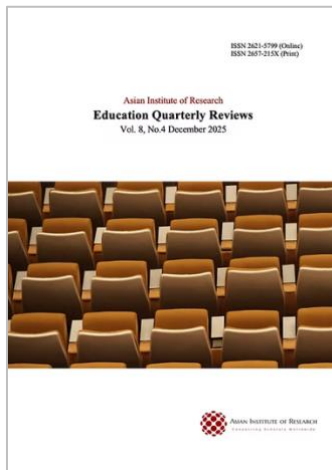




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Factors Influencing Teaching Career Choice Among Student Teachers in Cambodian Teacher Education Colleges

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Abstract

An education system should strive to attract well-qualified teachers and teacher candidates who have a high degree of professional commitment to meet society requirements such as teacher shortages, increasing numbers of schools and students (MoEYS, 2023), teacher policy adjustments (TPAP: 2024--2030, 2023) and Cambodia's socioeconomic status (ESP: 2024--2028, 2024) toward country development. This study aims to investigate the factors influencing teaching career choice among fourth-year primary and lower secondary school student teachers at Teacher Education Colleges (TECs). The study uses a quantitative paradigm with the survey method in the form of a structured questionnaire, which was adapted from Sardana et al. (2021) and Martinez-Moreno & Petko (2023), to collect the data. A simple random sampling method was used to select a sample of 223 participants, including both primary and lower secondary student teachers, whose ages ranged from 22--25 years (71.3%), 26--29 years (24.2%) and 4.5% of the other ages. This study uses descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the validity, reliability, mean, standard deviation, and significance of the collected data through a one-sample t test. The study revealed four main factors that influence the decision to choose teaching as a career, such as the influence of others, including family, friends, teachers and mass media; extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motivational influences; and teaching as a fallback career and sociocultural factor. Altruistic motivation had the most significant influence on teaching career choice, with the highest mean score ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.59$), whereas teacher influence had the second greatest influence ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.65$), followed by intrinsic motivation ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.62$), while teaching as a fallback career had the least influence on all four factors, with the lowest mean score ($M=2.37$, $SD=1.12$). This study will help relevant people and institutions, such as the Cambodian ministry of education, parents, administrations, teachers, students and other researchers to be aware of the factors influencing career choice so that they can refine recruitment policies, increase their actions and efforts, and enter preparation programs for teaching careers in the Cambodian context today and in the future.

Keywords: Student Teachers, Teaching Career, Teacher Education College (TEC)

1. Introduction

Teaching is a noble profession and has helped shape many societies and nations. As explained by Richardson and Watt (2006), governments worldwide recognize that quality teachers and teaching are central to the development and maintenance of intelligent people. They also mentioned that working as a teacher may not be a profitable profession, but it has been regarded as the noblest mission, vocation and profession that contributes mainly to the nonmaterial satisfaction of individuals who are engaged in it. The ideology for someone to choose teaching as a career is based on working lighthouse image, their previous knowledge, self-perceptions in different areas related to the profession, and the aspirations of the profession.

The education system in Cambodia has undergone a remarkable transformation owing to considerable efforts by the Cambodian government and relevant stakeholders. In general, education has improved across the subsector. For example, there have been many efforts to improve the quality of teachers and school principals as well as their educational infrastructure. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), has introduced several projects, such as the Secondary Education Improvement Project and the General Education Improvement Project, to improve the general education subsector (Heng & Sol, 2022; Tao & Kao, 2023). In 2014, a major reform to the Grade 12 national examination was introduced to combat corruption and cheating during exams (Bredenberg, 2022). In 2016, another reform to general education was undertaken: the introduction of a school improvement initiative known as the new generation school (NGS). This important initiative aims to create a new model of Cambodian public schools to improve the quality of general education (Bredenberg, 2022).

1.1 Problem Statement

In the modern world, many people want to work in professional fields such as engineers, pilots or doctors to earn a large amount of money or to obtain a better career for their future. Teaching seems to be a less attractive profession because of low salaries and poor employment conditions (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Although education still competes with other types of careers, teaching careers are altruistically motivated in Cambodia (MoEYS, 2023).

Furthermore, according to MoEYS (2023), over the past decade (2013--2022), there has been significant progress in the development of educational infrastructure, student enrollment, and education access. For example, the number of kindergarten and general education schools increased from 14,852 in the 2013--2014 academic year to 18,830 in the 2022--2023 academic year. Additionally, the number of HEIs increased from 110 from 2013--2014 to 132 from 2021--2022. Moreover, the number of education staff also increased from 112,704 in 2013 to 125,597 in 2022. Therefore, this study examines the factors influencing the career decisions of teachers in Cambodia. The researchers are intrinsically motivated to start this study since they are seeking those factors that explain why people in Cambodia choose teaching as their career.

