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Teachers' Perceptions of School Directors' Leadership Practices and Morale in Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study described teachers' perceptions of school directors' leadership practices and teachers' own morale in Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools, and compared perceptions of leadership across teacher characteristics. A quantitative descriptive and comparative design was used. A sample of 452 teachers was drawn from a population of 4,524 teaching staff across 50 Secondary Resource Schools in five regional clusters of Cambodian provinces, using stratified random sampling with simple random selection by lot within each province. Teachers rated their directors' leadership practices using the Leadership Practices Inventory, Observer form, and reported their own morale using the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire. Both instruments were back-translated and field tested in Khmer, and piloted with 58 teachers before full administration. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA. Teachers rated all five leadership practices as high, with Encouraging the Heart rated highest and Challenging the Process rated lowest, and perceptions did not differ significantly by gender, age, educational level, or years of teaching experience. Teacher morale was also rated high overall, led by Satisfaction with Teaching and Rapport among Teachers, while Teacher Rapport with the School Director and School Facilities and Services were rated lowest. Interviews with a subset of teachers and directors showed shared emphasis on teacher quality and collaborative culture, alongside differing views on school community and effective leadership. The findings describe an under-researched school type and point to director responsiveness as an area for development.

Keywords: Cambodia, Leadership Practices, Secondary Resource Schools, Teacher Morale, Teacher Perceptions

INTRODUCTION

Global commitment to education has grown around a shared understanding that inclusive and equitable quality education, together with lifelong learning opportunities for all, is central to sustainable development (Zickafoose et al., 2024). This commitment is reflected in the United Nations global goals for 2030, of which education is one of 17. The ASEAN education platform likewise declared seven priority areas for 2015 to 2030, namely early childhood care and education, addressing barriers to inclusion, resiliency in the face of emergencies, technical and vocational education and training, revitalizing teacher education, harmonization in higher education and research, and adoption of a twenty-first century curriculum (Nadhira, 2021). Cambodia localized these 2030 goals through the National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023, which was aligned with phase IV of the Rectangular Strategy and named seven education priorities (Nhil, 2021). These were teachers, construction of primary schools, inspection, technical education, response to the labour market, the curriculum framework, and preparation for the 2023 Southeast Asian Games (Chhy & Kawai, 2025). Policy targets of this kind are realized only when schools put them into practice. Research on Cambodian schools has examined the practices of school directors and the perceptions of teachers who work under them (Khan et al., 2024; Om, 2022). Work on organizational performance in Cambodia also treats motivation and organizational support as factors that shape performance (Bunteng, 2022).

The school is where much educational change begins and where the quality of human resources is built. Students gain knowledge through the teaching they receive in class, yet school administration also contributes to their success (Parveen et al., 2024). The school director carries responsibilities in leadership, administration, communication, and support, and must gain the backing of many stakeholders. As leader and manager, the director oversees the curriculum, school culture, staff, co-curricular activities, and public relations. A good director needs a clear vision of where the school is heading and the ability to turn available resources into action. A director cannot reach these goals alone and must work together with teachers. Om (2022) examined the effective leadership and management practices of school directors, and the challenges they face, in Cambodian primary schools. Khan et al. (2024) studied how teachers in Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools perceive their directors' instructional leadership and how these perceptions relate to teacher commitment. One framework that describes leadership as a set of observable practices is the exemplary leadership model of Kouzes and Posner (2023), which identifies five practices and is measured through the Leadership Practices Inventory.

How teachers experience their work is closely tied to how they are led. Duraku and Hoxha (2021) surveyed 357 Kosovar public middle school teachers and found that idealised influence and inspirational motivation predicted autonomous

work motivation, individual consideration predicted motivation for complementary tasks, and contingent reward predicted motivation for student evaluations. Yohannes and Wasonga (2023) examined the relationship between leadership styles and teacher job satisfaction in Ethiopian schools. In Cambodia, Bunteng (2022) included motivation and organizational support among the factors that affect organizational performance. These studies come from different settings, but each treats the motivational and affective state of staff as central to how organizations function. In education, this state is captured by the concept of teacher morale, which is the focus of the present study.

