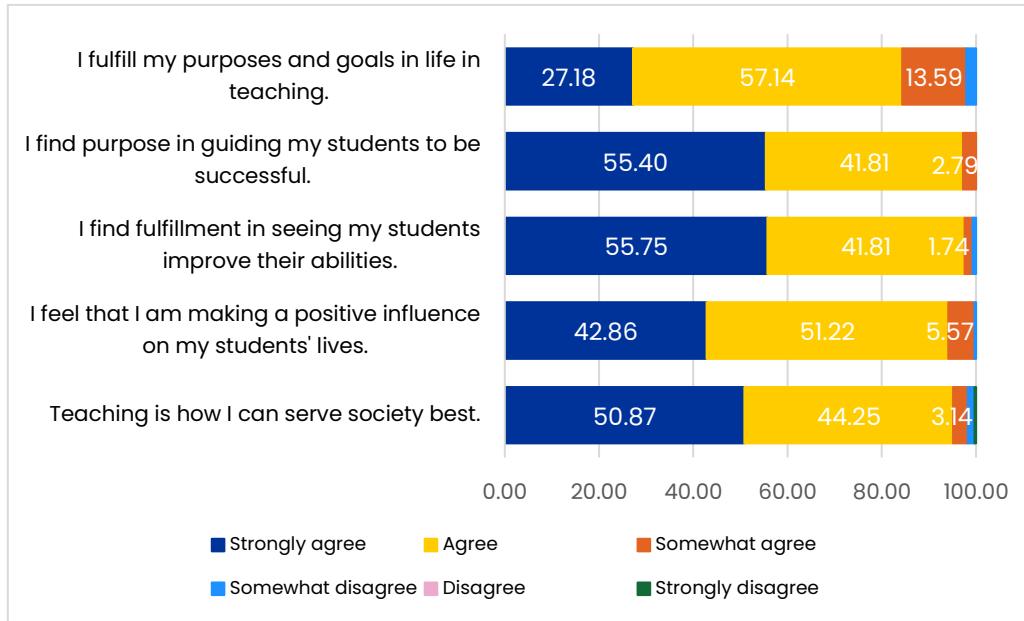
Core Factors of Teacher Motivation. The section below presents teacher respondents' level of agreement with statements related to the three core factors of motivation to stay in the teaching profession, namely, 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', 'teaching as interest and passion', and 'sense of growth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

Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment. The motivational factor 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' pertains to teachers' impact on their students and their contributions to societal and national development.

On average, an overwhelming majority of Laotian teacher respondents feel a sense of 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', as reflected in their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: "I fulfill my purposes and goals in life in teaching" (97.91%), "I find purpose in guiding my students to be successful" (100%), "I find fulfillment in seeing my students improve their abilities" (99.30%), and "I feel that I am making a positive influence on my students' lives" (99.65%) and "Teaching is how I can serve society best" (98.26%). Figure 3 presents teacher respondents' agreement level with statements relevant to the factor 'sense of purpose and fulfillment'. Overall, the mean score for this factor is 5.39 (rated as 'strongly agree'), using the 6-point Likert scale interpretation (see Table 4 in the Appendix).

Figure 3

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



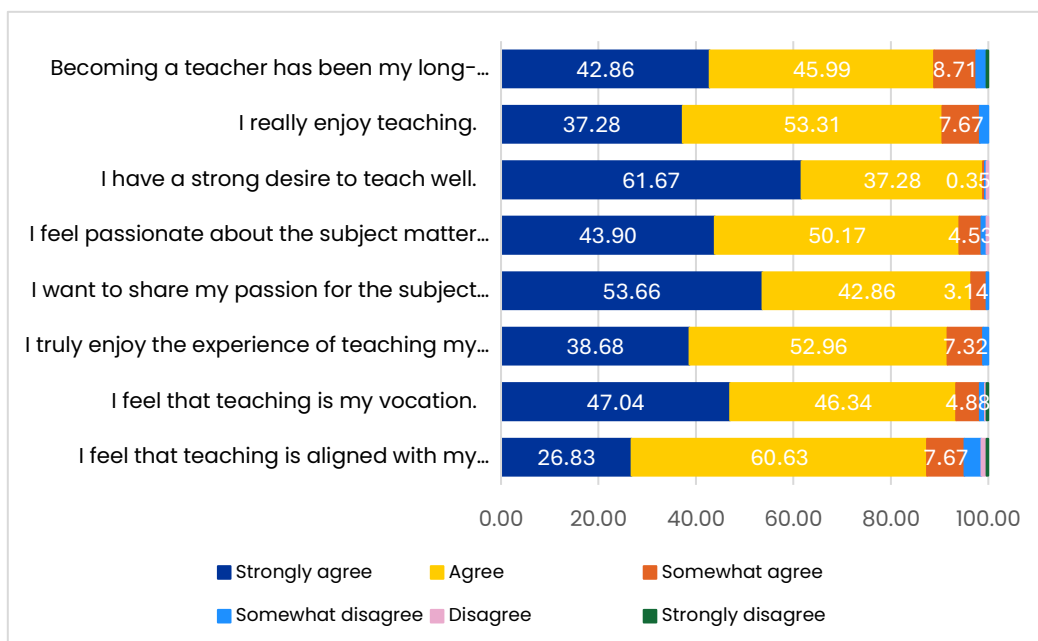
Teaching as Interest and Passion. The factor ‘teaching as interest and passion’ revolves around teachers’ aspiration to become educators from childhood, their love for teaching, love for the subject matter, and love for their pupils. It also pertains to their profession being aligned with their belief system.

In a similar light, a vast majority of teacher respondents in Lao PDR, at more than 98%, perceive teaching to be aligned with their interest and passion. This is manifested in their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “Becoming a teacher has been my long-time dream in life” (97.56%), “I really enjoy teaching” (98.26%), “I have a strong desire to teach well” (99.30%), “I feel passionate about the subject matter that I teach” (98.61%), “I want to share my passion for the subject that I am teaching with my students” (99.65%), “I truly enjoy the experience of teaching my students” (98.95%), “I feel that teaching is my vocation” (98.26%) and “I feel that teaching is aligned with my spiritual

beliefs” (95.12%). Figure 4 shows respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the factor ‘teaching as interest and passion’. The mean score for this factor is 5.35 (rated as ‘strongly agree’).

Figure 4

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



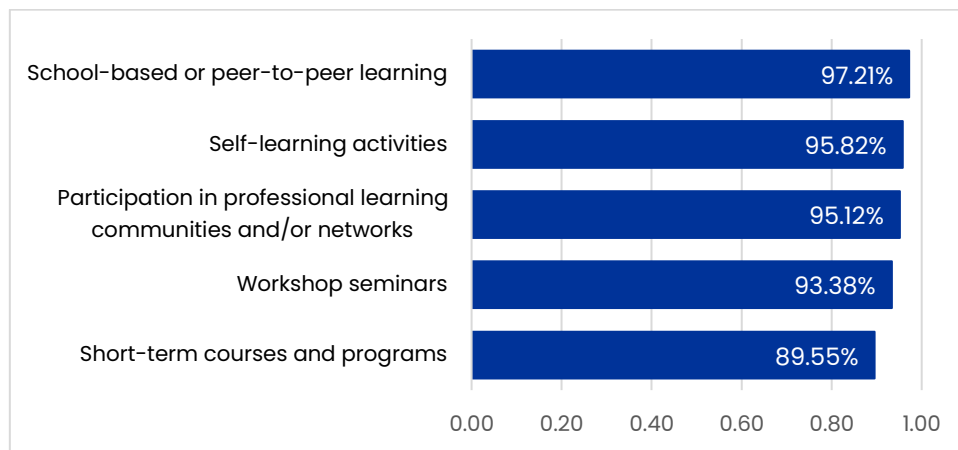
Sense of Growth and Development. ‘Sense of growth and development’, as a factor, refers to teachers’ desire to be better at teaching. This includes having opportunities for professional development, as well as recognizing that challenges help them grow in their profession.

Figure 5 presents the percentage of Laotian teacher respondents participating in various professional development activities. Most of them engage in professional development, with 97.21% participating in school-based or peer-to-peer learning, 95.82% in self-learning activities, and 95.12% in professional learning communities and/or networks. Many took part in structured training programs,

such as workshops (93.38%) and short-term courses (89.55%). In addition, almost half of the teachers are enrolled in graduate studies (47.39%), and 51.47% of them received scholarships. The survey findings on further studies are encouraging, given that Sisouphanthong et al. (2020) discovered that access to continued education at universities was seen as an incentive, especially for teachers assigned in rural areas.

