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## **Motivations of International Students from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines in Selecting Teacher Education Programs**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In this study, we examined the motivations of students from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines in choosing to pursue undergraduate teacher education programs. Through a narrative inquiry approach, we collected data using focus group discussions with international student representatives from the three countries. Findings show that the common motivation of students from the three countries in choosing a teacher education study program was to improve the quality of education in their home countries and form a better next generation. However, there is a fundamental difference in the motivation behind their choices. Filipino students view teaching as a challenging and dynamic job, whereas Indonesian students are driven by religious calling, parental encouragement, and attractive work-hour flexibility. Thailand students, on the other hand, are more motivated by economic factors, the promise of increased self-esteem, and respect from society. This study provides valuable insights into understanding the motives for choosing a teacher education major for international students.*

**Keywords:** motivation, teacher education program, international students, Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

The issue of the teaching profession has become the focus of significant discussion in the ASEAN region (Postlethwaite et al., 2014). In Thailand, for example, the inequality of access to education between urban and rural areas and the gap in the quality of education between regions are the main obstacles faced by educators (Supakit Wittayasin, 2017). Moreover, in the Philippines, the lack of educational facilities and low teacher salaries are the main obstacles to retaining qualified teachers (Lorraine Pe Symaco, 2013). Indonesia, the world's fourth-most populous country, faces similar challenges. The number of teachers is not proportional to needs, especially in remote areas, and the difference in the quality of education between islands is a critical issue (Jakhongir Shaturayev, 2021). In addition, in each country, the application of educational technology and the lack of support for the development of the teaching profession significantly affect the quality of education at the national level (Ab Halim bin Tamuri & Norfaizah binti Othman, 2012).

Although the teaching profession in the ASEAN region faces several challenges, the loyalty of the community to educate children in teacher study programs in higher education remains high (Widiati Utami & Nur Hayati, 2016). This can be seen from the results of research by Kawuryan et al. (2012), which revealed an increase in the number of teacher education students in Indonesia every year. In addition, Sirait Swando's research succeeded in revealing a strong desire for high school graduates to pursue teacher education (Sirait Swando, 2016). Data from Stephen Raudenbush's study also show that universities with teacher training programs in Thailand often reject applicants because their quota has been met (Sinaga Bornok, 2021). This shows that the interest of the ASEAN community in studying teacher training programs remains high, despite the limitations in access to such education. In line with Bornok Sinaga's research, further efforts are needed to improve the quality of teacher education to meet the demands of the times and prepare prospective teachers with relevant competencies (Stephen Raudenbush, 2021).

Although the teaching profession in ASEAN countries has become the focus of attention, few studies have analyzed the comparative motivation of ASEAN students in choosing a teaching study program (Thongphukdee Chayapol, & Thanin Ratana O Larn, 2021). In fact, research comparing three countries with different religious characteristics, such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, is still very limited. Radcliffe Brown (1945) highlighted that the differences in the majority of religions are unique because there are unique factors that influence students' motivation to choose to teach, including cultural and religious influences. Therefore, further research on differences in motivation in choosing a teacher study program is important to provide deeper insights into the factors that motivate students to choose the teaching profession in ASEAN countries.

This study aims to analyze the various motivations of students from Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines in choosing a training teacher as their study program. International students from these three countries are selected with special consideration to explore the unique perspectives of each cultural context (Bob Scribner, 1982). The importance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the factors that influence international students' decisions to choose the field of teacher education, with the hope of improving cross-cultural

understanding in the context of education (Vance Randall, 2013). The study began with an in-depth description of how international students from Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand made the decision to join a teacher training program. Furthermore, it is critically analyzed to reveal reflections on the experiences of international students from all three countries.

## **Literature Review**

Researchers have paid considerable attention to the potential of teacher education programs create meaningful lives for the community. For example, Amzat Ismail et al. (2017) reported the tendency of Malaysian students to choose the teaching profession as a step to gain respect in society. The analysis of Malmberg Lars-Erik (2006) also shows that the teaching profession in Finland is considered a dream because it offers promising income for teachers. Candidus and Cummins, highlighted the psychological influence of increasing the number of applicants for teacher training programs in Nigerian universities (Candidus Nwakasi & Phyllis, 2018). This reflects the complexity and diversity of considerations that motivate individuals to choose a career path in education.