The studies summarized above differ in setting, leadership framework, and outcome. Duraku and Hoxha (2021) combined a multifactor leadership measure with a work motivation scale in Kosovo. Yohannes and Wasonga (2023) focused on leadership styles and job satisfaction in Ethiopia. Om (2022) documented directors' effective practices and challenges in Cambodian primary schools, and Khan et al. (2024) examined instructional leadership, regional variation, and teacher commitment in Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools. Three patterns follow from this body of work. Leadership is studied through many different frameworks, the outcomes are usually motivation, satisfaction, or commitment, and the Cambodian evidence concentrates on primary schools or on instructional leadership. In the studies summarized here, teacher morale, understood as a profile across several dimensions, was not the focal outcome.

This leaves a gap in what is known about Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools. Cambodian research on education and performance has grown across levels, including studies of students in higher education, directors in primary schools, and teachers in Secondary Resource Schools (Bunteng, 2022; Khan et al., 2024; Om, 2022). Even so, little is known about how teachers in Secondary Resource Schools describe their own morale, how they perceive their directors across the five exemplary leadership practices, or whether these perceptions differ across teacher characteristics. To the authors' knowledge, the Leadership Practices Inventory and the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire have not been used together to describe these schools. Without such a description, directors and education authorities lack a baseline for deciding where to direct support.

The purpose of this study was therefore to describe teachers' perceptions of their directors' leadership practices, to describe teachers' morale, and to compare perceptions of leadership across teacher characteristics. Three research questions guided the study. First, how do teachers perceive the five leadership practices of their school directors? Second, what levels of morale do teachers report across the six dimensions of the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire? Third, do teachers' perceptions of leadership practices differ by gender, age, educational level, and years of teaching experience? The findings can inform director development and school support in a school type that Khan et al. (2024) and Om (2022) have only begun to address for Cambodia, and they add to the growing Cambodian evidence base that

includes the studies of Bunteng (2022, 2023). The next section reviews the literature that frames these questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation of the Leadership Practices Inventory

The Leadership Practices Inventory rests on five practices identified by Kouzes and Posner (2023), namely modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Each practice is measured through six statements rated on a ten-point scale from almost never to almost always. The normative data come from 2,876 respondents, of whom 708 completed the self-version and 2,168 completed the observer version. Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients for each practice. Scores are the sum of six items and therefore range from 6 to 60. Reliability coefficients ranged from .70 to .91 across the three versions, and they remain the reference point for later applications of the instrument.

Table 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Reliability Indices for the Leadership Practices Inventory

LPI Practice	Mean	SD	LPI (N = 2,876)	LPI-Self (N = 708)	LPI-Other (N = 2,168)
Modeling the Way	22.30	4.10	.80	.72	.81
Inspiring a Shared Vision	20.01	5.04	.88	.83	.89
Challenging the Process	22.53	3.95	.77	.73	.79
Enabling Others to Act	23.68	4.23	.84	.70	.86
Encouraging the Heart	22.31	4.92	.90	.84	.91

Source: (Kouzes & Posner, 2023)

The exemplary practices belong to a family of behavioral leadership models, including transformational leadership, that treat leadership as observable behavior rather than fixed traits. This shared logic means that evidence produced with related instruments can inform, without directly validating, the use of the Leadership Practices Inventory in the present study. The next subsection reviews how such behaviors have been linked to teacher outcomes in Asian school systems.

Leadership and Teacher Outcomes in Asian School Systems

Firmansyah et al. (2022) synthesized 65 independent studies conducted in Asia and found that transformational school leadership positively influenced teacher job satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy. Alanoglu (2022) conducted a meta-analytic review of the role of instructional leadership in increasing teacher self-efficacy. These two syntheses show that Asian research has linked principal

leadership to teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their work, using both transformational and instructional models.

