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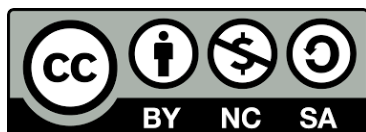
Teacher Motivation for Staying in the Profession: Insights from Malaysia

Lee Thunder T. Bernasor, Hiyas S. Clamor-Torneo,
Sherlyne A. Almonte-Acosta, PhD, Katherine P. Torralba, and
Erlene G. Umali

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Contents

Acknowledgements	5
Abstract	6
I. Introduction	7
II. Results and Discussion	13
<i>Level of Motivation of Teachers to Remain in the Profession</i>	14
<i>Factors Relevant to Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession</i>	15
<i>Relationship between Factors of Motivation and the Level of Motivation of Teachers</i>	38
<i>Relationships between Other Indicators and Level of Motivation of Teachers</i>	39
<i>Predictive Model of Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession in Malaysia</i>	45
III. Conclusion	48
References	51
Appendix	53
Statistical Results of the Study	53

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Abstract

Examining teacher motivation is crucial to supporting the Ministry of Education in sustaining educators' commitment. This study looked into the factors that affect teachers' motivation to stay in the profession. Descriptive statistics unveiled that teacher respondents in Malaysia are highly motivated to continue serving. On the other hand, inferential statistics revealed significant positive associations between all identified motivational factors and motivation levels, with varying strengths. Significant differences in motivation among respondents were also found based on the provision of learning and teaching resources, and the adequacy of school facilities. A predictive model was also developed, highlighting a combination of motivational and demographic factors that influence teachers' motivation to stay. The results were used to propose several policy recommendations.

I. Introduction

Education lies at the heart of national development, and Malaysia firmly embraces this vision through its Education Blueprint 2013–2025, which highlights the pivotal role of classrooms in shaping the country’s future. Education is more than an economic tool; it is a vehicle for building national unity, fostering inclusivity, and enhancing social cohesion in a diverse society. As the Blueprint underscores, a nation’s competitiveness in the global economy is deeply rooted in the knowledge, skills, and character of its people, and education is the most strategic channel through which these are developed (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013).

The structural landscape of Malaysia’s education system illustrates the government’s commitment to providing widespread access to formal education. As of 2024, there were 7,776 government and government-aided primary schools and 2,457 secondary schools across the country, supported by a substantial teaching force of 415,906 educators at the preschool, primary, and secondary levels (Malaysia Educational Statistics, 2024). Pupil-to-teacher ratios, which are at 23.19:1 in preschool, 12.26:1 in primary, and 11.63:1 in secondary schools, reflect relatively manageable class sizes in most stages, although the preschool ratio remains considerably higher. Such disparities are not only administrative considerations but also pedagogical ones, as they may affect the quality of teacher–student interactions, workload balance, and instructional effectiveness, particularly at the foundational levels of learning.

Despite being structurally robust, Malaysia’s education system is not insulated from the complex realities surrounding the teaching profession. Teaching in Malaysia remains a highly respected vocation, often regarded with reverence due to cultural norms, religious beliefs, and social traditions. Teachers are seen as moral leaders, mentors, and pillars of community life. For many, the profession is a

calling shaped by familial legacy, intrinsic passion, and societal respect. Formal recognitions such as the Tokoh Guru [Teacher Icon] and the Excellence Service Awards further elevate the status of teachers and reinforce their value in Malaysian society (SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2023). These cultural and institutional reinforcements have traditionally helped sustain the appeal of the profession.

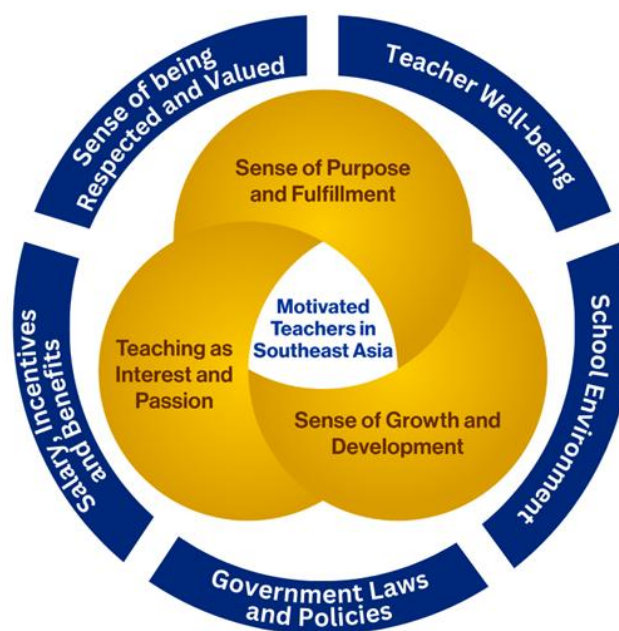
However, this revered status does not shield educators from mounting professional pressures. Teaching is increasingly recognized as an emotionally and cognitively demanding occupation, especially amid evolving curricular demands, administrative responsibilities, and shifting educational policies. Existing literature consistently highlights the importance of contextual factors that shape educators' lived experiences and influence their decisions to remain in or leave the profession (Kyriacou, 2001; Day & Gu, 2010). As such, examining their motivations to stay in the teaching career has its merits.

Researchers define motivation in several ways. Dörnyei (2001, as cited in Syamananda, 2017) describes it as the “driving force behind all actions, influencing “why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it” (p.121). On the other hand, Han and Ying (2016) perceive 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) illustrates the construct 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 reflect the multiple layers of intrinsic and extrinsic drivers that affect teachers’ decisions.

In this study, motivation refers to the factors that influence teachers to remain in the profession. As reflected in Umali et al.'s (2024) Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession, motivation is shaped by core and contributing factors. Core factors are primary drivers that encourage teachers to continue providing educational services, while contributing factors are those that may enhance or support the core factors. Core factors comprise teachers' sense of purpose and fulfillment, interest and passion for teaching and sense of growth and development. Contributing factors include their sense of being respected and valued, 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



A few studies have examined teacher motivation in Malaysia. Pre-service and in-service teachers in Qin et al.'s (2017) study reported high levels of teaching motivation. They also determined links between motivation and demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and type of institution. Likewise, Abdullah et

al. (2018) discovered that teachers have very high levels of work motivation. The researchers also found associations between teachers' work motivation and transformational leadership. In a similar fashion, Yaakub (1990) unveiled several factors that affect teachers' decisions to teach, which include personal considerations, values of teaching, altruism, working conditions, and the influence of key persons.

In recognition of the necessity of examining teacher motivation for the sustainability of teaching as a lifelong career, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, through its Regional Centre for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH), initiated a collaborative project with the Malaysian Ministry of Education. The Regional Teacher Motivation 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.

Utilizing quantitative methodologies, a survey questionnaire was developed based on the Southeast Asian Framework on Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession (Umali et al., 2024) and other relevant literature. The questionnaire was validated by content experts and country representatives and was translated into local languages. Data were collected via SurveyMonkey, yielding 425 valid responses from educators in Malaysia. Table 1 delineates the characteristics of survey respondents. Data were then analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Hierarchical regression analysis was also performed to develop predictive models.

Table 1*Profile of Survey Respondents in Malaysia*

	Count	Percent
Age in years		
18-24	8	1.9
25-34	86	20.2
35-44	157	36.9
45-54	151	35.5
55-64	23	5.4
Gender		
Male	95	22.4
Female	330	77.6
Marital status		
Single	62	14.6
Married	342	80.5
Divorced	6	1.4
Widowed	11	2.6
Prefer not to say	4	0.9
Highest educational attainment		
Certificate/Diploma Level	8	1.9
Bachelor's Degree	356	83.8
Master's Degree	57	13.4
Doctoral Degree	4	0.9
Type of school		
Public	425	100.0
School location		
Urban	256	60.2
Rural	169	39.8
Length of teaching career		
Early Career (1 to 5 years)	59	13.9
Mid-Career (6 to 10 years)	54	12.7
Experienced (11 years and up)	312	73.4
Currently taking graduate studies		
Yes	20	4.7
No	405	95.3
Total	425	100

The demographic composition of the Malaysian teacher respondents presents a broad representation across age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, school type and location, teaching experience, and engagement in graduate studies. In terms of age distribution, the majority of respondents fell within the 35 to 44-year-old age bracket, accounting for 36.9% of the total. This was closely followed by those aged 45 to 54 years at 35.5%. Teachers in the 25 to 34 age range made up 20.2% of the group, while smaller proportions were noted among the 55 to 64 age group (5.4%) and the youngest group, 18 to 24 years (1.9%).

Gender-wise, the sample was predominantly female, with 77.6% identifying as such while male respondents represented 22.4%. Marital status data revealed that a substantial majority of the participants were married, comprising 80.5% of the total sample. Single respondents made up 14.6%, while those who were divorced comprised 1.4%. Widowed individuals accounted for 2.6%, and 0.9% chose not to disclose their marital status. In terms of educational qualifications, a significant majority held a bachelor's degree (83.8%), followed by 13.4% with a master's degree. A small portion reported having a certificate or diploma (1.9%), while less than 1% (0.9%) had obtained a doctoral degree. These figures suggest that most respondents have attained at least an undergraduate-level education.

All respondents (100%) reported working in public schools. Regarding school location, 60.2% of the participants were based in urban areas, while 39.8% were from rural settings. This distribution reflects a slight urban majority in the teaching workforce represented in the study. Finally, in terms of teaching experience, most respondents identified as experienced teachers with more than 11 years in the profession, making up 73.4% of the sample. Early-career teachers (1 to 5 years) accounted for 13.9%, while mid-career teachers (6 to 10 years) represented 12.7%. Lastly, a large majority of respondents (95.3%) are not taking graduate studies; only 4.7% are currently engaged in further education.

II. Results and Discussion

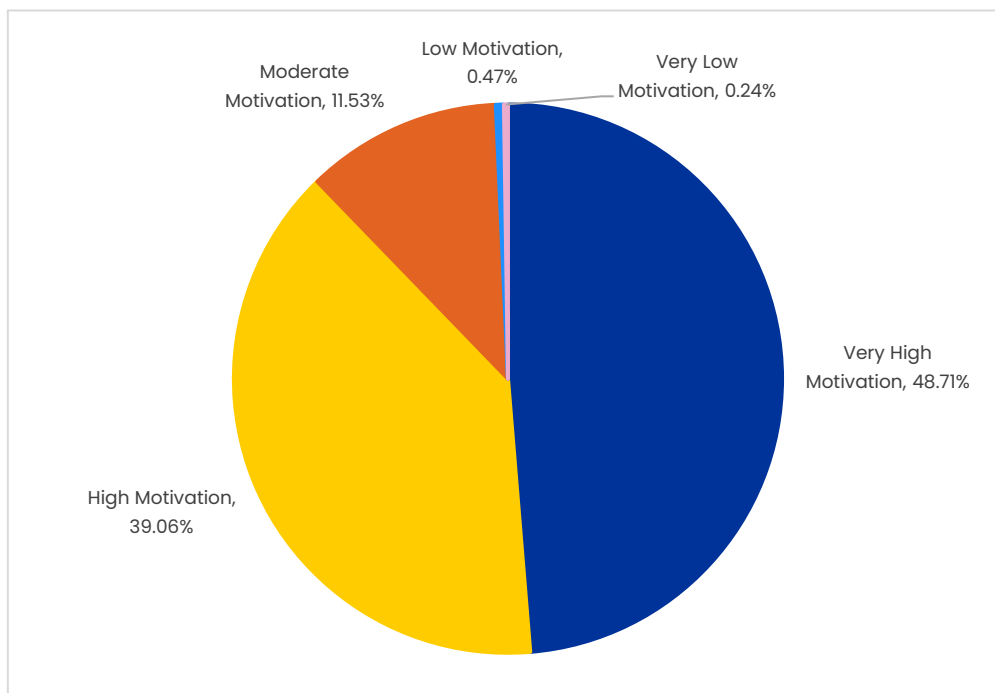
This section outlines the main findings of the study on teacher motivation in Malaysia, emphasizing both the general level of educators' commitment to staying in the profession and the key factors that influence this motivation. Using descriptive analyses, the study captures teachers' perspectives across several key areas, including their sense of purpose and fulfillment, passion for teaching, opportunities for growth and development, perceived respect and value, well-being, school environment, salary and benefits, and the impact of government policies. These dimensions are presented through visual data and narrative summaries, showcasing patterns in areas such as participation in professional development, workload allocation, commuting time, and financial obligations. In addition, inferential and correlational analyses investigate the connections between these variables and teacher motivation, exploring how differences in salary, work environment, career advancement, and access to development opportunities relate to teachers' intent to remain in the profession. The section concludes with a predictive model that identifies the most significant factors driving teacher motivation to stay, offering data-driven insights to support policy decisions and long-term teacher retention efforts in Malaysia.