In their study, Robert and Gao concluded that there is a relationship between a person's motivation to become a teacher and Abraham Maslow's pyramid of basic needs (Robert Taormina, & Jennifer, 2013). Maslow's pyramid of needs organizes the hierarchy of human needs into five levels, ranging from physical needs to self-actualization needs (Saul McLeod, 2007). The relationship between Maslow's pyramid of needs and a person's motivation to become a teacher can be explained through the fulfillment of social needs and the need for self-actualization (Adiele & Nath Abraham, 2020). As teachers, one has the opportunity to positively influence their students, build meaningful social relationships and feel valued in the educational community (Aspy David, 1969). By meeting these social needs, a teacher can feel personal satisfaction and full achievement as an educator (Joseph Gawel, 2019). In addition, teaching and educational activities also provide opportunities to understand the deep meaning and purpose of life, in accordance with the level of self-actualization needs in Maslow's pyramid.

The pyramid of basic needs presented by Maslow was used as the basis for Dolman et al. in compiling motivational indicators. This includes a number of factors that can describe a person's level of drive or enthusiasm in achieving a goal or doing an activity (Dohlman Lena, 2019). Dolman et al. explained that key indicators of motivation involve an individual's level of interest and inclination toward a task or goal, the extent to which a person feels competent or confident in performing an activity, and the extent to which the results of the effort are considered valuable and meaningful. Similarly, Osemeke Monday and Samuel Adegboyega developed a motivation framework based on the level of determination and resistance to obstacles, and a focus on achieving goals is also a relevant motivational indicator (Monday Osemeke, & Samuel Adegboyega, 2017). Toni Watson asserts that internally motivated individuals tend to have a stronger and more consistent drive in pursuing their goals, whereas external

factors such as social support, recognition, or rewards can also play an important role in maintaining a person's motivation level (Tony Watson, 1996).

**METHOD**

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with focus groups as the main instrument for data collection (Norman Denzin & Katherine, 2007). The selection of in-depth focus group interviews was chosen because of the advantages of the approach, which allowed the researcher to detail and understand the respondents' frame of mind in a more holistic way. This decision is based on the superiority of methods that can provide a rich and in-depth context, enriching the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Manju Gundumogula, 2020). Therefore, it facilitates the capture of more nuanced and complex views of the focus group, opening up opportunities for more in-depth and interpretive analysis. The collected data were then analyzed with the help of Chat GPT. 4.0 to help find the right word and sentence arrangement while still being guided by the data presented by the research participants.

The focus group members we selected to outline their motivations for choosing a teaching major were third-year students with good English language skills, which is considered a critical stage in their academic journey. Students at this stage are believed to have developed a mature understanding of their field of study from the beginning of their university journey (Saunders, 2012). The twelve respondents involved in this study were from three different countries, with 4 Indonesia students from Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang, 4 Filipino students from the University of Technology Malaysia, and 4 Thailand students from Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang. All the selected respondents were students of the teacher study program at their respective institutions. The selection of focus group members is based on the need to obtain representative and diverse data on their motivations in the context of education in different countries (Hoepfl Marie, 1997).

**Table 1:** Demographic of Participants

No	Initials	Country of Origin	Places of Study	Age
1	I1	Indonesian	UIN Walisongo Semarang	24
2	I2	Indonesian	UIN Walisongo Semarang	23
3	I3	Indonesian	UIN Walisongo Semarang	24
4	I4	Indonesian	UIN Walisongo Semarang	21
5	F1	Philippines	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	25
6	F2	Philippines	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	27
7	F3	Philippines	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	26
8	F4	Philippines	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	23
9	T1	Thailand	UIN Walisongo Semarang	25
10	T2	Thailand	UIN Walisongo Semarang	26
11	T3	Thailand	UIN Walisongo Semarang	23
12	T4	Thailand	UIN Walisongo Semarang	22