Figure 5

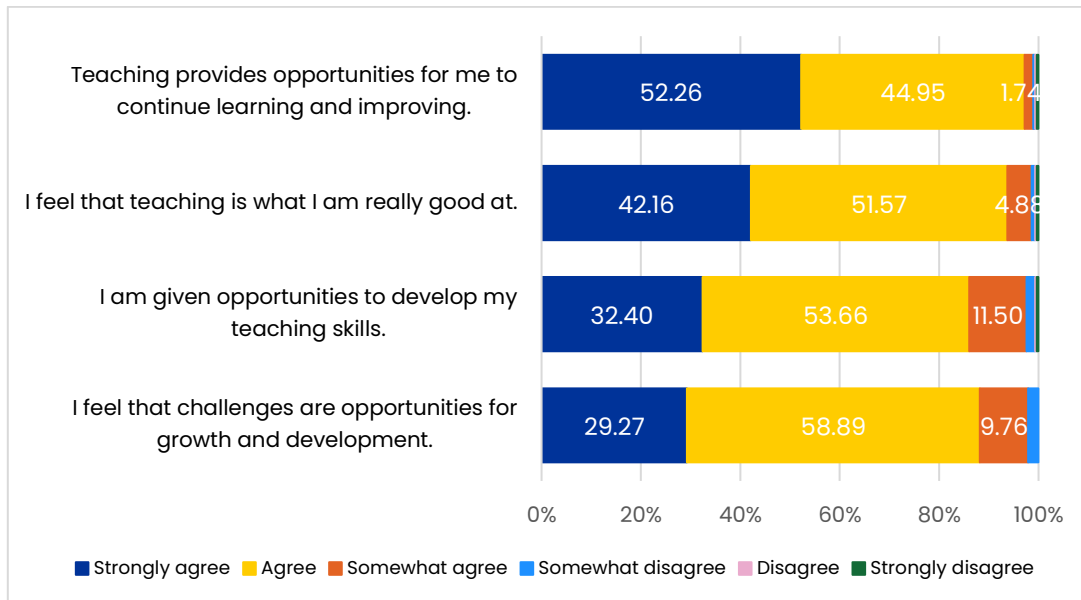
Percentage of Teacher Respondents Engaging in Professional Development



In addition, on average, more than 98% of Laotian teacher respondents believe that they have 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” (98.95%), “I feel that teaching is what I am really good at” (98.61%), “I am given opportunities to develop my teaching skills” (97.56%), and “I feel that challenges are opportunities for growth and development” (97.91%). Figure 6 shows respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the ‘sense of growth and development’. The mean score for this factor is 5.28 (rated as ‘strongly agree’).

Figure 6

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



Although data from the survey of this study suggests that teacher respondents engage in professional development and that they feel that they experience growth and development in their profession, according to an MOES report (2021), many teachers struggle to access in-service training that aligns with their professional needs because most available workshops are linked to specific projects or tailored for particular subject areas. This mismatch impairs educators’ mastery of subject matter and teaching methods, ultimately contributing to poor instructional quality.

Contributing Factors of Teacher Motivation. In a similar manner, the portions below presents teacher respondents’ level of agreement with statements related to the five contributing factors of teacher motivation to stay in the profession, such as ‘sense of being respected and valued’, ‘teacher well-being’,

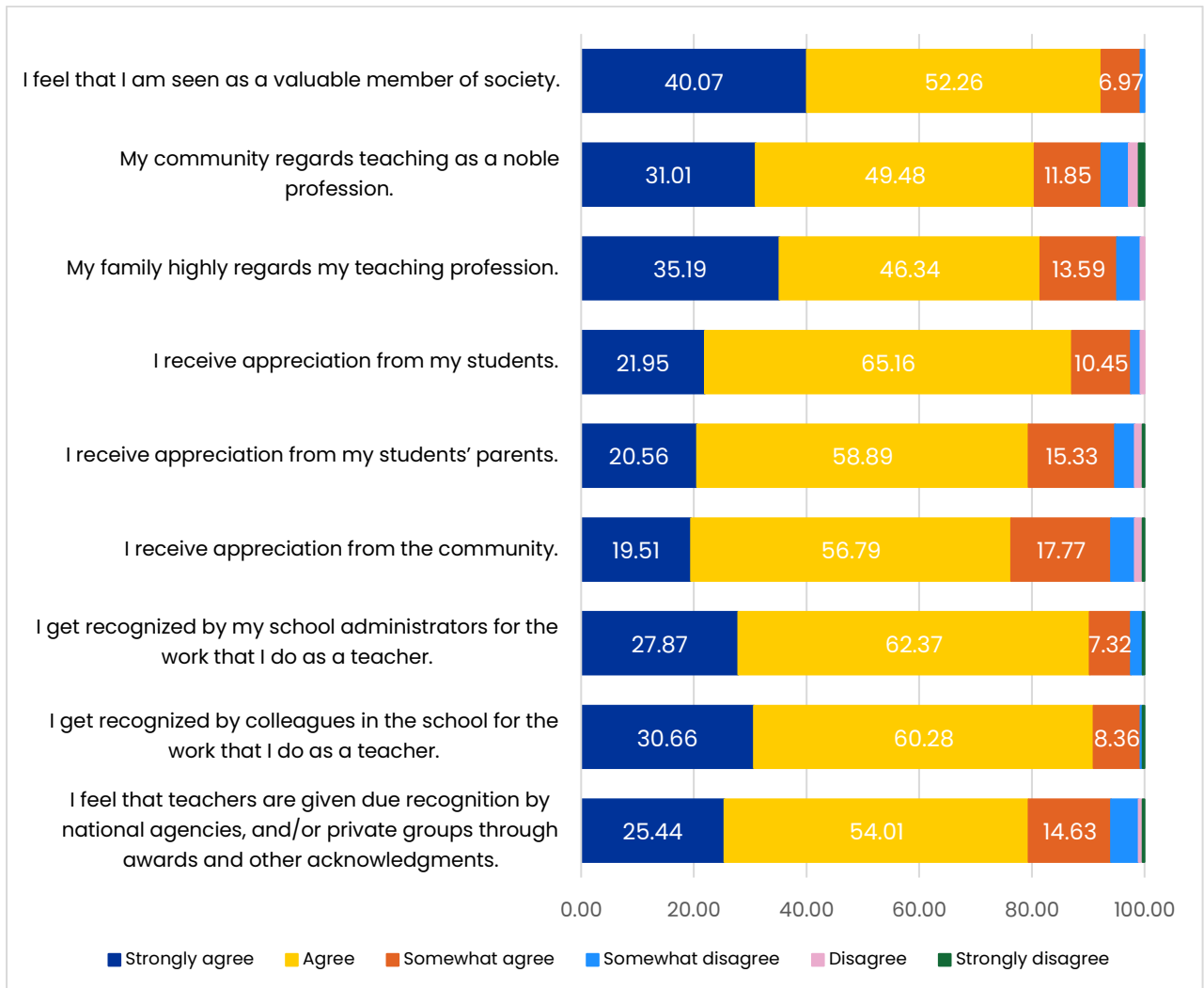
'school environment', 'salary, incentives and benefits' and 'government laws and policies'.

Sense of Being Respected and Valued. The factor 'sense of being respected and valued' refers to the notion that teachers are regarded as knowledgeable members of society and the belief that the profession is a valuable one. It also entails receiving appreciation from family, students, and parents, as well as awards and recognitions from the school and other stakeholders.

About 96% of teacher respondents feel they are being respected and valued as teachers in their country. This perception is reflected in their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: "I feel that I am seen as a valuable member of society" (99.30%), "My community regards teaching as a noble profession" (92.33%), "My family highly regards my teaching profession" (95.12%), "I receive appreciation from my students" (97.56%), "I receive appreciation from my students' parents" (94.77%), "I receive appreciation from the community" (94.08%), "I get recognized by my school administrators for the work that I do as a teacher" (97.56%), "I get recognized by colleagues in the school for the work that I do as a teacher" (99.30), and "I feel that teachers are given due recognition by national agencies, and/or private groups through awards and other acknowledgments" (94.08%). Figure 7 shows respondents' agreement level with statements related to the factor 'sense of being respected and valued.' The mean score for the factor is 5.07 (rated as 'agree').

Figure 7

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



Teacher Well-being. Although the concept of teacher well-being is broad, this factor within the context of this research pertains only to having a work-life balance, a flexible schedule, and having one’s home close to the school.