Level of Motivation of Teachers to Remain in the Profession

The overall motivation levels of teachers in Malaysia, as shown in Figure 2, reveal a notably positive outlook toward the teaching profession. Nearly half of the respondents (48.71%) reported having very high motivation, while an additional 39.06% indicated high motivation to remain in the profession. Combined, these two categories account for a substantial 87.76% of the sample, suggesting that the majority of teachers feel strongly driven and committed to their roles. A smaller segment of the respondents (11.53%) reported moderate motivation toward the profession. Only 0.47% of teachers indicated low motivation, while the remaining 0.24% reported very low levels of motivation. These figures provide a valuable baseline for understanding the current motivational climate in Malaysia’s teaching workforce and set the stage for exploring the factors that sustain or challenge teacher motivation in the broader educational context.

Figure 2

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



Factors Relevant to Teacher Motivation in Staying in the Profession

The study analyzed eight factors pertinent to teacher motivation for remaining in the profession. Teacher respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with statements pertaining to the eight motivational variables using a six-point scale ranging from 1, denoting "strongly disagree," to 6, indicating "strongly agree."

Core Factors of Teacher Motivation. The following sections present teacher respondents' agreement levels with statements related to the core motivational factors, which include 'sense of purpose and fulfillment', teaching as interest and passion' and 'sense of growth and development'.

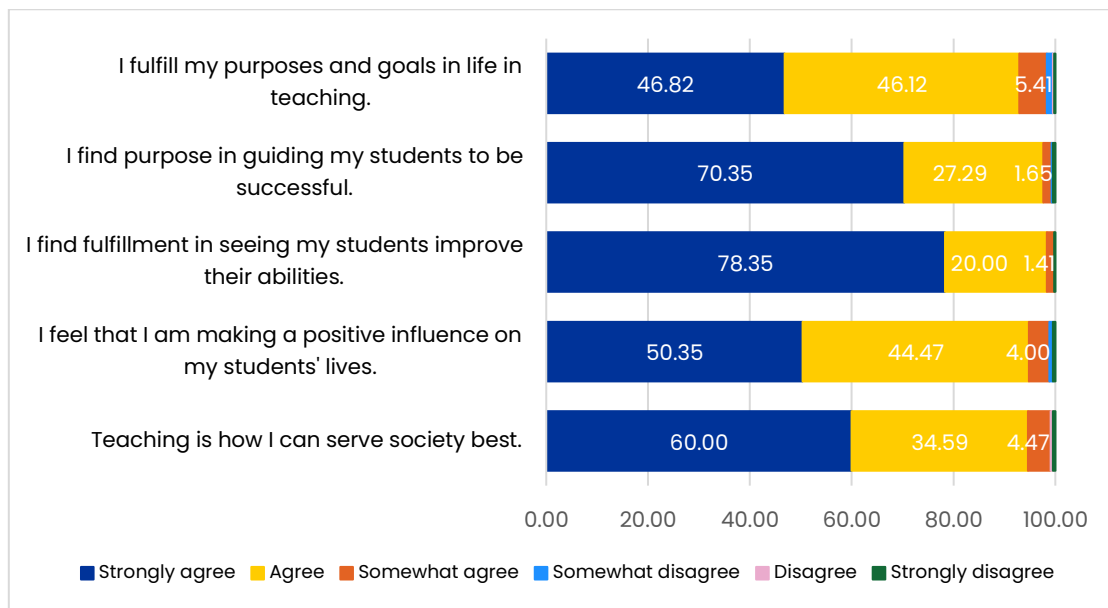
Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment. The first core factor on 'sense of purpose and fulfillment' refers to teachers' perceived impact on their learners as well as their contribution to societal and national goals.

The responses from teacher respondents reveal a profound sense of purpose and personal fulfillment in their professional roles. Majority (46.82% strongly agreed and 46.12% agreed) of respondents feel that teaching allows them to fulfill their life purposes and goals. In terms of guiding students toward success, 70.35% strongly agreed and 27.29% agreed, again affirming a deep sense of vocational satisfaction. A notable 78.35% strongly agreed, and 20% agreed that they find fulfillment in seeing their students improve their abilities, with virtually no disagreement. Similarly, 50.35% strongly agreed, and 44.47% agreed that they feel they are making a positive influence on their students' lives, an affirmation of the deep impact educators perceive themselves to have. Lastly, a significant proportion (60%) strongly agreed that teaching is the best way they can serve society, while another 34.59% agreed, showing that nearly all respondents view their profession as a meaningful societal contribution. These responses suggest that the teaching profession, for the vast majority of respondents, is not merely a

job but a purposeful life path closely linked to personal values and aspirations. Overall, the factor ‘sense of purpose and fulfillment’ has a mean score of 5.6 (rated as ‘strongly agree’).

Figure 3

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



These findings are aligned with Yaakub’s (1990) study. Although the research respondents are teacher trainees, the author found that altruism is among the factors influencing their decision to pursue a career in teaching. They deemed “imparting knowledge”, “educating the younger generation”, and “rendering service to society” as important values that they could fulfill in the profession (p. 279).

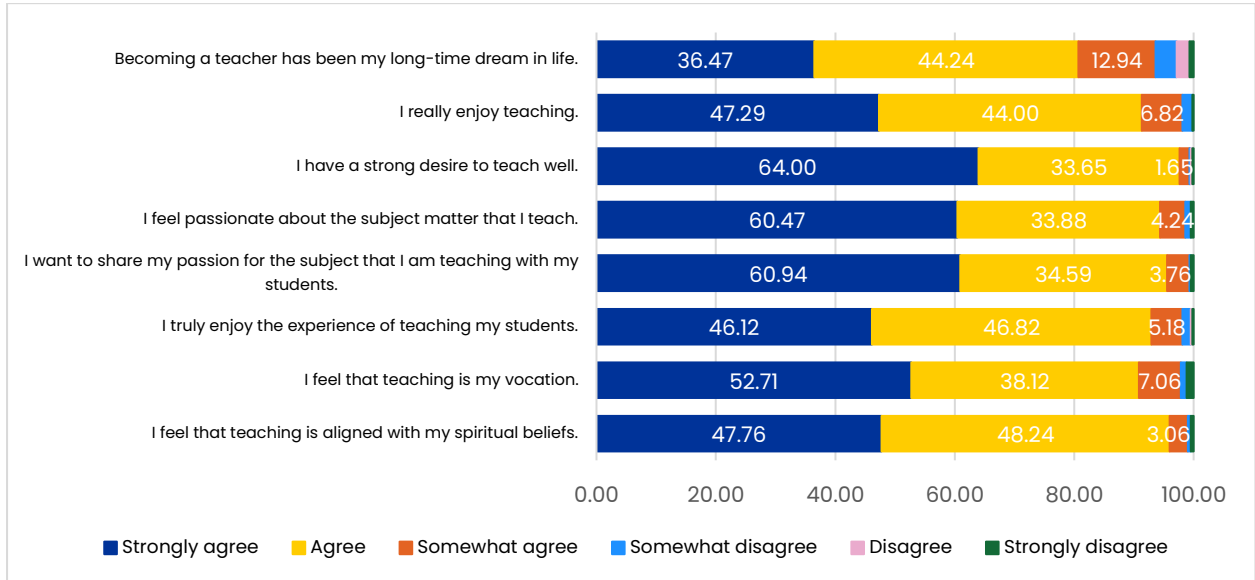
Teaching as Interest and Passion. Interest and passion play a role in sustaining teachers in fulfilling their roles and are considered motivational factors. Aspects covered under this factor include aspiring to become teachers since

childhood, love of teaching, love of subject matter, love of children, and alignment with one's belief system.

Malaysian teacher respondents expressed strong personal and emotional connections to teaching, underscoring it as a passion rather than simply a profession. When asked if becoming a teacher had been a long-time dream, responses were slightly more distributed: 36.647 strongly agreed, 44.24% agreed, while 12.94% somewhat agreed and 6.35% showed some form of disagreement. Additionally, 47.29% strongly agreed and 44% agreed that they really enjoy teaching. An overwhelming 64% strongly agreed and 33.65% agreed that they have a strong desire to teach well, suggesting a deep commitment to excellence in the classroom. Passion for subject matter also surfaced, as 60.47% strongly agreed and 33.88% agreed that they feel passionate about the subject they teach. Similarly, 60.94% strongly agreed and 34.59% agreed that they wish to share their passion for the subject with their students. Teachers also conveyed enjoyment in their daily classroom experiences, with 46.12% strongly agreeing and 46.82% agreeing that they truly enjoy teaching students. More than half (52.71%) strongly believed teaching is their vocation, and 38.12% agreed demonstrating how teaching is often seen as a calling. Lastly, when asked whether teaching aligns with their spiritual beliefs, 47.76% strongly agreed and 48.24% agreed, indicating that for most, teaching resonates with their core values. These patterns reflect a strong internal motivation among Malaysian educators, anchored in passion, joy, and a personal sense of mission. Overall, 'teaching as interest and passion' gained a mean score of 5.41 (rated 'strongly agree').

Figure 4

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



In Yaakub’s (1990) study, interest and passion were personal considerations that teacher trainees brought to their decision to enter the teaching profession. For instance, liking teaching and children, and seeing it as a “fun” activity and an “ambition” were among the reasons presented by the respondents (p. 277).

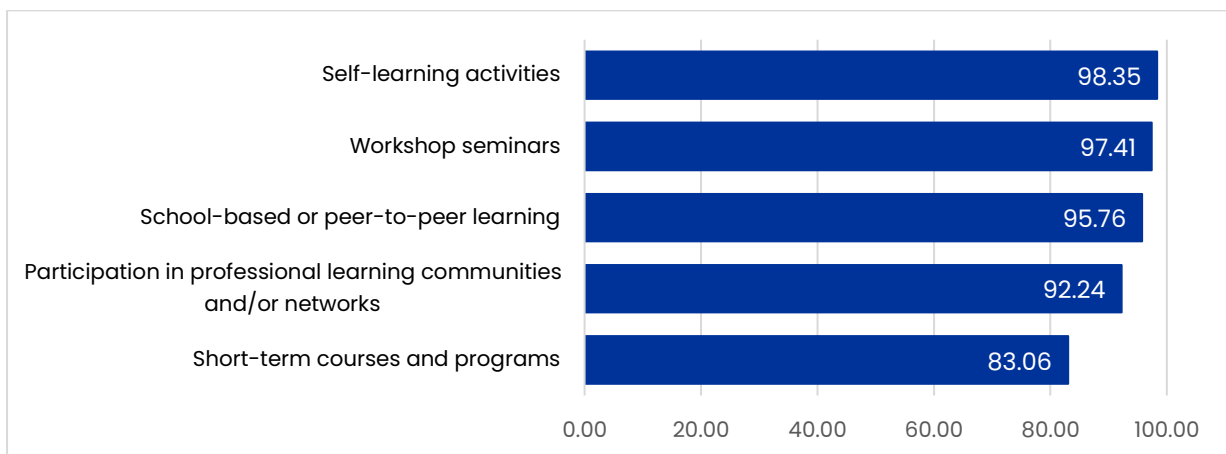
Sense of Growth and Development. Teachers are also motivated by having a sense of growth and development. They are driven by wanting to be better at what they do, having opportunities for professional development, and facing challenges as part of progress.

Figure 5 reveals that teacher respondents are highly engaged in various forms of professional development, showcasing their strong dedication to ongoing learning and growth in the education sector. Among the respondents, 98.35% reported participating in self-learning activities such as independent study and online courses. Workshop seminars were also widely attended, with 97.41% of

teachers engaging in these sessions. Additionally, 95.76% took part in school-based or peer-to-peer learning opportunities, which emphasize collaborative and context-specific improvement. Participation in professional learning communities or networks was similarly high at 92.24%, while 83.06% of respondents reported enrolling in short-term courses and programs. These high percentages reflect a robust culture of professional development and a strong drive among Malaysian educators to enhance their skills, stay updated on educational innovations, and better serve their students.