Amzat et al. (2022) examined the effect of principal instructional and distributed leadership on the professional development of teachers in Jakarta, a Southeast Asian setting that is closer to Cambodia than most of the settings covered by the wider literature. The studies reviewed here concentrate on job satisfaction, commitment, self-efficacy, and professional development. Teacher morale, understood as a profile across several dimensions of school life, is less often the focal outcome. The next subsection defines morale and describes how it is measured.

Teacher Morale and the Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire

Teacher morale is conceptually distinct from job satisfaction and commitment. It reflects a general affective and motivational state toward the work environment, including relationships, working conditions, and perceived support, rather than a single judgment about the job (Castro et al., 2023; Thakur & Sharma, 2025). The Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire developed by Bentley and Rempel (1980) measures morale across several dimensions. This study used a 36-item version with six dimensions of six items each, namely teacher rapport with the school director, satisfaction with teaching, rapport among teachers, curriculum issues, community support of education, and school facilities and services.

The dimensions differ in how far they depend on the director. Rapport with the director reflects the director's behavior directly, rapport among teachers reflects the peer culture, and community support and facilities depend heavily on resources and policy (Zulu et al., 2025). Reporting morale as a profile across dimensions therefore shows which aspects are strong and which are weak, whereas a single score would hide these differences (Mokhtar et al., 2023). This is also why morale is treated here as an outcome in its own right rather than as a substitute for the satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy outcomes reviewed above.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative descriptive and comparative survey design in which numerical data were collected from a defined group of teachers using standardized instruments to answer the research questions (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024; Gliner et al., 2016). Data were collected once, so the design is cross-sectional. The survey data were supplemented with interviews from a small subset of participants.

The population consisted of 4,524 teaching staff in 50 Secondary Resource Schools across five regional groups of Cambodian provinces. The sample was drawn using stratified random sampling. The population was first stratified by province, and 10 percent of each province was then selected through simple random sampling by drawing lots, which produced a final sample of 452 teaching staff, as

shown in Table 2. The 50 school directors are described only to identify the schools sampled and were not survey respondents. All survey data came from the sampled teachers, who rated their own director's leadership practices on the LPI-Observer form and reported their own morale on the Purdue Teacher Opinionaire. A subset of 16 teachers and 8 school directors was also invited to in-depth interviews.

Table 2 The Sample Classified by Region and Province

No.	Region	Province	Teaching Staff Population	Teaching Staff Sample
1	Kandal	Kandal	383	38
		Koh Kong	151	15
		Phnom Penh	453	45
		Prey Veng	257	26
		Svay Rieng	233	23
2	Kampong Cham	Kampong Cham	253	25
		Kratie	76	8
		Mondol Kiri	58	6
		Ratanak Kiri	92	9
		Stung Treng	95	9
		Tboung Khmoum	163	16
3	Takeo	Kampong Speu	111	11
		Kompot	156	16
		Preah Sihanouk	156	16
		Takeo	155	16
		Kep	71	7
4	Battambang	Bantheay Meanchey	190	19
		Battambang	283	28
		Kampong Chhnang	207	21
		Pursat	152	15
		Pailin	109	11
5	Siem Reap	Kampong Thom	218	22
		Preah Vihear	147	15
		Siem Reap	258	26
		Udor Meanchey	97	10
Total			4,524	452

Source: Processed by the researchers (2026)

Note. Province sample figures were rounded from 10 percent of each population, so they sum to 453, while the total reflects the final sample of 452

Two instruments were selected for their reliability, validity, and fit with the purpose of the study (Babbie, 2020; Newman & Ridenour, 1998). The Leadership Practices Inventory, in its observer form, contains 30 statements that measure teachers' perceptions of their director's practices across the five leadership practices, with six statements per practice. The Purdue Teacher Opinionaire measured

teachers' self-reported morale through 36 statements across six dimensions of six statements each. For both instruments, responses were recorded on a five-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the statements were presented in random order. The forms were back-translated to minimize ambiguity and error, and the Khmer versions were field tested.