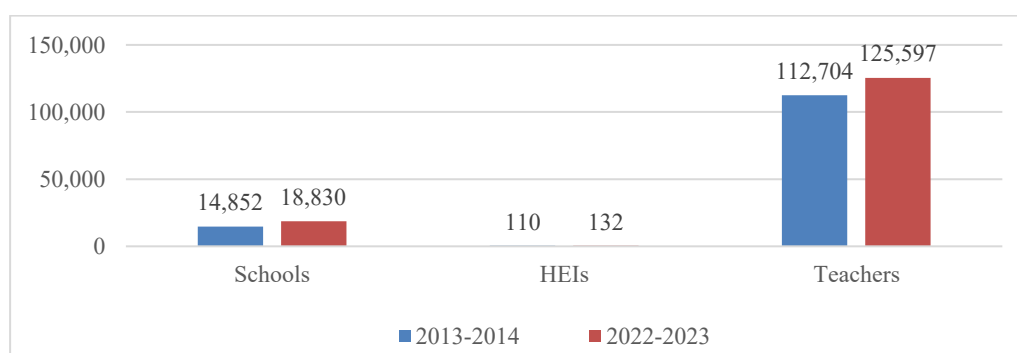


Figure 1: Increases in the number of schools, HEIs and teachers

1.2 Purposes of the Study

This study investigates the factors that influence the career decisions of primary and lower secondary school teachers and student teachers from teacher education colleges. This study was also conducted to analyze the significant differences between each factor that influences the respondents' decision to choose teaching as a career as well as to understand the student teachers' perceptions of teaching career decisions from both teacher education institutions. Moreover, this research aims to provide useful insights into the factors that influence teaching career choice and to provide useful and relevant information, which is required by the following sectors: administrations, parents, teachers, students and other researchers.

1.3 Research Objectives

There are three research objectives. The main objective is to identify key factors influencing student teachers' choice of teaching as a career. The second objective is to explore which factor is the most influential in choosing teaching as a career. The final objective is to provide recommendations for policy and teacher education reforms.

1.4 Influence of Others on Teaching Career Decisions

Previous studies have shown that several sectors are related to the influence of others on career choices. For example, one study conducted in Ghana revealed that teachers do not significantly influence the career aspirations of students, while parents' influence is a major determinant of the career aspirations of students, and peers influence the career aspirations of male and female students differently. The influence of peers on the career aspirations of students does not vary on the basis of age or program of study (Owusu et al., 2022). However, in a study of 1249 secondary school students in Hong Kong (Lai et al., 2005), the influence of others included several sectors, such as the family, friends, teachers, and mass media. In one of several studies that reported on the career goals of secondary school students, Lai et al. (2005) reported that the influence of others had both a negative influence and a positive influence on the choice of teaching as a career.

1.4.1. Family influence on teaching career choice

Research on family influence has increased rapidly during the last few years, but the understanding of family influences on career choices remains limited. Many studies on family influence on career choice focus on individual parents' careers; for example, mothers or fathers influence children to generally take up a certain career as they do. This research revealed that family members, which include parents, siblings and extended family members, influence career decisions. The first interactions of a child with other people occur with his home's family members, including his parents, siblings and other relatives (Bollu-steve & Sanni, 2013). A child is influenced by a number of family-related factors, such as the marital relationship of the parents, the socioeconomic status of the family, the home atmosphere, whether parents are warm or hostile, the environmental condition, the occupational status of the parents and the number of siblings in the family (Bollu-steve & Sanni, 2013:92). Family dynamics, therefore, play a pivotal role in the career readiness of students. Several studies provide evidence that parental involvement influences high school students' career choices, for instance, in Romania (Marinas, Igrat, Marinas & Prioteasa, 2016) in the Philippines (Aguado, Laguado & Deligero, 2015). These studies showed that parents influence the choice of career among high school students. A study conducted in Kenya revealed that when adolescents required information on topics such as career planning, they consulted their parents (Edwards & Quinter, 2012). Supportive parents are important for their children's career decision-making and for the success of their careers (Clutter, 2010). If an individual always observes his or her mother and admires her teaching skills, that may influence the pursuit of a career in education. Wright, Perrone-McGovern, Boo, & White (2014) reported that support from the most influential people is likely to have more direct influence on career decision-making self-efficacy than other contextual factors.

Kniveton (2004) reported that parents have much more influence on students' career decisions than teachers do. The study indicated that young children begin to identify with their parent's occupation as soon as they can pronounce their job title. Peterson, Stivers, & Peters, as cited in Clutter (2010), indicated that although adolescents

begin to demonstrate their independence actively from their parents in their high school years, they are still very much dependent on their parents for their career development. In fact, parents tend to create the strongest impression of their children's career choices rather than any other group, such as counsellors, teachers or even friends (Bardick, Berns, Magnusson, & Witko, 2004). Additionally, Jungen (2008) noted that choosing a career is often a major change in a person's life, and this decision alone has the potential to open the door for having success or closing the door of opportunity. While often perceived to be an individual choice, the study suggested that a variety of influences, such as family, school, community, social and economic factors, are likely to manipulate one's final career decision. Among these factors, students report that parents have the greatest influence on which career they choose.

1.4.2. Friend influence on teaching career choice

According to Abdulla (2024), a senior career development specialist at the Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC) mentioned that friends and peers significantly influence individuals' lives, including their future career choices. Having friends who share the same interests and ambitions can influence a person's career choices, guiding them toward a specific professional way, as people generally feel comfortable and confident when they are surrounded by friends with similar interests. Peer influence also extends to expanding knowledge and learning opportunities. When individuals have friends with similar interests, they can always communicate and discuss things related to their shared interests. Abdulla's study was conducted in 2015 with 220 high school students in Qatar about the most influential factors in career decisions. The study revealed that friends were the factor with the most influence on others, as 180 students chose the same career path as their peers did. While some students were influenced by their peers and parents, others were influenced by different factors. However, friends were the most significant factor in these students' career decisions.