Focus group discussions were conducted face-to-face in three sessions, each lasting 60–70 minutes for each country involved. After consent was obtained to record nonverbal expressions, each participant's response was recorded. A moderator guided the discussion, the focus of which was to explore students' motivation for choosing teacher training programs in the context of education in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Efforts are made to ensure that discussions cover only the main aspects that are relevant to the research objectives and avoid discussing unrelated matters. The data are recorded, and transcription is performed with the guidance of the moderator. The collected data were validated with a member checking and triangulation model. The data analysis process following the Miles and Huberman model includes three main steps: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn/verification. First, the data collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) were reduced, namely, selecting, focusing, and simplifying information according to the research objectives. Second, the data that have been reduced are presented in the form of matrices, tables, or narratives, making it easier to analyze further. Third, the researcher draws conclusions on the basis of patterns, themes, or relationships found in the data and verifies them to ensure the validity of the findings. This process takes place iteratively and continuously throughout the research. (Salmona & Kaczynski, 2024). Artificial intelligence (AI) is used to help compose more detailed and organized sentences and paragraphs through the Chat GPT. 4.0, while the research data are obtained directly according to the research rules described in the research methods section. By using Chat GPT 4.0, we have made every effort to maintain scientific ethics.

## **RESULTS**

### **Motivation of Indonesian students in participating in teacher education programs**

This study shows that the motivation of Indonesian students to participate in teacher training programs is based on social, religious, and patriotic motives. Informant I1 explained that the reason for choosing the teacher study program was to carry out a religious order. In the Islamic view, every individual is required to be able to provide benefits to others. I1 emphasized that being a teacher is considered an implementation of religious command because it involves aspects of teaching and mentoring that are considered positive in Islam. Thus, his decision to pursue this profession was not just a career choice but also a form of obedience to the religious teachings he believed. This can be interpreted as a representation of his personal commitment to religious values, which is reflected in his career choice as a teacher. It is said

"My religion (Islam) teaches *khoirunnas anfauhum linnas*, the best human being is a person who is beneficial to others. I think being a teacher truly represents this teaching because teachers teach knowledge that is very useful for our students".

I1's expression is in line with the reasoning given by informant I2. He

explained that being a teacher is a noble profession because it can guide other people's careers to be better. This is also the reason why parents of I2 informants always encourage their children to become teachers since their children are still in junior high school. According to her, the encouragement and blessing of her parents to become a teacher convinced her that this profession was the best choice for her. This phenomenon highlights the deep-rooted view of the public that the teaching profession in Indonesia has an important role in shaping the future of children. Informant I2 said that his parents always taught him that the decision to become a teacher was not only a job but also a vocation and dedication to educate and shape the next generation. This understanding reflects the values of care, responsibility and dedication inherent in the profession in Indonesia. I2 revealed,

"There are many reasons why I chose the teaching program as my place of study, including the support and encouragement from my parents. They have been telling me about the glory of the teaching profession since I was in junior high school, about eight years ago. I agree with my parents that being a teacher is not just a job but also a vocation and dedication to educate and shape the next generation".

Moreover, informant I3 explained that the most important reason for him to study in the teacher study program was job opportunities, which provided less working time than other jobs did. He believes that teachers work only Monday--Friday and still have two days off a week. Informant I3 explained that teachers have clear working time between the mornings at approximately 7:00 and 16:00. This provides an advantage because it makes it possible to maintain a balance between work and personal life. In addition, working hours that provide breaks are important for absorbing learning experiences, developing creativity, and maintaining mental and physical health. He emphasized that teacher training programs not only offer exciting career opportunities but also provide opportunities for individuals to achieve a healthy balance of life. I3 explained,

"The teacher program will take me to become a teacher. This is interesting because teachers' working hours are ideal in Indonesia because middle-level teachers work only during the day, Monday-Friday. It allows me to develop my potential".

