



Salary Satisfaction of Vietnamese Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: The research aims to clarify the salary and satisfaction levels of Vietnamese preschool and high school teachers today.

Methodology: Data was collected from 869 teachers and administrators working at preschools, primary schools, lower secondary schools, upper secondary schools, and inter-level schools in both public and private schools across the country through an online survey (questionnaire designed on Google form), combined with online interviews with 13 teachers and administrators. Data were processed using SPSS software version 28.0 to analyze descriptive statistics, One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and post-test to detect differences in salary levels and teachers' satisfaction with aspects of being paid.

Main Findings: Research results show that there is no difference in the average monthly income of teachers according to training level; the difference in salaries of preschool teachers and high school teachers shows that the current salary mechanism in Vietnam gives more priority to general education; teachers' satisfaction with salary level is only at a normal level; there are differences in teachers' allowances between delta areas, mountainous areas, and remote islands.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The study offers some new findings, for example there is no difference in average salary between teachers with different training levels, or salary satisfaction of private school teachers is higher public school teacher. The research also provides helpful information for policymakers about teacher salaries in Vietnam in the coming time, especially in the context of upcoming changes in salary policy from July 1, 2024.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the field of education is seeing a decline in its attractiveness as a career choice. An IIEP study team investigated teacher career changes in eleven countries over a span of two years. One prominent finding of this research is that conducting wage reviews is an essential need for any effort to enhance the standing of the teaching profession. IIEP researcher Chloé Chimier states that throughout their study in all locations, they saw that the questioned teachers showed little interest in career changes unless they included wage increases [1]. The research conducted by Anita, Tran and Ho, identified three primary factors contributing to job discontent among Vietnamese teachers: i) lack of job security; ii) an unfavorable working environment; and iii) excessive job responsibilities. Job security includes many key variables, including salaries, benefits, opportunities for advancement or transfer to more desirable positions, overall career satisfaction, and recognition and rewards for performance [2].

Prior researchs have identified the factors that impact teachers' contentment with their remuneration. The majority of the data may be classified into three distinct categories: personal factors, organizational factors, and environmental factors. Carraher and Buckley, argued that cognitive complexity influences teachers' perceptions of several measures of salary satisfaction [3]. Salary level, salary structure satisfaction, salary increase satisfaction, and benefits satisfaction are all factors that influence teacher salary satisfaction [4], [5]. Organizational justice, including procedural, distributive, and interactive justice, significantly predicts teachers' satisfaction with their compensation [5]-[7]. Teachers' satisfaction with their salary may be impacted by variables such as the economic conditions in the local region [8].

Previous studies have also examined differences in teacher salary satisfaction. Research by Mwamwenda, in South Africa shows that there is no significant difference in salary satisfaction among the 114 cases studied [9]. Gius, M, Franco-Lopez et al shown that although the impact of performance-based pay on overall job satisfaction was insignificant [10], [11]. However, when examining a sample of teachers working only in areas that paid merit pay, it was found that teachers who received merit pay were generally more satisfied with their jobs than teachers who did not be paid with merit. Findings from a qualitative study by Demir indicate that salary is one of the factors that enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Teachers expressed that receiving high and fair salaries increases their job satisfaction [12]. On the contrary, Sahin and Dursun, argued that teachers, like other professions that are respected in society, want a salary that reflects the value of their efforts [13]. They want to be able to work with peace of mind without having to worry about their wallets. If teachers are not satisfied with their jobs, they tend to look for alternative tuition or undertake non-teaching activities for economic gain [14].