Figure 5

Percentage of Teacher Respondents Engaging in Professional Development



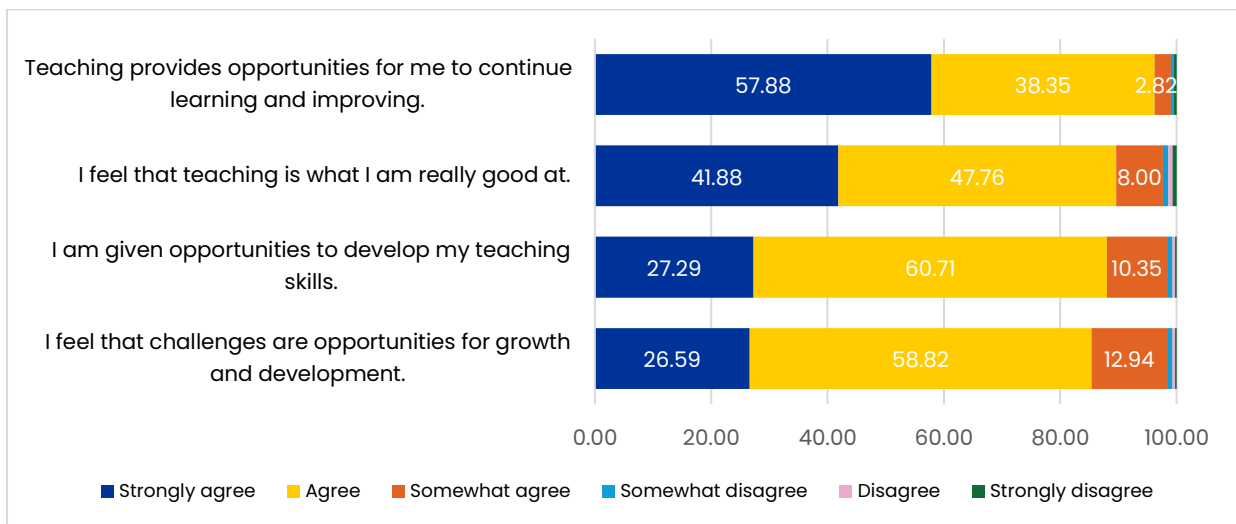
Moreover, 95.30% of teacher respondents are not currently pursuing graduate studies. Among those who are studying, 20% received scholarships for their further education. These data suggest that teachers may be more engaged in alternative forms of professional development, as formal studies require greater time and financial commitment.

Complementing these behavioral indicators, perceptual responses provide further insights into teachers’ orientation toward professional growth in Figure 6. Notably, 96.24% (57.88% strongly agree; 38.35% agree) agreed that teaching offers

continued opportunities for learning and improvement. When asked about their confidence in teaching ability, 89.65% (41.88% strongly agree; 47.76% agree) believed they are genuinely good at teaching. Likewise, 88% (27.29% strongly agree; 60.71% agree) affirmed that they are provided opportunities to develop their teaching skills. Lastly, a majority of the teacher respondents expressed a positive mindset toward development: 85.41% (26.59% strongly agree; 58.82% agree) stated that they view challenges as opportunities for growth. These responses highlight the positive perceptions Malaysian teachers have toward their professional journey, reinforcing the idea that both structural support and personal motivation play a key role in sustaining teacher development. Overall, the mean score for the factor ‘sense of growth and development’ is 5.25 (rated ‘strongly agree’).

Figure 6

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



Contributing Factors of Teacher Motivation. The succeeding portion presents teacher respondents’ agreement levels with statements related to the contributing factors of teacher motivation, which comprise ‘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' pertains to teachers' perception of society's regard for them as knowledgeable members and of their profession's value. This factor also includes their feelings about how they are appreciated by their families, students and their parents as well as how they are honored through awards and recognition.

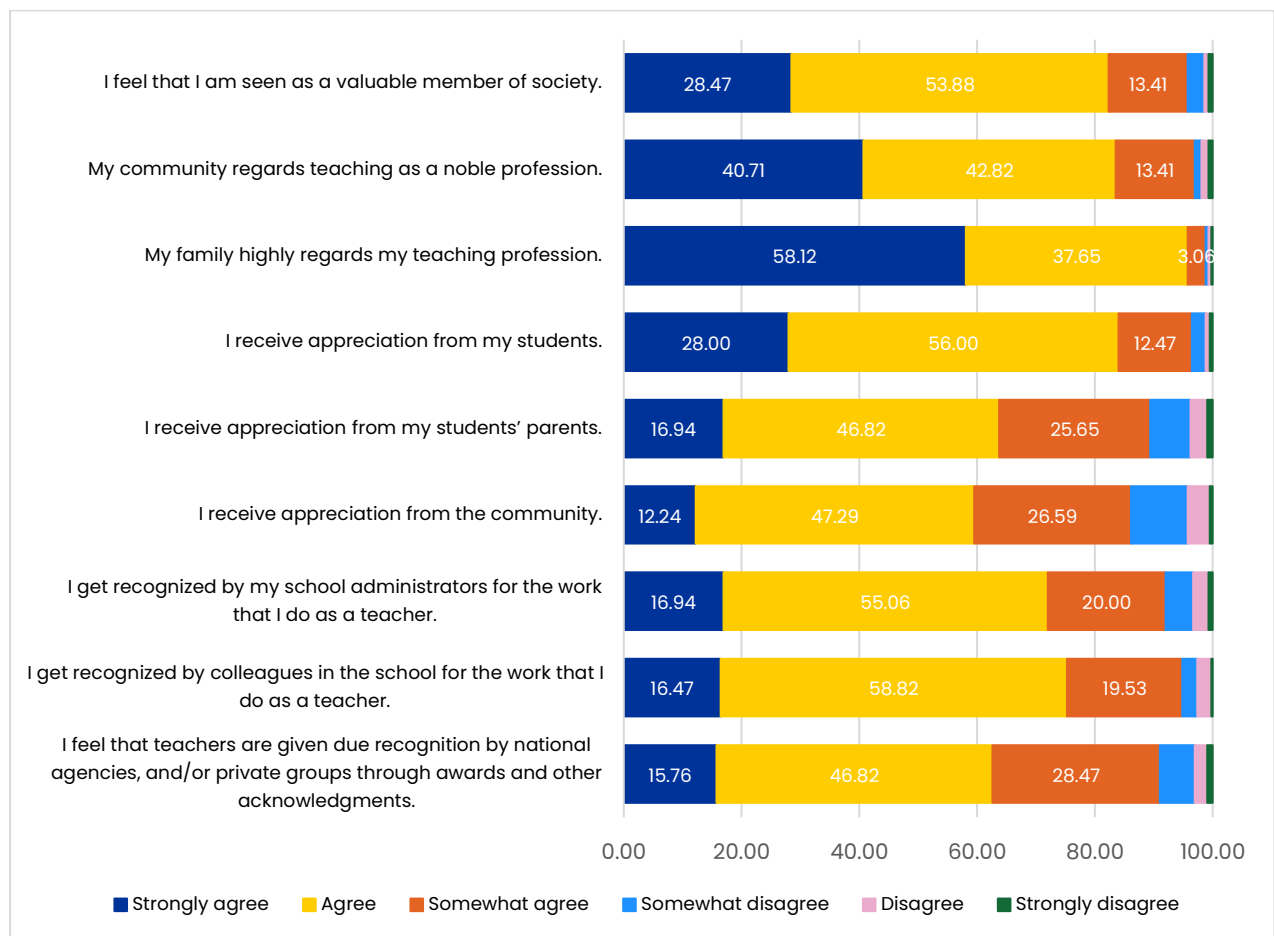
Figure 7 shows that the teacher respondents' sense of being respected and valued suggests a generally positive perception, albeit with notable variation depending on the source of recognition. A strong majority reported receiving appreciation from their students, with 28% strongly agreeing and 56% agreeing, indicating that over 84% feel affirmed by those they directly teach. Similarly, 63.76% of respondents (16.94% strongly agree; 46.82% agree) felt appreciated by their students' parents, reflecting a supportive dynamic between educators and families. Moreover, 59.53% (12.24% strongly agree; 47.29% agree) indicated receiving appreciation from the broader community.

When it comes to professional recognition within school environments, most teachers felt acknowledged. Recognition by colleagues was affirmed by 75.29% (16.47% strongly agree; 58.82% agree), and 72% (16.94% strongly agree; 55.06% agree) felt similarly appreciated by their school administrators. These results point to a workplace culture that, for the most part, values collaborative respect and supervisory support. Meanwhile, 62.59% (15.76% strongly agree; 46.82% agree) of teachers were satisfied with national-level recognition, such as awards and commendations. However, fewer respondents felt sufficiently recognized by national agencies or private institutions. Teachers reported strong affirmation from personal networks and society at large. A combined 95.76% (58.12% strongly agree; 37.65% agree) shared that their families highly regard their profession. Additionally,

83.53% (40.71% strongly agree; 42.82% agree) believed that the community still sees teaching as a noble occupation. Lastly, a sense of societal worth was reflected in 82.35% (28.47% strongly agree; 53.88% agree) of teachers who reported feeling like valuable members of society. Malaysian teachers generally feel a strong sense of personal and communal respect, a factor that could meaningfully contribute to their motivation to remain in the profession. Overall, this factor received a mean score of 4.92 (rated 'agree').

Figure 7

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

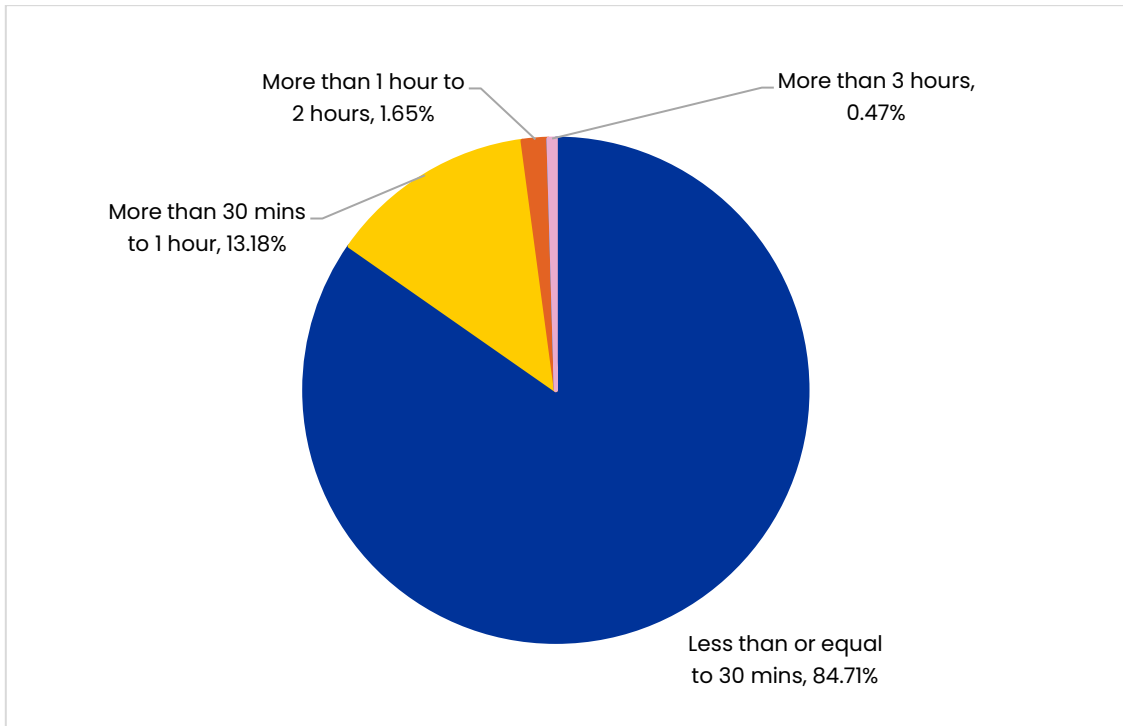


Teacher Well-being. There are many aspects concerning teacher well-being that influence their motivation to stay. However, for this research, this factor revolved only around three areas: work-life balance, schedule flexibility, and home-school proximity.

