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Sustaining the Teacher Workforce: Evidence on Teacher Motivation Across Southeast Asia

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Katherine P. Torralba, and Ma. Lovena V. Moneva, PhD, PhD

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Abstract

There has been a global shortage of teachers, impacting the quality of education. This challenge prompted SEAMEO INNOTECH to explore teacher motivation to stay in the profession. Initially conducted in the Philippines, the research expanded across Southeast Asia and evolved into the Regional Teacher Motivation Study. The first phase of the study identified three core and five contributing motivating factors that influence teachers' motivation, forming the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession (SEA-TM). The second phase of the research aims to examine the relationship between the different motivational factors and teachers' motivation to stay. Quantitative data were gathered using survey questionnaires that were distributed to ten participating countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. As the second regional paper, this discussion paper reports the results from the correlational analyses conducted to determine the relationships between each factor and the teachers' level of motivation to stay. The relationships of specific indicators, such as salary, working conditions, professional development, and career progression, with teachers' level of motivation to stay were also explored. Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed to develop country-specific models that predict teachers' motivation to keep teaching. The results show that all eight factors are associated with teacher motivation to stay. Indicators related to salary, working conditions, professional development, and career progression have positive but very weak associations with teacher motivation. Finally, Perception of Government Policies was a predictor of teacher motivation in all countries, while the predictive power of other motivational factors varied across nations.

Background

Introduction

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping student learning and are central to delivering quality education. However, a global shortage persists, with UNESCO (2023) reporting a need for 44 million teachers worldwide, including over 4.5 million in Southeast Asia by 2030. Addressing both the recruitment and retention of teachers is vital, especially as attrition rates rise—9% of teachers left the profession within five years in 2022, doubling the rate from 2015.

Motivation is key to career decisions in teaching, influencing entry, commitment, and longevity (Han & Yin, 2016; Ulfathmi et al., 2021). It stems from intrinsic factors like passion, achievement, and recognition, and extrinsic ones such as salary, job security, and work environment (Maund, 2001, Rees and McBain, 2004, as cited in Kumar & Hossain, 2017). Both types of motivation are essential in encouraging teachers to continue teaching, though their impact varies across individual and cultural contexts.

Since 2018, SEAMEO INNOTECH has collaborated with the Philippine Department of Education to understand teacher motivations for entering and remaining in their careers. Building on this effort, this initiative expanded across Southeast Asia through the Regional Teacher Motivation Study.

The first phase of the study was concluded in 2024, wherein the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession (SEA-TM) was developed. The SEA-TM identified eight factors that motivate teachers to stay in their careers. These are divided into core factors and contributing factors. The Core Factors need to be fulfilled for teachers to remain in the profession. This includes Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment, Teaching as Interest and Passion, and Sense of Growth and Development. Contributing Factors are those that help sustain teacher motivation when the first three core factors are not fulfilled, namely, Sense of Being

Respected and Valued, Teacher Well-being, School Environment, Salary, Incentives, and Benefits, and Government Laws and Policies (Umali, et al., 2024).

The second phase of the study was implemented from 2024 to 2025 using a quantitative approach. The study aimed 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.

Research Objectives

As the second of two papers, this discussion paper aims to examine the following across the Southeast Asian region:

1. The relationship between different factors and teachers' level of motivation to stay in the profession;
2. The relationship of the following indicators to teachers' level of motivation to stay in the profession: salary, working conditions, professional development, and career progression; and
3. The extent to which each motivating factor and demographic characteristic can predict teachers' motivation to stay in the teaching profession.

Literature Review

Three core factors and five contributing factors were identified in the SEA-TM. Several studies have been conducted about how each one influences teachers' decisions to continue with their teaching careers.

Core Motivating Factors

Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment

One of the main drivers that keeps teachers in the profession is a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Purpose refers to a meaningful, long-term goal that serves both individual aspirations and societal good (Moberg & Kuusisto, 2024; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016). In teaching, this can include goals like career advancement or making a lasting difference in students' lives. This sense of purpose also shapes other motivators such as growth, recognition, well-being, and financial rewards. Many educators find purpose through their passion for teaching and their dedication to students. In the educational context, purpose may involve contributing to society or being intentional in one's teaching approach (Quinn, 2016). Notably, a teacher's sense of purpose can shift over time. While many begin with clear intentions, they often remain open to evolving goals or even changing careers (Tirri & Kuusisto, 2016).

Teaching as an Interest and Passion

Passion is defined as a deep dedication to an activity perceived as meaningful (Serin, 2017), and in education, it shows through a love for the subject matter, eagerness to share knowledge, and genuine concern for students' development. Teachers driven by passion continually seek to expand their knowledge, improve instructional techniques, and help students achieve their goals. Although passion contributes to better teaching and improved student

outcomes, it isn't enough to sustain educators over time. Challenges such as overwhelming workloads, ineffective leadership, and poor work-life balance can erode motivation (Nwoko et al., 2025), and intense passion may even result in emotional fatigue (Fernet et al., 2014). To preserve a healthy sense of passion, educators need strong support systems, including mentorship, ongoing training, and emotional care (Rampa, 2014; Santoro et al., 2012; Serin, 2023).

Sense of Growth and Development

The desire for growth and development plays a vital role in motivating teachers to remain in the profession. Educators typically move through various career phases, starting with preparation and induction, followed by competency-building, enthusiasm, stability, and eventually retirement (Lynn, 2002). In the mid-career stages, many seek professional development opportunities to refine their teaching abilities and boost student achievement (Appova & Arbaugh, 2018). Pursuing graduate education or stepping into leadership positions often promotes both personal and professional advancement, leading to increased confidence and fulfillment (Sevim & Akın, 2021). However, juggling further studies with teaching responsibilities can be stressful, especially when time is limited or expectations are not met (Caraig, 2024; Sarigöz, 2025). Interestingly, teachers with higher academic credentials may experience lower job satisfaction, potentially due to a disconnect between their ideals and the realities of the school environment (Abd-El-Fattah, 2010; Triyanto, 2016). However, some studies show motivation to teach remains strong, regardless of educational background (Eskildsen et al., 2004; Qin et al., 2017; Wiyono, 2016).

Contributing Motivational Factors

Sense of Being Respected and Valued

In Southeast Asian societies, a strong cultural emphasis on respecting authority figures, especially teachers, is deeply rooted (Macasaet & Maranan, 2015; Villacorta, 2002). Educators are viewed not just as instructors but also as moral exemplars, with parents often considering them central to their children's growth and character formation (Uy, 2015; Umali et al., 2024). This cultural reverence plays a significant role in motivating teachers to remain in the profession, as being respected and valued is a key element of the SEA-TM framework. Teachers experience a sense of appreciation when their efforts are acknowledged and when they are actively involved in decision-making, which boosts both job satisfaction and their sense of professional competence (Oblina et al., 2021; Sarafidou & Chatziioannidis, 2013).

Teacher Well-being

Teacher well-being plays a crucial role in the SEA-TM framework. When teachers maintain a sense of hope, resilience, and optimism, their motivation tends to rise (Zewude & Hercz, 2022). However, factors such as time constraints, classroom management difficulties, and disengaged students can undermine their well-being. While some educators respond with healthy coping mechanisms, others may turn to less effective strategies, which can lead to burnout and increased turnover (Brasfield et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Strong support systems within the school, such as encouraging colleagues and supervisors, a nurturing environment, and a sense of community, are essential for promoting well-being (Cheung et al., 2022). Moreover, instructional support is especially important when teaching students with behavioral or learning difficulties (Rae et al., 2017).

School Environment

The school environment greatly influences teachers' motivation and overall experience. A secure and nurturing setting, characterized by mutual trust among staff, leadership, and students, along with protection from harm, contributes to higher job satisfaction, stronger commitment, and better retention rates (Adebayo & Ileuma, 2023; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018). Having access to sufficient teaching materials and well-equipped facilities also supports instructional quality and boosts motivation, whereas resource shortages can lead to frustration and stress (Jaminal, 2019; Buckley et al., 2004). Classroom conditions, particularly class size, play a key role in shaping workload and instructional focus. Smaller class sizes tend to ease stress and enhance teachers' satisfaction with their work (Laitsch et al., 2021).

Salary, Incentives, and Benefits

Salary, incentives, and benefits are key factors affecting teachers' motivation to stay. Educators bring specialized expertise that warrants fair pay, which in turn supports the delivery of quality education (Ahmed, 2024). Nations that offer more competitive teacher salaries often see stronger educational outcomes (Akiba et al., 2012), yet many teachers continue to earn less than professionals in other sectors (Mizala & Romaguera, 2005). Inadequate pay can lead to reduced performance, higher turnover, and even migration in search of better opportunities, contributing to talent loss in some education systems (Kambuga, 2023; Granger et al., 2022). Although research offers mixed findings on how directly salary influences motivation (See et al., 2020), it remains a practical and influential factor in teachers' career decisions.