There are various ways in which peers can influence individuals' career choices. One of the major ways in which friends influence people is their ability to provide them with a sense of comfort and acceptance. People mostly find it easier to accompany their old friends and make new friends with them in the future. This, along with developing a sense of belonging to the group by following the group's preferences, is one of the main reasons why people choose to pursue careers that their peers are following as well (Rosenqvist, 2017). Others, who are confused about their future and do not have much exposure to what all they could pursue, tend to follow the general trend they see among their peers (Rosenqvist, 2017). In addition, friends are often compared to, academically, the individuals making the decision.

According to Salvy, Haye, Bowker, & Hermans (2012), friends are great sources of motivation for each other. Lifelong friendships are made at schools, and friends are known to stand up for one another, sometimes even more than siblings. They help each other with school work and become mentors to each other in their personal lives (Salvy et al., 2012). Additionally, Ogutu, Odera & Maragia (2017) examined the influence of friends on students' career decision making. They reported that friend influence had a positive relationship with career choice. Naz, Saeed, Khan, Khan, & Sheikh (2014) explored the nature, level and extent of peer and friend influence in the career decision process of an individual. The study revealed that even though families primarily prepare and transform children's behavior in many ways, friend influence is a resource for developing career opportunities and decision making among youth.

1.4.3. Teacher influence on teaching career choice

According to Tira Nur Fitria (2023), teachers have the ability to inspire and motivate students. They can spark a love of learning, encourage students to try new things and push them to reach their full potential. Teachers, through their enthusiasm and dedication, can instill a love for a subject or a specific field, which can have a significant effect on a student's career choices.

Teachers are creatures who are given the mandate to educate humans to become human beings who have good character, have character, and are knowledgeable (Normawati et al., 2019). Teachers are professional educators with the main tasks of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students (Pianda,

2018). The teacher's role is very important in the teaching and learning process, as well as in advancing the world of education (Wijaya, 2018). Teachers who carry out their duties professionally will be able to provide great and dignified educational output (Octavia, 2019). Becoming a teacher usually begins with interest. Interest in the teaching profession is a person's willingness or desire to pursue the teaching profession, where the teaching profession has a professional role and competence and requires special skills as a teacher. Elements of interest in becoming a teacher can start from studying at the faculty of teacher training and education, seeking knowledge and information about the teaching profession, feelings of pleasure and interest in the teaching profession, and the willingness and desire to become a teacher.

Khan, Murtaza & Shafa (2012) investigated the role of teachers in career counseling in high schools in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. The findings showed that teachers voluntarily act as students' informal counsellors who guide them in their subject choices and career paths. Moreover, they indicated that students view their teachers as role models and attach high value to their advice and guidance related to career choice. Shumba and Naong (2012) determined the factors influencing career choice and aspirations among students in South Africa. They reported that the family is the ability of the student to identify his or her preferred career choice and that teachers are the main factors that influence the students' career choices and aspirations.

1.4.4. Influence of mass media on teaching career choice

Media and communication technology have affected modern life by influencing one's perception of the world and interfering with personal interactions with individuals and society (Hoag & Grant, 2017). Research has shown that mass media influences the career selection process by shaping personal decisions since it contributes to character development, language and habit formation (Noshina, Mian, Irfan & Rao, 2014; Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Studies conducted in countries such as the United States of America, Australia and Nigeria have indicated that media such as TV, radio, internet, newspapers and social media sites have contributed to students' choices of careers in librarianship and journalism (Dana, 2017; Busayo, 2017). Further studies by Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) and Adedeji, Ojelabi, Lekan and Adefarati (2017) insist that high school students' career choices are influenced by notable personalities in certain professions, as seen on television, heard on radios and read in printed media.

1.5 Motivational Factors in Teaching Career Decisions

Motivational factors are most frequently found when searching for the decision to choose a teaching career, as they are divided into altruistic, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivations. While there is some overlap between these types of motivations, especially between altruistic and intrinsic motivation, these terms are broadly used in the literature. Altruistic behavior is described as human actions with no apparent benefits for the person who performs them but who benefits other individuals, shows a generous love of others, desires their discovery of happiness and expects nothing in return (Altruism/Psychology Today, n.d.). Some examples related to motivation for choosing teaching include things such as a desire to work with children and adolescents, to make a social contribution, or to make a difference. Intrinsic motivation consists of engaging in a behavior because it is personally rewarding, performing an action for the pleasure it conveys, and it is for internal reward, not for some external reward. Intrinsic motivation defines the work itself as its reward and arises from within the individual because the work is naturally satisfying, they enjoy an activity, or they see it as an opportunity to discover, learn and update their possibilities (Griggs, 2017). Some examples related to motivation for choosing teaching include enjoying the work of teaching, compatibility with other interests and activities, compatibility with family life, and self-education. Extrinsic motivation arises from outside an individual and happens when they are moved to engage in an activity to earn a reward or evade penalty; that is, a person behaves in a specific way, not because of mere enjoyment or satisfaction but rather to obtain a payment or avoid an unpleasant consequence (Griggs, 2017). Some examples of extrinsic motivation include money, fame, grades, and admiration. People who are extrinsically motivated continue to perform an action although they do not see the task rewarding. Another example related to this kind of motivation for teaching is having job security.