Before full administration, the questionnaires were piloted with 58 teachers selected through purposive sampling from three Secondary Resource Schools in three provinces (Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Cronbach's alpha was used to check reliability, and a coefficient of .70 or higher was taken as the minimum acceptable level (George & Mallery, 2019). The final questionnaire was then distributed to the sampled teachers. Incomplete cases were removed during data cleaning, and all analyses used the final sample of 452 teachers. Data were analyzed with SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics included frequency, mean, and standard deviation. Means were interpreted with five intervals, where 1.00 to 1.49 was very low, 1.50 to 2.49 low, 2.50 to 3.49 moderate, 3.50 to 4.49 high, and 4.50 to 5.00 very high. Independent samples t-tests compared perceptions by gender, and one-way ANOVA compared perceptions by age, educational level, and years of teaching experience, with an alpha level of .05 for all tests (Gall et al., 2003). Interview responses were summarized into themes and compared across teachers and directors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived Leadership Practices of School Directors

The 452 teachers rated their directors' leadership practices on the LPI-Observer. The overall mean was 3.66 (SD = 0.72), which falls in the high range. Of the 30 items, 27 were rated high and three were rated moderate. The highest rated items were item 29, on helping people grow by learning new skills (M = 3.87, SD = 0.88), and item 5, on praising people for a job well done (M = 3.87, SD = 0.89), followed by item 4, on building cooperative relationships (M = 3.80, SD = 0.92). The lowest rated items were item 28, on experimenting and taking risks (M = 3.38, SD = 0.97), item 19, on supporting decisions people make on their own (M = 3.43, SD = 0.90), and item 16, on asking for feedback about the effect of one's actions on others (M = 3.48, SD = 0.90). These were the only moderate items, and each came from a different dimension.

At the dimension level, all five practices were rated high, as shown in Table 3. Encouraging the Heart received the highest mean (M = 3.71, SD = 0.77) and Challenging the Process the lowest (M = 3.60, SD = 0.73). The gap between the highest and lowest dimension was only 0.11 points, so the five practices were perceived as being used with similar frequency. The spread of items within each dimension was more informative. Inspiring a Shared Vision was the most uniform, with item means between 3.64 and 3.73. Challenging the Process and Enabling Others to Act showed the widest internal spread, at 0.41 and 0.44 points. Within

Challenging the Process, directors were rated high for searching outside the school for innovative ways to improve (item 13, $M = 3.79$) but lowest for taking risks (item 28, $M = 3.38$). Within Enabling Others to Act, directors were rated high for developing people (item 29, $M = 3.87$) and cooperative relationships (item 4, $M = 3.80$) but lower for supporting people's own decisions (item 19, $M = 3.43$) and giving freedom in how work is done (item 24, $M = 3.54$). Within Modeling the Way, setting a personal example (item 1) and ensuring adherence to agreed standards (item 6) were both rated 3.78, while asking for feedback (item 16) was rated 3.48.

Table 3 Teachers' Perceptions of School Directors' Leadership Practices by Dimension (N = 452)

Leadership practice	M	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Encouraging the Heart	3.71	0.77	High	1
Inspiring a Shared Vision	3.68	0.71	High	2
Modeling the Way	3.67	0.74	High	3
Enabling Others to Act	3.66	0.78	High	4
Challenging the Process	3.60	0.73	High	5
Overall	3.66	0.72	High	

Source: Analyzed by the researchers (2026)

Differences by Teacher Characteristics

Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA examined whether teachers' perceptions of their directors differed by gender, age, educational level, and years of teaching experience. As Table 4 shows, none of the 20 comparisons reached statistical significance at the .05 level. Male and female teachers gave almost identical ratings on four of the five practices. The largest gender gap appeared for Modeling the Way, where female teachers ($n = 180$) gave a slightly higher rating than male teachers ($n = 272$), at 3.72 and 3.64, but the difference was not significant, $t = -1.25$, $p = .21$. The comparisons by years of teaching experience came closest to significance, for Encouraging the Heart ($F = 2.49$, $p = .08$) and Enabling Others to Act ($F = 2.15$, $p = .11$), although neither met the threshold.