Government Laws and Policies

Government laws and policies represent the final major component of the SEA-TM framework, shaping key aspects of the teaching profession such as standards, training, working conditions, and retirement. These regulations also influence the implementation and sustainability of other motivators like infrastructure, compensation, and supervision. In Southeast Asia, regional initiatives like the SEA Teacher Competency Framework (SEA-TCF) help guide teacher development and skill-building, though individual countries tailor these frameworks to suit their specific needs (ASEAN Secretariat, 2025; Teachers' Council of Thailand et al., 2018). While educators may not always feel the immediate effects of policy in their daily routines, research indicates that the broader policy environment significantly impacts their motivation and professional experience (Chiong et al., 2017). For policies to be effective, they must be clearly executed, adaptable, and regularly reviewed (Howlett, 2018). Measures such as performance-based evaluations can either inspire or burden teachers, depending on how fair and achievable they are (Finnigan & Gross, 2007; Mintz & Kelly, 2021). Therefore, careful policy design and evaluation are crucial to fostering teacher motivation.

Methodology

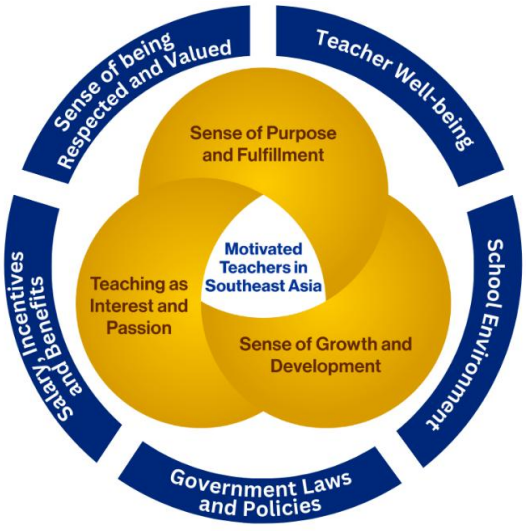
This phase of the study employed a quantitative approach to attain research objectives.

Instrumentation

The development of a survey questionnaire followed a structured and collaborative approach to ensure the instrument's validity, cultural relevance, and linguistic appropriateness across participating Southeast Asian countries. Initially, a draft version of the survey questionnaire was constructed, drawing on the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession (see Figure 1), as well as a review of relevant literature.

Figure 1

Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession



Operational descriptors were also adopted for each factor, serving as guides in developing the statements in the questionnaire (see Figures 2 and 3). Inputs from research team members were incorporated during this drafting phase.

Figure 2

Operational Descriptors of Core Factors Affecting Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession

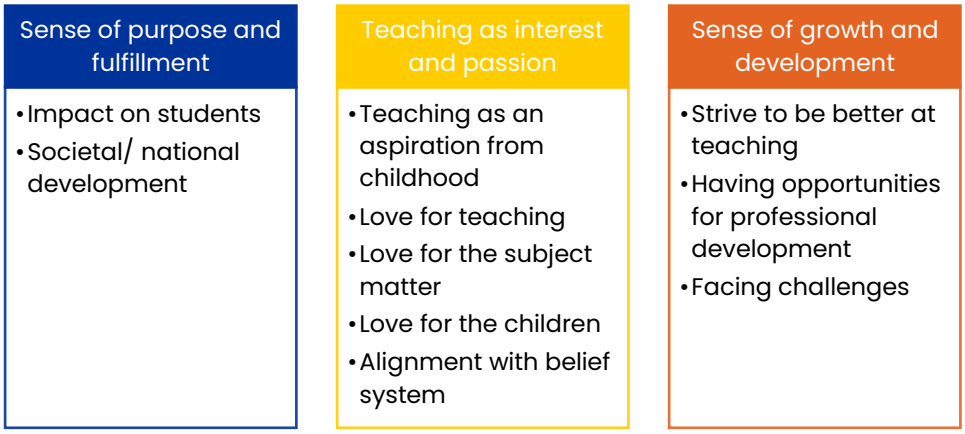
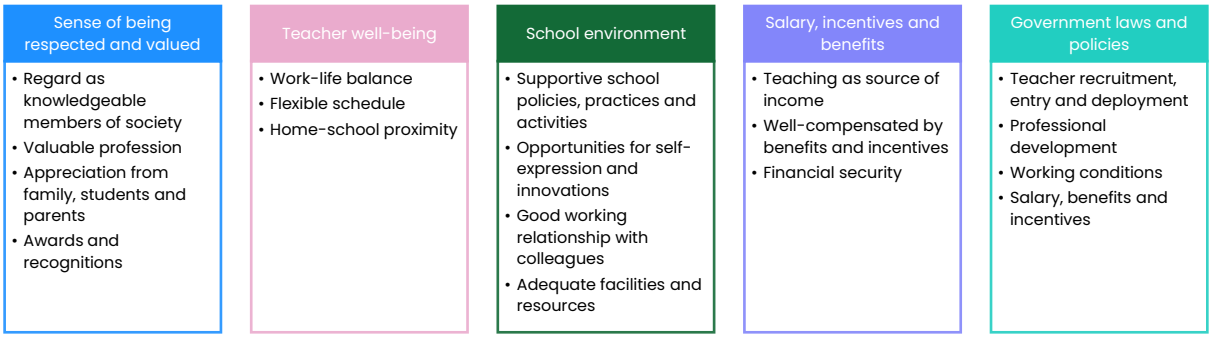


Figure 3

Operational Descriptors of Contributing Motivational Factors Affecting Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession



Following the internal review, the draft questionnaire was submitted for expert validation. Content experts and country representatives were consulted to assess the clarity, relevance, and contextual appropriateness of the items. Their feedback

was used to revise and refine the instrument, improving both its conceptual soundness and practical applicability across diverse contexts.

The finalized questionnaire was translated into eight languages: Khmer, Bahasa, Lao, Malay, Burmese, Thai, Tetum, and Vietnamese. Translations were supported by ChatGPT. These versions were then reviewed and cross-checked by research team members using a combination of ChatGPT and Google Translate, alongside manual verification for contextual accuracy and natural language use by the country representatives.

Subsequently, the translated questionnaires were digitized and hosted on SurveyMonkey. The survey links were distributed to country representatives for a final round of review, during which minor refinements in translation were made to address any lingering linguistic or cultural discrepancies.

Pilot testing was then conducted in nine of the ten participating countries. A Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.914 was obtained, which indicates excellent reliability and consistency among the items. This was calculated for the motivational statements, and pilot respondents also rated the questionnaire based on several criteria (i.e., easy to understand, clearly stated, platform navigation, and questionnaire length). The survey questionnaire was finalized considering the results of the pilot test.

Data Collection

Data collection commenced in October 2024 through the distribution of survey links and QR codes, which were disseminated by country representatives through their respective communication channels using convenience sampling. The use of convenience sampling, however, limits the generalizability of the research findings to only its sample. For Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand, data gathering took place between October and November 2024, while for the

remaining participating countries, data collection extended from October 2024 to January 2025. Vietnam conducted its data gathering separately, from February to March 2025. A total of 61,450 survey responses were successfully collected from the ten participating countries.

Data Processing

Initial data cleaning began in December 2024 for the first three countries. The process was repeated in March 2025 to include data from the remaining six countries, while Vietnam's data underwent cleaning in April 2025. Out of 61,450 total survey responses, 53,815 valid responses were retained after data cleaning. A total of 7,635 observations were removed due to incomplete survey results and anomalous responses. Table 1 presents a summary of the data cleaning done:

Table 1

Summary of Data Cleaning Done

Country	***Raw Observations***	***Clean Observations***
Brunei Darussalam	*1,455*	*1,168*
Cambodia	*435*	*352*
Indonesia	*9,706*	*8,064*
Lao PDR	*372*	*287*
Malaysia	*484*	*426*
Myanmar	*245*	*206*
Philippines	*651*	*503*
Thailand	*3,579*	*2,947*
Timor-Leste	*444*	*402*
Vietnam	*44,079*	*39,460*
TOTAL	***61,450***	***53,815***

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods with the aid of Microsoft Excel and JASP (v.0.19.3.) software. Although the study involved a very large sample size, tests for normality revealed that the assumptions of normal distribution were not met. Consequently, non-parametric statistical tests were employed to ensure the robustness and accuracy of the findings.

To examine relationships between predictor variables (such as demographic characteristics and motivational factors) and outcome variable (level of teacher motivation), Spearman's rho and point-biserial correlation coefficients were used.