Moreover, Nesje et al. (2018) confirmed a Norwegian translation of the Factors Influencing Teaching Career Choice (FIT-Choice) scale and reported that the factors that Norwegian future teachers most strongly agreed with

were intrinsic motivation, shaping the future of children or adolescents, perceived teaching ability, making social contributions, and ensuring job security. Lin et al. (2012) examined similar and differing initial motivations to teach between 257 U.S. and 542 Chinese preservice teachers via the FIT-Choice scale. The highest-rated motivations, which are common to both the U.S. and Chinese samples, were within social utility values (“make social contributions” and “shape the future of children or adolescents”). Similarly, the lowest mean rating for both groups was chosen for teaching as a “fallback” career, followed by socialization influences such as people who had encouraged them to embark upon a teaching career. Goller et al. (2019) used the FIT-Choice scale to discover undergraduate students’ motivations in Finland for choosing teaching as a career in comparison to student teachers in Germany. Compared with Finnish students, German students tended to choose their careers in more cases because they felt that their teaching abilities were high, judged the job as having high personal utility value, including strong job security and time for family, and were convinced by other people who the teaching career choice would be a good idea. Even though most students in both samples noted that they did not choose teaching as a fallback career, the German students scored significantly higher on this factor than did the Finnish students.

1.6 Teaching as a Fallback Career in the Teaching Career Choice

Australian research conducted with 1653 preservice teachers from three universities in Australia revealed that teaching is not typically considered a fallback career, chosen only because other options were not available or did not work out (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007). However, some evidence suggests that teaching is a fallback career for some students who are aspiring to other careers. For example, Australian research involving more than 6000 primary and secondary school students shows that teaching is considered a second option by some students who feel that their first choice of career may be out of reach (Gore et al., forthcoming). Internationally, research has also indicated that teaching may be considered if other options do not work out (Akar, 2012; Dastidar & Sikdar, 2015; Gu & Lai, 2012; Klassen et al., 2011; Lawver & Torres, 2011; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). Recent research has indicated that teaching as a fallback career is not necessarily negative. Menzies et al. (2015) reported that both “accidental entry” and “getting attracted to teaching” (p.7) are important reasons for entering the teaching profession, whereas Wong et al. (2014) reported that teaching as a fallback career could be positive when it was seen as a reasonable career choice and connected with intrinsic and altruistic motivation.

1.7 Sociocultural factors affecting teaching career choice

Research within the last decade that has focused on the sociocultural influences surrounding the choice to enter teaching as a career has been limited. Much of the research pointing to this type of influence is international in nature and provides a point of comparison to influence the choice of teaching in Western countries. For example, a Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) may allow students’ direct entry into university. As such, preservice teachers in Nigeria indicated that they had taken a teaching course to increase their chances of being admitted to the university (Ejeh, 2005). In China and Hong Kong, negative images of teachers, including the reported low status of teachers, discouraged Chinese students from choosing teaching as a career, despite teaching being viewed more favorably in Chinese society more generally (Gao & Trent, 2009; Lai et al., 2005), whereas in Oman, religion and social expectations have a strong role in influencing Omani preservice teachers (Klassen et al., 2011). Furthermore, research with African-American males in the United States has demonstrated how cultural understanding can influence students to not choose a career in teaching. These students identified three key reasons for not choosing teaching: (1) holding negative perceptions of teachers and teaching; (2) viewing schools as oppressive institutions where African-American males are stigmatized, labeled, and devalued; and (3) seeing teaching as “selling out” (p. 409), as it is believed that the curriculum represents black people inaccurately and unfairly (Graham & Erwin, 2011).

In Malaysia, cultural beliefs play a main role “in constructing favorable conditions in teaching and facilitating a positive image of the teaching career” (Azman, 2012), whereas English language (ELT) teachers in Turkey indicate that social influences, religious purposes, significant others and gender roles are key sociocultural influences on the choice of teaching as a career (Sali, 2013). Further research with 974 preservice teachers from Turkey illustrated how participant motivations and perceptions of teaching as a career were shaped by the sociocultural context of Turkish society (Akar, 2012), which included teaching as a suitable job for women and

identifying teaching as a low-status profession. In one of several studies that focused on ethnic background as an influence on teaching career choice, Butt et al. (2010) undertook focus groups and qualitative interviews with 18 British South Asian women. The findings revealed that intrinsic motivations to teach, including job satisfaction, a sense of achievement, love for the subject and enjoyment of working with children, were also influential. Additionally, the influence on teaching career choice for British South Asian women was the flexibility offered by a teaching career and its perceived fit with both present and future family needs and the acceptability of teaching as a career with respect to its status in the community. Furthermore, the authors also noted responses from participants that suggested that their presence in schools as role models for their ethnic group was crucial, even though there was also acknowledgment that this could add more pressure (Butt et al., 2010).

In Australia, social influences were found to be less important than other factors, including intrinsic and altruistic motivation (Watt & Richardson, 2007). However, one qualitative study with Indigenous Australian people noted that “emotional capital” influences the choice of a teaching career (Santoro, 2010). The findings suggest that the mothers of indigenous students have an important influence on the choice of their children to enter a teaching career. Teaching in this context can be understood to represent good chances for “upward class mobility” and opportunities for social change to Indigenous people more generally (Santoro, 2010). Furthermore, Gore et al. (forthcoming) reported that indigenous primary and high school students are 1.6 times more likely to express an interest in teaching as a career than nonindigenous students are over and above the influence of other demographic factors.