Teachers are those who directly teach and impart knowledge and skills to students, playing a key role in improving education quality. However, if teachers do not feel satisfied with the salaries they receive, it can negatively affect their motivation, enthusiasm, and work performance [15]. Many teachers have left their positions because of low salaries [16]. The concept of teacher salary satisfaction is critical to the systematic assessment of teacher remuneration [5]. Salary satisfaction is a crucial factor that determines teachers' overall work satisfaction, motivation, and ability to stay in their jobs [17], [18]. Higher salaries may encourage teachers to pursue professional development opportunities, which can enhance their skills and knowledge, ultimately benefiting their performance in the classroom. When teachers feel valued and financially secure, they may be more likely to invest time and effort in their teaching activities [19]. While teachers' dedication and love for their profession enable them to improve the quality of education, they do not deny that income and financial security are their main concerns, with 80% of the respondents expressing this view [20]. However, teachers are not really satisfied with their salaries [12], [21]. A study in China by Zhou and Ma, in 2022 has also shown that the average salary satisfaction score of 500 elementary and middle school teachers was 2.64, lower than the midpoint of 3 and had certain level of dissatisfaction [7]. Therefore, research on teacher salary satisfaction is an extremely necessary and important issue. In Vietnam, there have not been many studies by educational scientists and education management experts on teachers' satisfaction with their salaries, even though the issue of teachers' salaries is a topic that receives a lot of attention from different levels of government administration, teaching community and the media.

Currently, the salaries of Vietnamese teachers are calculated as follows: Teacher's salary = Basic salary level x Salary coefficient + Amount received as preferential allowance + Seniority allowance social insurance premiums. Accordingly, the salary coefficient is a number that represents the salary level for each class and salary step. "Class" is the name that indicates the rank in terms of capacity, professional, and technical qualifications of teachers to determine the salary level or the amount of money specified for a group of teachers with the same qualifications, the same job position, or the same type of work in an educational organization. Teachers at each level (preschool, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary) are also classified into ranks (I, II, and III) based on training level, professional capacity, achievements and seniority. Each teacher rank will correspond to a certain salary class. Salary steps are the number of steps of salary advancement within each teacher's salary class. Each salary step corresponds to a specific salary coefficient and only represents the teacher's basic salary level. The current basic salary level being applied from July 1, 2023 is 1,800,000 VND (according to Decree 24/2023/ND-CP). The types of allowances that teachers are currently enjoying include: extra seniority allowance, concurrent leadership position allowance, regional allowance, attraction allowance, mobility allowance, occupational seniority allowance, professional preferential allowance; allowance for party and socio-political organizations;...These allowances are stipulated in numerous different legal documents. Thus, teachers' salaries are currently understood as basic salary plus allowances. In addition, teachers also receive other income from the school such as extra teaching fees (organized by the school), extra care fees (for preschool teachers) ... and some other allowed revenues. With such amounts, the salary satisfaction of Vietnamese teachers is still a controversial issue. Especially, there is an upcoming change in salary policy for teachers that will be issued from July 1, 2024. Therefore, studying Vietnamese teachers' satisfaction with salary is necessary as a reference source for managers to adjust teachers' salary policies.

This article focuses on examining the salary satisfaction of Vietnamese teachers and the aspects of teachers' salary satisfaction based on a sample of 869 teachers nationwide in order to answer the research questions: 1) What are the salary levels of teachers in Vietnam across different factors such as education level, school type, and region?; 2) How satisfied are Vietnamese teachers with their salary?; 3) How does salary satisfaction vary across different school types in Vietnam?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The study used data collected from an online survey (through a questionnaire designed on a Google Form) sent to teachers working at schools in Vietnam via email or social media platforms (Zalo, Facebook...) in May, 2024. To attract potential respondents and improve the quality of responses, we emphasized the importance of the study, while also committing to the confidentiality of respondents' personal identities.

The minimum sample size needed with a margin of error of 0.05 is 385 teachers. However, in practice, we collected valid data from 869 teachers. The sample included 869 teachers (82 males and 787 females) working at preschools (31.2%), primary schools (33.5%), lower secondary schools (23.0%), and upper secondary schools (11.4%) and multi-level school (0.9%). Regarding the type of educational institution, 96.0% of teachers work in public schools and 4.0% in non-public schools. In terms of educational qualifications, 1.4% of teachers have less than a college degree, 5.4% have a college degree, 85.7% have a university degree, 7.4% have a master's degree, and 0.1% have a doctorate degree. Research participants had working experience in the education sector from 1 year to 43 years (average of about 15.12 years). Of which, teachers working at schools signing indefinite-term contracts (permanent contract) account for 87.3%, and fixed-term contracts (temporary contract) account for 12.7%.