Additionally, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to develop predictive models for each country. This type of analysis allows for determining which indicators predict teachers' level of motivation by adding or removing predictor variables. Hierarchical regression analysis with two blocks was conducted, where:

- Block 1: Main predictors of interest (e.g., motivational factors for staying in the teaching profession)
- Block 2: Demographic profile and Working conditions (e.g., age, gender, education level)

Each block (or step) in this hierarchical regression refers to a set of variables that are entered into the regression model together. The purpose of entering variables in blocks is usually to assess the incremental explanatory power of additional predictors, over and above the variables entered in previous steps.

As a first step, all eight motivational factors for staying in the teaching profession were included in block one. Assessing the results, insignificant predictors were removed one by one, starting from the most insignificant. This process continues until the model contains only significant predictors.

As a second step, demographic profile and working conditions variables were entered into block 2. Again, assessing the results, variables with insignificant effects were removed one by one. This process continues until the model contains only significant predictors.

Results

Relationships Between Motivational Factors and Level of Motivation

The relationship between each motivational factor and the level of teacher motivation was analyzed. The results of the Spearman's rho correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive associations between all motivational factors and the overall level of motivation of teacher respondents across Southeast Asia (all $p < .001$). Using the interpretation of Spearman's rho correlation coefficient, the strength of these associations ranged from moderate to approaching strong, suggesting that each factor plays a meaningful role in influencing a teacher's motivation to remain in the profession.

The highest correlation ($\rho = 0.42$), which indicates a strong relationship, was observed between Perception of Government Policies and motivation level. This was followed by the following factors, also with strong relationships with motivation for staying: School Environment ($\rho = 0.41$), Salary, Incentives, and Benefits ($\rho = 0.41$), and Teaching as Interest and Passion ($\rho = 0.40$). These were followed closely by the following factors with a moderate relationship with motivation level: Sense of Growth and Development ($\rho = 0.40$), Sense of Being Respected and Valued ($\rho = 0.39$), and Teacher Well-being ($\rho = 0.39$). The lowest correlation, also indicating a moderate relationship, was found between Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment and level of motivation ($\rho = 0.35$) (see Table 2 and Figure 4).

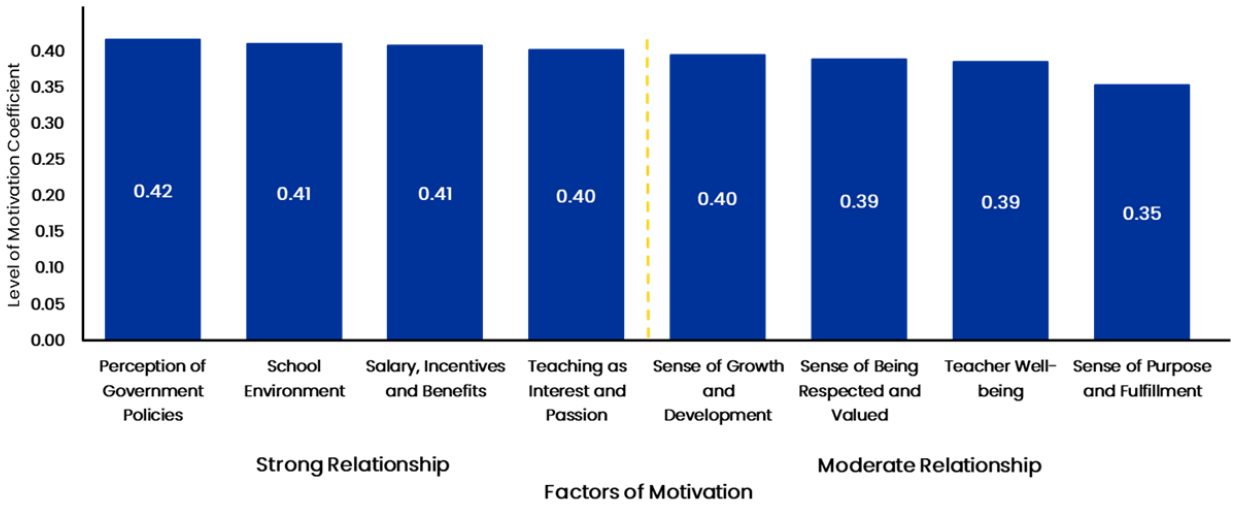
Table 2

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teachers

Factors of Motivation	Level of Motivation		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Perception of Government Policies	0.42	< .001	Strong relationship
School Environment	0.41	< .001	
Salary, Incentives and Benefits	0.41	< .001	
Teaching as Interest and Passion	0.40	< .001	
Sense of Growth and Development	0.40	< .001	
Sense of Being Respected and Valued	0.39	< .001	Moderate relationship
Teacher Well-being	0.39	< .001	
Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment	0.35	< .001	

Figure 4

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teachers



Relationships Between Other Indicators and Teachers' Level of Motivation

Indicators that have policy implications were also examined for possible relationships with motivation level: Salary, Working Conditions, Professional Development, and Career Progression. To explore the relationships between various indicators influencing teacher motivation to remain in the profession, Spearman's rho correlation analysis was performed, along with t-tests and Kruskal-Wallis tests, to identify significant differences among these factors. Table 3 presents the indicators examined.

Table 3

Examined Indicators that Influence Teacher Motivation to Remain in the Profession

Salary	***Working conditions***	***Professional development***	***Career progression***
• *Monthly net income in USD*	• *Length of teaching* • *Length of teaching in the current school* • *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*	• *Use of personal money for professional development* • *Highest educational attainment* • *Currently taking graduate studies*	• *History of promotion* • *Frequency of promotion*

Salary-Related Indicators

Spearman's rho correlation was used to explore the association between monthly net income and teacher respondents' motivation levels to remain in the profession. Table 4 shows that monthly net income is negatively correlated with the overall motivation level ($\rho = -0.09$), implying that higher earnings do not necessarily translate into stronger motivation and may even coincide with diminished morale or increased expectations. The relationship between salary and teacher motivation is very weak. This suggests that, other than salary, other factors motivate teachers to continue teaching.

Table 4

Relationship between Monthly Net Income in USD and Level of Motivation of Teachers

	Monthly Net Income in USD		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Level of Motivation	-0.09	< .001	Very weak relationship

Working Conditions-Related Indicators

Several indicators were examined related to working conditions. These include length of teaching, length of teaching in current school, total grade levels taught, hours spent teaching, hours spent in nonteaching-related tasks, hours spent traveling to school, having nonteaching-related tasks, adequacy of teaching and learning resources, and adequacy of school facilities.

Table 5 shows how various aspects of working conditions relate to teacher motivation. Six contextual variables were considered: length of teaching experience, tenure in current school, total grade levels taught, time spent teaching

per week, time allocated for nonteaching tasks, and travel time to school. Using Spearman's rho correlation, the study reveals statistically significant, though very weak, relationships between these variables and teacher respondents' motivation.

Table 5

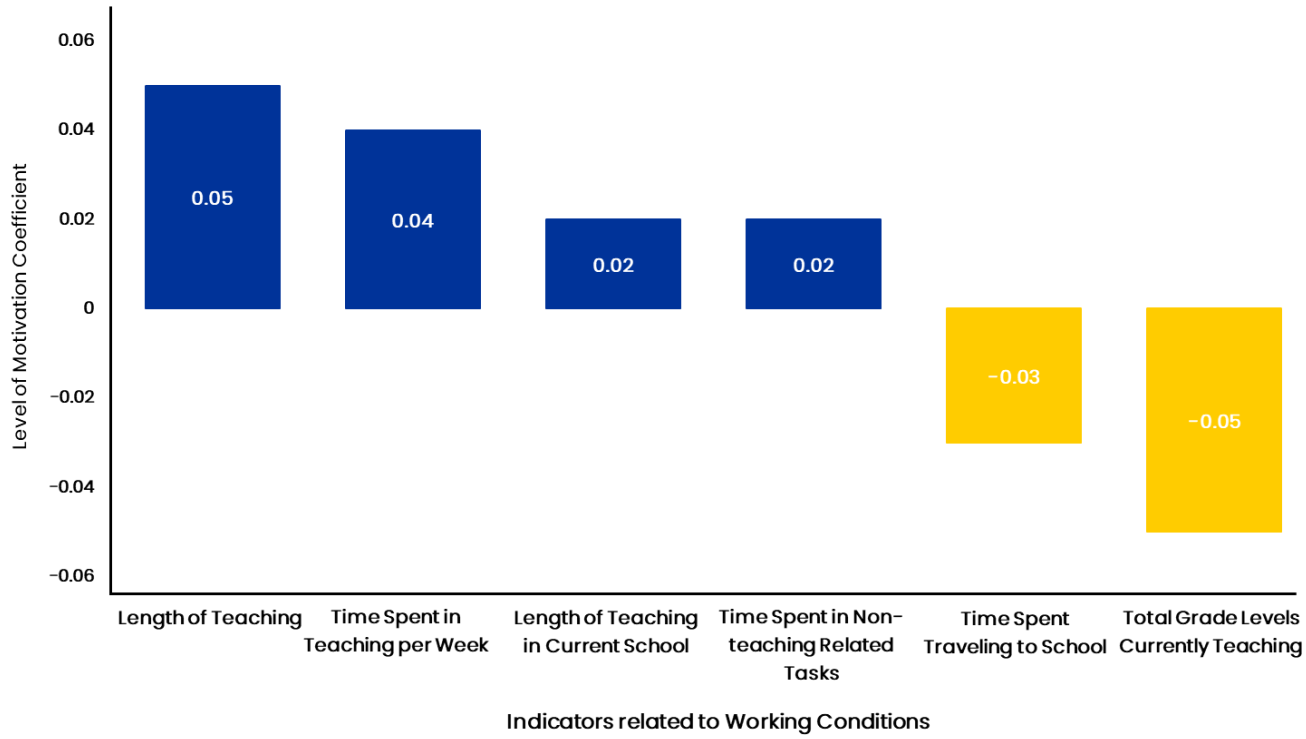
Relationship between Indicators related to Working Conditions and Level of Motivation of Teacher Respondents