The I4 informants had different reasons for choosing the teacher training program, which aimed to express their patriotic spirit. For him, taking a vocational program is not only about acquiring teaching skills as a teacher but also as a form of participation in developing the education sector in this country. He believes that through teaching, he can make a significant contribution to shaping the golden generation through the education system. In addition, a strong drive to prosper in society by applying good manners is a key factor that encourages him to choose this profession. This belief is in line with the goals of Indonesia's National Education, which emphasizes the importance of shaping the character and intelligence of the younger generation as the foundation for the nation's progress. Informant I4 explained,

"I took the teacher study program to have good teaching skills. This is important so that I can help the country create a quality generation through good teaching skills. It is important to achieve national education goals in Indonesia"

In response to the I4 informant's answer, the other participants strongly responded to his statement. In response, informant I2 gave his support by stating, "This is a very important reason, because a good generation will be born from quality teachers." This statement reflects the belief in the central role of education and the presence of competent educators in shaping a quality future. This view is in line with the perspective of the I1 informant, who emphasized that the challenges expressed by I4 must be overcome by the development of an effective teacher education program. I1 highlights the need for universities to provide programs that are able to improve students' teaching skills so that the teachers produced truly have the qualities needed to educate future generations.

In this context, the I5 informant added a relevant social dimension by stating that the desire to create a good generation through education is in line with community service efforts. I5 stated, "Teaching is a very influential part of community service; Without education, a country will find it difficult to develop." This statement emphasizes the close relationship between education and social progress, where the role of teachers as agents of social change is becoming increasingly significant. As such, the participants' serious response to the I4 statement reflected an awareness of the complexity of educational challenges and the need for collaboration in addressing them, underscoring the critical role of education in shaping a sustainable and competitive future.

### **Motivation of Thailand students in participating in teacher training programs**

This study successfully shows that the motivation of Thai students to major in teaching is related to respect and price, economic motives, and the need for self-actualization. The T1 informant, in a detailed interview, revealed that his decision to choose a teacher training program was not solely based on his love for education but rather on his aspiration to achieve a respected position in society. In this context, he expressed his belief that the teaching profession in Thailand has a highly valued reputation and is placed at a high level of social status. For T1, being a teacher is not only a job but also a path to recognition and respect from the community. This positive outlook on the teaching profession provides additional motivation for T1 to pursue higher education, with the hope that his investment in learning will lead him to a respected and recognized role in Thailand's social fabric. T1 revealed,

"I want to be a teacher, that is why I joined this program. Of course not without reason, but because in Thailand, in almost every district, teachers have a very honorable and highly valued position".

Meanwhile, the T2 informant said that the reason for participating in the teacher education program is closely related to the guarantee of teacher professional income in Thailand. On the basis of the discussion he had with his parents, who are also teachers, informant T2 explained that the salary of teachers in Thailand reached 21,950 THB or approximately 625.29 USD (2024 exchange rate) in one month. This far exceeds the average teacher income in various

ASEAN countries, such as Cambodia, Laos and even Indonesia. In addition to the basic salary, this income does not include overtime pay, bonuses, or honorariums for administering exams, which can be a significant addition for teachers in Thailand. The T2 informant emphasized that economic security provides stability and certainty, which in turn makes it easier for a person to achieve happiness in daily life. This finding shows that the motivation of Thailand students to participate in teacher training programs is driven not only by an interest in education but also by the aspiration to achieve economic prosperity, which can bring happiness to their lives.

"It needs to be said honestly that my main motive for teaching is the security of the income of the teaching profession in Thailand. My parents are teachers and earn approximately 21,950 THB per month. This is important for me to pay attention to because economic security will have a great impact on a person's happiness level."

For the same reason, the T3 informant admitted that his main goal in choosing the teacher study program was related to career opportunities and the ease of obtaining a job: "I took this major because I needed a promising job in the future". However, he did not deny that other reasons related to the desire to devote themselves to the community were very high. He explained that his religion (Buddhism) teaches that humans living in this world can provide benefits, at least for the people around them. This is also encouraged by the teachings of his parents, who emphasize that their children always teach virtue to anyone. On this basis, he feels that taking a teacher education program is a choice that is in accordance with his vision and mission in life. Informant T3 said,

"Being kind is a religious commandment, my parents always said that we can teach kindness to anyone. I feel that the teaching profession is a choice that is in line with my vision and mission in life".