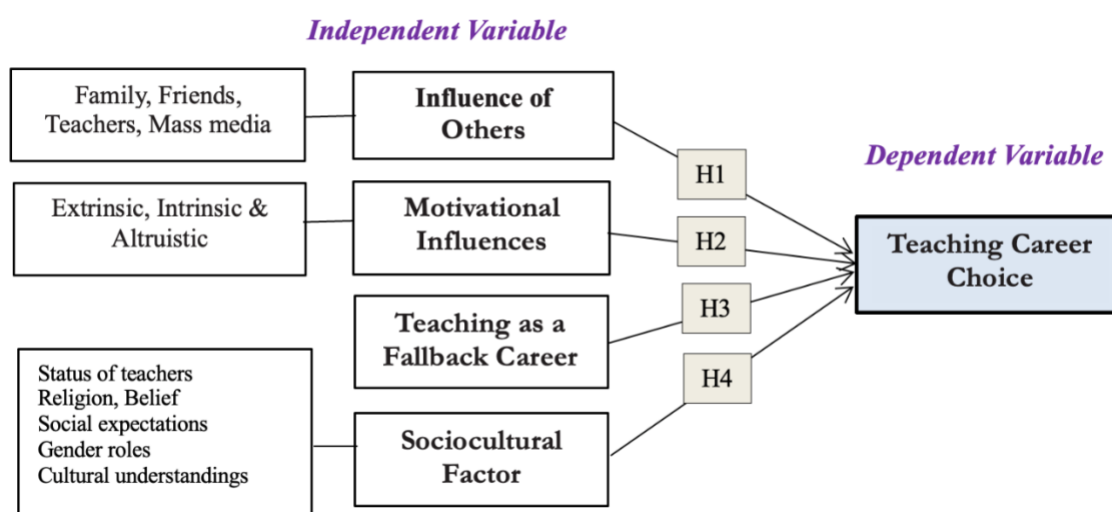


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework Model

2. Method

2.1. Research Design and Instrument

The study uses primary data collected in the form of participant responses through a structured questionnaire in line with the FIT-Choice scale, which was adapted from Sardana et al. (2021) and Martinez-Moreno & Petko (2023). This was followed by the employment of a quantitative cross-sectional research design. To avoid any misconception of the questions or factors, the questionnaire was designed in both languages—Khmer and English—and was distributed to student teachers from both TECs.

2.2. Sample size

The study was conducted with a sample of 223 preservice teachers in Cambodia, that is, year-4 student teachers who are educated to become teachers in the near future. A simple random sampling method was used to select the sample, and of the 223 questionnaires distributed in Google form, all were returned, representing a response rate

of 100%. The sample included 70.4% female and 29.6% male respondents whose ages ranged from 22–25 (71.3%), 26–29 (24.2%) and 4.5%, respectively.

2.3. Procedure

Phnom Penh and Battambang Teacher Education Colleges were visited to collect data from primary and lower secondary student teachers. After the aim of the survey was explained, the questionnaires were administered to the student teachers who were studying in their fourth year at both institutions through an online means—the Google form.

2.4. Data analysis

The study's quantitative data were analyzed via the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) technique via IBM's SPSS version 21.0 analytical software. This study uses descriptive and inferential statistics to analyze the validity, reliability, mean, standard deviation, and significance of the collected data through a one-sample t test.

3. Results

The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence the decision to choose teaching as a career among student teachers at the Teacher Education Colleges (TECs) in Cambodia. With respect to the respondents' participation, there were more females than males due to the greater proportion of student teachers at both TECs—29.6% males and 70.4% females. All the respondents were in their fourth year, ranging in age from 22–25 years (71.3%), 26–29 years (24.2%) and 4.5% of the other respondents, and only 20.6% held a bachelor's degree, whereas 79.4% held a high school diploma. The questionnaire item score ranged from 1 (extremely untrue) to 5 (extremely true), and the findings showed that the item scale was reliable because the four-factor solution had medium to high Cronbach's alphas for each of the factors, ranging from $\alpha = 0.711$ to $\alpha = 0.848$.

Table 1: Regression analysis

ANOVAa

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	395.849	4	98.962	45.996	.000b
Residual	469.039	218	2.152		
Total	864.888	222			

a. Dependent Variable: Total_TCC

b. Predictors: (Constant), Total_IO, Total_MF, Total_FC, Total_SC

Through the table above, the ANOVA results show that the regression model with the four main factors, such as influence of others (IO), motivational factors (MF), teaching as a fallback career (FC), and social-cultural factors (SC), as predictors is a statistically significant predictor of teaching career choice (TCC) ($F(4, 218) = 45.996$, $p < .001$). The model explains approximately 46% of the variance in teaching career choice, meaning that these factors together have a strong influence on student teachers' decisions to become teachers.

3.1 Influence of Others

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis (M, SD, α) influence of other variables

Code	Items	M	SD	α
	Influence of Others	3.95	0.79	0.785
	Family Influence	4.14	0.73	0.745
Fa.1	I have discussed my future career with my family.	4.09	0.75	
Fa.2	People in my family explain to me about the importance and value of being a teacher, and motivate me to be a teacher.	4.19	0.73	
	Friend Influence	3.47	1.03	0.848
Fr.3	I have discussed my future career with my friends.	3.46	0.99	

Fr.4	My friends explain to me about the importance and value of being a teacher, and motivate me to be a teacher.	3.48	1.07	
	Teacher Influence	4.20	0.65	0.720
T.5	I found that all teachers I know are good role models for me.	4.29	0.64	
T.6	My teachers advice and encourage me to be a teacher.	4.13	0.66	
	Mass Media Influence	3.98	0.68	0.714
M.7	I have access to any media every day, and they provide adequate information for my decision making.	3.82	0.75	
M.8	Through the media, I see the value and dignity of teachers, that is why I am interested in teaching as a career.	4.15	0.60	