	Level of Motivation		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Length of Teaching	0.05	< .001	
Length of Teaching in Current School	0.02	< .001	
Total Grade Levels Currently Teaching	-0.05	< .001	Very weak
Time Spent in Teaching per Week	0.04	< .001	relationship
Time Spent in Nonteaching-related Tasks	0.02	0.00	
Time Spent Traveling to School	-0.03	< .001	

Teachers with longer teaching experience and those with longer tenure in their current schools showed very weak yet positive correlations with motivational levels ($\rho = 0.05$ and $\rho = 0.02$, respectively) (see Figure 5). These findings suggest that as teachers become more experienced in their careers and more embedded in their schools, they may tend to find more reasons to stay teaching.

Figure 5

Relationship Between Work Conditions Indicators and the Level of Motivation of Teacher Respondents



Teaching multiple grade levels, on the other hand, showed negligible but negative correlations with teachers' motivation levels ($\rho = -0.05$, $p < .001$). While the effect is minimal, this result indicates that multi-grade assignments may overwhelm teachers or reduce their ability to engage deeply, leading to lower motivation and more negative perceptions of their work conditions.

Interestingly, the time spent teaching per week showed very weak but positive correlations with motivation levels ($\rho = 0.04$, $p < .001$). This may imply that teachers who spend more time on instructional activities feel more connected to their professional purpose and valued in their roles. On the other hand, time allocated to nonteaching tasks had negligible to no correlations with motivation (ρ

= 0.02, p = .00). In both cases, caution should be taken when generalizing the impact of this indicator on motivation.

Lastly, longer travel time to school showed consistent negative correlations with overall motivation (ρ = -0.03, p < .001); however, the relationship is negligible. This finding suggests that while the association is weak, longer commutes contribute to fatigue and lower job satisfaction, reinforcing the importance of addressing geographic accessibility and working conditions.

Overall, the findings emphasize that teaching load complexity, school placement duration, and travel burden play subtle but statistically significant roles in shaping teachers' motivation. While all correlations are very weak, they still offer actionable insights: supporting multi-grade teachers, minimizing excessive travel, and ensuring professional growth opportunities within long-term placements may enhance teachers' motivation to remain in the profession.

Involvement in Non-teaching Related Tasks. T-test was employed to examine whether teachers' motivation to stay in the profession differed based on their engagement in nonteaching-related tasks. As shown in Table 6 and Figure 6, significant differences emerged between teachers with and without nonteaching responsibilities. The overall motivation level was slightly lower among those involved in nonteaching duties (M = 8.277) than those who were not (M = 8.406, df = 38551.55, t = -9.67, p < .001), with a small effect (g = -0.09). While the effect size (practical impact) is small, this difference is consistent with the broader pattern, suggesting that added responsibilities may subtly erode teacher motivation. This finding highlights the importance of protecting teachers' instructional time and minimizing administrative duties to sustain their motivation and effectiveness.

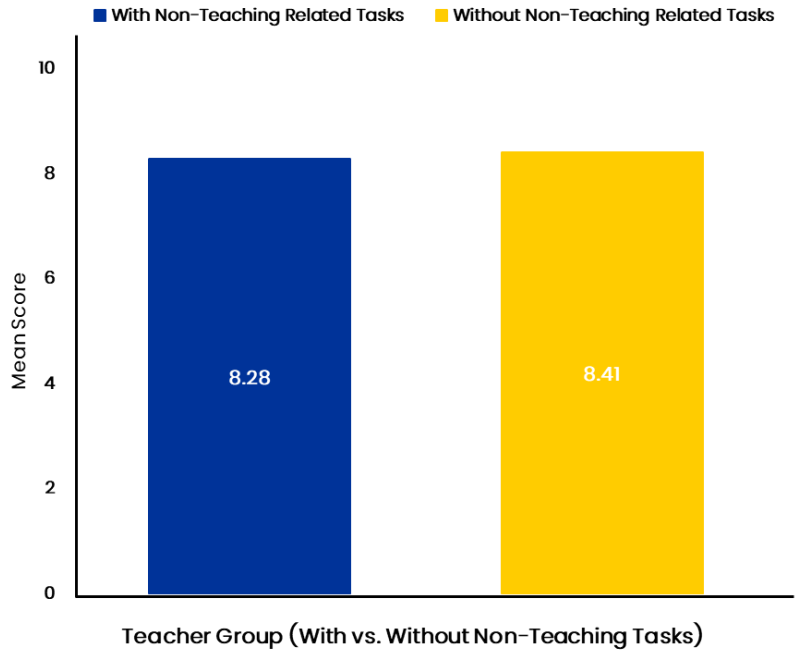
Table 6

Difference between Involvement and Non-involvement in Non-Teaching Related Tasks and Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation

	w/ Non-Teaching Related Tasks		w/o Non-Teaching Related Tasks					
	M	SD	M	SD	df	t	p	Hedges' g
Level of Motivation	8.28	1.53	8.41	1.43	38551.55	-9.67	< .001	-0.09

Figure 6

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation Based on Involvement in Nonteaching-related Tasks



Adequacy of Teaching and Learning Resources. Examining if there is a difference between teacher respondents' motivation level and adequacy of teaching and learning resources, the results reveal a statistically significant association across the three categories of resource provision—more than

adequate, adequate, and inadequate ($\chi^2(2) = 1501.53$, $p < .001$). The effect size is 0.03, suggesting a very small association between the provision of resources and teacher motivation. Although statistically significant, the effect size suggests a minimal practical relationship between resource adequacy and motivation (See Table 7).

Table 7

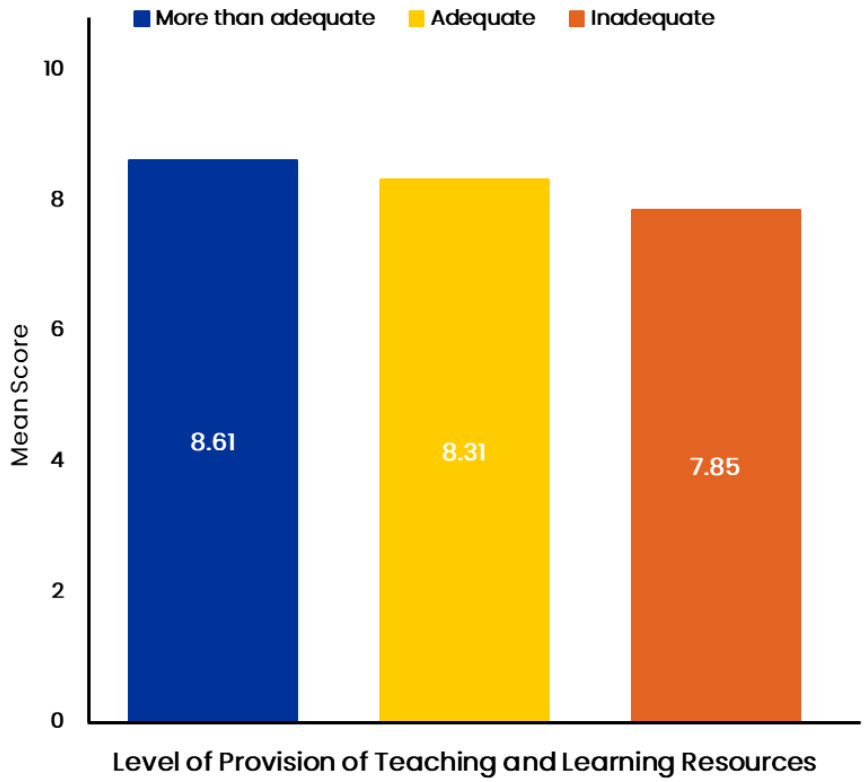
Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation Based on Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources

						95% CI for Rank ε^2	
	M	**df**	**x^2**	**p**	**Rank ε^2**	**Lower**	**Upper**
More than adequate	8.61						
Adequate	8.31	2	1501.53	<.001	0.03	0.03	0.03
Inadequate	7.85						

Descriptive statistics show a positive association between resource adequacy and teacher motivation (see Figure 4). Teachers who reported having more than adequate instructional resources had the highest mean motivation score (M = 8.61), followed by those with adequate resources (M = 8.31), while those reporting inadequate resources had the lowest motivation (M = 7.85).