Table 4 Differences in Perceived Leadership Practices by Teacher Characteristics

Leadership practice	Gender, t (p)	Age, F (p)	Education, F (p)	Experience, F (p)
Modeling the Way	-1.25 (.21)	0.71 (.49)	0.58 (.55)	0.83 (.43)
Inspiring a Shared Vision	-0.30 (.76)	0.25 (.77)	1.02 (.36)	1.10 (.33)
Challenging the Process	0.04 (.97)	0.18 (.83)	0.69 (.50)	1.71 (.18)
Enabling Others to Act	-0.27 (.79)	0.35 (.70)	0.16 (.84)	2.15 (.11)

Leadership practice	Gender, t (p)	Age, F (p)	Education, F (p)	Experience, F (p)
Encouraging the Heart	0.21 (.83)	0.75 (.47)	0.01 (.98)	2.49 (.08)

Source: Processed by the researchers (2026)

Note. Gender was compared using independent samples t-tests (males $n = 272$, females $n = 180$). Age, education, and experience were compared using one-way ANOVA with $df = 2, 449$.

Teacher Morale Levels

Teachers reported their own morale on the 36-item Purdue Teacher Opinionnaire. The overall mean was 3.80 ($SD = 0.57$), which is high. Table 5 shows that all six dimensions were rated high, and they fell into two tiers. Satisfaction with Teaching ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.60$) and Rapport among Teachers ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.65$) formed the upper tier. Community Support of Education ($M = 3.73$), Curriculum Issues ($M = 3.72$), School Facilities and Services ($M = 3.67$), and Teacher Rapport with the School Director ($M = 3.67$) formed a tighter lower tier.

Item-level results add detail to this pattern. Within Satisfaction with Teaching, every item exceeded 3.85. Teachers were most positive about being satisfied with their teaching career (item 32, $M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.76$), about teaching as a way to contribute to society (item 8, $M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.78$), and about their contact with students (item 14, $M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.72$). Within Rapport among Teachers, accepting new and younger colleagues received the highest rating (item 15, $M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.76$). Within Teacher Rapport with the School Director, teachers rated the director's effort to maintain close contact with them highest (item 7, $M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.92$). They rated lowest the director's concern for teachers' problems and sympathetic handling of them (item 19, $M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.96$), and their freedom to approach the director about personal and group welfare (item 31, $M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.90$).

Within Curriculum Issues, the highest rating went to the curriculum's success in preparing students to become competent citizens (item 28, $M = 4.06$, $SD = 0.79$). Community Support of Education showed the widest gap between attitude and action. Teachers agreed that the community was willing to support the school (item 35, $M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.72$), yet they gave the lowest rating of all 36 items to the community's financial support (item 23, $M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.91$). Within School Facilities and Services, textbooks were rated highest (item 36, $M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.93$), while computers and projector equipment were rated low and drew the most varied responses of any item (item 18, $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.04$).

Table 5 Teachers' Morale Levels by PTO Dimension ($N = 452$)

PTO dimension	M	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Satisfaction with Teaching	4.07	0.60	High	1
Rapport among Teachers	3.97	0.65	High	2

PTO dimension	M	SD	Interpretation	Rank
Community Support of Education	3.73	0.62	High	3
Curriculum Issues	3.72	0.57	High	4
School Facilities and Services	3.67	0.68	High	5 (tied)
Teacher Rapport with the School Director	3.67	0.74	High	5 (tied)
Overall	3.80	0.57	High	

Source: Processed by the researchers (2026)

Interview Themes

The 16 teachers and 8 school directors who took part in in-depth interviews named three shared themes as central to school quality, namely the quality of teachers, a collaborative school culture, and a supportive student culture. The groups diverged on what else mattered. Directors stressed building a strong school community, which they linked to the role of Secondary Resource Schools as community centers where families and teachers live close together. They also valued service-learning partnerships with local organizations. Teachers raised neither theme. Teachers instead emphasized a positive school climate in which they feel valued and appreciated, and they described effective school leadership as something that supports them in their roles. Directors did not identify effective leadership as a theme.