Meanwhile, informant I4 gave different reasons from his three friends. He stated that the decision to take a teaching study program is related to the need for self-actualization. It has to do with the drive of the individual to reach maximum potential in his field, gain personal satisfaction, and pursue deep interests. Informant I4 expressed the importance of embracing passion in determining the path of education, along with acknowledging that choosing a major is not only about meeting the demands of the job market but also embracing personal values and interests for the formation of personal identity and happiness.

"The choice of teacher study program is related to self-actualization; I feel free to make choices, and I find this freedom in my life purpose to become a teacher".

In response to T4's expression, T2's informant described his views on his religious teachings, Buddhism, as the path to happiness in life. According to him, choosing this path is a wise decision because it can lead individuals to freedom that goes hand in hand with happiness without violating religious norms. This view reflects a deep understanding of how religious teachings can guide the achievement of happiness, taking into account spiritual and moral values. On the other hand, the response of the I1 informant highlighted another aspect of life, namely, the role of a teacher. I1 emphasized that being a teacher is not only about



self-actualization but also about one's readiness to become a role model for one's students. This statement shows an understanding of the moral and social responsibilities inherent in the role of an educator, which not only shapes a career but also shapes positive character and values in the next generation.

### **Motivation of Filipino students in participating in teacher education programs**

On the basis of the results of in-depth discussions with teacher students from the Philippines, this study shows that the motives of Filipino teacher students in taking a teacher study program are focused on the aspects of meeting psychological needs, the desire to contribute to improving the welfare of Filipino society, and career motives to find a job that is not monotonous. The F1 informant explained that he was interested in participating in the teaching program because he was motivated by elementary school teachers in the past. She saw that her female teacher looked happy when interacting with young students. According to him, this happens because the interaction has a positive impact because it can help support children's development, creating a supportive and fun learning environment. Experiences such as this are the basis for why F1 informants want to become teachers because, according to him, being a teacher makes it easier to find happiness in life through a positive contribution to children's growth and learning. In addition, being a teacher gives him the opportunity to continue learning and develop personally, enriching his knowledge in the field of education.

"I chose the teacher study program because it truly helped me find happiness. " I like children because of their innocence and cute faces; by becoming a teacher, I will meet them often".

The F2 informant firmly stated that his decision to join the teacher study program had a strong background. According to him, this ambition does not come from personal desires but is part of his determination to contribute to improving the quality of education in the Philippines. With the belief that the role of teachers is the main key in shaping human quality, F2 believes that if teachers have good quality, the overall quality of education will improve. According to him, this is the basis for creating a superior and quality generation. In terms of the quality of education, F2 feels encouraged to participate in efforts to improve the quality of education in the environment where he or she lives. In addition, her strong desire to educate children who have skipped school is an additional encouragement that motivates her to pursue her dreams. The F2 educational journey is aimed not only at personal achievement but also at a real commitment to play an active role in creating positive change in the Philippine education system. F2 revealed,

"It is important for me to pay attention to children who drop out of school, either due to economic factors or a messy family. " The teacher program will help me provide capital to become a good education, which can provide opportunities for them to stay educated".

For different reasons, the F3 informant explained that his goal in taking the teacher study program was an opportunity to find a job that was not monotonous. According to him, being a teacher is a very dynamic job because it involves continuous interaction with students who have various characters and learning needs. The F3 informant imagines that every day, a teacher is faced with new challenges that require creativity and adaptability to create an effective learning environment. In addition, the teaching process involves preparing relevant and interesting learning materials, understanding students' learning styles, and developing teaching methods that are appropriate for student development. From practical field experience, the F3 informant concluded that teachers act as guides, advisors, and motivators, helping students overcome learning obstacles and inspiring them to reach their best potential. This diversity of duties and responsibilities is what makes the job of a teacher interesting and challenging every day. F3 explained,

"Being a teacher is fun and not boring. From my experience taking part in teaching practice in high school, I find it fun because there are always different challenges every day. This is closely related to the different characteristics and dispositions of students".