Figure 7

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation According to Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources



To further explore these differences, Dunn's post hoc tests with Bonferroni and Holm adjustments revealed that all pairwise comparisons were modest in size but are likewise statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that each level of resource provision was associated with distinct differences in teacher motivation. Specifically, teacher respondents with more than adequate resources were significantly more motivated than those with adequate resources ($z = 22.50$, $r_{rb} = 0.13$), and even more so than those with inadequate resources ($z = 38.47$, $r_{rb} = 0.27$). Similarly, teachers with adequate resources were significantly more motivated than those with inadequate resources ($z = 23.06$, $r_{rb} = 0.16$).

These results underscore the importance of ensuring sufficient provision of instructional materials to maintain and enhance teacher motivation. The

consistently significant findings across all group comparisons emphasize that any improvement in the adequacy of resources correlates with a measurable increase in motivation. While the effect size is very small, the practical implications for policy and educational resource allocation are noteworthy.

Similarly, results identified statistically significant differences in teacher motivation based on how adequate they perceived school facilities to be ($\chi^2(2) = 1395.10$, $p < .001$). The effect size is 0.026, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.023 to 0.029. This suggests a small but statistically reliable association between facility availability on motivation levels (see Table 8).

Table 8

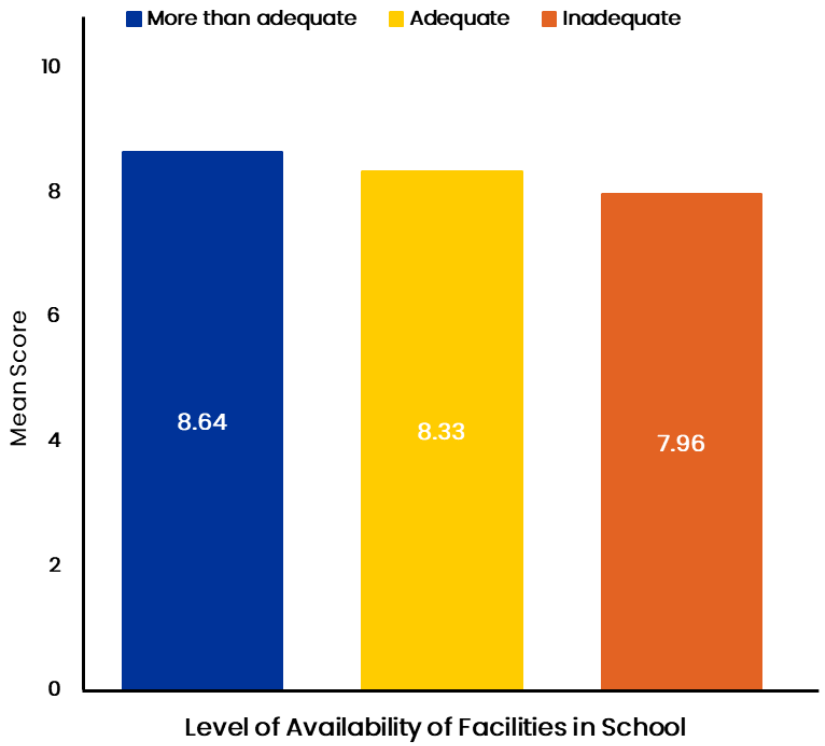
Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation Based on Availability of School Facilities

						95% CI for Rank ε^2	
	M	df	x^2	p	Rank ε^2	Lower	Upper
More than adequate	8.64						
Adequate	8.33	2	1395.10	<.001	0.03	0.02	0.03
Inadequate	7.96						

Descriptive statistics further illustrate this trend. Teachers who reported that school facilities were more than adequate had the highest average motivation score (M = 8.64), followed by those who reported adequate facilities (M = 8.33). Teachers with inadequate facilities reported the lowest motivation levels (M = 7.96) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation According to Availability of School Facilities



To explore these differences further, Dunn's post hoc tests with Bonferroni and Holm corrections were applied. All pairwise comparisons were statistically significant ($p < .001$), confirming that teachers in schools with more than adequate facilities were significantly more motivated than those in schools with adequate facilities ($z = 21.00$, $r_{rb} = 0.13$), and substantially more motivated than those in schools with inadequate facilities ($z = 37.35$, $r_{rb} = 0.25$). Similarly, teacher respondents with adequate facilities reported significantly higher motivation than those with inadequate facilities ($z = 21.44$, $r_{rb} = 0.13$).

These findings indicate that teacher motivation for staying in the profession is positively associated with the perceived availability of school facilities. While the effect size is small, it carries practical significance for educational administrators

and policymakers. Improving the availability and quality of school facilities may contribute meaningfully to fostering a more motivated and productive teaching workforce.

Professional Development-Related Indicators

Three indicators related to professional development were investigated. Two of which, engagement in graduate studies and highest educational attainment, yielded significant findings. No association was found between motivation level and use of personal money for professional development.

T-test was conducted to determine if there is a significant difference in the motivation levels of teacher respondents who are currently taking graduate studies and those who are not (see Table 9 and Figure 9). Results reveal statistically significant differences. Teacher respondents who were not enrolled in graduate studies reported slightly higher motivation compared to those currently enrolled in graduate studies. However, the differences, while statistically significant ($p < .001$), showed very small effect sizes (-0.04), indicating that the practical significance of these differences may be minimal. This finding suggests that while graduate study participation may be associated with slight variations in motivational factors—possibly due to increased workload and stress—it does not lead to meaningful differences in overall motivation levels in practical terms.

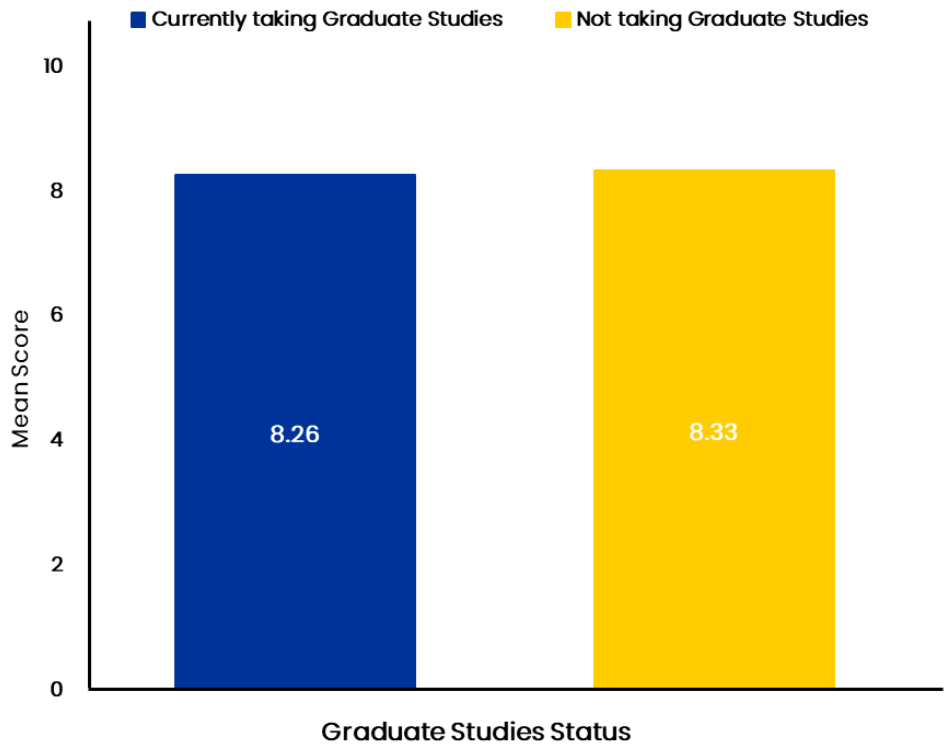
Table 9

Difference Between the Graduate Studies Status and Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation

	Currently Taking Graduate Studies		Not Taking Graduate Studies		df	t	p	Hedges' g
	M	SD	M	SD				
Level of Motivation	8.26	1.61	8.33	1.47	10030.14	-3.36	< .001	-0.04

Figure 9

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation Based on Engagement in Graduate Studies



On the other hand, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine if there are significant differences in teacher respondents' motivation levels in relation to their highest educational attainment (see Table 10). The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference in the level of motivation across the 14 educational attainment groups ($\chi^2(13) = 437.45$, $p < .001$). This suggests that at least one group differs significantly from the others in terms of motivation. Despite the statistical significance, the effect size (Rank $\varepsilon^2 = 0.008$; 95% CI: [0.007, 0.010]) was very small, indicating that educational attainment accounts for less than 1% of the variance in motivation levels among respondents. Thus, while educational attainment is statistically related to motivation, the practical impact is minimal beyond this research.