Investigating teachers’ work-life balance, Laotian respondents spend an average of 13 hours and 40 minutes teaching per week, or about 2 hours and 44 minutes per day. This is below the reported teaching hours in past surveys, where

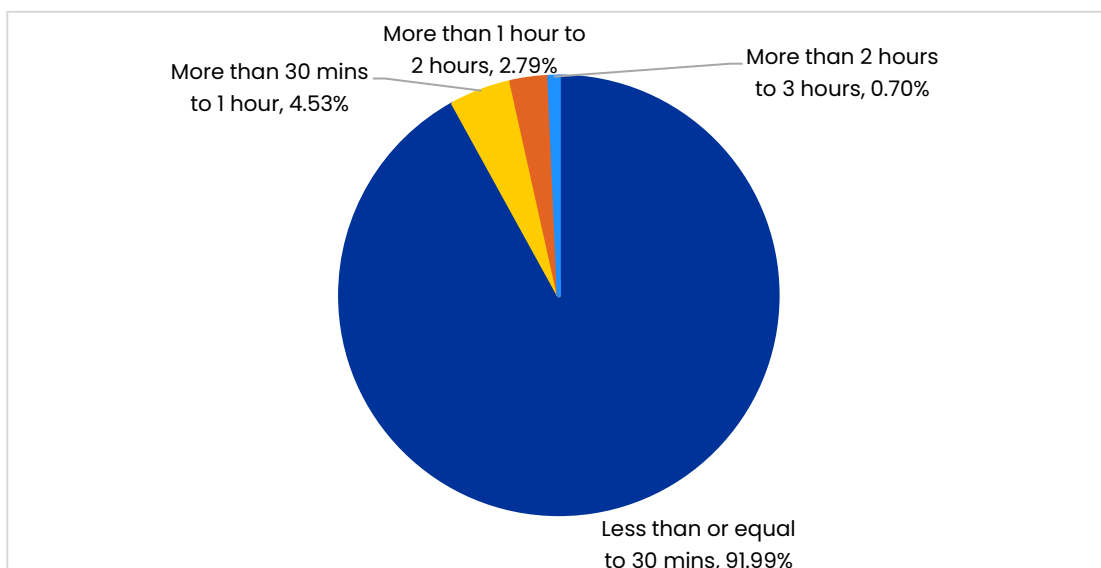
primary school teachers spend 4 hours and 8 minutes teaching per day, while secondary teachers spend 27 to 32 hours for lower secondary and 32 to 33 hours for upper secondary per week (The World Bank, 2018; UNESCO, 2008).

The majority of teacher respondents, at 64.46%, also have nonteaching-related tasks, which may range from 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. For such tasks, teachers spend an average of 10 hours and 38 minutes weekly, on top of their teaching hours.

In addition, considering the proximity of teachers' residences to their workplaces, Laotian teacher respondents spend an average of 18.60 minutes travelling to school one way. As shown in Figure 8, most teachers (91.99%) spend less than 30 minutes on travel.

Figure 8

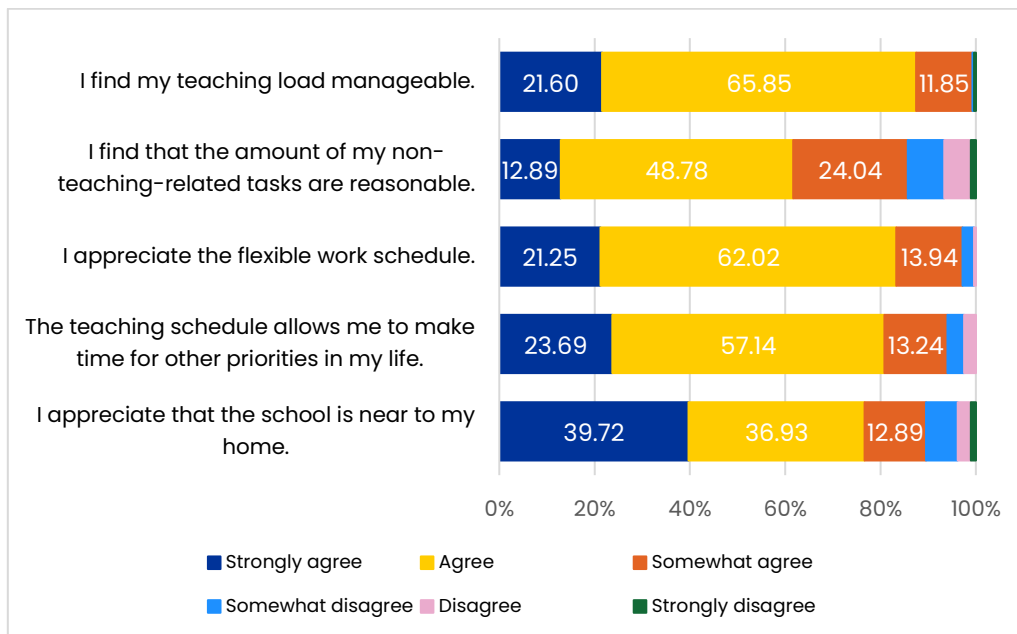
Percentage of Teacher Respondents based on their One-way Travel Time to School



On average, about 93% of the Laotian teacher respondents feel that their well-being is taken care of, as manifested in their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “I find my teaching load manageable” (99.30%), “I find that the amount of my non-teaching-related tasks are reasonable” (85.71%), “I appreciate the flexible work schedule” (97.21%), “The teaching schedule allows me to make time for other priorities in my life” (94.08%), and “I appreciate that the school is near to my home” (89.55%). Figure 9 depicts respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the factor ‘teacher well-being’. The mean score for the factor is 4.92 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 9

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

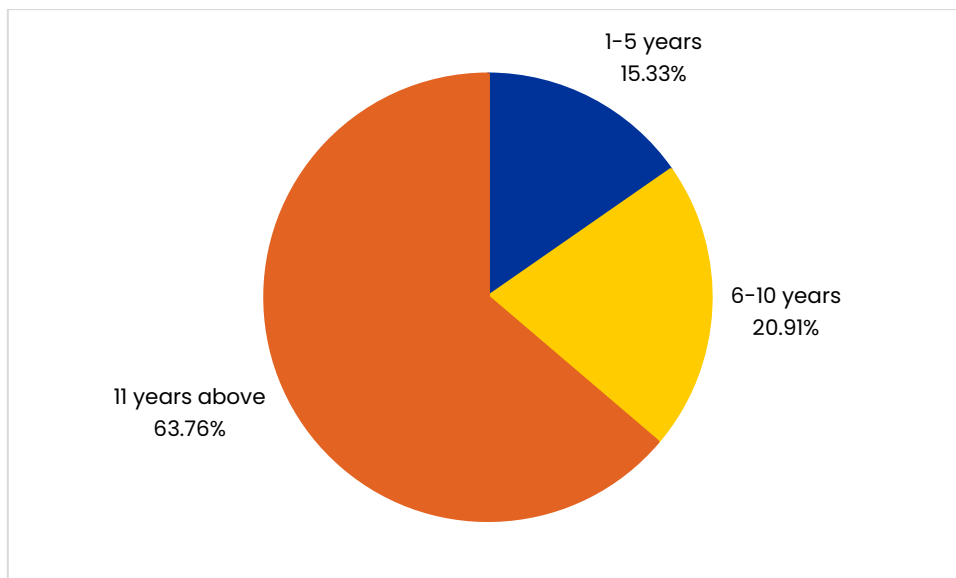


School Environment. School environment, as a motivational factor, pertains to several aspects. Among these include having supportive school policies, practices and activities, opportunities for self-expression and innovations, good working relationships with colleagues and having adequate facilities and resources.

Teacher respondents in Lao PDR have stayed in their current educational institutions for an average of 12.90 years. This is also reflected in Figure 10, where 63.76% have been in their schools for 11 years or more. This is followed by those who have stayed in their educational institutions for six to ten years (20.91%) and those who have stayed for only one to five years (15.33%).

Figure 10

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



Notably, Figures 11 and 12 indicate that most teachers perceive their teaching and learning resources and school facilities as inadequate. These findings are aligned with an MOES report (2021) that revealed that many educational institutions are not sufficiently equipped with facilities, especially information and communication technology (ICT) equipment.