The study revealed, as shown in Table 2, that the first factor, “the influence of others”, such as family, friends, teachers and mass media, influenced the teaching career choices of student teachers at TECs. The findings showed that “teachers” had the most significant influence on teaching career choice ($M=4.20$, $SD=0.65$), while “families” had the second most significant influence ($M=4.14$, $SD=0.73$), followed by “mass media” ($M=3.98$, $SD=0.68$). “Friends” had the least influence on teaching career choice ($M=3.47$, $SD=1.03$); however, it scored above the scale midpoint (3.00). This implies that most of the respondents agreed that what career they want to have in the future is influenced the most by their teachers, followed by their family, the mass media and, finally, the influence of their friends. Overall, the influence of others, such as family, friends, teachers and mass media, was perceived to be the most important to our preservice student teachers’ decision to become a teacher.

3.2 Motivational Factors

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis (M, SD, α) of the motivational factors

Code	Items	M	SD	α
	Motivational Factors	3.99	0.70	0.830
Ex.	Extrinsic Motivation	3.54	0.86	0.785
Ex.1	I found that teachers get fairly good salary these days.	3.78	0.74	0.746
Ex.2	As a teacher, I can have more holidays due to school vacations.	3.35	0.98	0.705
Ex.3	For me, teaching is an easy job in the society.	3.16	0.98	0.703
Ex.4	Work security is one reason I choose a teaching as a career.	3.87	0.73	0.762
In.	Intrinsic Motivation	4.17	0.62	0.738
In.5	I like teaching.	4.25	0.58	0.671
In.6	As a teacher, I have a chance to upgrade my knowledge.	4.45	0.57	0.700
In.7	Being a teacher, I can have a comfortable life in the society.	3.91	0.70	0.682
In.8	Teaching is a respectable job.	4.07	0.63	0.659
Al.	Altruistic Motivation	4.26	0.59	0.815
Al.9	I love children and adolescents, and like working with them.	4.00	0.60	0.845
Al.10	I want to share and give proper knowledge to young people.	4.38	0.56	0.743
Al.11	I want to educate the next generation to become good people.	4.43	0.58	0.706
Al.12	I want to change young people’s mind in the future.	4.26	0.64	0.763

Motivational factors, which include extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic motivations, strongly influence teaching career choice. The mean score ($M=3.99$) is higher than the scale midpoint with the standard deviation ($SD=0.70$). The Cronbach’s alpha value is equal to 0.830, which indicates that the item scale for this section is reliable for the survey (see Table 3). The findings revealed that altruistic motivation had the most significant influence on teaching career choice ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.59$), followed by intrinsic motivation ($M=4.17$, $SD=0.62$). This indicates that respondents love their children and adolescents, such as working with them, wanting to share knowledge with them, educating the next generation to become good people, and wanting to change young people’s minds in the future. Additionally, all the respondents, as prospective teachers, believe that they will like teaching, have the opportunity to increase their knowledge and think that teaching is a respectable job. Surprisingly, the altruistic motivation score was the highest, whereas extrinsic motivation, including salary, vacation and job security, was the lowest ($M=3.54$, $SD=0.86$) among the three motivational factors. Thus, even though extrinsic motivation seems

to receive low scores, all motivations, especially altruistic and intrinsic motivations, are very important for decision making as well as in doing something.

However, the factor “teaching as a fallback career”, as shown in Table 4, had less influence on teaching career choice among student teachers at TECs, with a mean score of low ($M=2.37$, $SD=1.12$), and this result is not different from that of a previous study conducted in India by Sardana et al. (2021), with a mean score of $M=2.05$, $SD=0.88$. This study revealed that most of the student teachers said statements such as “I was unsure of what career I wanted, there were no other choices besides teaching, and it was difficult for me to find other jobs so I decided to choose teaching.” were not true to them. However, slightly more of them said they chose teaching to step stone to other careers ($M=2.66$, $SD=1.12$). Overall, all the mean scores were lower than the scale midpoint ($M<3.00$). This can reflect that they chose to be teachers for reasons other than teaching being their last choice.

3.3 Teaching as a Fallback Career

Table 4: Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis (M, SD, α) Teaching as a Fallback Career

Code	Items	M	SD	α
FC.	Teaching as a Fallback Career	2.37	1.12	0.800
FC.1	I was unsure of what career I wanted.	2.28	1.11	0.757
FC.2	There were no other choices besides teaching.	2.23	1.12	0.724
FC.3	It was difficult for me to find other jobs, so I decided to choose teaching.	2.31	1.15	0.690
FC.4	I chose teaching in order to step stone to other careers.	2.66	1.12	0.818

3.4 Sociocultural Factors

Table 5: Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis (M, SD, α) of sociocultural factors

Code	Items	M	SD	α
SC.	Sociocultural Factors	3.89	0.75	0.711
SC.1	Teachers contribute a lot to establishing and preserving culture.	4.30	0.56	0.719
SC.2	I found that in Cambodia nowadays, most people who have jobs, work as teachers, so I also want to become a teacher.	3.25	0.94	0.667
SC.3	Teaching is perceived as a worthwhile career in the society.	4.09	0.70	0.573
SC.4	I believe that working as a teacher will receive very much merit.	3.91	0.76	0.615

Sociocultural factors have also influenced teaching career choices among student teachers at TECs. The findings showed that teachers contributed greatly to establishing and preserving culture ($M=4.30$, $SD=0.56$), which was the highest in this factor, whereas “Teaching is perceived as a worthwhile career in society.” This factor had the second lowest mean score for the following statement: “In Cambodia currently, most people who have jobs work as teachers, so they also want to become teachers” ($M=3.25$, $SD=0.94$). However, all the items were scored above the scale midpoint, which reflects that these factors also influence teaching career decisions.