Although the sample was selected using the convenience sampling method to increase the response rate, this may limit the generalization of research results. However, the composition of the sample is relatively diverse and representing (64.7% in urban areas, 6.1% in rural delta areas, 28.7% in rural mountainous areas and 0.5% in island and coastal areas). Data were processed using SPSS software version 28.0.0.0 to analyze descriptive statistics, One-way ANOVA and post-test to detect differences in the teachers' salary and satisfaction.

Besides, the research also used in-depth interviews with 13 teachers via phone call or video call to better understand their current salary satisfaction. Among them, there are 10 public school teachers and 03 non-public school teachers; 03 preschool teachers, 03 elementary school teachers, 03 lower secondary school teachers and 04 upper secondary school teachers; 09 teachers in the delta area and 04 teachers in the mountainous area. The results obtained from the interview process will provide more information for a more in-depth explanation of quantitative results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Salary levels of teachers in Vietnamese schools

With feedback obtained from 869 respondents, the monthly income of teachers and school administrators (including salaries and allowances) ranges from about 3.9 to 45 million VND/month, an average of 10,153 million VND/month, of which, 25% of teachers have a salary of 7.4 million VND/month or less and 25% of teachers have a salary of 12 million VND/month or more. Besides, the longer a teacher's working experience, the higher their income ($R=0.673$, $\text{sig} < 0.001$).

Research results show that there is no difference in the average monthly income of teachers at schools according to training level. In other words, teachers with different training levels have negligible salary differences when the average income is approximately 10 million VND/month assuming other conditions remain unchanged. As the basic salary of teachers is strictly regulated according to the general salary applicable to civil servants and state employees, a higher level of training cannot create a big difference in salary compared to a lower level within the prescribed range. A teacher's salary depends on not only years of service but also their degree level. Teachers who have been working for a long time, even if they are not highly qualified, can still receive higher salaries than those who have just graduated. In addition to the basic salary, teachers also receive other allowances, such as career incentive allowances, seniority allowances, regional incentive allowances, etc. In addition, teachers also have additional income from extra classes held at school or money for babysitting outside of prescribed hours (for preschool teachers), etc. These figures help narrow the income gap between different levels of training. In addition, the research results also demonstrate that the income levels of teachers in public preschools and high schools are similar to those of non-public schools. However, if we consider each individual subject in terms of working time, there is a clear difference. In non-public schools, teachers' salaries usually do not differ too much regardless of their seniority, but in public schools, the less time they work means the lower the salary because their salary rank and class as well as prescribed allowances are all lower. The lowest salary of public sector teachers is about 5 million VND while the highest can be up to about 18 to 20 million VND.

Table 1. Teacher’s salary levels by educational qualifications and school types

Variables	Variable values	N	Teacher’s Salary Level		One way ANOVA		
					Test of Homogeneity of Variances	ANOVA	Welch
Mean	Std						
Educational qualifications	Below college level	12	7.642	2.471	0.268	0.065	
	College level	47	10.034	4.614			
	Bachelor's degree	745	10.143	3.632			
	Master's degree	64	10.904	5.300			
	Doctoral degree	1	6	.			
School types	Public school	834	10.075	3.617	<0.001		0.118
	Non-public school	35	12.026	7.155			

(Source: Authors’ research)

In addition, teachers in different areas also have different income levels. Specifically, the average salary of teachers in rural mountainous areas is higher than that of teachers in rural plains because teachers working in mountainous areas often enjoy regional incentives. The factors determining regional allowances are specified as follows: i) Natural geographical factors such as: bad climate, expressed in extreme levels of temperature, humidity, altitude, air pressure, speed wind levels, etc. are higher or lower than normal, affecting human health; ii) Remote (sparse population density, far from cultural, political, economic centers, far from the mainland...); iii) Poor infrastructure and difficult transportation have negatively impacted the people's material and spiritual lives. In addition, when determining regional allowances, additional factors such as borders, islands, and swamps can be considered. Regional allowances are regulated at 7 levels: 0.1; 0.2; 0.3; 0.4; 0.5; 0.7 and 1.0 compared to the general minimum wage. In rural and mountainous areas, which are mostly areas with difficult terrain, difficulty in traveling, underdeveloped infrastructure, and even no electricity and clean water for daily use, many teachers have to stay at school for weeks or months before being able to return home because transportation is extremely difficult. Therefore, incentives for teachers in these areas are even up to 70% of basic salary. Interviewing teachers in the northern mountainous rural area, teacher TC1 said: “I receive some allowances such as seniority allowance, 30% teaching allowance and 30% preferential allowance for teachers working in mountainous areas.”