Table 10

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation Based on Highest Educational Attainment

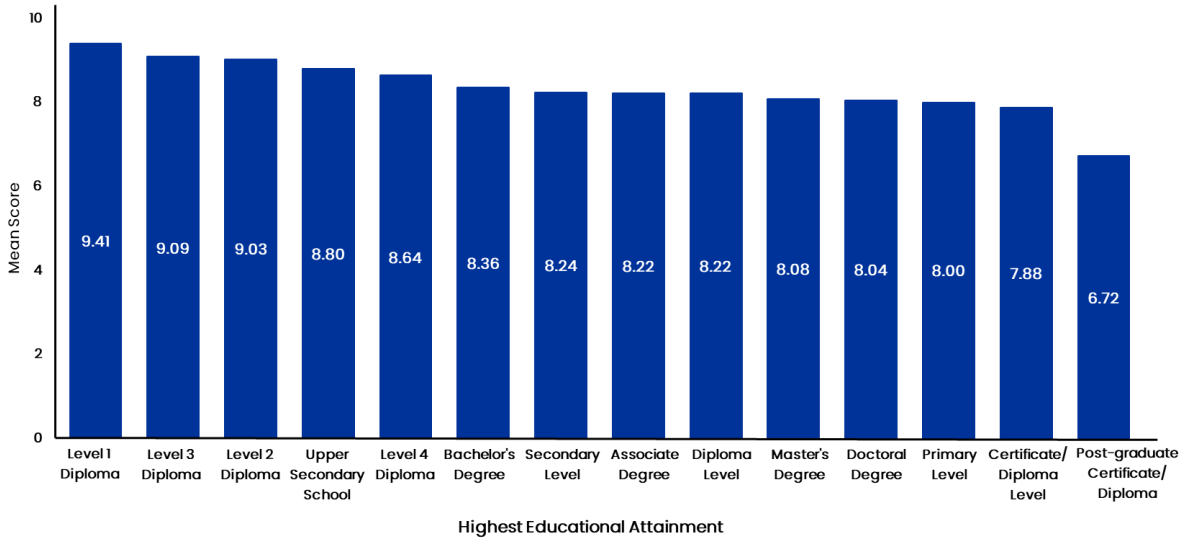
Highest Educational Attainment	M	df	x^2	p	Rank ε^2	95% CI for Rank ε^2	
						Lower	Upper
Level 1 Diploma	9.41						
Level 3 Diploma	9.09						
Level 2 Diploma	9.03						
Upper Secondary School	8.80						
Level 4 Diploma	8.64						
Bachelor's Degree	8.36						
Secondary Level	8.24						
Associate Degree	8.22	13	437.45	<.001	0.01	0.007	0.01
Diploma level	8.22						
Master's Degree	8.08						
Doctoral Degree	8.04						
Primary Level	8.00						
Certificate/Diploma Level	7.88						
Post-graduate certificate or Diploma	6.72						

Descriptive statistics indicate that respondents with a Level 1 Diploma (M = 9.41), Level 3 Diploma (M = 9.09), and Level 2 Diploma (M = 9.03) reported the highest average motivation scores. In contrast, those with Post-graduate Certificates or Diplomas (M = 6.72) reported the lowest motivation levels, followed by those with Master's Degrees (M = 8.08) and Doctoral Degrees (M = 8.04). Interestingly, motivation appears to decline slightly at higher levels of academic

qualification, contrary to the expectation that higher education would consistently correlate with higher motivation (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation According to Highest Educational Attainment



This pattern may suggest that certain technical or vocational diploma programs are more closely aligned with the respondents' professional interests and passions or day-to-day responsibilities, thereby enhancing their motivation. Conversely, individuals with post-graduate qualifications may be more likely to experience misalignment between their advanced academic background and the practical realities of their current roles.

In summary, although a statistically significant association exists between educational attainment and motivation levels among teacher respondents, the effect size is negligible, indicating that the real-world impact of this relationship is minimal.

Career Progression-Related Indicators

Two indicators related to career progression were examined against teacher respondents' motivation to remain in the teaching profession. The factors explored include the history and frequency of promotion; both of which yield significant results.

T-test was used to explore how teacher respondents' motivation differs based on their promotion history (see Table 11 and Figure 11). Results showed that the overall motivation was slightly higher among those with promotion history (M = 8.416) than those without (M = 8.289), with a small effect size (g = 0.08). While the effect size is small, the findings suggest that promotion may modestly contribute to enhancing teaching motivation, affirming the value of recognizing and advancing teachers within the education system.

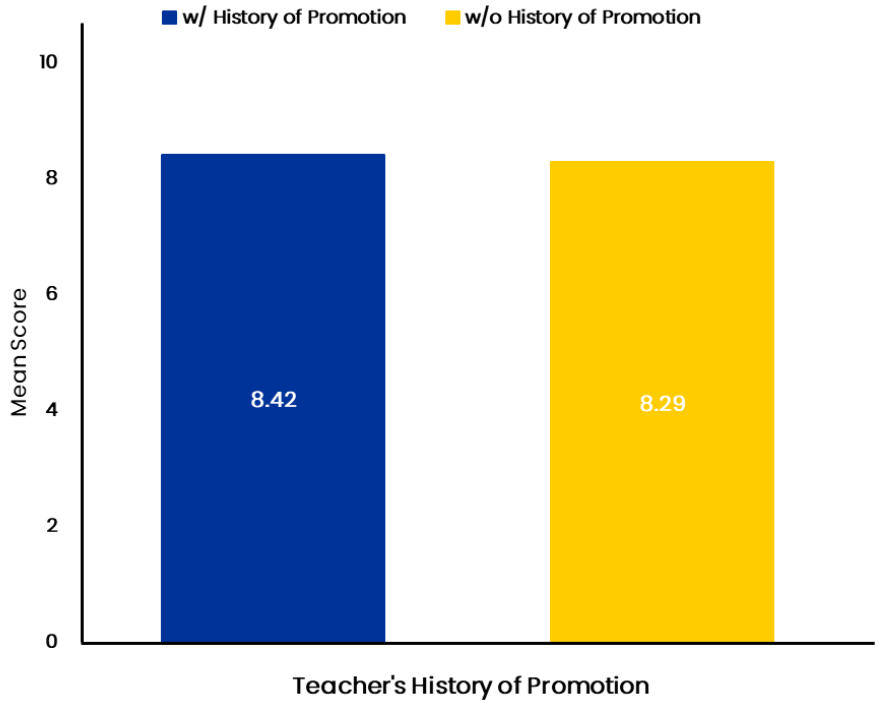
Table 11

Difference Between Teacher Respondents' History and Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation

	w/ History of Promotion		w/o History of Promotion					
	M	SD	M	SD	df	t	p	Hedges' g
Level of Motivation	8.42	1.53	8.29	1.48	21491.2	8.29	< .001	0.08

Figure 11

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation According to History of Promotion



Using the Kruskal-Wallis test, the frequency of teachers' promotions was examined to determine if there are significant differences in overall motivation across promotion frequency groups (see Table 12). The results showed a statistically significant difference in motivation levels ($\chi^2(4) = 168.36$, $p < .001$). This suggests that the frequency with which teacher respondents are promoted is associated with variations in their reported motivation levels. However, the effect size (Rank $\varepsilon^2 = 0.003$; 95% CI: [0.002, 0.004]) is very small, suggesting that promotion frequency accounts for only 0.3% of the variance in motivation levels. This implies a statistically significant relationship, but one with limited practical impact.