In response to F3's argument, the F4 informant expressed his agreement by saying "finding a job that is not monotonous has great relevance in improving one's quality of life and job satisfaction." F4 informants emphasized that nonmonotonous work involves a variety of tasks and challenges that can stimulate professional growth and creativity. In a dynamic work environment, individuals have the opportunity to develop a wide range of skills, expand their knowledge, and increase their resilience to change. According to him, being a teacher can help prevent fatigue and boredom, which can result in a decrease in motivation and productivity. By providing variety in daily tasks, a teacher can feel more engaged in their work, increase their sense of accomplishment, and foster a passion for sustainable development. In conclusion, F3 and F4 informants explained the importance of finding a job that provides space for exploration, challenges and personal growth so that a person can achieve success and happiness in their career.

At the end of the discussion session, the F1, F3, and F4 informants agreed that the teacher study program they took was closely related to the social, geographical, and religious context. The Philippines, as a culturally and ethnically diverse country, encourages students to choose a teaching path as a way to contribute to the development of their society. Social conditions involving economic and educational inequality can be a major trigger, where the desire to inspire future generations and reduce educational disparities is a strong motivation. In addition, the geography of the Philippines, which often consists of hard-to-reach rural areas and has limited access to high-quality education, encourages students to teach in hopes of helping improve the educational situation in the area. In a religious context, strong religious values can also be a driving factor, with the belief that being an educator is a way to serve society and achieve spiritual goals.

## DISCUSSION

This study shows that students from the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia have the same motivation in deciding to participate in teacher training programs. This unity of purpose is seen in their aspirations to improve the quality of education in their respective countries, which reflects a shared desire to shape the next generation better and achieve the educational goals of each country. The informants from the three countries agreed that choosing a teacher training program is not only a career choice but also a manifestation of a deep desire to make a positive contribution to society. This decision can be considered a tangible manifestation of their service to society, signaling that their commitment to play an active role in creating positive change through education (James Mayall, 1990).

The similarity of reasons for students from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines choosing teacher education programs can be explained by the similar geographical, social, and cultural conditions in these ASEAN countries (Mie Oba, 2019). Geographically, these three countries have regional contexts that tend to affect educational needs and challenges. In addition, similarities in social and cultural structures in ASEAN create a uniform mindset among students, sparking their interest in pursuing teacher education programs (Busapathumrong Pattamaporn, 2012). These factors shape the common needs and social conditions of the surrounding community (Stefan Rother, 2012), making the decision to choose teaching as a relevant study program option and in accordance with the demands of the same regional context.

Despite these similarities, there are different motives that explain why students from the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia choose to participate in teacher education programs. Filipino students see teaching as a dynamic and nonmonotonous job, which presents the potential for self-development through new challenges every day. For them, being a teacher also means undertaking entertaining tasks, interacting with children who have unique characters every day (Juncal Cuñado and Fernando Pérez, 2012). On the other hand, Indonesian students are inspired by their religious vocation and the high value placed on the teaching profession in the eyes of God. Encouragement from parents, low working hours, and free time are important factors in their decisions. Moreover, Thai students choose teacher training with economic motives because the teaching profession is rewarded with a decent income, a sense of self-esteem, and respect from society, which is also a form of self-actualization (Juul, 1959).

The results of this study reinforce the findings of Vesamavibool (2015). Studies have shown that the high salary level of teachers in Thailand has a positive effect on people's interest in sending their children to teacher training colleges. Research by Daungkaew, Ratana, and Annop Jeenawathana revealed that the average income of teachers in Thailand reaches 9.5 million rupiah per month, almost double the income of public teachers in Indonesia (Agustina Pitriyani, et al., 2012). In addition to the financial aspect, Gurevichnoted that Robert (1975) also supported this research by highlighting the high prestige that Thailand society gives teachers. This shows that teachers in Thailand are highly valued, a concept that is in stark contrast to reality in Indonesia, as explained by Agi et al., where

teachers are faced with honorary status with minimal salaries, creating a situation where teachers are often ridiculed by society because of their profession (Agi Septina Nugraheni & Wiwien Dinar, 2019).

Although some of the findings are in line with previous research, this study highlights significant differences from the analysis of Kongcharoen et al. (2020), which showed that teachers in Thailand are faced with a high workload, including taking exams and other responsibilities in school. In contrast, this study shows that students in Thailand remain motivated to choose a teaching major because they feel that the teaching profession there provides freedom and convenience to actualize themselves through career development.