3.5 Teaching Career Choice (Student Teachers' Satisfaction with Career Choice)

Table 6: Descriptive statistics and reliability analysis (M, SD, α) of teaching career choice

Code	Items	M	SD	α
TCC.	Teaching Career Choice	4.26	0.57	0.893
TCC.1	I am very happy with my choice of becoming a teacher.	4.26	0.57	0.854

TCC.2	I am very satisfied with my choice of becoming a teacher.	4.26	0.58	0.840
TCC.3	I am very determined with my choice to become a teacher.	4.26	0.56	0.873
TCC.4	I think this is my right decision of becoming a teacher.	4.25	0.56	0.880

The item scale for respondents' satisfaction with their career decision had high reliability, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from $\alpha = 0.840$ to $\alpha = 0.880$ (see Table 6). The following were the respondents' feelings after making the decision to be teachers and after passing three years of teacher education at TECs, and they said they were very happy, very satisfied and very determined with their choice of becoming teachers ($M=4.26$, $SD=0.57$), whereas they thought it was their right decision of becoming teachers ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.56$) that almost all of them chose number 5 (extremely true) to each of the statements in the survey. All the mean scores for each item are much higher than the scale midpoint, so it is good news for all levels in education sectors that student teachers, who become teachers, are highly satisfied with their career choices.

4. Discussion

In the context of the current study's sample from the Cambodian Teacher Education Colleges, the highest-rated factor was altruistic motivation, which included the willingness to develop society, the ability to share knowledge with young people, and the ability to provide education to the next generation, followed by influences from the teacher and family and intrinsic motivation, such as having an opportunity to improve knowledge and having comfortable lives with respectable jobs. However, sociocultural factors such as the willingness to preserve culture, religion, and belief were also the factors that influenced teaching career choice; however, teaching as a fallback career was rated the lowest of all the factors.

In terms of the influences of others such as family, friends, teachers and mass media, the teacher influence was rated the highest because teachers did as role models and always gave them good advice or encouraged them to become teachers. These findings are in line with those of the study conducted in Pakistan by Khan et al. (2012), who investigated the influence of teachers on career counseling in secondary schools in Gilgit, Pakistan, Brazil. Khan et al. discovered that teachers play important roles in guiding their students as well as their careers. They also stated that teachers did as informal volunteer counsellors to guide students in their subject decisions and career choices. However, these findings contradict the findings of research conducted in India that teachers do not significantly influence the career decisions of their students, but they at least pay special attention to students who have made career choices (Martinez-Moreno & Petko, 2023). With respect to family influence, this study revealed that children in Cambodia have been influenced by parents as well as their relatives because they mostly discuss with parents or relatives before doing something, and parents are always motivated and give advice to them, especially with respect to career aspirations. Similarly, Law and Yuen conducted research in Hong Kong and indicated that students greatly appreciate their parents' advice. This finding shows that parents can shape their specific careers in their children from childhood (Law & Yuen, 2004). Another report written in Canada indicated that Canadian adolescents tend to value their parents' opinions further than any other sources do in terms of career decision issues. Many parents influence their children's career development because they have observed, known their children's interests and strengths and developed a trusting relationship with their children (Law et al., 2011). Moreover, this finding showed that peers or friends also influence career choice because they usually provide motivation and discussion on difficult issues together to reach decisions. This finding was in line with the findings of other studies that specified different groups that can influence students' career decisions. They reported that career decisions are usually influenced by parents, peers, friends, relatives, role models, and career counsellors (Pummel et al., 2008). In addition, mass media has a positive influence on career choice among student teachers in Cambodia. The respondents were interested in teaching as a career because they recognized the value and dignity of teachers. This aligns with a study in Kenya, which revealed that mass media statistically and significantly influence career choice among secondary school students in Meru County, Kenya (Njogu et al, 2019).

In addition to the influences of family, friends, teachers and mass media, motivational factors such as extrinsic, intrinsic and altruistic motivations significantly influence teaching career choice. As mentioned above, altruistic motivation had the most significant influence on career decisions, followed by intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Similar to the findings of a previous study conducted in India, altruistic motivation, such as developing young people's minds, was rated the highest, whereas intrinsic and extrinsic career value motivations, such as working with youth, job security and salary, were not rated high (Sardana et al., 2021). Similarly, another study in Indonesia reported that intrinsic value motivation was rated high in terms of becoming civil servant teachers in Indonesia (Suryani et al., 2016). However, this finding seems slightly different from the research findings that intrinsic motivation, such as pedagogical interest, motives to work with children, and the self-concept of teaching ability, is rated higher than altruistic motivation (Keller-Schneider, 2019). Other studies also support the finding that altruistic motivation was rated the highest. It has been reported that altruistic motivations such as "contributing to society", "working with children" and "shaping the future of children or adolescents" are the most influential factors (Krecic & Grmek, 2005; Saban, 2003). Another study in Turkey reported results similar to those of this study, as in the Cambodian context, students in Turkey are encouraged to choose to teach for altruistic motives and wish to help contribute to society by being a part of young generations' growth and development (Moss, 2020).