Table 12

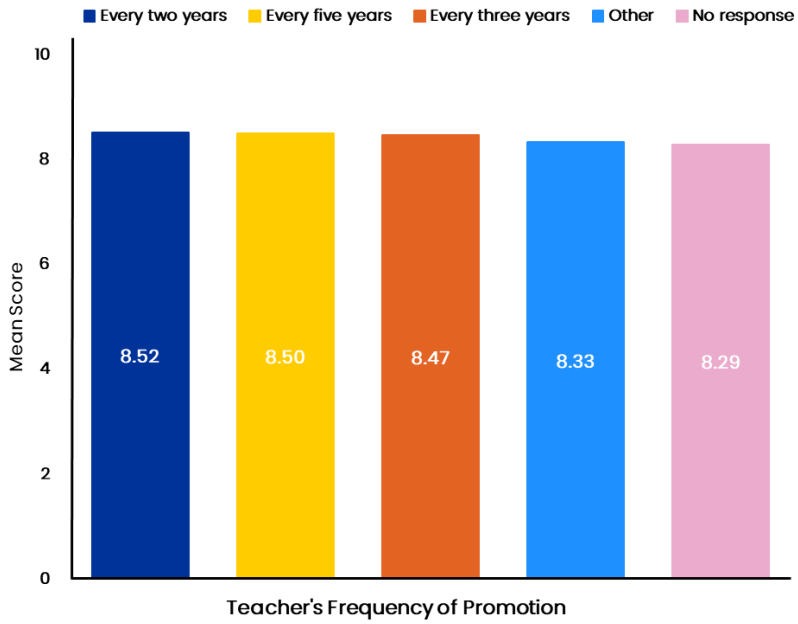
Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation based on Frequency of Promotion

Frequency of Promotion	M	df	x^2	p	Rank ε^2	95% CI for Rank ε^2	
						Lower	Upper
Every two years	8.52						
Every five years	8.50						
Every three years	8.47	4	168.36	<.001	0.003	0.002	0.004
Other	8.33						
No response	8.29						

Descriptive statistics reveal a slight but consistent trend (see Figure 12): teachers who reported being promoted more frequently (e.g., every two years: M = 8.52) tended to report higher motivation levels than those promoted less frequently or not at all (e.g., "No response": M = 8.29; "Other": M = 8.33). Teachers promoted every five years (M = 8.50), and every three years (M = 8.47) also reported relatively high motivation levels, reinforcing the pattern. This suggests that regular promotion, as a form of professional recognition or career progression, may contribute positively, albeit modestly, to teacher motivation. It may reflect a perception of growth, reward, and acknowledgment within the profession, which are known motivational drivers.

Figure 12

Differences in Teacher Respondents' Motivation According to Frequency of Promotion



Given the minimal effect size, these differences should be interpreted with caution. Other factors not captured by promotion frequency likely play a more substantial role in shaping teacher motivation. A deeper investigation could provide insight into how promotion processes influence motivation beyond frequency alone.

Summary of Predictive Models on Teacher Motivation to Stay in the Profession

This study used hierarchical regression analysis to explore what drives teacher motivation in ten Southeast Asian countries (see Figure 13 and a different visualization focusing on the motivational factors in Figure 14). The models examined how the motivational factors help explain why teacher respondents remain committed to the profession, as well as sociodemographic variables. The ability of this model to explain teacher motivation varied widely—from as high as 43.6% in Brunei to as low as 10.2% in Timor-Leste—highlighting that different countries have unique combinations of motivational and demographic factors influencing their teachers.

Figure 13

Regression Analysis of Motivational Factors

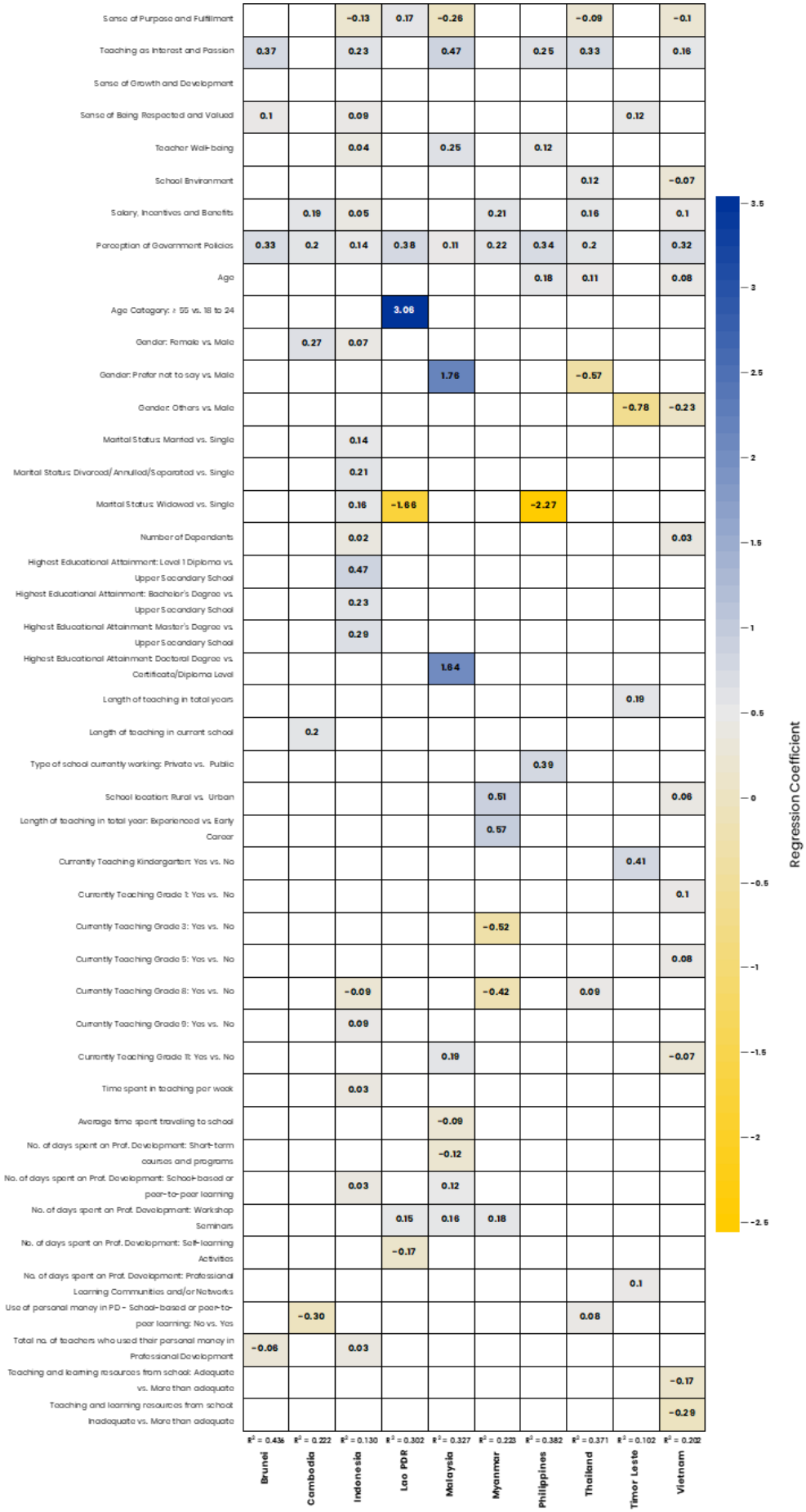


Figure 14

Summary of Regression Analysis Results of Motivational Factors across Southeast Asian Countries

Among the three core motivators, Teaching as Interest and Passion was a significant positive predictor of teacher motivation in six countries: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment was a predictor of teacher motivation in five countries, with a positive association in Lao PDR, but had a negative influence in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. On the other hand, Sense of Growth and Development is not a predictor of teacher motivation in any of the countries.

Looking at the five contributing factors for teacher motivation, Perception of Government Policies was consistently a strong predictor across nine countries (except for Timor-Leste). Salary, Incentives and Benefits was a driver for teachers staying in five countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. This was followed by Sense of Being Respected and Valued in three countries: Brunei, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste. Teacher Well-Being was a significant predictor of motivation in three countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Lastly, School Environment was positively associated with teacher motivation in Thailand but was a negative predictor in Vietnam.

Sociodemographic variables also played a significant yet context-dependent role in shaping teacher motivation. The influence of these factors varied significantly depending on local socio-political and educational conditions. Other factors have different levels of predictive strength, which might reflect the varied contexts where the teachers are.

The teachers' demographic profiles were predictors of teacher motivation in some countries. Gender influences teacher motivation in Cambodia and Indonesia, considering that the majority of teachers across the region are female. Age has a particularly strong influence in Lao PDR, wherein older teachers were more motivated. Higher educational attainment was positively associated with motivation in Indonesia, while having a doctoral degree in Malaysia increased teacher motivation to stay. These point to the role of professional identity and

aspirations in sustaining engagement in these two countries, which may further be explored to identify specific aspects of higher studies that motivate teachers to stay.