The average income of preschool teachers is significantly lower than that of teachers at other educational levels. However, the average income of elementary, lower secondary school and upper secondary school teachers has almost no significant difference. This situation have been caused by regulations on the salary coefficients of preschool teachers being lower than the salary coefficients of teachers, shown in the following table 2.

Table 2. Salary coefficient of elementary, lower secondary, upper secondary school teachers by class

Group	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9
Teachers Class 3	2.34	2.67	3.0	3.33	3.66	3.99	4.32	4.65	4.98
Teachers Class 2	4.0	4.34	4.68	5.02	5.36	5.7	6.04	6.38	
Teachers Class 1	4.4	4.74	5.08	5.42	5.76	6.1	6.44	6.78	

(Source: Author’s compilation)

Table 3. Salary coefficient of preschool teachers by class

Group	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
Preschool teacher Class 3	2.1	2.41	2.72	3.03	3.34	3.65	3.96	4.27	4.58	4.89
Preschool teacher Class 2	2.34	2.67	3.0	3.33	3.66	3.99	4.32	4.65	4.98	
Preschool teacher Class 1	4.0	4.34	4.68	5.02	5.36	5.7	6.04	6.38		

(Source: Author’s compilation)

It can be seen that the salary level of preschool teachers starts at class III with a college degree requirement, lower than the required level of class III high school teachers, which is a university bachelor's degree. In fact, in Vietnam, there was a time when teachers were not paid according to their qualifications, in the case of TC12: "When working as a preschool teacher in a public school, even though you have a college degree, you still have to start from the salary calculated based on an intermediate degree with a coefficient of 1.86 at that time. Only then will the salary be raised according to regulations."

The average income of teachers signing indefinite-term contracts is about 3 million VND/month higher than that of teachers signing fixed-term contracts. This is also explained by the fact that teachers who sign fixed-term contracts do not receive preferential allowances. In Vietnam, in public schools, teachers with indefinite contracts are considered public employees, and allowances are only paid to civil servants and public employees.

Table 4. Vietnamese teacher's salary levels by areas, school levels, and employment contract types

Variables	Variable values	N	Teacher's Salary Level		One way ANOVA		
					Test of Homogeneity of Variances		
					ANOVA	Welch	
			Mean	Std	Sig.	Sig.	Sig.
Gender	Female	787	10.044	3.822	0.427	0.009	
	Male	82	11.202	3.821			
Marital Status	Single	74	8.992	3.727	0.395	0.006	
	Married	794	10.262	3.831			
Areas	Urban area	561	10.335	3.917	0.030		<0.001
	Rural Lowland area	53	8.172	2.287			
	Rural Mountainous area	249	10.118	3.790			
	Islands and coastal area	4	10.075	1.491			
	Pre-school	271	8.726	3.446			
School levels	Primary school	291	10.568	3.863	<0.001		<0.001
	Secondary school	200	11.236	4.352			
	High School	99	10.478	1.799			
	Multi - level School	8	12.358	6.114			
Employment contract types	Permanent contract	759	10.524	3.575	0.675	<0.001	
	Temporary contract	110	7.596	4.548			

(Source: Authors' reseach)

3.2. Level of salary satisfaction among teachers in Vietnamese schools

A previous study has evaluated the level of satisfaction with teachers' income at schools according to two aspects: "salary level" (SL) and "salary management process" [5]. In which, "salary management process" includes the following concepts: teachers' engagement in developing policies on salaries and allowances (Teacher's engagement – TE), openness and transparency in salaryment of salaries and allowances (Openness and transparency of distribution – OT), and reasonableness of regulations on salaryment of salaries and allowances (Reasonableness of distribution rules – RE). The questions are measured using a 5-point Likert scale (with level 1 being completely disagree and level 5 being completely agree). All scales ensure reliability with Cronbach's Alpha coefficient from 0.895 to 0.921 (Table 5). The level of satisfaction is calculated based on the average value of each scale as follows:

From 1.00 to 1.80: Strongly dissatisfied

From above 1.80 to 2.60: Somewhat dissatisfied

From above 2.60 to 3.40: Neutral

From above 3.40 to 4.20: Somewhat satisfied

From above 4.20 to 5.00: Strongly satisfied

Because the data were collected through one method, the study assessed common method bias (CMB) through exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Research results show that the items measuring the concepts "Salary level" and "Salary management process" are completely distinct, consistent with the theoretical model. The

measurement sub-concepts for the concept “Salary management process” all have high factor loadings, which shows that they contribute significantly to the explanation of the concept. However, there is a difference in variance explained by the concepts “Salary management process” (59.657%) and “Salary level” (13.241%) which may be a sign of CMB – a limitation of the study due to the problem of one-way data collection methods (Table 6). Therefore, the study considers expanding teacher salary satisfaction based on four simultaneous aspects: “Salary level”, “Teacher’s engagement”, “Openness and transparency of distribution” and “Reasonableness of distribution rules”. Although the research results were not completely consistent with the original theoretical model, it was able to describe the salary satisfaction level of Vietnamese teachers in a multidimensional way.

Table 5. Teacher Salary Satisfaction Scale Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha)

Concepts	Items	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Cronbach’s Alpha
Salary level	SL1	0.848	0.917
	SL2	0.864	
	SL3	0.786	
	SL4	0.745	
Teacher’s engagement	TE1	0.794	0.895
	TE2	0.801	
	TE3	0.786	
Openness and transparency of distribution	OT1	0.767	0.899
	OT2	0.855	
	OT3	0.78	
Reasonableness of distribution rules	RE1	0.876	0.921
	RE2	0.904	
	RE3	0.882	
	RE4	0.625	

Table 6. EFA Analysis

Concepts	Sub-concepts	Component	
		1	2
Salary level		SL1	0.891
		SL2	0.900
		SL3	0.814
		SL4	0.794
Salary management process	Teacher’s engagement	TE1	0.578
		TE2	0.583
		TE3	0.711
	Openness and transparency of distribution	OT1	0.785
		OT2	0.846
		OT3	0.855
	Reasonableness of distribution rules	RE1	0.873
		RE2	0.872
		RE3	0.845
		RE4	0.644
% of Variance		59.657	13.241
KMO			0.937
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity			0.000

Among the four aspects, teachers have the lowest level of satisfaction with their salary level (2.901 - Neutral), “teacher’s engagement” (3.386 – Neutral) . The remaining two aspects “openness and transparency of distribution”, “reasonableness of distribution rules” have a higher level of satisfaction (somewhat satisfied) with an average rating from 3,686 to 3,855. Regulations on salaries and allowances as well as regulations on job evaluation of teachers have a relatively complete system of legal documents. Teacher performance evaluation processes that include public voting can explain the level of satisfaction with these aspects.

Table 7. Teacher's salary satisfaction

Teacher's salary satisfaction	N	Mean	Std.	Satisfaction level
Salary level	935	2.901	1.077	Neutral
Teacher's engagement	935	3.386	1.108	Neutral
Openness and transparency of distribution	935	3.855	1.053	Somewhat satisfied
Reasonableness of distribution rules	935	3.686	1.001	Somewhat satisfied

Regarding salary level, research results have shown that there is no difference in the level of satisfaction of teachers teaching at different school levels, in different areas, or between teachers with indefinite contracts and fixed-term contracts. However, satisfaction with the salary level of teachers in non-public schools is higher than that of teachers in public schools.