Figure 11

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

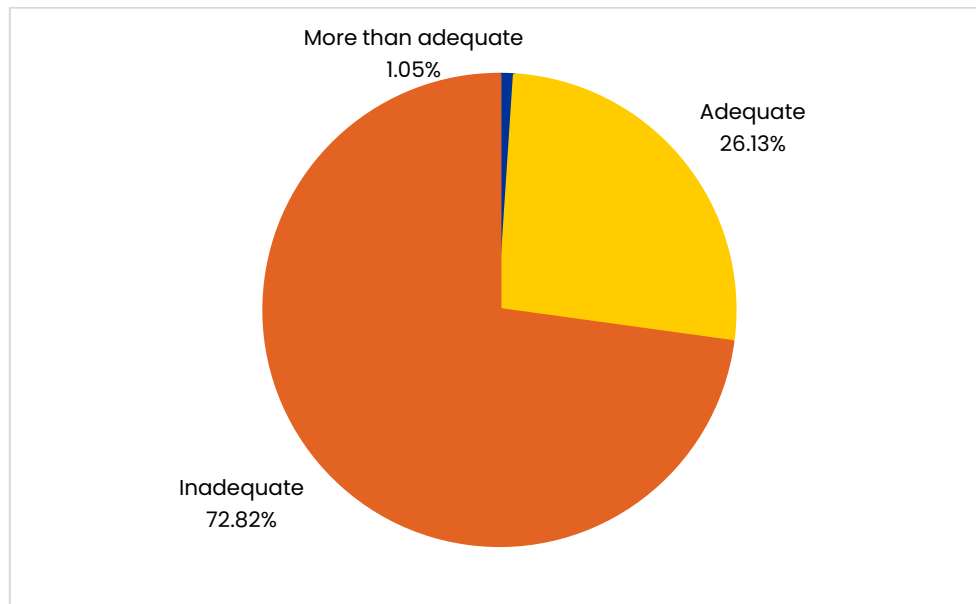
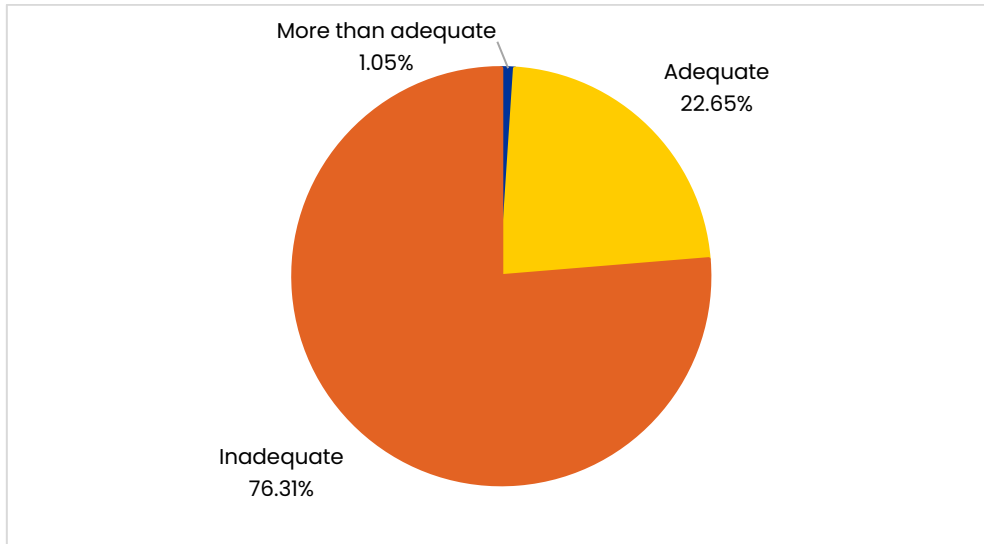


Figure 12

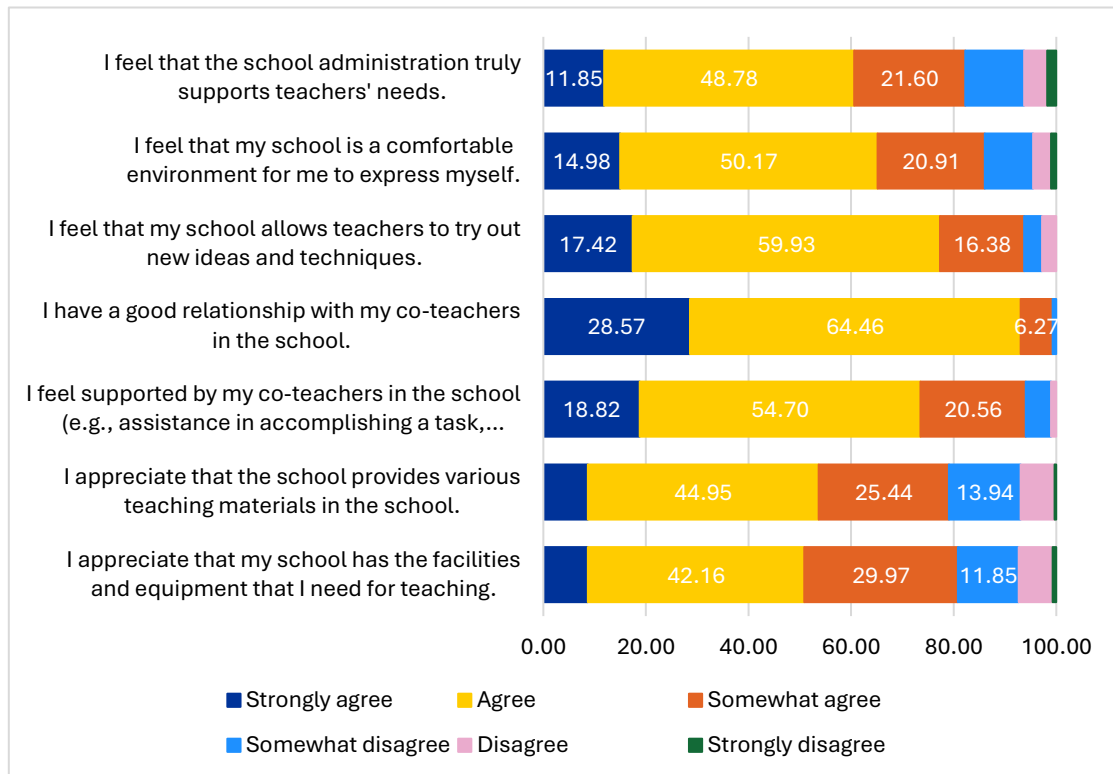
Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of Adequacy of Facilities Available in School



On average, more than 87% of teacher respondents in Lao PDR perceive their school environment to be motivating. This is reflected in their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “I feel that the school administration truly supports teachers' needs” (82.23%), “I feel that my school is a comfortable environment for me to express myself” (86.06%), “I feel that my school allows teachers to try out new ideas and techniques” (93.73%), “I have a good relationship with my co-teachers in the school” (99.30%), “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.)” (94.08%), “I appreciate that the school provides various teaching materials in the school” (79.09%), and “I appreciate that my school has the facilities and equipment that I need for teaching” (80.84%). Figure 13 illustrates respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the ‘school environment’ factor. The mean score for this factor in Lao PDR is 4.67 (rated as ‘agree’).

Figure 13

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Perception of School Environment



Salary, Incentives and Benefits. The motivational factor ‘salary, incentives and benefits’ dealt with teachers’ perception of teaching as a source of income, financial security, and well-compensated benefits and incentives.

On average, survey respondents in Lao PDR earn USD 279.56 per month for serving as teachers. Teachers, however, receive the same base salary as all government employees, which, at a minimum, is USD 84.59 in 2024 (Visapra, 2024). There is a large discrepancy between the minimum wage of teachers and the survey data, suggesting potential confusion among respondents in answering this particular survey item. On the other hand, Figure 14 shows that the majority of the teachers are their family’s main provider (79.09%). In a similar light, Figure 15 presents that many teachers have three to five dependents (58.89%). The rest are

almost equally distributed, with 14.29% of them having one to two dependents, six to ten dependents, and 12.54% having no dependents.

Figure 14

Percentage of Teacher Respondents as the Main Financial Provider

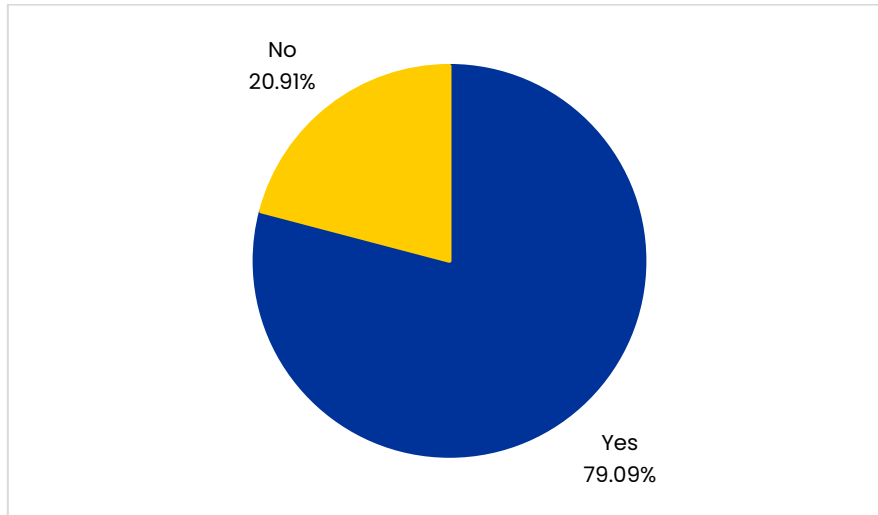
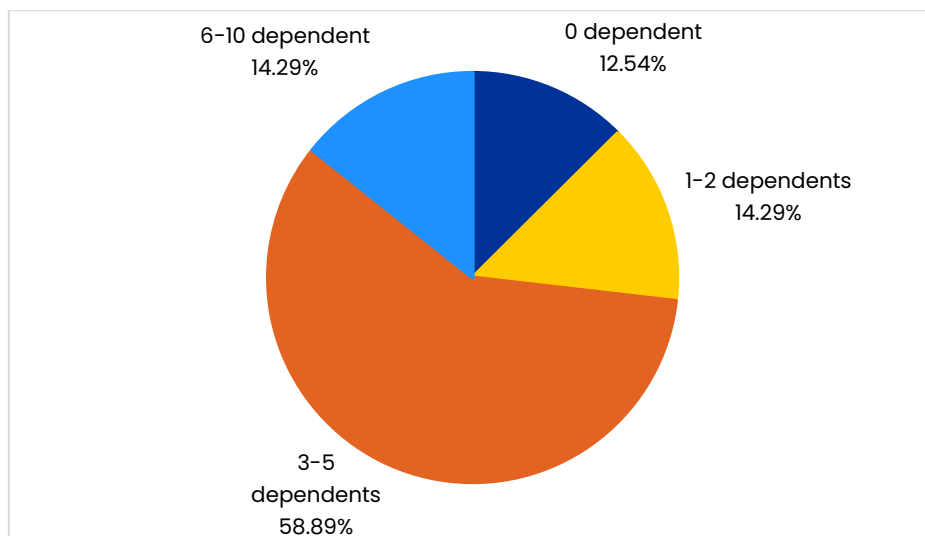