Teachers described their directors as using all five leadership practices on a regular basis, and the ratings were closely grouped. This pattern supports the view that the exemplary practices framework of Kouzes and Posner (2023) captures behaviors that teachers in a Cambodian setting recognize, and it extends the documented use of the framework to Secondary Resource Schools. The Asian syntheses reviewed earlier link principal leadership to teachers' job satisfaction, commitment, and self-efficacy and link instructional leadership to teacher self-efficacy (Alanoglu, 2022; Firmansyah et al., 2022). Like those studies, the present study treats leadership as behavior that teachers can observe and rate. Its contribution is to describe how teachers perceive specific practices in a Southeast Asian public school system.

The item-level results show where directors are strongest and weakest. Developing people, recognizing contributions, and building cooperative relationships were rated highest. Taking risks, seeking feedback, and leaving decisions to teachers were rated lowest. The first group of behaviors is directive and affirming, while the second requires directors to share discretion and to hear teachers' views. A plausible reading is that directors in a centrally administered public system have limited room to experiment and delegate, but this explanation was not tested here. Amzat et al. (2022) examined distributed leadership in relation to teachers' professional development in Jakarta, and delegation is the area where directors in this sample were rated least favorably. The results therefore extend that line of inquiry by identifying delegation as a specific area for growth in Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools.

Perceptions did not differ by gender, age, educational level, or years of teaching experience. Teachers with different backgrounds therefore appear to experience their directors' behavior in a broadly similar way, which supports treating these ratings as a shared feature of the school rather than an individual impression. The two near-significant results for experience concern recognition and empowerment, and they merit follow-up in larger samples.

The morale results show a profile anchored in professional identity and collegial relationships. Satisfaction with Teaching and Rapport among Teachers were rated highest, while the dimensions tied to the director, to facilities, and to community support were rated lower. The two director-related measures converged closely, with Teacher Rapport with the School Director at 3.67 and the overall leadership mean at 3.66. The weakest items in both instruments also point to the same theme, which is responsiveness to teachers. Teachers gave lower ratings to directors who ask for feedback and support their independent decisions, and to directors who show concern for teachers' problems and are approachable on welfare matters. This agreement across two separate instruments strengthens confidence that responsiveness is a real point of relative weakness rather than an artifact of one scale. It also fits the view that morale has several dimensions, because the dimensions showed different levels among the same teachers (Bentley & Rempel, 1980).

The interviews add a qualitative layer to this picture. Teachers said they wanted to feel valued and to work with effective leaders, and the high rating of Encouraging the Heart shows that recognition is visible to them. The lower ratings on directors' concern for personal and group problems suggest that recognition is not always matched by responsive support. Directors did not name effective leadership as a theme, which indicates that the two groups may hold different views of what makes a school strong. The interviews involved a small subset of participants and are best read as illustrative.

These findings carry practical implications. Director training could target the lowest rated practices, namely experimenting, seeking feedback, and delegating decisions, while building on existing strengths in recognition and staff development. Regular structured dialogue between directors and teachers could address the responsiveness gap and narrow the difference in priorities that emerged from the interviews. The lowest morale items concern computer equipment and community financial support, which depend on resources and policy as much as on directors, so they call for attention from education authorities as well.

Several limitations apply. The design is cross-sectional, so changes over time cannot be assessed. The same teachers rated both leadership practices and their own morale, and all data are self-reported, which raises the possibility of shared-method bias. The study describes and compares ratings but does not test how leadership practices relate to morale statistically, so the results cannot show that one shapes the other. The sample comes only from Secondary Resource Schools, so the results

should not be generalized to other school types or countries. Future research could combine teacher and director ratings, apply correlational and regression analyses to the two instruments, and use longitudinal designs.