Interview results show that public high school and preschool teachers have salaries ranging from 9-20 million: TC6 has a salary of 20 million, TC10 is 19 million, TC11 is 13 million, TC13 is 13 million. The teachers at this non-public school all said that "my salary is enough to live quite comfortably" (TC6, TC10), "I was satisfied with the salary I received" (TC13). In addition, they said their salaries are based on their performance. "Our salaries are currently calculated based on the price of a lesson. The more we teach, the more we earn. We teach about 24 lessons per week, and our income is about 15 to 20 million" (TC6). Teachers at these schools can also negotiate with the school about their salary. For preschool teachers, the salaries may be different between the homeroom teachers and the assistant teachers in the classroom: "homeroom teachers' salaries are from 10 to 13 million dong, teaching assistants' salaries from 8 to 10 million dong" (TC11). Furthermore, these non-public teachers all have the same qualifications as a top-level, long-time public teacher and have many other allowances (for example, TC2 Anti-public age 30 years, principal, total salary, allowances and other accounts is 21 million) when they are only at the professional age level of less than 10 years of work and are not managers. Meanwhile, teachers at public schools with seniority levels nearly equivalent to TC6 and TC7 have a salary of approximately 5 million VND, equal to ¼ of TC6. She said: "The current salary is quite difficult for expenditure but for someone like me who is currently single and has no family of my own, living with my parents and having my parents support me, it's enough to make ends meet."

Teachers with many years of experience in public schools all say that "Salary is only enough to cover minimum expenses" (TC1, TC2, TC3, TC4, TC5, TC8, TC9, TC12); they can only spend at living level, but cannot accumulate or buy valuable assets such as a house if they only have income from teaching salaries. Public teachers also said they have to do many other jobs, "compared to the amount of work and effort put in, the salary is not worth it", especially for high school teachers who are homeroom teachers (TC4, TC5, TC7, TC 8, TC9) who are deducted from 2-4 periods/week, which means less teaching hours according to regulations to perform tasks such as: monitoring and managing class students on all activities in the school, performing book declarations and records for students, advising students, supporting parents, even collecting and spending accounts of the parents' association fund. TC4 said "The homeroom teachers must also do the accounting of income and expenditure of the class parent association fund, even though it only collects 200.000 VND/student, it also requires a full receipt. As the result, I usually go home at night and I don't have time for my family... Although nominally, students' parents collect and pay themselves, perhaps each school will have its own way, but in my school, to ensure the school's safety, homeroom teachers are asked to do it because if the homeroom teacher does it, it will be better. In order for revenue and expenditure documents to be in the same form, it will serve well for future inspection and examination by the Department of Education and Training or the Provincial People's Committee...". TC4 also added that they have to provide free tutoring for students for many hours to ensure that students can graduate from high school without being charged extra money, the pressure is also great: "Sometimes we have to teach up to more than 100 lessons for free to help students prepare for the graduation exam, but the teacher does not get paid all that money, but only within a certain limit... At school, leaders also want their students pass the final exams, and our province is one of the provinces where the quality of students is very low. There are students who sometimes finish primary or secondary school but they are unable to read a text fluently. Because the most difficult level of education in the mountainous areas today is high school, it is the teachers' responsibilities to help their students graduate from high schools. There are students, who take the high school entrance exam, for example, at high school in town X, province Y in 2023, only needs a total of 3.5 points (3 subjects) to pass; however, to graduate from high school, the students must achieve at least 4.5 points for each subject. Invisibly, the entire responsibility belongs to the high school teacher, which is very hard and very tiring.

For public preschool teachers like TC12: "I am dissatisfied because life expenditure is too much. For example, raising one child to school in the city cost around 5 million, not including food, just tuition. Compared to the effort put in, the salary earned is low". Meanwhile, non-public high school teachers said that they do not have to take on too many jobs but only carry out the assigned teaching hours: "I don't take on anything else... I work 24 hours per week" (TC6), if you have a concurrent position, the allowance is quite high: "My current

salary and allowances are about 19 million dong. Salary accounts for about 70%, the remaining 30% is allowance for team duties Deputy Head of IT.” Non-public preschool teacher TC13 also said: “In addition to working hours according to regulations at school, teachers do not have to work too much overtime. When the school has programs and events, they can work about 30 minutes extra.”