Figure 15

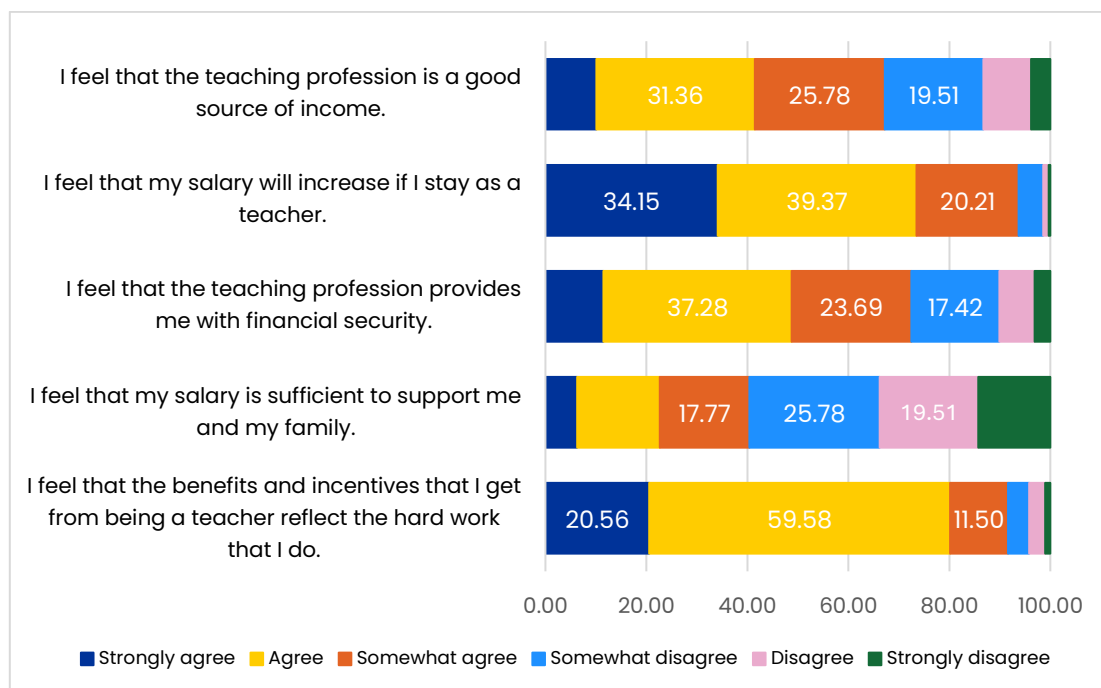
Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to the Number of their Dependents



On average, more than 73% of teacher respondents in Lao PDR perceive their salary, incentives and benefits positively. This is manifested in their agreement (strongly agree, agree and somewhat agree) with the following statements: “I feel that the teaching profession is a good source of income” (67.25%), “I feel that my salary will increase if I stay as a teacher” (93.73%), “I feel that the teaching profession provides me with financial security” (72.47%), and “I feel that the benefits and incentives that I get from being a teacher reflect the hard work that I do” (91.64%). However, only 40.42% of teacher respondents agree with the statement “I feel that my salary is sufficient to support me and my family”. Figure 16 presents respondents’ agreement level with statements related to the factor ‘salary, incentives, and benefits’. The mean score for Lao PDR for this factor is 4.26 (rated as ‘somewhat agree’).

Figure 16

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



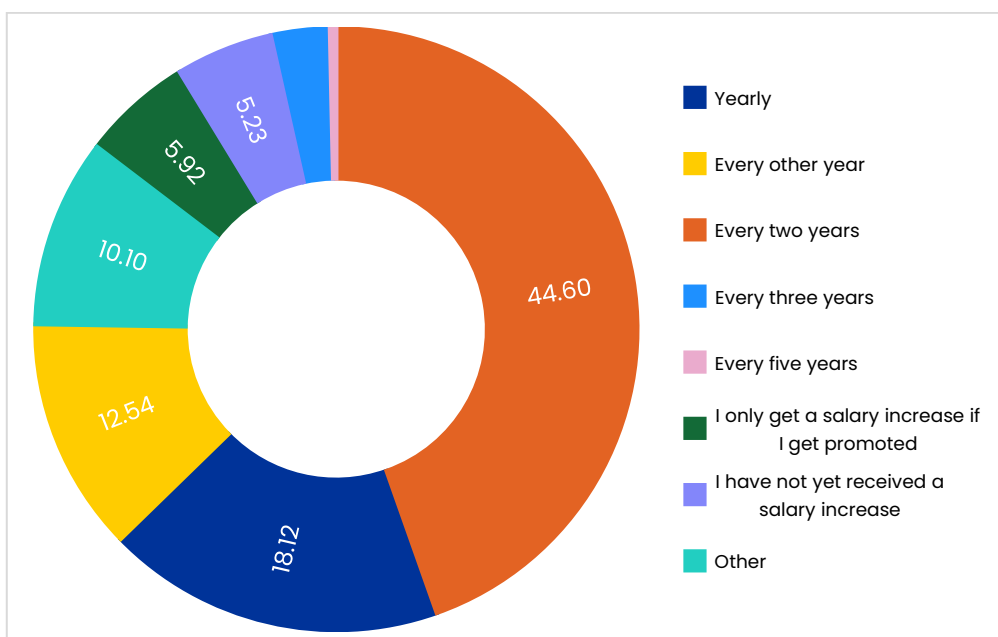
Although teacher respondents in general seem to still perceive their salary, incentives and benefits positively, the findings hint at exploring possible ways to increase the salary of teachers, as their compensation is greatly affected by inflation and rising cost of living (RFA Lao, 2024).

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.

About salary, 44.60% of teacher respondents from Lao PDR reported that their salaries increase every two years. This is followed by those who receive annual salary increases (18.12%) and those who receive them every other year (12.54%).

Figure 17

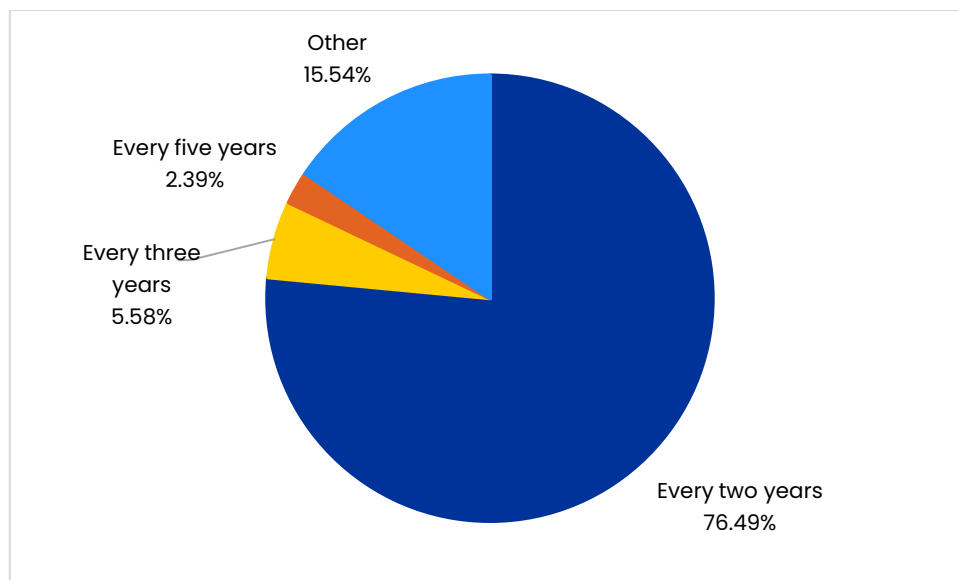
Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to the Frequency of Teacher Salary Increase



Concerning career progression, the large majority of Laotian teacher respondents (87.46%) have a history of promotion. Among those who experienced promotion, 76.49% reported being promoted every two years. This is followed by those who responded ‘others’ (15.54%) and those who are promoted every three years (5.58%). The other responses include not having a definite frequency for promotion, such as being promoted twice or once during their teaching career. These findings are somewhat consistent with an MOES report (2021), which reveals that teacher professional structures and career paths are not clearly laid out in the country.