Considering teachers' work-life balance, they spend an average of 19.5 hours per week teaching. Majority of them (93.88%) are also engaged in nonteaching-related tasks, spending an average of 10 hours per week for tasks, such as on tasks such as being assigned as classroom advisers, subject coordinators, club moderators, sports coaches, co-curricular and extracurricular committee members, project or program coordinators, community involvement services, and other school administrative committees (planning, facility management, etc.). In addition, Figure 8 shows relatively short travel times to school, with 84.71% indicating they travel 30 minutes or less one-way. This suggests that most teachers live in proximity to their place of work, which may potentially reduce daily fatigue and enhance work-life balance. A smaller portion, 13.18%, commute between 30 minutes and one hour, while only 1.65% travel between one and two hours. No teachers reported travel between two to three hours, and only 0.47% reported commuting more than three hours. These figures indicate that long travel times are uncommon among the surveyed educators.

Figure 8

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

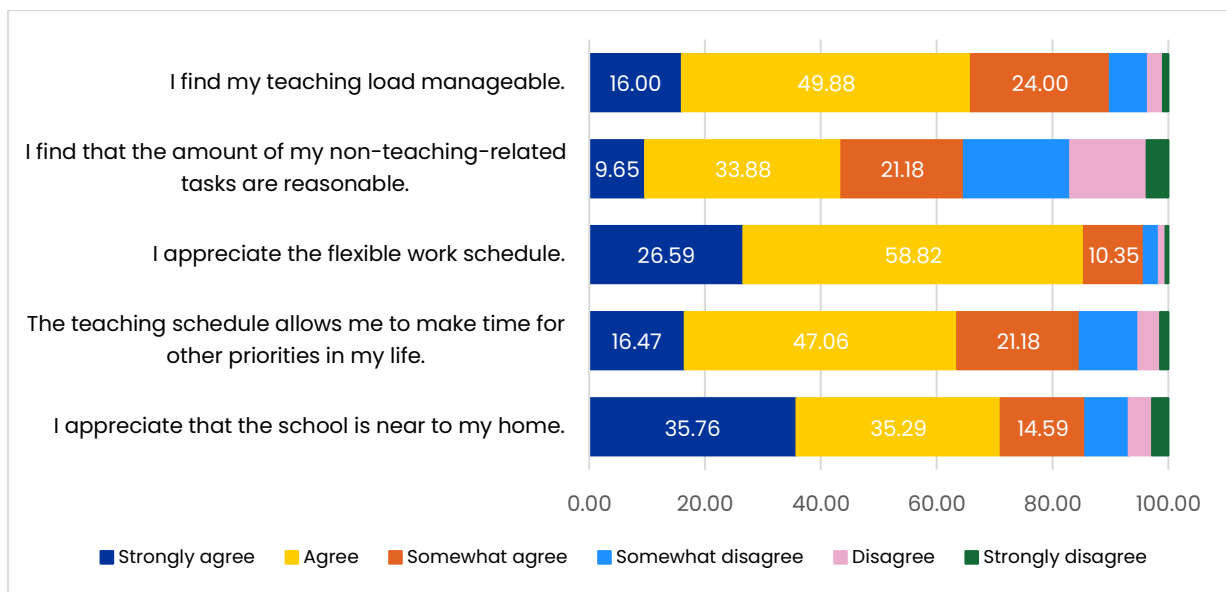


Teachers' sense of well-being reflects a varied but generally positive outlook on aspects of their work environment and responsibilities. Flexibility in scheduling was positively perceived, with 85.41% (26.59% strongly agree; 58.82% agree) appreciating a flexible work arrangement. When asked whether their teaching schedules allow them to prioritize other aspects of life, 63.53% (16.47% strongly agree; 47.06% agree) responded positively, while only 15.29% expressed some level of disagreement. Figure 9 also shows that a combined 71.06% (35.76% strongly agree; 35.29% agree) expressed appreciation for the school's proximity to their homes, aligning with the earlier finding on short travel times. Workload-related questions revealed some concern, whereby only 43.53% agreed that their nonteaching-related tasks were reasonable, while 16.94% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Also, while 65.88% felt their teaching load was manageable, a significant

portion, over 30%, only somewhat agreed or disagreed, suggesting that workload demands may still pose a challenge to overall well-being for a notable subset of teachers. Overall, the mean score for this factor is 4.59 (rated 'agree').

Figure 9

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



Concerns about nonteaching-related tasks have been echoed by Malaysian teachers, as voiced by the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) (Education International, 2024). The NUTP General-Secretary emphasized the need to ease teachers' administrative burdens, thereby enabling them to focus on facilitating learning for their students. The Malaysian Ministry of Education has also been responsive to addressing teacher workload (The Sun, 2025). Among the measures taken are "limiting the organization of low-impact school events, reducing the frequency of administrative reviews under the Malaysian Education Quality Standards, allowing flexible times for recoding student attendance, and appointing non-teachers to invigilate public examinations" (para. 3). Further initiatives also include "simplifying daily lesson plans..., restricting Teacher's Day

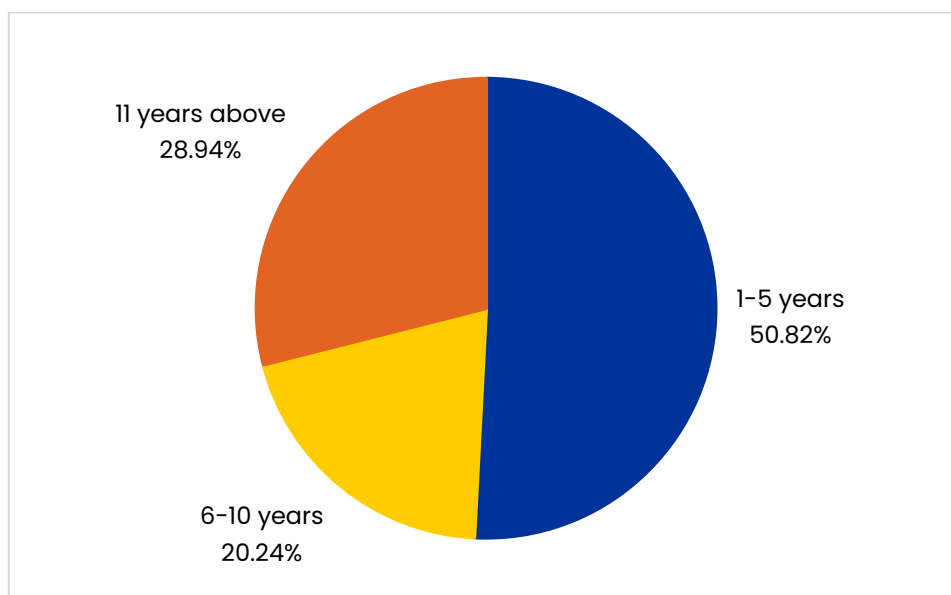
celebrations to the school and national levels and enhancing teacher autonomy in delivering classroom lessons and assessments” (para. 4).

School Environment. The motivational factor ‘school environment’ concerns a variety of aspects, such as having supportive school policies, practices and activities, having opportunities for self-expression and innovation, good working relationship with colleagues and adequate facilities and resources.

On average, teacher respondents have been teaching in their current school for about 7.67 years. Figure 10 shows that a large portion of them (50.82%) have been working at their educational institutions between 1 to 5 years, 20.24% between 6 to 10 years while the remaining (28.94%) have been teaching for more than 11 years.

Figure 10

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



Additionally, most respondents believe that their teaching materials (70.11%) and school facilities (56%) are adequate (see Figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11

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

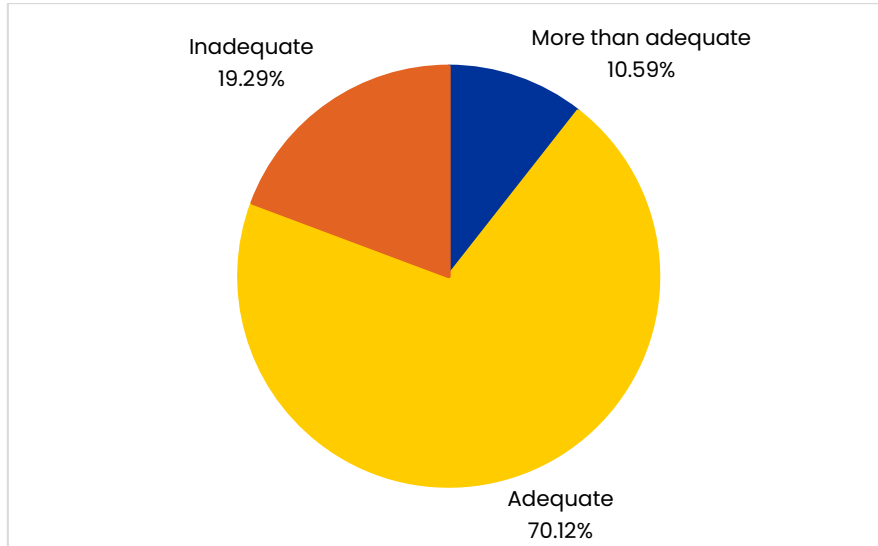
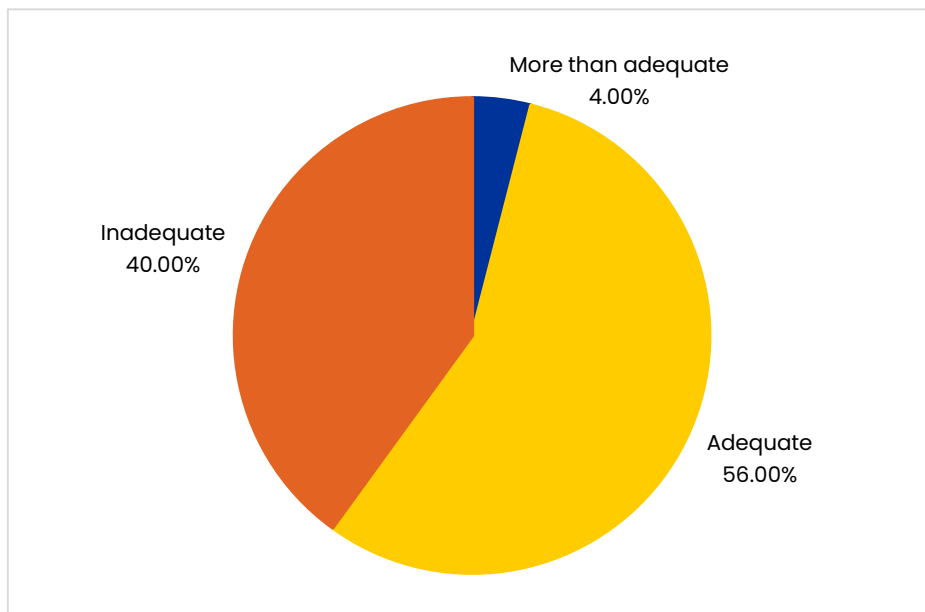


Figure 12

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



The perception of school environment among teacher respondents reflects a generally positive view, as seen in Figure 13. Firstly, 67.85% of respondents affirmed that their school administration truly supports teachers' needs. Regarding emotional safety and administrative support, 72.07% of teachers agreed that their schools are comfortable environments for self-expression, although nearly 7% expressed disagreement. Teachers also recognized a culture of innovation, with 86.39% (25.59% strongly agree; 60.80% agree) stating that their schools allow experimentation with new ideas and techniques.