Regarding the level of satisfaction with teachers’ participation in developing salary and allowance policies, openness, transparency, and reasonableness of regulations on income at schools, research results have shown that teachers in different regions, types of schools (public and non-public), and forms of contracts (indefinite and fixed-term) have similar satisfaction levels. The non-public high school teachers who were interviewed said they were consulted and participated in making the school's salary decisions. TC10 said: “At my school, every year in May, the human resources department will organize to collect teachers' feedback on their wishes regarding school issues and suggestions for improvement. The human resources department will also call each teacher to discuss the next salary for the next school year... 95% of our opinions and suggestions are discussed and agreed upon by the staffs. Both of us were satisfied.” As for the non-public preschool teacher TC13: “Every time there is a salary increase, my school staffs will collect opinions on the level of job completion of teachers and comments from managers of the institutions as a basis for salary increase. This salary increase reviews activity that takes place once a year.” Meanwhile, interviewed high school and public preschool teachers said they were not asked by management levels for advice on salary and allowance policies for teachers, but they said: “That is the level common for the entire industry... experts have calculated and deemed it appropriate... we also read the policy and absorbed it” (TC3). However, preschool teachers have higher satisfaction than elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary school teachers in all three aspects mentioned above.

In addition, research results have shown that teachers whose marital status is single or married have similar levels of satisfaction in all three aspects salary level, teacher's engagement, reasonableness of distribution rules. However, male teachers evaluate the openness and transparency of the school’s salary and allowance policies more positively than female teachers.

Table 8. Comparing the level of salary satisfaction among teachers

	Salary level	Teacher's engagement	Openness and transparency of distribution	Reasonableness of distribution rules
Gender	No difference	No difference	No difference	Difference
Marital statuses	No difference	No difference	Difference	No difference
Areas	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference
School types	Difference	No difference	No difference	No difference
School levels	No difference	Difference	Difference	Difference
Employment contract types	No difference	No difference	No difference	No difference

The discussions on salary satisfaction of Vietnamese teachers reveal strengths and areas that remain to be considered in teacher salary policies. First, there is no difference in the average monthly income of teachers according to training level. This may indicate that current policies do not encourage teachers to improve their training. At the present time, these policies may be suitable for the conditions and goals of human resource development in Vietnam, but if this situation persists, it may lead to teachers lacking motivation to improve their qualifications. This finding is similar to the results of Hanushek in the United States, which found that graduate degrees do not often improve teaching effectiveness because they are obtained part-time with low academic requirements, which are suitable for working teachers [22]. Many master's programs focus on educational management rather than professional knowledge, so they have limited value in improving the quality of direct teaching in the classroom. Therefore, graduate degrees do not have much impact on the difference in salaries that teachers receive.

Second, the difference in the salaries of preschool teachers and high school teachers reflects signs that the current salary mechanism in Vietnam gives more priority to the high school level. In addition, the salary level of preschool teachers starts from a lower training level than the training level of high school teachers, which means that the qualifications requirements of preschool teachers are also lower than those of high school teachers. This also shows that the current interest in general education in Vietnam is higher than in preschool education. In addition, hiring contract teachers who are young, less experienced, and with lower educational qualifications and certificates is also a solution that some developing countries have adopted to overcome teacher shortages and limited budgets. However, scholars have raised concerns that this form of teacher recruitment may not be sustainable, and may have negative impacts on educational equity in terms of teacher distribution, teacher morale, and teacher professional status [23].