Figure 18

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to their Frequency of Promotion



In connection with professional development, Figure 19 indicates that 92.68% of Lao teacher respondents reported using their personal funds for at least one professional development activity, suggesting that most teachers in the country

spend their own resources to access professional development and career advancement. In a similar light, Figure 20 shows the percentage of teachers who used personal money according to professional development activities.

Figure 19

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

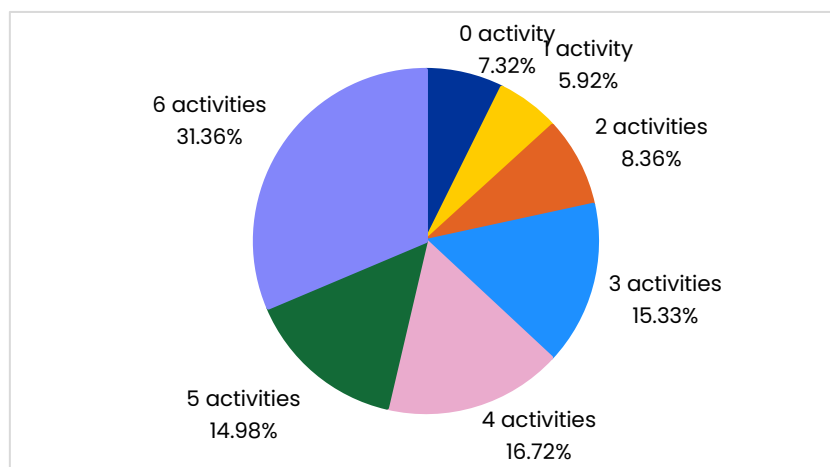
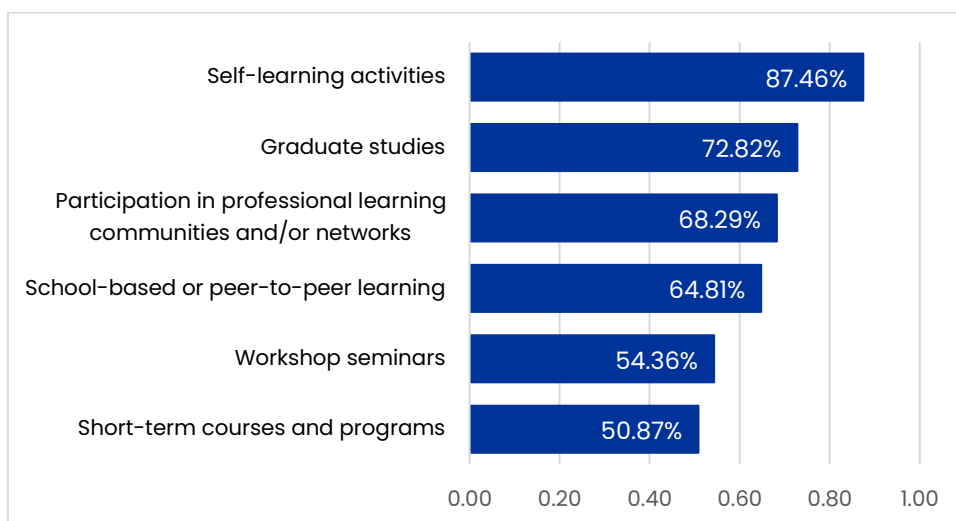


Figure 20

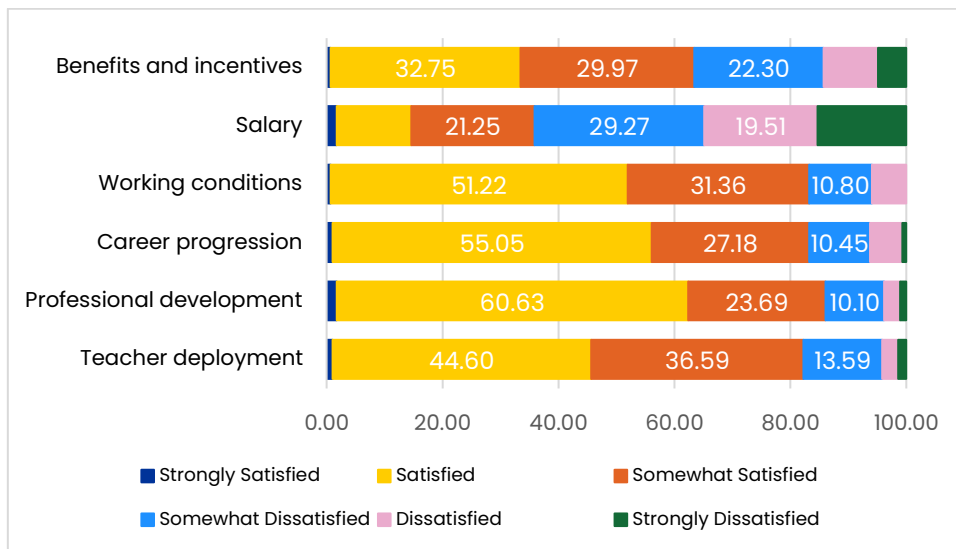
Percentage of Teacher Respondents Who Used Personal Money According to Professional Development Activities



On average, more than 72% of the teacher respondents in Lao PDR 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” (63.41%), “Working conditions” (83.27%), “Career progression” (83.27%), “Professional development” (86.02%), and “Teacher deployment” (82.23%). However, only 35.89% of the respondents indicate their satisfaction with the area of “Salary”. Figure 21 illustrates respondents’ level of satisfaction with the factor ‘government laws and policies’. The mean score for Lao PDR for this factor is 4.02 (rated as ‘somewhat satisfied’).

Figure 21

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



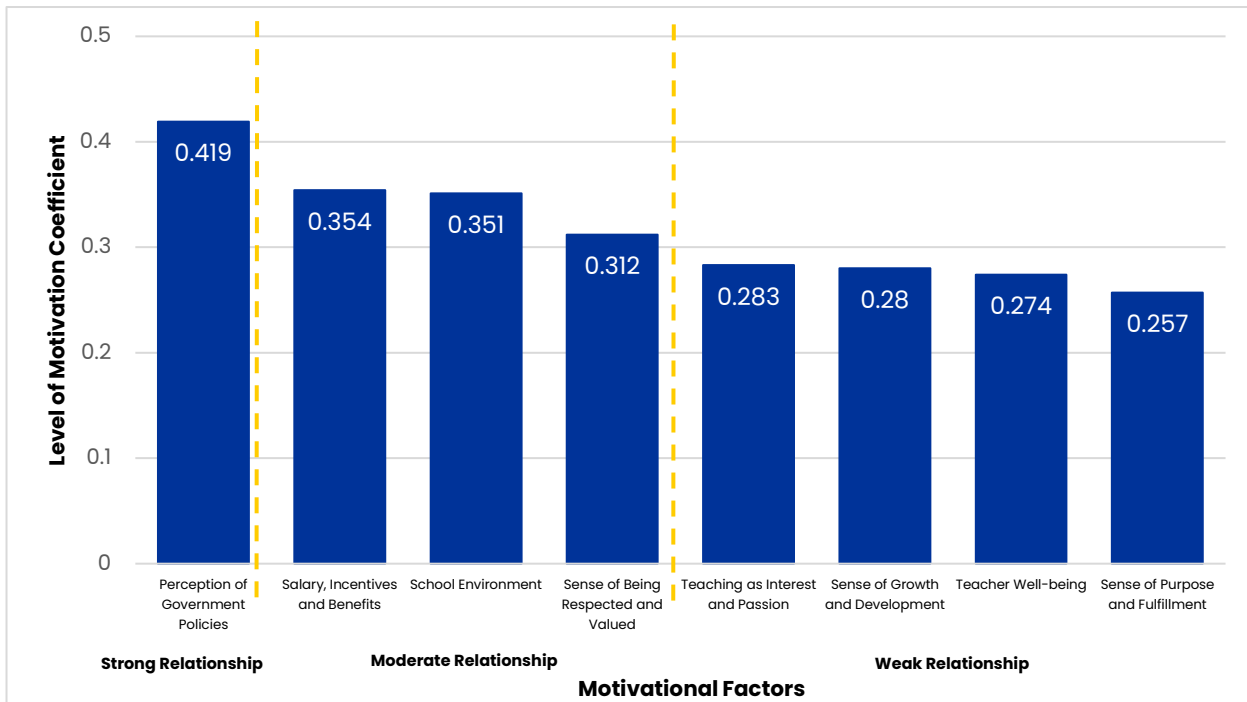
Summary. The results of the descriptive statistics suggest that teacher respondents in Lao PDR resonate with all core and contributing motivational factors that support teachers to stay in their profession. They rated strongly agree to statements related to all three core factors of 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', 'teaching as interest and passion' and 'sense of growth and development'. They also agreed with statements connected to the other contributing factors apart from 'salary, incentives and benefits' and 'government laws and policies', both of which rated only 'somewhat agree or satisfied'. These findings are in alignment with their self-rated level of motivation, which is high among teacher respondents.