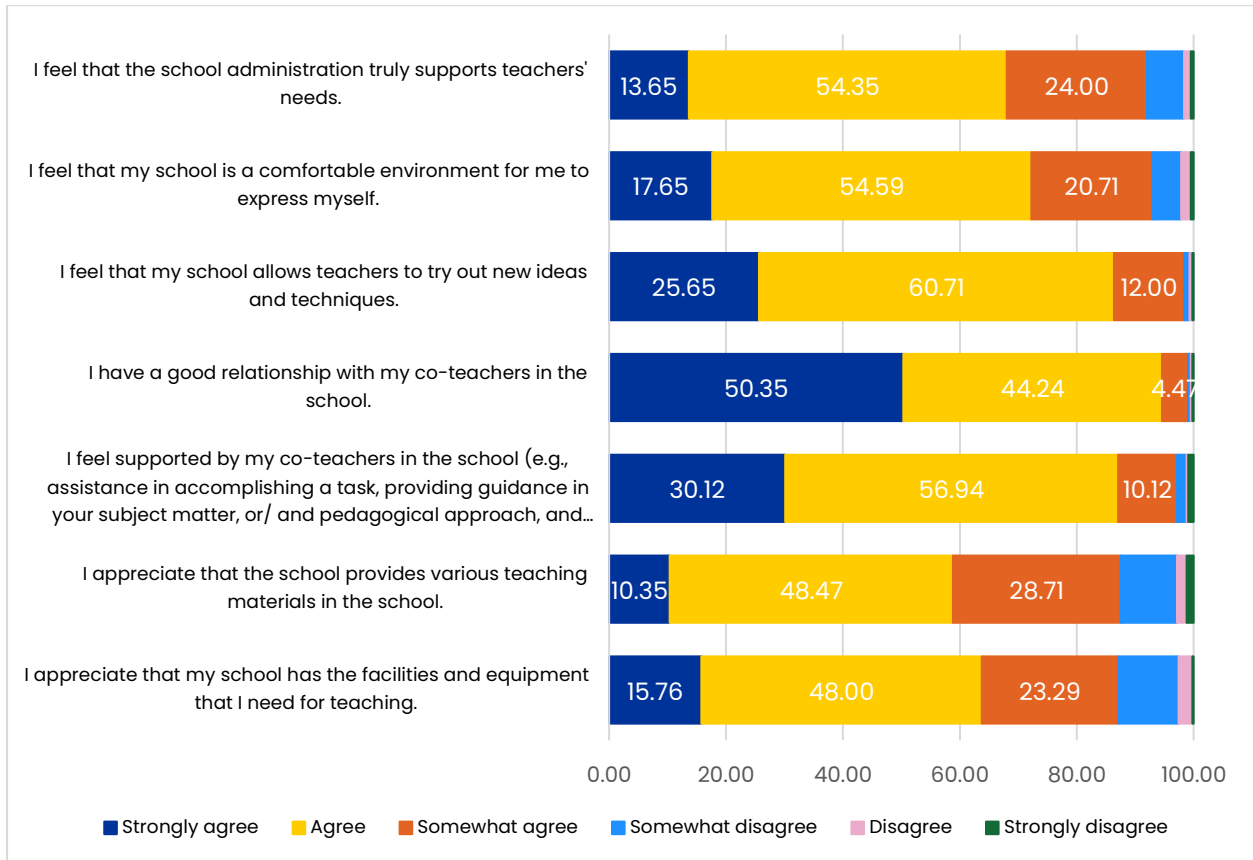
Interpersonal support and collegiality within schools were strongly affirmed by most teachers. For instance, 94.59% reported having good relationships with their peers, with half of them (50.35%) strongly agreeing. A notable 87.06% (30.12% strongly agree; 56.94% agree) felt supported by their co-teachers in various aspects such as task completion, pedagogical guidance, and conflict resolution. These high levels of agreement underscore the presence of a collaborative and collegial school climate.

In terms of provision of teaching materials, 58.82% of the respondents agreed and 28.71% somewhat agreed that their schools provide these resources. Only 11.29% of them expressed some level of dissatisfaction, suggesting possible gaps in access to instructional materials. A similar pattern emerged regarding physical resources, 63.76% (15.76% strongly agree; 48% agree) of teachers expressed appreciation for the availability of necessary teaching facilities and equipment. However, 10.35% somewhat disagreed, and a smaller segment (2.59%) outright disagreed or strongly disagreed.

These findings suggest that while most teachers perceive their school environments as supportive, there remain areas where improvements could enhance the overall teaching climate. Overall, the factor 'school environment' has a mean score of 4.90 (rated 'agree').

Figure 13

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to Their Perception of School Environment



Salary, Incentives and Benefits. On average, teacher respondents receive a monthly net income of approximately MYR 9,130 or USD 2,163, as most respondents are aged 35 to 54 and have been teaching for more than eight years. A little more than half (52.47%) are their family’s main financial providers, as shown in Figure 14. However, Figure 15 shows that 11.53% of the respondents do not have any dependents, while 26.59% have 1-2 dependents, and 46.35% have 3-5 dependents.

Figure 14

Percentage of Teacher Respondents as the Main Financial Provider

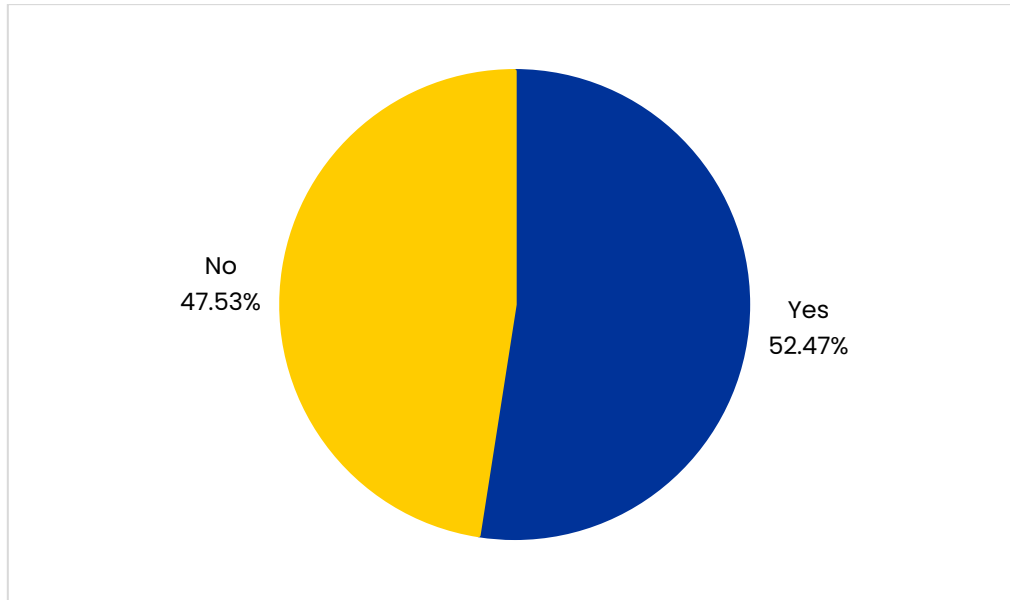
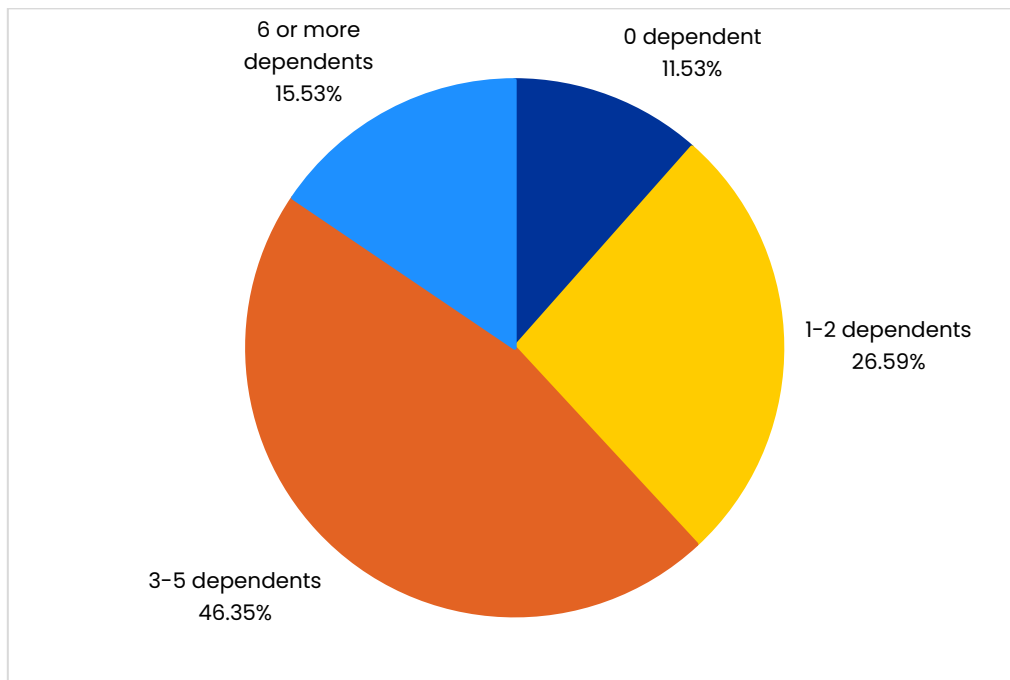


Figure 15

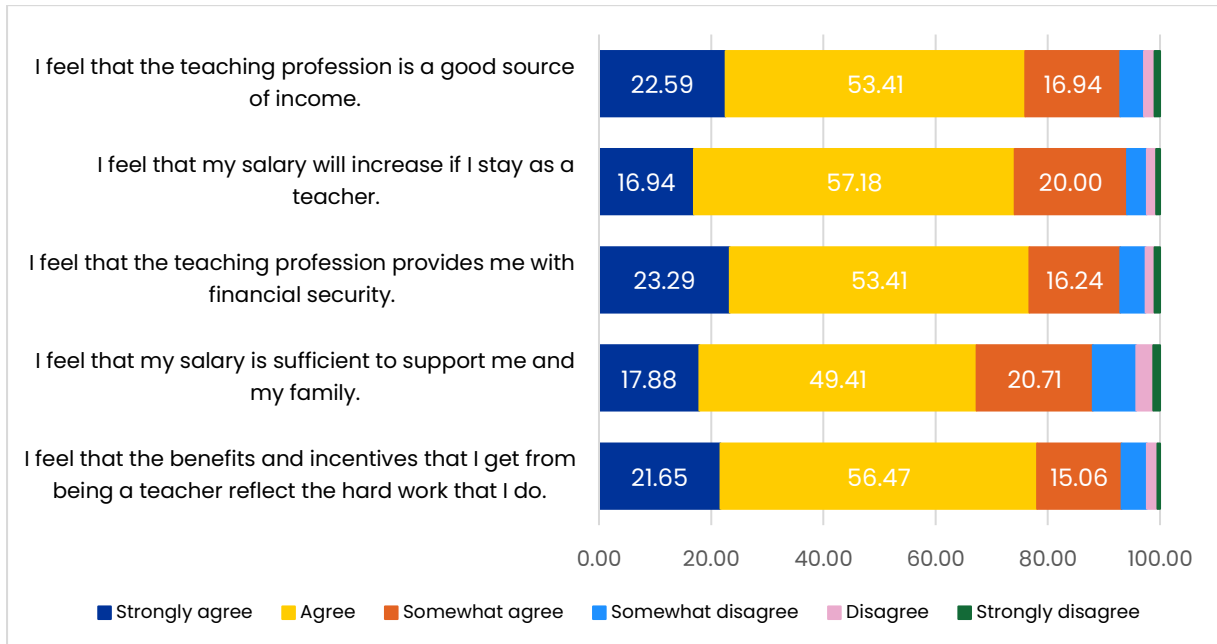
Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to the Number of Their Dependents



The perception of salary, incentives, and benefits among teacher respondents in Figure 16 reveals a generally favorable but cautiously optimistic outlook regarding the financial aspects of the teaching profession. Firstly, 76% believed that teaching is a good source of income, while 7.06% did not share the same view. Moreover, most teachers (74.12%) agreed that their salary may increase if they stay; only 5.88% expressed some level of disagreement. Similarly, when asked whether teaching provides financial security, 76.71% responded positively (23.29% strongly agree, 53.41% agree). This indicates a strong sense of stability among most teachers, yet only 7.06% held reservations about the profession's financial dependability. Regarding salary sufficiency, 67.29% of teachers agreed, and strongly agreed that their current earnings are enough to support themselves and their families. Nevertheless, 12% disagreed to some extent, pointing to some teachers who may be facing financial strain. Lastly, a significant majority (93.18%) either strongly agreed (21.65%), agreed (56.47%) or somewhat agreed (15.06%) that the benefits and incentives they receive reflect the hard work they contributed as teachers. However, about 6.82% of the respondents expressed disagreement, suggesting that while many feel appreciated financially, some may perceive a gap between work and reward. Overall, a mean score of 4.83 (rated 'agree') was computed for the motivational factor 'salary, incentives and benefits'.