Connecting the Findings to Earlier Research

Earlier Cambodian work on school leadership provides the closest points of comparison. Om (2022) examined effective leadership and management practices and their challenges in Cambodian primary schools. The present results support the attention that study gives to directors' day-to-day practices, and they extend it to Secondary Resource Schools by showing which specific practices teachers rate highest and lowest. Khan et al. (2024) studied teachers' perceptions of directors' instructional leadership in Secondary Resource Schools and its relation to teacher commitment, with attention to regional variation. The present study shares the same school type and the same teacher perspective, but it used a different framework, exemplary leadership practices, and a different outcome, teacher morale. It also did not test regional differences. It therefore extends that line of work to a new framework and outcome, and it can neither confirm nor contradict the regional findings.

The international studies cited in the Introduction address how leadership relates to teachers' work attitudes. Duraku and Hoxha (2021) found, among Kosovar middle school teachers, that inspirational motivation, idealised influence, individual consideration, and contingent reward each predicted a different form of teacher work motivation. The Leadership Practices Inventory practices of Inspiring a Shared Vision, Modeling the Way, Enabling Others to Act, and Encouraging the Heart are conceptually related to these attributes, and teachers in the present sample observed all four regularly, with recognition rated highest. The descriptive pattern is therefore consistent with the presence of behaviors that those authors found to matter, but because the present study did not test associations, it neither replicates nor contradicts their predictive results. Yohannes and Wasonga (2023) examined how leadership styles relate to teacher job satisfaction in Ethiopian schools. In the present data, Satisfaction with Teaching was the highest rated morale dimension while leadership was rated high, which points in the same general direction. Satisfaction with teaching was also clearly higher than rapport with the director, so satisfaction in this setting appears to rest more on intrinsic and collegial factors than on the director relationship. This qualifies accounts that place leadership at the center of teacher attitudes, although it does not contradict them.

Bunteng (2022) identified motivation, ability, roles, and organizational support as factors in organizational performance. The morale profile found here is consistent with that framing, because the dimensions closest to organizational support, namely facilities, community backing, and the director's responsiveness, were rated lower than the intrinsic dimensions tied to teaching itself. Bunteng (2023) studied students in higher education in Phnom Penh, so the population differs, but the study shares the Cambodian setting and the focus on factors that

shape performance in education. Taken together, the present findings support earlier work in direction, extend it in setting, framework, and outcome, and qualify accounts that center leadership by showing that intrinsic and collegial factors carry the highest morale. No finding directly contradicts the studies cited, but this reflects differences in design, since the present study did not test associations between leadership and morale.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how 452 teachers perceived their school directors' leadership practices and how they rated their own morale in Cambodian Secondary Resource Schools. Teachers rated all five leadership practices as high, with Encouraging the Heart highest ($M = 3.71$) and Challenging the Process lowest ($M = 3.60$). These perceptions did not differ by gender, age, educational level, or years of teaching experience. Teacher morale was also high overall ($M = 3.80$) and rested mainly on Satisfaction with Teaching ($M = 4.07$) and Rapport among Teachers ($M = 3.97$). The weakest points in both instruments concerned responsiveness to teachers, meaning asking for feedback, supporting independent decisions, and attending to teachers' problems. Interviews with teachers and directors supported this picture. Both groups valued teacher quality and a collaborative culture, but teachers stressed feeling valued and having effective leaders, while directors did not name leadership as a theme.

The study contributes a description of leadership and morale in a school type that has received little empirical attention, using two established instruments. For practice, the results suggest that director development should focus on seeking feedback, sharing decisions, and taking measured risks, while keeping the strengths in recognition and staff development. Education authorities can also address the lowest morale items, which were community financial support and computer equipment, since these depend on resources and policy as much as on directors. Regular dialogue between directors and teachers could narrow the difference in priorities that emerged from the interviews.

The findings should be read with the limits of the study in mind. The design was cross-sectional, all data were self-reported by the same teachers, and the sample came only from Secondary Resource Schools, so causal claims and wider generalization are not supported. The interview group was small. Future research could add correlational and regression analyses of the two instruments, collect ratings from directors as well as teachers, follow schools over time, and compare Secondary Resource Schools with other Cambodian school types.

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