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 core and contributing motivational factors and teacher respondents' overall level of motivation in Lao PDR (see Figure 22 and Table 5 in the Appendix). The strength of these associations, ranging from weak to strong relationships, suggests that all of the factors have a role in influencing teachers' motivation to remain in the profession.

Figure 22

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teachers



Looking at the factors individually, the results indicate that as teacher respondents' perception of government policies improves, such as those investigated in this study, namely benefits and incentives, salary, working conditions, career progression, professional development, and teacher deployment, their motivation to stay in the teaching profession also becomes higher. In a similar light, the more favorably they view their salary, incentives and benefits, the more motivated they are to continue serving as teachers. These findings highlight the importance of government policies that directly affect the welfare of teachers in motivating them to provide their service.

In addition, as teacher respondents perceive their school environment as a better workplace, they are more likely to remain in the education sector. This result suggests the need to improve the environment in educational institutions, as it contributes to motivating teachers, and is aligned with existing literature that that

a conducive work environment supports teachers in the fulfillment of roles, ultimately affecting their motivation (Salifu, 2013, Adelabu, 2005, Bennell, 2004, Mathew, 2005, Hooker, et al., 2003, Park, et al., 2007, as cited in Handayani, 2016).

Furthermore, as Laotian teacher respondents' sense of being respected and valued strengthens, the more motivated they become to remain in the teaching profession. This result coincides with Mattar's (2010) qualitative research, in which teachers in top-performing schools expressed appreciation for the recognition they received from administrators and fellow staff. It indicates that cultivating a culture of respect and appreciation for teachers—from students, peers, communities, and governmental bodies—could enhance their motivation to stay in the teaching career.

Moreover, the correlation analysis suggests that the more teacher respondents view teaching as their interest and passion, the more likely they are to continue serving as teachers. This result implies the need to cultivate teachers' love for teaching, the subject matter they are teaching, and love for their learners. As emphasized by Zee and Koomen (2016, as cited in Almeida et al., 2021), interest generates uplifting emotions and fosters a positive environment, reinforcing one's motivation to continue teaching.

In a similar light, as teacher respondents feel that their sense of growth and development becomes stronger, they tend to be more motivated to stay in the teaching profession. This finding suggests that teachers should be provided with adequate opportunities for professional development and avenues to enhance their practice, as also evident in Sisouphanthong et al.'s (2020) study, which found that access to education in universities was perceived as an incentive for teaching in rural areas.

Teacher well-being is also positively associated with motivational level. This means that as teacher respondents' well-being improves, so does their motivation

to keep on serving as educators. The results highlight the importance of addressing teachers' work-life balance, home-school proximity, and other aspects that promote their well-being.

Lastly, although the association is weak, the factor 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' remains statistically significant in relation to teacher motivation. This suggests that when teachers experience a deeper sense of meaning in their roles, they are more inclined to remain in the profession. The finding underscores the importance of nurturing teachers' sense of mission—empowering them to inspire students and make meaningful contributions to society and national progress. This finding coincides with existing literature that highlights the role of impact on students on teachers' intrinsic motivation (Han & Yin, 2016; Koran, 2015, Csikszentmihalyi's, 1997, Alibakhshi & Nezakatgoo, 2019, Dörnyei's, 2001, as cited in Stezycka & Etherington, 2020).

Relationships between Other Indicators and the Level of Motivation of Teachers

Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships among indicators affecting teacher motivation to stay in the profession. In addition, the Mann-Whitney U test, ANOVA, and chi-square tests were utilized to assess whether there are significant differences across the indicators. Attention was given to indicators that have potential implications for policy recommendations. 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 the 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 related to salary, the frequency of salary increases, was investigated, but it did not yield significant results.

Indicators Related to Working Conditions. Seven indicators were explored to determine the relationships between work conditions indicators and teachers' level of motivation. These include 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, and adequacy of facilities in school. Unfortunately, none of these yielded significant findings.

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

Relationship between Use of Personal Money for Professional Development and Level of Motivation of Teachers. Spearman's rho correlation was used to investigate the relationship between teacher respondents' use of personal funds for professional development and their motivation levels. The results reveal statistically significant associations between Lao teacher respondents' level of motivation to remain in the profession and their use of personal funds for professional development ($\rho = 0.152, p < .01$) (also see Table 6 in the Appendix). This finding suggests that motivated teachers who remain in the profession are willing to use their finances to avail themselves of professional development opportunities. Additionally, teachers who feel they have invested in enhancing their skills may be less likely to explore moving to a different profession, as they have spent valuable resources to improve their teaching practices.

Indicators Related to Career Progression. Two indicators were examined to determine the relationships between career progression indicators and the level of motivation of Laotian teacher respondents. These include history and frequency of promotion. However, these also did not yield significant results.

Summary. The results of the correlation analysis showed that each of the core and contributing motivational factors examined in this study (see Figure 1) had a statistically significant positive association with teachers' motivation to continue in the profession, ranging from weak to strong relationships. These findings highlight that the more favorably teachers perceive these factors, the stronger their desire to remain in the teaching profession. Conversely, if their views on these factors become less positive, their motivation to stay in the profession tends to decline as well.

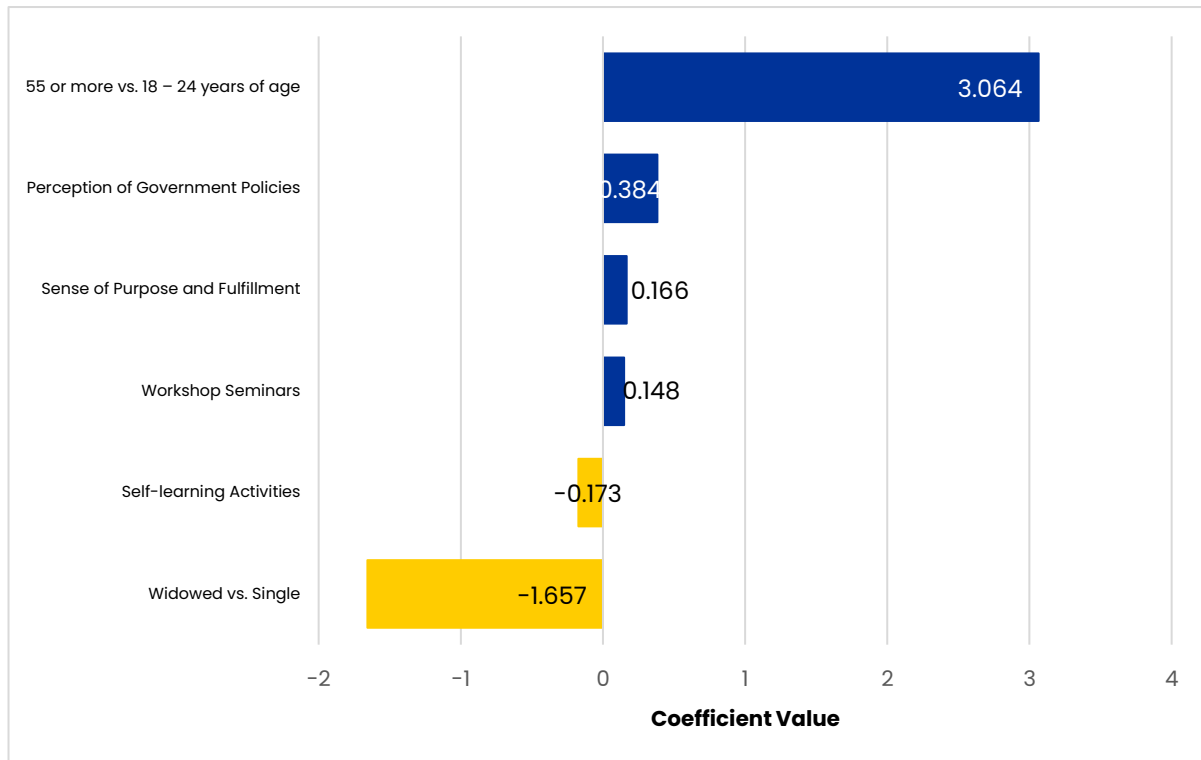
In addition, when exploring the relationships between teacher respondents' level of motivation and other relevant indicators (see Table 2), correlational analysis revealed that, although at a very weak level, teacher respondents' use of personal funds for professional development is statistically positively associated with their motivation to stay in the profession. This result implies that when teachers allocate more resources to developing their professional expertise, their motivation to stay in the education sector tends to grow stronger.