Figure 16

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

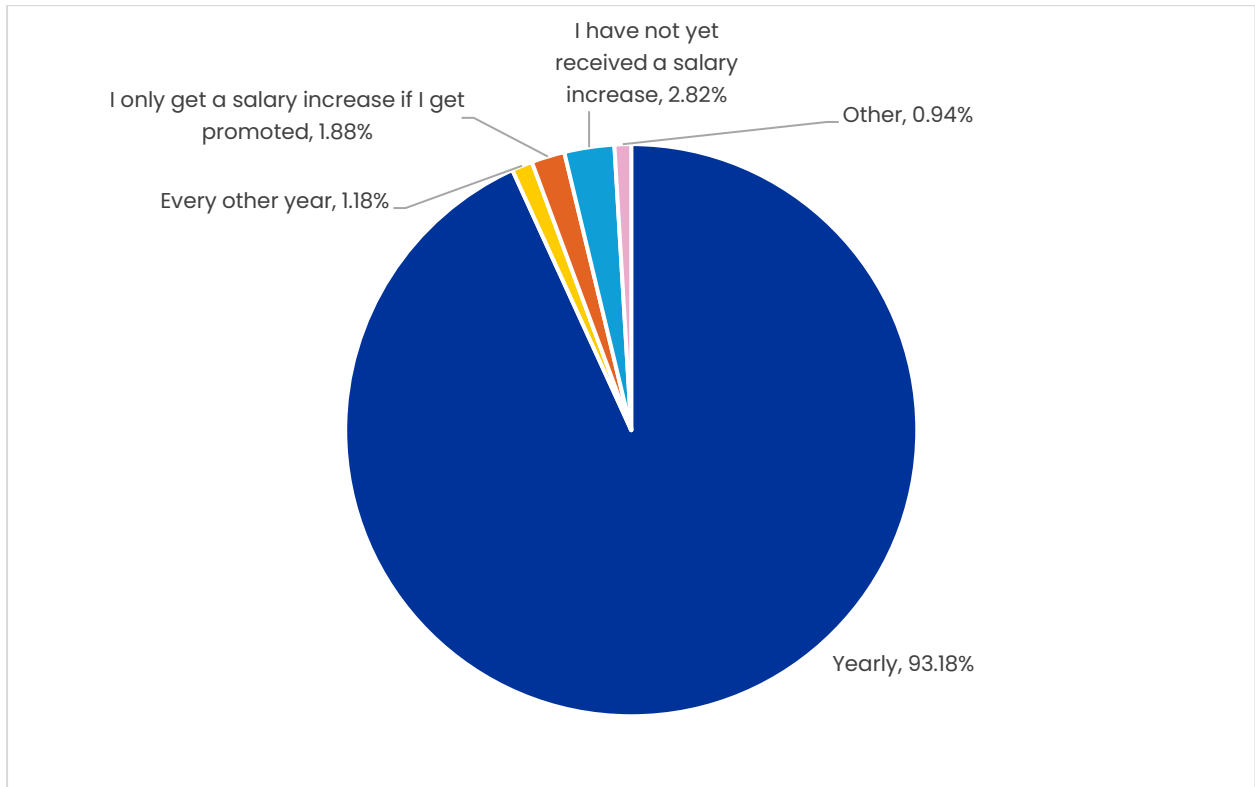


Government Laws and Policies. Six areas were examined in terms of the factor ‘government laws and policies’ namely, benefits and incentives, salary, working conditions, career progression, professional development, and teacher deployment.

The findings in Figure 17 show that the majority of teacher respondents experience regular and consistent compensation adjustments. For instance, 93.19% reported receiving a yearly salary increase, suggesting a structured and systematic approach in accordance with the time-based salary policy for teaching profession. Meanwhile, a small proportion stated alternative experiences. These results suggest that annual increases are the norm, although a minor segment of the teaching workforce might be experiencing otherwise due to various factors.

Figure 17

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



Regarding promotions, 57.18% of teacher respondents reported experiencing promotions. Figure 18 shows the frequency of promotions, whereby the majority of the respondents (90.61%) stated 'Other' due to time-based promotion by grade and a specific promotion for a higher position in school. Only 1.63% of the teachers reported being promoted every two years, and 2.04% indicated promotions every three years and 5.71% noted promotions every five years, implying that teacher promotion involved a longer advancement process.

Figure 18

Percentage of Teacher Respondents According to Their Frequency of Promotion

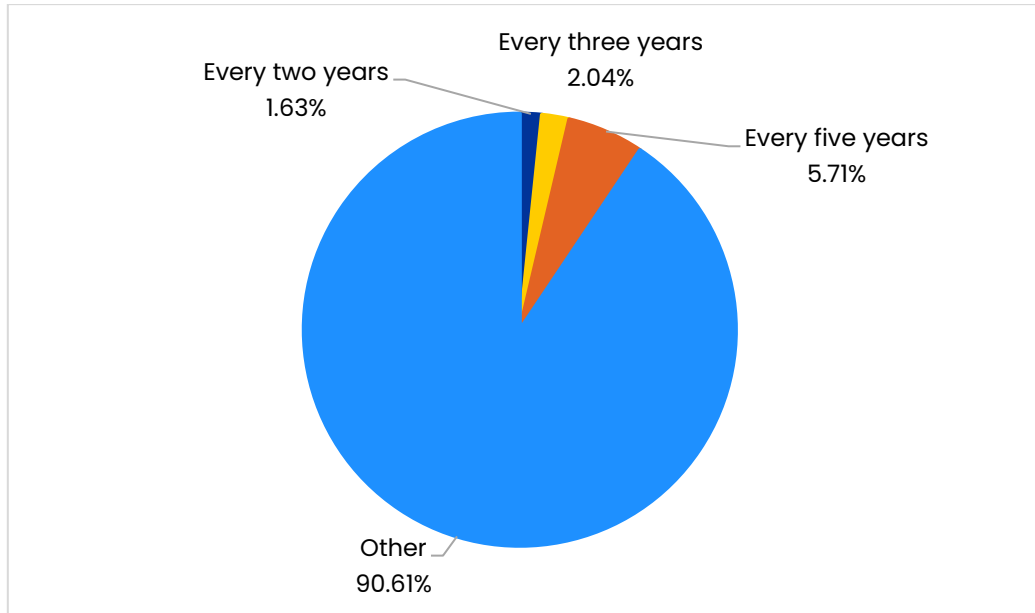


Figure 19 illustrates the percentage of teachers who spend their own money or professional development activities, indicating a strong individual initiative for teacher improvement. The highest percentage, 70.82%, reported spending personal money on self-learning activities, while 50.59% used their own funds for participation in professional learning communities and/or networks and 49.41% for school-based or peer-to-peer learning. Meanwhile, short-term courses and programs (42.12%) and workshop seminars (41.65%) also interest teachers to self-finance. Lastly, graduate studies were personally funded by 16.71% of the teachers, a comparatively lower figure, possibly due to the higher cost and the likelihood of institutional scholarships or external sponsorships. Overall, these findings reflect both teachers' proactive stance toward lifelong learning and their commitment to continuously enhancing their professional practice.

Figure 19

Percentage of Teacher Respondents Who Used Personal Funds for Professional Development

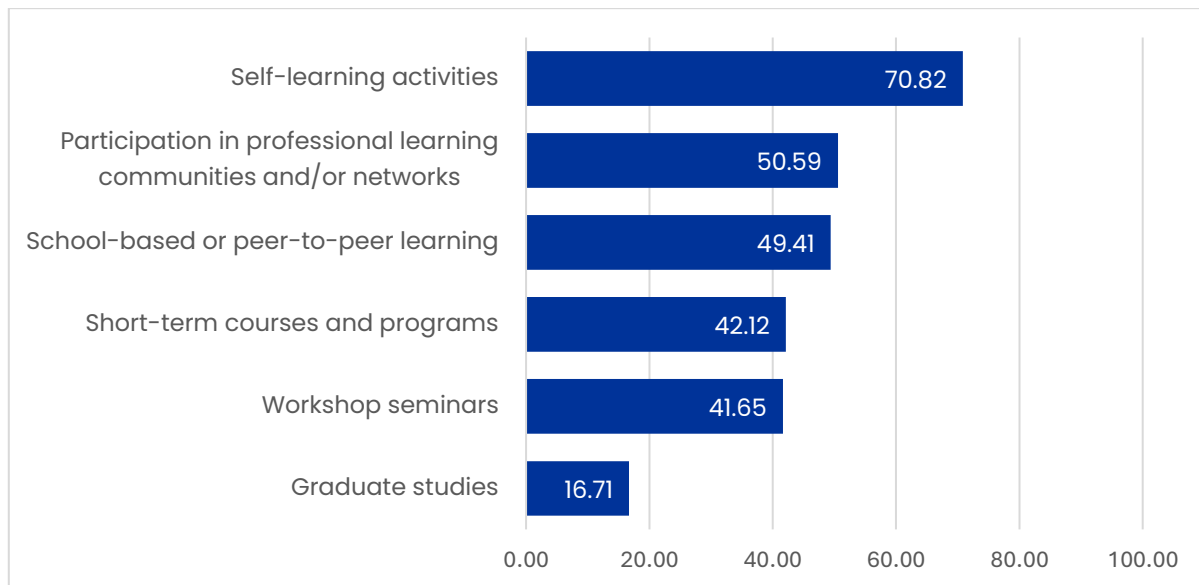


Figure 20 shows that majority of respondents reported positive satisfaction levels across all six areas under perception of government laws and policies, though variations in strength of sentiment are evident. In terms of benefits and incentives, 57.41% of teacher respondents expressed satisfaction (9.18% strongly satisfied, 48.24% satisfied) and 28.71% indicated somewhat satisfied. Dissatisfaction was more pronounced in this category compared to others, totaling 13.88% across the three dissatisfaction levels. This suggests that policies related to teacher incentives may not fully meet expectations among teaching respondents.

When it comes to salary, satisfaction levels remain high, with 63.29% (10.35% strongly, 52.94% satisfied), and 27.76% only somewhat satisfied. Meanwhile, 8.94% expressed some level of dissatisfaction. Perceptions regarding working conditions show varying levels of satisfaction, with 89.65% of respondents indicating they were satisfied (12% strongly satisfied, 55.29% satisfied, 22.35% somewhat satisfied). However, 10.35% expressed dissatisfaction (6.35% somewhat dissatisfied, 2.82%

dissatisfied, 1.18% strongly dissatisfied), indicating room for improvement in this area. A similar trend is seen with career progression, where 13.65% were strongly satisfied, 57.88% satisfied, and 21.65% somewhat satisfied, while only 6.82% were dissatisfied. This suggests that pathways for career growth are generally viewed positively.

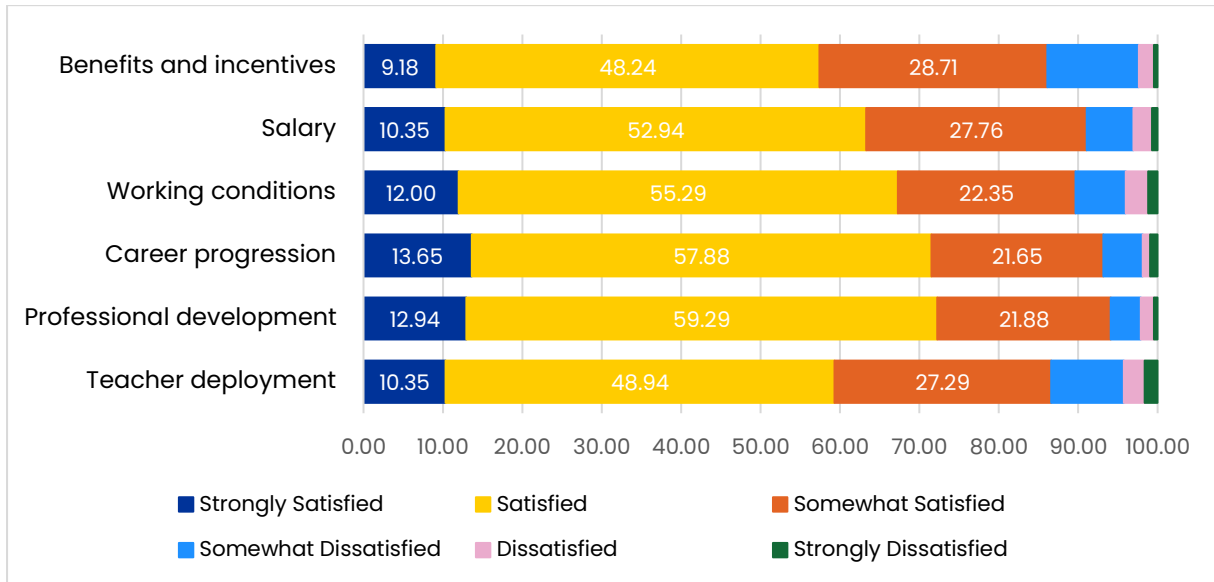
For professional development, perceptions were notably more favorable, whereby 12.94% teachers were strongly satisfied, 59.29% satisfied and 21.88% somewhat satisfied. Only a small proportion (5.88%) expressed dissatisfaction. This indicates that current professional development policies are largely appreciated by the teaching workforce.