Another discussion concerns the factor of teaching as a fallback career. The findings indicated that the respondents had entered the teacher education program as a positive choice, not because teaching was the last or second choice, and similar to a study conducted in India, only 16.5% of the sample agreed that they had chosen or would choose teaching as a fallback career (Sardana et al., 2021). Additionally, the findings of this study are similar to those of some studies conducted in Germany, the United States, Australia, Norway (Watt et al., 2012), Spain (Gratacós et al., 2017), South Korea (Lee et al., 2019), and Turkey (Kiliç et al., 2012). Other studies have focused on teaching as a fallback career; for example, Akpochofo (2020), Salifu et al. (2017), Jukovic et al. (2012) and Lin et al. (2012) reported that job transferability, social influences, and the fallback career were the least influential factors in career choice. Unlike teaching as a fallback career, sociocultural factors significantly influence the career choices of student teachers at TECs in Cambodia. This factor was scored high, ranging from $M=3.25$ to 4.30 above the scale midpoint, which means that student teachers considered culture preservation, belief and religion to be very important and valued them as living in society and led them to career choices as teachers. This result is similar to that of a study conducted in Oman, whose findings revealed that religion and social expectations had a strong role in influencing Omani preservice teachers (Klassen et al., 2011). Additionally, in Malaysia, cultural beliefs play a vital role "in constructing favorable conditions in teaching and facilitating a positive image of the teaching career" (Azman, 2012), whereas another study by Sali (2013) indicated that English language teachers in Turkey believe that social influences, religious purposes, and gender roles are key sociocultural influences on the choice of teaching as a career. This research is also consistent with the findings of Akosah-Twumasi, Emeto, Lindsay, Tsey, and Malau-Aduli (2018), whose work suggests that the family, the social environment, peers, and societal values affect students' career decisions. Another study reported that sociocultural factors play a significant role in shaping the career decisions of students (Oderinde & Adesina, 2024). This study indicates that all education sectors should consider sociocultural factors when providing career guidance.

The findings provide a basis for improving teacher education programs and teacher policies in Cambodia and are important for preparing future teachers and understanding teachers who have entered the profession. For example, do teachers take a second job while teaching, and does it affect their teaching commitments and teaching quality, particularly during early careers? Studies in the literature state that teachers have second jobs, mainly for earning extra money (Betts, 2004; Parham & Gordon, 2011), and that doing so truly impacts the quality of teaching because of a lack of time to prepare lessons and teaching materials, attend professional development programs, and undertake leadership roles in schools. As with other factors influencing teaching career choice study contexts, participants in Cambodia chose to enter teacher education due to positive motivations, not because of a lack of other options. Because Cambodia needs more teachers in rural and remote areas to evenly distribute placements across the nation, altruistic and intrinsic motivations had the greatest influence on career choice. If these teachers desire to benefit socially disadvantaged people, provide services to society and help children and adolescents, hopefully, this may attract them to teach in such locations. It certainly appeared that teaching was perceived as a career high in social status and attractive to secondary school graduates, who enter teacher education and plan to work as qualified teachers upon completion of their studies.

5. Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the major variables influencing the teaching career choices of primary and lower secondary school teachers in Cambodia and fourth-year student teachers at Teacher Education College. A thorough analysis of research and theoretical frameworks led to the identification of various predictor variables, demonstrating the intricate interaction between independent and predictive variables influencing teachers' and student teachers' career choices. The factor influencing teaching career choice is the influence of other factors, such as other teachers, friends, family and mass media. Another factor is the motivational factor, which includes altruistic, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The third factor is teaching as a fallback career, and teaching may be considered if other options do not work out. The fourth factor is the sociocultural factor, which includes the status of teachers, religion, social expectations, gender roles, and cultural understanding. In conclusion, the findings revealed that motivation, especially altruistic motivation, is the most influential factor in teaching career choice among student teachers at teacher education colleges in Cambodia, followed by other teachers; however, teaching as a fallback career is the least influential factor.

6. Recommendations

Researchers would intend to provide useful insights into the factors that influence teachers' choice of teaching as a career. The useful and relevant information from this study would benefit the following sectors: the ministry of education, policymakers, parents, teachers, students and other researchers as follows:

- (1) The ministry of education should continue the reform to improve teachers' salaries, school infrastructures and facilities to improve the working environment for teachers as professionals. Additionally, the ministry of education should ensure high-quality training and pay more attention to good, smart and competent teachers, who can be role models for students, to retain them in schools as well as in education institutions.
- (2) This study could help policymakers and school leaders in the Cambodian educational system refine recruitment policies and practices for teaching careers. Policymakers should prioritize teacher education scholarships for students with strong altruistic and intrinsic motivations.
- (3) This study will inform parents about what possibly influences their children's career choices.
- (4) The knowledge gained from such studies could be used to increase actions and efforts to recruit students with higher academic and social profiles for their teaching careers.
- (5) This study could lead students to enter a preparation program for their teaching careers, and some actions could be taken to encourage more academically excellent students to pursue their teaching careers.
- (6) This study can help future researchers consider other factors that might affect students' preferences for certain careers. Further qualitative studies should be conducted to better understand these motivational factors over time.

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