In the context of education in Indonesia and the Philippines, this study confirms the analysis of David Morgan (2012) that adherence to divine values makes people want to be useful to others. This study challenges the findings of Assagaf et al., (2015) that low salaries can make teacher education programs lose interest in Indonesia. Instead, the study suggests that parents' incentive to send their children to teacher education programs is a stronger reason than salary considerations alone. The findings also reveal a similarity in motivation between Indonesian and Filipino teacher education students, who emphasize comfort at work rather than salary. This result also contrasts with the findings of Majorsy Ursa (2011), who highlighted that salary is the main factor in choosing a job whereas this study shows that comfort also plays an important role in work rather than salary. These findings contrast with previous research that showed that the main factor in choosing a job was income/salary, not convenience.

The results of this study can be attributed to Maslow's theory of basic needs, which organizes the hierarchy of human needs from the most basic to the highest. The motivation of students from these three countries reflects the fulfillment of different levels of needs in this hierarchy. Filipino students who view teaching as a dynamic job can be associated with the need for self-actualization or the fulfillment of personal potential, which is at the top of the hierarchy (Joseph Gawel, 2019). Indonesian students, who are inspired by religious vocations and parental encouragement, describe the need for affiliation and security (Lena Dohlman, 2019). On the other hand, more economically motivated Thai students reflect the fulfillment of physical and security needs, which are at a lower level in Maslow's hierarchy (Anjanaben Trivedi & Amit Mehta, 2019). Thus, the findings of this study suggest that the choice of teacher training program can be understood through the lens of Maslow's basic needs theory, highlighting the complexity of the factors that motivate individuals to continue their education.

The results of this study have significant implications for the development of education in these three ASEAN countries. For Indonesia, it is recommended that the government prioritize increasing teachers' wages to increase the prestige of the profession in society. This is considered a strategic step to restore public interest in sending their children to teacher training programs (Qonitah Cahyaning Tyas, 2023). In addition, Indonesia's educational institutions must integrate more religious elements and moral values into the curriculum because religious elements are the main motivation for students to choose teacher training programs (Meiliyani & Puspita, 2021). For the Philippine government, it is important for educational institutions to provide learning experiences that reflect the dynamics of the teaching profession, emphasizing the challenges and uniqueness of the profession to spread the welfare of teachers to remote villages. For Thai students, institutions need to maintain a focus on the economic and social rewards of teacher

study programs, providing practical insights into the financial benefits and social rewards that can be earned as teachers. This approach is expected to create an educational environment that supports a variety of student motives, ensuring that they feel connected to the values on which their professional choice in teaching is based (Arman et al., 2023).

## **CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that students from the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia have the same motivation in choosing a teacher training program. They are united in their determination to improve the quality of education in their home countries, which reflects a shared desire to shape a better next generation. The three countries agreed that choosing a teacher training program is not only a career choice but also a manifestation of a deep desire to make a positive contribution to society. This decision signifies their commitment to play an active role in creating positive change through education. Despite these similarities, different motives explain why students from the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia choose teacher training programs. Filipino students see the teaching profession as a dynamic job that is not monotonous, providing opportunities for self-development through new challenges every day. For them, being a teacher also means doing entertaining tasks and interacting with children who have unique characters every day. In contrast, Indonesian students are inspired by religious callings. In addition, encouragement from parents, low working hours, and leisure time are also important factors in their choice. Moreover, Thailand students choose teacher study programs with economic motives because their teachers are rewarded with a decent income, a sense of self-esteem, and respect from society, as well as a form of self-actualization.

Although this study succeeded in finding differences in motivation for choosing teacher education majors in Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, it has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the limited number of countries involved in this study may reduce the generalizability of the findings, given that contextual variations between countries can have a significant effect on the motivation to choose a teacher training major. In addition, data collection methods through in-depth discussions are sometimes susceptible to respondent bias and are difficult to measure objectively. For this reason, future research is recommended to expand the scope of the countries studied, use more structured and measurable data collection methods, and consider broader contextual factors. A deeper understanding of motivational variability at the global level can contribute more substantially to the development of more effective and inclusive education policies.

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