Lastly, in terms of teacher deployment, most respondents expressed satisfaction, with 48.94% satisfied and 10.35% strongly satisfied, while 27.29% were somewhat satisfied. However, 13.41% were on the dissatisfied end of the scale, comprising 9.18% somewhat dissatisfied, 2.59% dissatisfied, and 1.65% strongly dissatisfied, suggesting that deployment policies may present challenges for some.

Overall, the mean score for the factor 'government laws and policies' is 4.63 (rated 'agree').

Figure 20

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



Summary. Descriptive statistics indicate that teacher respondents in Malaysia were highly motivated, with a little less than half of them (48.71%) reporting very high levels of motivation. They also view all motivational factors positively, especially the three core motivating factors, namely ‘sense of purpose and fulfillment’, ‘teaching as interest and passion’ and ‘sense of growth and development’. The findings reveal that the core and contributing motivational factors identified in Umali et al.’s (2024) framework are indeed relevant for the context of Malaysia.

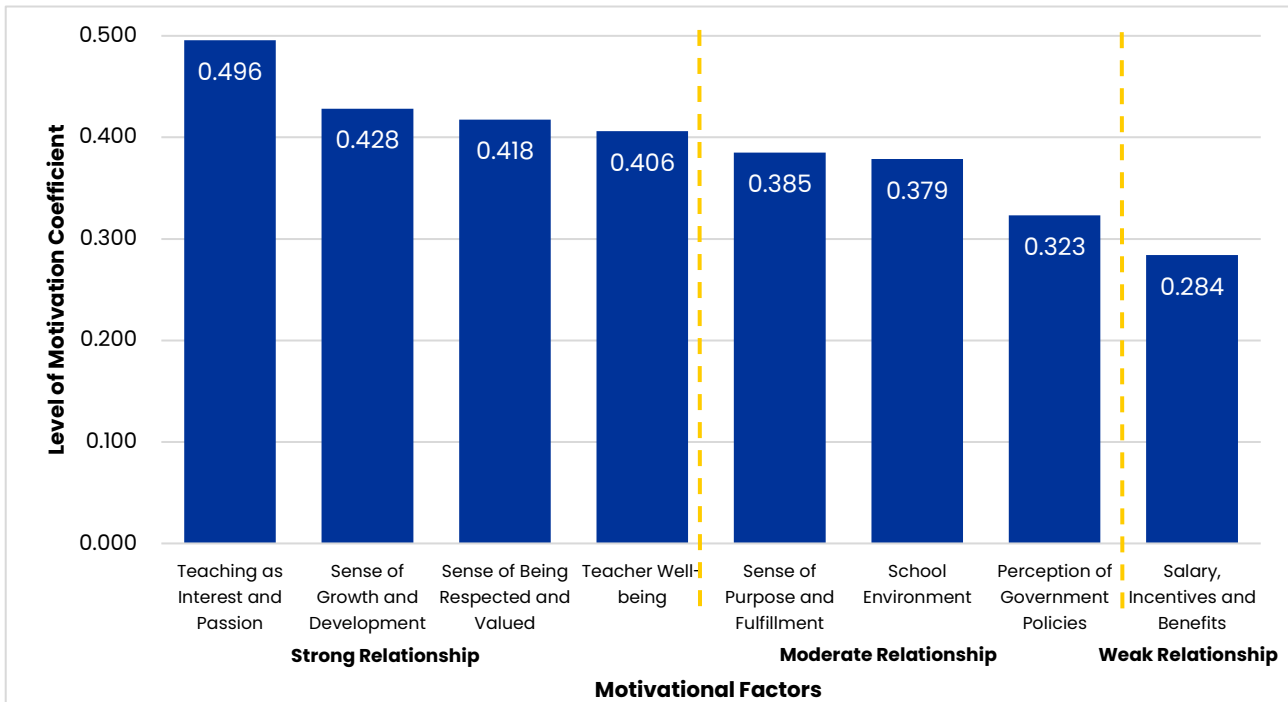
Relationship between Factors of Motivation and the Level of Motivation of Teachers

Spearman's rho correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive associations between all eight motivational factors and the overall level of motivation of teacher respondents in Malaysia (see Figure 21 and Table 3 in the Appendix) with varying degrees of correlation strength. Among the motivational factors, Teaching as Interest and Passion emerged as the most strongly associated with motivation ($\rho = 0.496$). This suggests that teachers who view teaching as a passion and a meaningful vocation tend to report higher levels of motivation to remain in the profession. Similarly, Sense of Growth and Development ($\rho = 0.428$), Sense of Being Respected and Valued ($\rho = 0.418$), and Teacher Well-being ($\rho = 0.406$) also demonstrated strong and positive correlations with motivation. These findings highlight the importance of professional development opportunities, recognition from stakeholders, such as learners, parents, wider community, among others, and a healthy work-life balance in sustaining high levels of teacher motivation.

On the other hand, Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment ($\rho = 0.385$), School Environment ($\rho = 0.379$), and Perception of Government Policies ($\rho = 0.323$) showed moderate yet significant associations with motivation. These results underscore that, while these factors are positively related to motivation, their influence is somewhat less pronounced compared to the top-ranked factors. Lastly, Salary, Incentives, and Benefits, though statistically significant ($\rho = 0.284$), exhibited only a weak relationship with motivation. This indicates that while financial compensation plays a role, it is not the primary driver of teacher motivation in the Malaysian context.

Figure 21

Relationship Between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teacher Respondents



Relationships between Other Indicators and Level of Motivation of Teachers

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

Table 2*Indicators Covered in Inferential Statistical Analysis*

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

* indicators with significant results

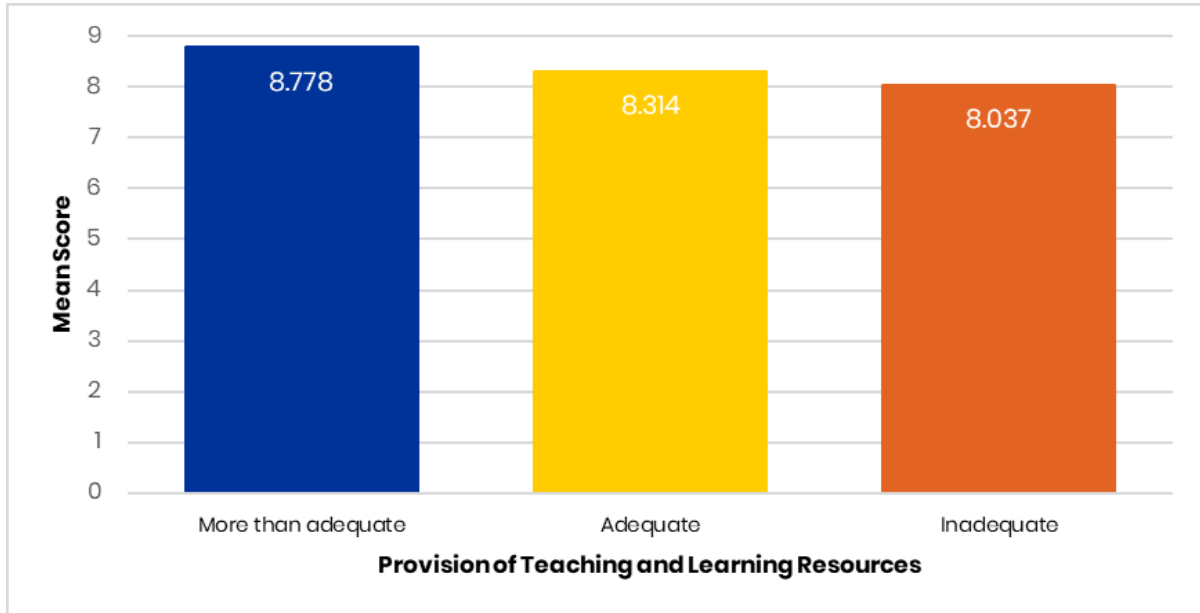
Indicators Related to Salary. One indicator, the frequency of salary increases, was examined to determine the relationships between the salary-related indicator and teachers' level of motivation; however, it did not yield significant results.

Indicators Related to Working Conditions. Six indicators were examined to determine the relationships between work conditions indicators and teachers' level of motivation; however, only two out of seven indicators yielded significant findings namely, adequacy of teaching and learning resources, and adequacy of facilities in school.

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources. Results of ANOVA revealed a statistically significant difference in the level of teacher motivation based on their perception of the adequacy of teaching and learning resources ($p = 0.021$, $\eta^2p = 0.02$) (also see Table 4 in the Appendix). Although the effect size is small, the result suggests that the adequacy of resources has a meaningful influence on teacher motivation. Teachers who rated the provision of resources as "more than adequate" reported the highest level of motivation ($N = 45$, $M = 8.778$), followed by those who perceived them as "adequate" ($N = 298$, $M = 8.314$), while teachers who found the resources to be "inadequate" had the lowest motivation scores ($N = 82$, $M = 8.037$).

Figure 22

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

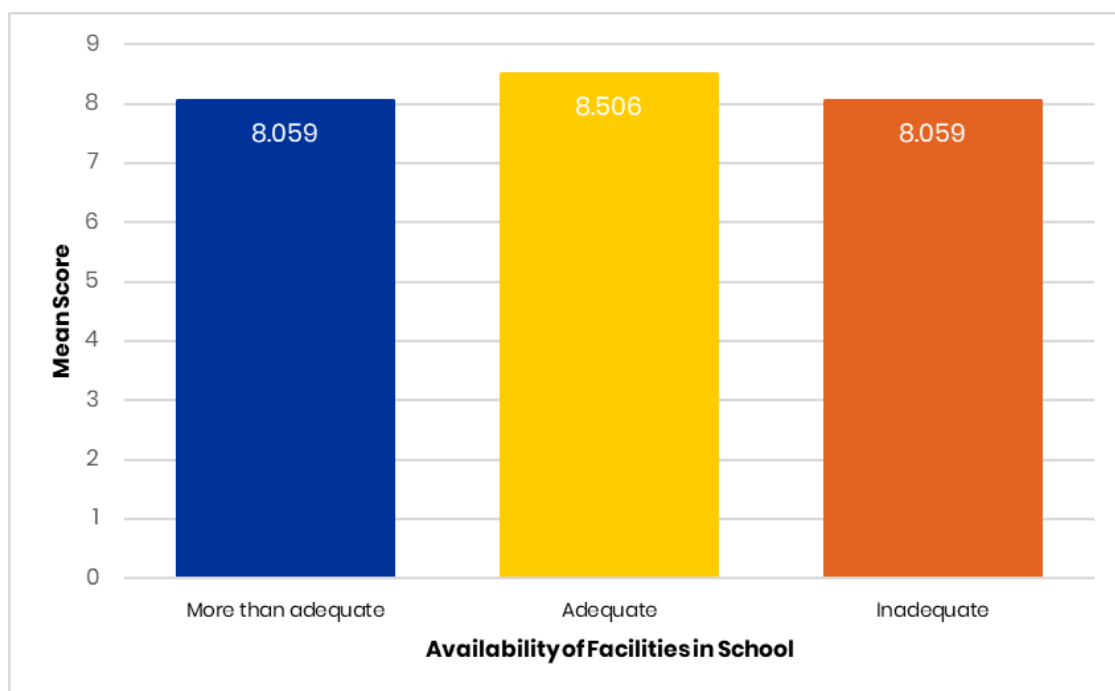


Tukey’s post-hoc analysis revealed a significant difference in motivation levels between teachers who rated resources as “more than adequate” and those who found them “inadequate” ($p = 0.015$), suggesting that access to superior resources positively impacts teacher motivation. However, the differences between the “more than adequate” and “adequate” groups ($p = 0.108$) and the “adequate” and “inadequate” groups ($p = 0.266$) were not statistically significant. This implies that substantial improvements in resources, beyond mere adequacy, may be necessary to yield a significant boost in motivation. Overall, the findings support the conclusion that enhanced availability and quality of teaching and learning resources are associated with higher teacher motivation, particularly when resources exceed basic adequacy. This underscores the importance of investing in comprehensive educational materials and facilities to sustain a motivated teaching workforce.