Third, teachers' satisfaction with salary level is only at a normal level, showing that at the present time, the salary system for Vietnamese teachers shows signs of only meeting workers' expectations at a moderate level, enough to cover living expenses but not competitive. Some teachers believe that their salary is still low compared to the effort they put in. This suggests a need for improvements in the salary structure, which could include adjusting the base salary, improving the salary increase process, and providing additional benefits. This result is reminiscent of the research of Hasanah & Supardi, because the salary satisfaction of Vietnamese teachers is also likely to fall to a similar level of dissatisfaction if there is no improvement [24]. However, the lack of clear differences in satisfaction levels between gender, marital status, region, education level and types of labor contracts shows that at least the current salary system in Vietnam there is no distinction in the above factors. This can be seen as a positive point about fairness in the current teacher salary policy in Vietnam. This result has certain similarities with the research of Mwamwenda and Gius, when showing that the level of salary satisfaction among teachers is not too much different [9], [10]. However, there is a difference in salary level satisfaction between school types, which is also a concern when the satisfaction of teachers in the non-public sector is higher than the satisfaction of public teachers. This shows that non-public schools have a better salary system than the public system. The results of this article are similar to those of Vedder & Hall and Tasdan & Tiryaki, with a sample of public school teachers in the USA, and Turkey, correspondingly [25], [26]. These findings support the view that there is a need to improve the salary satisfaction of teachers working in public schools [27]. But this is also a challenge for Vietnam's education system when the total number of preschool and high school teachers across the entire territory of Vietnam is currently approximately 1.4 million people, of which the public accounts for about 1.1 million people. If each teacher's salary increases by at least 900,000 VND/month, then each year, the state budget spent on teacher salaries needs to increase by at least 11,880 billion VND (an increase equivalent to about 4.3% compared to the previous year). Estimated budget expenditure for education and training in 2022, equal to about 0.116% compared to GDP in 2023). Therefore, increasing salaries for more than 1 million people is a big challenge for the state budget. Even in developed economies such as the United States, raising salaries for the large public school teaching workforce poses a major budgetary challenge [22]. Of course, increasing public school teachers' salaries would significantly improve their satisfaction, reduce the rate of teachers moonlighting and their financial stress. However, growing salaries without any conditions is not necessarily an effective policy to improve teachers' work performance and students' academic achievement in the long term [28], [29]. While in Vietnam, there is no significant difference in salary satisfaction between male and female teachers, the situation in the United States shows a much more complex picture. Research by Fox et al, pointed out an interesting paradox: although the K-12 education sector in the United States has a transparent salary system based on clear salary scales, and the majority of employees in the industry are women, the income gap between men and women still exists significantly [30]. Notably, this gap does not simply stem from direct discrimination in salary policies, but also from many deeper structural factors in society and educational institutions. Specifically, men tend to have more opportunities to advance to management positions, seek additional work outside of work hours, and are less affected by the burden of family responsibilities than women. These factors combine to create a significant income gap, showing that gender pay inequality is a complex challenge that requires comprehensive solutions that go beyond the mere framework of wage policy.

Fourth, there are differences in teachers' allowances between plains, mountainous areas and remote islands. Allowance policies for teachers in ethnic minority areas, economically disadvantaged areas, etc., which are higher than other areas, are a positive points for teachers in these areas to have the motivation to overcome difficulties cling to school and class; At the same time, it can attract more teachers to these areas to teach. This recommendation is similar to previous research by Hanushek, that suggests that policies should be in place to provide additional financial support to teachers in disadvantaged schools to reduce the risk of leaving the profession [31].

Besides the contents mentioned, this study also has certain limitations such as: Preschool teachers have a higher level of satisfaction than high school teachers in terms of teacher's engagement, openness and transparency of distribution, reasonableness of distribution rules, or the difference in satisfaction with openness and transparency of distribution of different marital statuses and the higher satisfaction of male teachers in reasonableness of distribution rules has not been clarified. The research also did not clarify teachers' salary policy expectations. The target group of teachers in continuing education centers in Vietnam has also not been mentioned in the study. This may suggest the research team for further studies.

4. CONCLUSION

Through an in-depth analysis of Vietnamese teachers' satisfaction with salary policies, the study has clarified the positive and negative aspects of the current salary policy system. On the positive side, the current salary policy demonstrates fairness because there is no income discrimination based on gender, marital status, and other demographic characteristics. At the same time, the regional allowance system has been somewhat effective in supporting and attracting teachers to work in disadvantaged and remote areas, contributing to

ensuring the quality of education nationwide. However, the study also pointed out worrying limitations in the current salary payment mechanism. Notably, the lack of income differentiation according to training level can negatively affect the motivation for professional development of the teaching staff. In addition, the salary gap between preschool and primary school teachers reflects a reality of uneven priorities between educational levels. In contrast, the average level of salary satisfaction shows that the current salary system has not met the expectations of workers.

These research results not only contribute to clarifying the current status of salary policy in the Vietnamese education sector but also lay the foundation for building a comprehensive policy framework, balancing the need to improve teachers' lives and the capacity of the state budget, while ensuring fairness and encouraging the professional development of future teachers.

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