Predictive Model of Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession in Lao PDR

Figure 23 depicts the combination of motivational factors, demographic characteristics and working conditions that predict Laotian teacher respondents' motivation to stay in the profession (also see Table 7 in the Appendix). The results of the hierarchical regression analysis indicate that two motivational factors are significant predictors of teachers' motivation to remain in their careers. Foremost among these is the 'perception of government policies' (standard estimate = 0.384, $p < .001$), suggesting that having a more positive view of policies affecting teachers leads to higher motivation levels to continue teaching. Similarly, the factor 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' (standard estimate = 0.166, $p = 0.002$) is another predictor, indicating that teachers who feel a strong sense of purpose tend to be more motivated to continue serving as educators. These results underline the importance of personal fulfillment and external policy factors in motivating teachers in Lao PDR.

Figure 23

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



Additionally, demographic characteristics, such as age and marital status, influence teachers’ motivation to stay in the profession. Teachers aged 55 years or older tend to have higher motivation levels to stay than those aged 18 to 24 years (standard estimate = 3.064, $p = 0.013$). This might be the case as, due to possible difficulties in finding alternative sources of income at their age, senior teachers are less likely to leave their teaching positions. Additionally, widowed teachers exhibit significantly lower motivation levels than their single counterparts (standard estimate = -1.657, $p = 0.010$). This finding may possibly be due to the grief brought about by losing a significant other, increased responsibility in one’s home after losing the support of another individual, a change in life priorities, among others.

In a similar light, professional development activities are predictors of teacher motivation. Participating in workshop seminars is positively associated

with higher motivation levels (standard estimate = 0.148, $p = 0.002$). However, engaging in self-learning activities negatively affects motivation (standard estimate = -0.173, $p = 0.002$), highlighting the need for more collaborative approaches to teacher professional development.

Overall, the combined influence of motivational factors and socio-demographic variables accounts for 30.2% of the variance in teacher motivation.

Summary. The hierarchical regression analysis yielded the combination of motivational factors, demographic characteristics and work conditions that may contribute to teacher respondents' desire to continue serving as educators. Among the motivational factors, 'government laws and policies' and 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' were identified as predictors of motivation to stay in the teaching profession. Age was also found to be a significant predictor, with teachers aged 55 years or older tending to have higher motivation levels compared to those aged 18 to 24 years. In a similar light, marital status is also a predictor, with single teachers reporting higher motivation levels compared to their widowed counterparts. Lastly, a couple of professional development activities were also ascertained as predictors, with those engaging in workshop seminars tending to have higher motivation levels to continue teaching and those doing self-learning activities tending to have lower motivation levels to stay in the teaching service.

III. Conclusion

This study investigated the factors influencing Laotian teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. The research aimed to determine the relationships among various factors that motivate teachers, develop a country-specific framework for teachers to remain in their teaching careers, and provide policy recommendations.

Laotian teacher respondents are highly motivated to stay in their profession. They have rated highly in most of the motivational factors; however, the lowest mean scores are with the factors 'perception of government policies' (M = 4.02, rated as 'somewhat satisfied') and 'salary, incentives and benefits' (M = 4.26, rated as 'somewhat agree').

In addition, indicators on salary, working conditions, professional development and career progression were examined to determine if they are related to motivation levels. Through inferential statistics, only the use of personal money for professional development yielded significant statistical results, suggesting that teachers who are motivated to remain in their careers are more willing to use their resources to avail themselves of professional development opportunities. Also, teachers who have invested resources in the enhancement of their craft and for career advancement may tend to be less inclined to move to a different field.

The hierarchical regression analysis also highlighted the combination of motivational factors and socio-demographic characteristics that predict teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. These include motivational factors such as 'perception of government policies' and 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', age, marital status, and participation in workshops and self-learning activities.

In conclusion, although the study's findings are only applicable to its sample due to the use of convenience sampling, the research still highlights several

aspects of teacher motivation. Firstly, the majority of Lao teacher respondents are highly motivated to stay in the teaching profession. A mixture of intrinsic drivers, work conditions, and policy-related factors shapes their motivation. The results of the inferential statistics and predictive analysis reveal possible levers that could be adjusted to help improve teachers' motivation to remain in the service. The study suggests that measures to strengthen motivation would require a combination of fostering internal commitments of educators, as well as system-wide enhancements, such as policy reforms and professional development.

The study hints at several policy implications. Among these are:

- SALARY

Explore conditions that support the provision of sufficient teacher compensation: Although still rated somewhat positively, through descriptive statistics, teacher respondents in Lao PDR indicate their dissatisfaction with their salaries. Only 40.42% agreed with the statement 'I feel that my salary is sufficient to support me and my family' under the factor 'salary, incentives and benefits'. Given that most of its education budget is allocated to compensation and other recurring expenses (MOES, 2020), facing a resource-tight scenario, the Lao Government would need to explore ways to manage its economic growth in general, through attracting investments, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises. While it may be challenging to raise salaries directly, the government can create an environment that enables teachers to support their families adequately.

- WORKING CONDITIONS

Mobilize resources for teaching and learning and school facilities: Most teacher respondents in this study reported that their teaching and learning resources and school facilities are both inadequate (72.82% and 76.31%,

respectively). At the same time, non-salary operating costs account for 12% of the education sector's budget (MOES, 2020). This leaves little room for expenses for improving school resources. School administrators may consider finding ways to mobilize resources, such as through the support of the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC), local businesses, and generous individuals. Having additional resources to address the lack of instructional materials and school facilities may ultimately support learners' academic performance.

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:**

Explore cost-effective measures for teachers to continually develop their professional competencies: Despite challenges with the education sector's budget, the MOES must continue to explore cost-effective measures that could support teachers to continually develop their professional skills. For example, the subnational education governance levels can explore harnessing resources from development partners to provide training workshops to teachers. One of these efforts is through the Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL) project, supported jointly by the Australian and United States Governments. The project supports the enhancement of knowledge and skills of primary teachers and is implemented in partnership with the Department of Teacher Education, the Department of General Education, Teacher Training Colleges, and the District Education and Sports Bureaus.

These initiatives prevent teachers from being left on their own to initiate their professional development through self-learning. School-based interventions, such as peer learning and communities of practice, are other forms that require minimal financial resources. Workshop seminars may continue to be organized by the MOES as well, as a predictor of motivation. ICT and traditional media may also be harnessed to expand the reach of these seminars (Saithibvongsa & Larkhamsaiby, 2025). Institutionalizing cost-effective opportunities for professional development,

teachers may feel more supported as they face the challenges of their teaching careers.

- **SENSE OF PURPOSE AND FULFILLMENT**

Foster teachers' sense of purpose and fulfillment: The MOES must continue to foster teachers' sense of purpose and fulfillment, as one of the predictors of teacher motivation to stay in the profession. Teachers' contributions in society and national development may be consistently acknowledged through inspiring messages from government officials, celebration of national teachers' month, among others. Teacher appreciation days may also be considered, at the level of the school, to acknowledge their impact on learners' lives.

- **PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

Conduct teacher policy reviews: As one of the predictors of motivation in staying in the profession, the MOES may consider conducting policy reviews that affect teachers' welfare. Based on the survey findings of this study, teachers are most dissatisfied with their salary (64.11%), benefits and incentives (36.58%), and teacher deployment (17.78%). Examining the situation of teachers and initiating measures that address them may help teachers feel more positive about 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 | 0.419 | < .001 | Strong Relationship |
| Salary, Incentives and Benefits | 0.354 | < .001 | Moderate Relationship |
| School Environment | 0.351 | < .001 | |
| Sense of Being Respected and Valued | 0.312 | < .001 | |
| Teaching as Interest and Passion | 0.283 | < .001 | Weak Relationship |
| Sense of Growth and Development | 0.28 | < .001 | |
| Teacher Well-being | 0.274 | < .001 | |
| Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment | 0.257 | < .001 | |

p < .001

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

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

Table 6

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 | 0.152 | 0.01 | Very Weak Relationship |

$p < .05$

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

Table 7

Regression Estimates of Factors Affecting the Teachers' Level of Motivation in Lao PDR

| Factors and Indicators | p | Stand. Estimate |
|--|--------|--------------------|
| Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment | 0.002 | 0.166 |
| Perception of Government Policies | < .001 | 0.384 |
| Days spent on Workshop Seminars | 0.008 | 0.148 |
| Days spent on Self-learning Activities | 0.002 | -0.173 |
| Age: (25 – 34) – (18 – 24) | 0.617 | 0.311 |
| Age: (35 – 44) – (18 – 24) | 0.667 | 0.267 |
| Age: (45 – 54) – (18 – 24) | 0.985 | 0.012 |
| Age: 55 or more – (18 – 24) | 0.013 | 3.064 |
| Marital Status: Married – Single | 0.171 | 0.243 |
| Marital Status: Divorced/Annulled/Separated – Single | 0.351 | 0.436 |
| Marital Status: Widowed – Single | 0.010 | -1.657 |
| Marital Status: Prefer not to say – Single | 0.088 | -0.667 |
| Currently Teaching Grade 8: Yes | 0.050 | 0.277 |

Model: $F(13, 273) = 9.07, p < 0.001, R^2 = 0.302$



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