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Availability of Facilities in School. In alignment with Hülya and Kanatlar's (2018) findings indicating that having a well-resourced school environment contributes positively to teacher motivation, the ANOVA test yielded a statistically significant difference in motivation levels across the three groups ($p = 0.006$, $\eta^2p = 0.02$) (also see Table 5 in the Appendix), indicating a small to moderate effect size. This suggests that differences in facility availability are meaningfully associated with differences in motivation. Teachers who rated facilities as "adequate" reported the highest motivation ($N = 238$, $M = 8.506$), while those who rated facilities as either "more than adequate" ($N = 17$, $M = 8.059$) or "inadequate" ($N = 170$, $M = 8.059$) had lower and equal mean scores. Interestingly, the highest motivation level was not found in the "more than adequate" group, which may be influenced by the relatively small sample size ($N = 17$).

Figure 23

Differences in Teachers' Motivation Based on Availability of Facilities in School



Tukey's post-hoc analysis revealed a significant difference between teachers who perceived facilities as "adequate" and those who rated them as "inadequate" ($p = 0.005$), indicating that simply having facilities rated as adequate contributes positively to teacher motivation. However, no significant difference was found between the "more than adequate" and "adequate" groups ($p = 0.425$) or between the "more than adequate" and "inadequate" groups ($p = 1.000$), again possibly due to the small and variable "more than adequate" group. Overall, the findings highlight that having facilities that meet teachers' needs, though not necessarily exceeding them, is linked to higher levels of motivation. The data imply that ensuring adequacy and reliability of resources may be more critical than striving for surplus, especially when the perceived benefits of "more than adequate" facilities are inconsistent or unclear to teachers.

Summary. The correlational analyses revealed that all core and contributing factors of motivation were positively associated with teacher motivation levels to stay with varying degrees of strength. These findings imply that as respondents' views of the motivational factors improve, there is a higher likelihood for them to consider remaining in the teaching profession. In a similar manner, if their perceptions of the motivational factors suffer, their resolve to keep on teaching also weakens.

The relationships between other indicators and teacher motivation levels were also examined. Only the provision of teaching and learning resources and school facilities yielded significant differences in means. The analyses unveiled that teachers who reported having more than adequate instructional resources were more motivated than those with adequate and inadequate resources. In a similar manner, respondents who reported having adequate school facilities are more motivated than those who responded with more than adequate and inadequate.

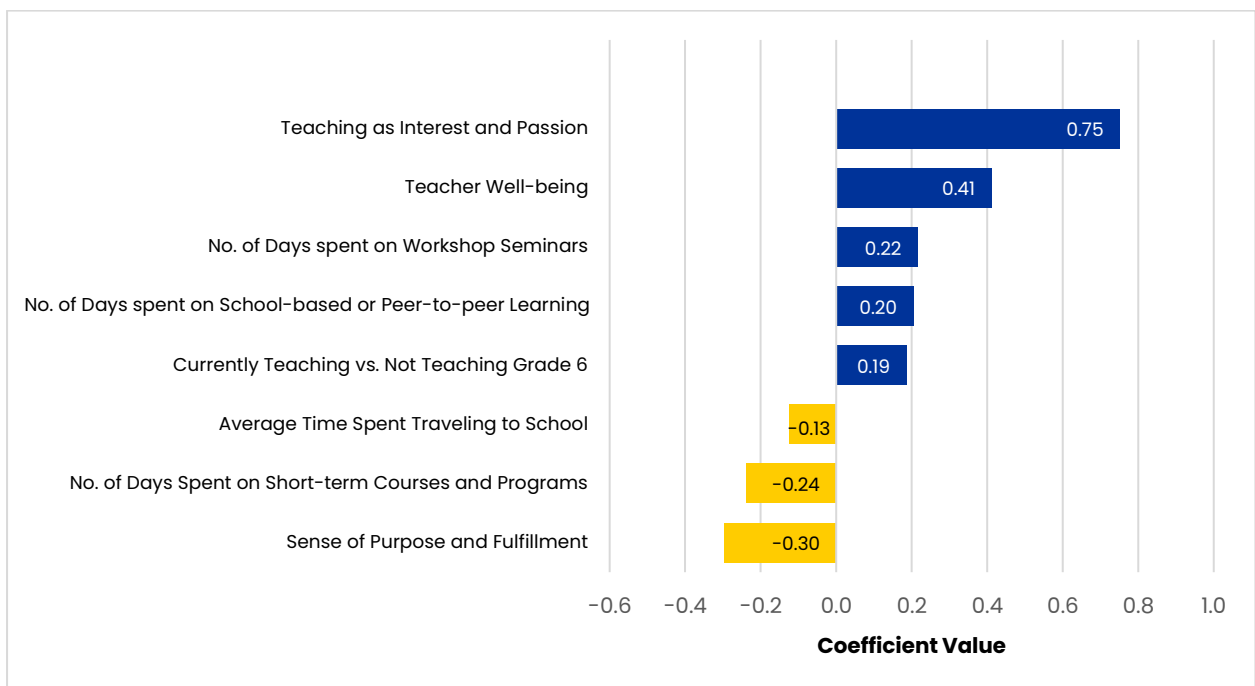
The results underscore the importance of providing an environment that enables teachers to perform their work effectively.

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

A multiple hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to identify the combination of motivational factors and demographic profiles that significantly predict teachers’ motivation to remain in the profession. The overall model was statistically significant, explaining 37.36% of the variance in teacher motivation ($R^2 = 0.3736$), indicating a moderately strong predictive capability (also see Table 6 in the Appendix).

Figure 24

Combination of Motivational Factors and Demographic Profiles that Predicts Teachers’ Motivation to Stay in the Profession



Among the motivational variables, Teaching as Interest and Passion emerged as the strongest positive predictor of motivation ($B = 1.34, p < .001, \beta = 0.75$), suggesting that teachers who are passionate about teaching and aligned with its purpose are significantly more motivated to stay. Teacher Well-being also demonstrated a robust positive link with motivation ($B = 0.56, p < .001, \beta = 0.41$), highlighting the importance of manageable workloads, supportive environments, and flexible schedules in retention. In contrast, Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment, while often considered a core intrinsic motivator, had a significant negative contribution to motivation ($B = -0.58, p = 0.0327, \beta = -0.30$), possibly indicating a complex relationship where high idealism, if unmet, may lead to disillusionment or reduced motivation.

Several logistical and professional development indicators also emerged as significant predictors. Days spent on workshop seminars ($B = 0.02, p = 0.0065, \beta = 0.22$) and school-based or peer-to-peer learning ($B = 0.01, p = 0.0087, \beta = 0.20$) were associated with increased motivation, reflecting the importance of active and collaborative professional development. Conversely, more participation in short-term courses and programs showed a negative relationship ($B = -0.01, p = 0.0059, \beta = -0.24$), which may indicate that not all training formats equally contribute to motivation, particularly if they are perceived as burdensome or disconnected from practical needs.

Travel time to school was also a negative predictor ($B = -0.002, p = 0.0417, \beta = -0.125$), reinforcing previous findings that longer commutes can diminish teacher motivation, likely due to increased stress or reduced work-life balance. Furthermore, teaching in Grade 6 was linked to slightly lower motivation levels ($B = 0.06, p = 0.0361, \beta = 0.19$) than those who are not.

Summary. The regression analysis highlights that teacher motivation is shaped by a complex interplay of intrinsic passion, well-being, professional development experiences, and logistical circumstances. Understanding and enhancing these factors can support more targeted and sustainable efforts to retain committed educators in Malaysia's schools. Other demographic characteristics were also determined as predictors, such as grade level taught, engagement in particular professional development activities and travel time to the school.

III. Conclusion

The study aimed to examine factors that affect teachers' motivation to stay in their profession. The research also sought to determine the relationships between motivational factors and motivation levels, develop a predictive model for Malaysia, and provide policy recommendations.

The study revealed that 87.76% of Malaysian teachers report high or very high motivation to remain in the profession, with a sense of passion, growth opportunities, respect and recognition, and well-being being the factors which had the strongest positive correlations with teacher motivation ($\rho > 0.40$, $p < .001$). While financial incentives and government policies also contributed, their correlation strengths were comparatively modest. Regression analysis further confirmed that Teaching as Interest & Passion ($\beta = 0.75$) and Teacher Well-being ($\beta = 0.41$) were the biggest positive contributors to motivation. Additionally, professional development engagement, and travel time were significant predictors as well. ANOVA findings highlight that schools rated as having adequate learning resources and facilities have teachers with higher motivation. Although the results of the study were only limited to its sample due to the use of convenience sampling, it provided some insights into the interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of motivation that could be utilized in determining individual and systemic measures to enhance teacher motivation to stay.

As a result of the findings of this study, the Malaysian Ministry of Education may consider the following policy recommendations:

• SALARY

Introduce a performance-linked component within the salary scale. Though 78.12% of teachers believe their compensation reflects their efforts, only 67.29% feel their salary sufficiently supports their families. Salary increases are mainly automatic and annual (93.18%), yet 12% feel inadequately rewarded. The Ministry of Education may continue to promote teachers to apply the Guru Cemerlang scheme as it motivates them to strive for excellence. The scheme also benefits them greatly, as it provides financial rewards and career advancement opportunities.

• PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Prioritize school-based and peer-led professional learning, allocating time and funding for collaborative in-school development. Engagement in professional development is high: 98.35% participate in self-learning, and more than 90% in workshops, peer-led programs, and learning communities. Moreover, days spent in workshops and peer-based learning positively predict motivation, underscoring their value. These results highlight options to shift professional development budget and scheduling to support in-school learning communities, co-teaching models, and reflective practice teams. Maintaining strategic, relevant workshops but scaling down one-off short-term courses, which the predictive model found may not significantly improve motivation, may also be considered.

- **CAREER PROGRESSION**

Establish clearer, competency-based promotion pathways. Aligning structured promotion tracks with temporal milestones, recognizing professional mastery and leadership roles, may offer more robust promotion pathways for teachers. Nearly all teachers receive annual salary increases, but promotions are rare, as 91% selected “Other” for promotion timeframe. Further, the Ministry may also consider developing career opportunities for teachers beyond administrative positions, such as becoming pedagogical experts, educational technology specialists, or educational researchers. Benchmarking best practices from other countries may also be done to identify effective models of career progression that allow teachers to remain in professional roles while advancing their careers.

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Appendix

Statistical Results of the Study

Table 3

Relationship between Factors of Motivation and Level of Motivation of Teachers

Factors of Motivation	Level of Motivation		Interpretation
	ρ	p	
Teaching as Interest and Passion	0.496	< .001	Strong Relationship
Sense of Growth and Development	0.428	< .001	
Sense of Being Respected and Valued	0.418	< .001	
Teacher Well-being	0.406	< .001	
Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment	0.385	< .001	Moderate Relationship
School Environment	0.379	< .001	
Perception of Government Policies	0.323	< .001	
Salary, Incentives and Benefits	0.284	< .001	Weak Relationship

$p < .001$

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 4

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources

	Provision of Teaching and Learning Resources	N	M	df	F	P	η^2p	Effect size interpretation
Level of Motivation	More than adequate	45	8.778	2	3.898	0.021	0.02	Small
	Adequate	298	8.314					
	Inadequate	82	8.037					

$p < .05$

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

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

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

Table 5

Differences in Teachers' Motivation based on Availability of Facilities in School

	Availability of Facilities in School	N	M	df	F	P	η^2p	Effect size interpretation
	Level of Motivation	More than adequate	17	8.059	2	5.153	0.006	0.02
Adequate		238	8.506					
Inadequate		170	8.059					

$p < .05$

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

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

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

Table 6

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

Predictor	p	Stand. Estimate
Sense of Purpose and Fulfillment	0.0327	-0.30
Days spent on Short-term courses and programs	0.0059	-0.24
Average time spent traveling to school	0.0417	-0.13
Currently teaching Grade 6: Yes vs. No	0.0361	0.19
Days spent on School-based or peer-to-peer learning	0.0087	0.20
Days spent on Workshop seminars	0.0065	0.22
Teacher Well-being	0.0000	0.41
Teaching as Interest and Passion	0.0000	0.75

$p < .05$

$R^2 = 0.3736$



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