Different aspects of work conditions predict teachers' motivation in specific countries. The total length of teaching and the length of teaching in their current school have a positive but small effect in Timor-Leste and Cambodia, respectively. Experienced teachers are more likely to be motivated to stay in Malaysia compared to early-career teachers. The type of school was only a predictor in the Philippines, with working in private schools (vs. public schools) being a moderate positive predictor. School location, particularly being in a rural area (vs. urban), is a positive predictor in Myanmar as well as in Vietnam (albeit weak). Lastly, it is only in Malaysia where the time spent travelling was a negative but very weak predictor of teacher motivation.

Some facets of the classroom situation were also examined. The influence of the grade level on teacher motivation is varied across different countries, and no particular pattern could be identified. The amount of time spent teaching has a positive but very weak influence on teacher motivation in Indonesia. The availability of materials was also analyzed, and it was found that in Vietnam, more adequate resources slightly positively predicted teacher motivation.

Aspects of personal development were analyzed and have yielded very weak to weak predictive power on teacher motivation. The number of days spent in school-based learning has a positive but very weak influence on teacher motivation in Indonesia and Malaysia. Time spent in workshop seminars also has a positive but very weak effect on motivation for teachers in Lao PDR, Malaysia, and Myanmar. Being part of a learning community or network was a very weak predictor in Timor-Leste. On the other hand, attending short-term courses has a very small and negative effect in Malaysia. Finally, using personal money to attend personal development activities had a small negative influence on teacher

motivation in Cambodia, while very small positive influence on teacher motivation in Timor-Leste, signaling some demotivating effects of the financial burden of unsupported career advancement.

Taken together, these results highlight that while some motivational levers are broadly applicable, effective policy and intervention strategies must be grounded in the specific realities of each country. Understanding and addressing both structural and cultural dimensions is crucial for fostering sustainable teacher motivation and, ultimately, improving education quality across the region.

Discussion

In this section, the results of the correlational analysis and regression analysis are interpreted per motivational factor.

Core Motivating Factors

Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment

Sense of Purpose and Fulfilment has a moderate relationship with teachers' motivation for staying ($\rho = 0.354$, $p < .001$). This supports the SEA-TM framework on the relevance of this factor to teacher motivation. In Southeast Asia, teachers often see their work as a meaningful pursuit and a way to serve society. This sense of purpose is vital throughout their careers, as it fuels their commitment to teaching. New educators should be encouraged to find purpose in their roles and continuously nurture that inner motivation to stay engaged in the profession.

Notably, this factor was found to reduce teacher motivation in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. This suggests a possible disconnect between teachers' idealized beliefs about what motivates them and the actual influence of this factor—while they may think it encourages them to remain in the profession, it may not truly affect their decision in practice.

Teaching as Interest and Passion

Results of the different statistical treatments support the initial identification that Teaching as Interest and Passion is a core factor and has a strong influence on teacher motivation for staying. Correlational analysis shows a strong association between this factor with teachers' motivation level ($\rho = 0.402$, $p < .001$). The impact of Teaching as Interest and Passion is further supported by the results of the hierarchical regression analysis and was consistently identified to be a key predictor of teacher motivation in six out of ten countries: Indonesia, Thailand,

Malaysia, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Brunei. Note that these countries have significantly different motivation levels, from highest to lowest. Thus, it is important to figure out what increases teaching interest and passion in countries with high ratings, since it influences teachers to stay or leave. Supporting teachers' interests and passion should be given attention, especially since this is a strong driver for teachers to stay.

Sense of Growth and Development

Sense of Growth and Development has a strong relationship with teacher motivation to stay ($\rho = 0.395$, $p < .001$).

One of the ways that teachers drive their careers forward is by taking up graduate studies. Surprisingly, teachers enrolled in graduate school have significantly lower motivation levels compared to those not taking graduate studies ($t = 3.36$, $p < 0.001$). This may be attributed to the fact that participation in graduate studies adds to the teachers' already heavy workloads, thus possibly adding to stress levels (Caraig, 2024; Sarigöz, 2025).

Also, teacher motivation varies across educational levels ($\chi^2(13) = 437.45$, $p < .001$). Surprisingly, teachers with higher academic qualifications often report lower job satisfaction. Studies (Abd-El-Fattah, 2010; Triyanto, 2016; Sevim & Akın, 2021) suggest this may stem from a mismatch between the advanced knowledge gained through postgraduate education and the practical realities of teaching. These teachers also tend to expect career growth, recognition, and autonomy, leading to dissatisfaction when such expectations are not met (Michaelowa, 2002).

Moreover, upon examination, teachers who had promotion histories had slightly higher motivation levels than those who had none ($t = 8.29$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, regular and frequent promotion has a modest positive contribution to teacher motivation ($\chi^2(4) = 168.36$, $p < .001$). This affirms that giving teachers

opportunities to advance in the education system encourages them to remain in the profession.

Contributing Motivating Factors

Sense of Being Respected and Valued

The Sense of Being Respected and Valued shows a moderate relationship with teacher motivation to stay ($\rho = 0.389$, $p < .001$), thus confirming its influence in the decision to remain in the teaching profession. Furthermore, this factor has been identified to be a key driver for teachers to stay in Indonesia, Timor-Leste, and Brunei.

Teacher Well-being

Teacher Well-being is moderately associated with teacher motivation to keep teaching. This is a key predictor of teachers staying in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

Teacher well-being is generally linked to favorable working conditions, though their impact on motivation appears weak. Factors like teaching experience and familiarity with the school slightly encourage retention, while reducing teaching and nonteaching tasks may ease burdens but only mildly boost motivation. Despite heavy workloads being cited as challenging in qualitative studies (Saleh et al., 2024; Umali et al., 2024), teachers seem to accept them as part of the profession. Travel time to school also shows a small negative effect on motivation, yet many teachers remain committed despite remote locations. Additionally, multigrade schools—common in Southeast Asia—support inclusive education but slightly discourage teacher retention (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2012; Agbisit, 2024).

School Environment

School Environment has a strong relationship with teacher motivation (ρ = 0.410, $p < .001$). Teachers may be more inclined to stay if the school environment improves. The factor positively influenced motivation in Thailand but unexpectedly negatively in Vietnam. This contrast suggests that in Vietnam's centralized education system, a structured environment might limit teacher autonomy (Duong & Nguyen, 2023). Further research is needed to clarify this. Additionally, adequate school resources positively affect motivation, as access to necessary materials reduces the financial burden on teachers

Salary, Incentives, and Benefits

The results of the correlational analysis clearly show that Salary, Incentives, and Benefits has a strong relationship with teacher motivation levels (ρ = 0.404, $p < .001$). Financial compensation is found to be a driver in teachers' decisions to remain teaching in most countries, specifically Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Cambodia. However, when net income was examined across Southeast Asia, it was found that the amount of salary received by the teachers is negatively related to motivation (ρ = -0.09), implying that higher income alone does not necessarily lead to higher levels of motivation to remain teaching.

Government Laws and Policies

This correlational analysis shows that Government Laws and Policies has a strong association with motivation levels (ρ = 0.417, $p < .001$). The factor was found to be a key predictor in nine out of ten countries (except Timor-Leste). National- and school-level policies, although external to the teachers' direct experience and control, have a significant influence on the motivation of teachers to remain in the profession. This may be because laws and policies lay the conditions for which

other motivating factors can be put into place. Given the strong influence of this factor on teacher retention, an in-depth examination and comparison of educational policies and laws could be done to determine possible points that contribute to teacher motivation.

Summary and Conclusion

The results from the study gathered from the 10 Southeast Asian countries support the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation for Staying in the Profession (SEA-TM) (Umali et al., 2024). All motivating factors were positively related to teacher motivation for staying in the profession. The following four factors were found to have strong relationships with teacher motivation: Perception of Government Policies, School Environment, Salary, Incentives, and Benefits, and Teaching as Interest and Passion. Meanwhile, the following have moderate relationships with teacher motivation: Sense of Growth and Development, Sense of Being Respected and Valued, Teacher Well-Being, and Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment. Meanwhile, specific indicators, namely Income, Working Conditions, Professional Development, and Career Progression, have significant but very weak relationships with motivation levels to stay. Further studies should be done to examine each indicator more in-depth.

Lastly, the motivational factors, together with demographic variables, were examined using hierarchical regression analysis to determine the predictive power of each factor on motivation levels to stay in the profession. Two predictors that emerged consistently across countries were Perception of Government Policies and Teaching as Interest and Passion. The predictive strength of the other factors varied across countries, reflecting contextual differences.

The study highlights the importance of the SEA-TM framework in identifying key elements that affect teacher motivation to stay in the profession. The quantitative results show that the impact of these factors differs across countries, emphasizing the role of local context. These findings both support the framework and offer data-driven guidance for policies that seek to maintain a dedicated and motivated teaching force in Southeast Asia.

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