Teacher's Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment in High Schools within Maela Refugee Camp, Thailand

Naw Marvel Thawda[1], Amanda Rachel Simon[2,*]

[1,2] Asia-Pacific International University, Thailand

*Corresponding author: asimon@apiu.edu

Abstract

The sustainable development goals recently published by the UN states that all children should have access to education. However, diverse populations, including teachers at refugee schools, are facing challenges in providing quality education for the students due to the lack of support and motivation. In order to improve teachers' work performance, it is important to consider what teachers need to increase their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The purpose of this study was to discover teachers' levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in High Schools within the Maela refugee camp, Thailand. This study was designed using a correlational and descriptive survey design. The study sample was 156 respondents selected using a convenience sampling procedure. The questionnaires were given to teachers who were willing to participate in this study. Data were analyzed quantitatively. The result showed that the overall level of teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment was neutral despite the fact that teachers were not really satisfied with the pay they received. However, the factors that most influence teachers' job satisfaction is responsibility, supervision, and colleagues. A mild significant relationship was found between teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment (n = 156, r =0.35). This research can be used to inform the future policies and procedures aimed at enhancing teachers' job satisfaction.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Teachers, Refugee

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and 2030 agenda that aims to end global poverty, build a life of dignity for all and leave no one behind have especially enlightened the future of the refugee children in terms of access to quality education (UNHCR, 2016). With this coming of changes come many unique challenges and obstacles.

One of the major challenges with the above goal is restoring student to teacher ratios to pre-crisis levels and finding qualified teachers (Sutcher et al., 2016). Due to the adoption of SDG, there is an increased number in student enrollments in all member countries of the United Nations (Giannakis & Bullivant, 2016; Nhat & Bich, 2017; *The Condition of Education*, 2020). Schools have also realized that having satisfied and committed teachers are imperative in this period of change in order to retain teachers and to provide quality education (Evans & Yuan, 2018; Kartika & Purba, 2018).

Due to decades of war and cycles of internal conflicts in Myanmar, millions of people have been displaced, with the latest numbers showing that 2.2 million Myanmar migrants and 100,000 refugees have crossed the border and have temporarily taken refuge in Thailand (ASEAN Today, 2020). There are 9 refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, and Mae La Camp is one of the biggest refugee camps where this research took place. According to the report from (UNHCR, 2021), out of 24,291 total population in Mae La camp, 93% of its population are Karen (Kayin). There are one or more durable solutions to the refugee crisis, such as the refugees being received and integrated into a host country, resettlement in a third country, or voluntary return to the home country.

Thailand, as a hosting country for refugees, has ratified rights to education for all children in Thailand since 2005 (Tuangratananon et al., 2019). However, the refugee education system is excluded and is not fully inclusive because the refugees do not speak the local language and they do not follow the national curriculum (UNESCO 2018). According to the UNHCR (2019) figures, only 3% of Refugees were enrolled in Higher education, whereas 63% were enrolled in Primary School and 24% in Secondary school.

Because of the difficult circumstances surrounding refugee education, having motivation is very important for teachers who are teaching in the refugee schools where they are at the frontline, helping to brighten students' hopes for the future, influencing the community, and guiding the students in times when they are at their most vulnerable. (Save the Children, 2018). Hence, this study was conducted to see what factors influence teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as having a positive attitude toward the work and implementing work goals as the organization provides the certain needs of the workers and helps the workers to reach their ultimate goal (Herzberg, 1987). Locke, a psychologist and theorist, defined satisfaction as a positive emotional state which results from the appraisal of one's job experiences, and their performance is based on one's set of values on the job (Tietjen & Myers, n.d.). And Vroom's theory defined it as an expectancy that drives a persons' working performance (Lunenburg, 2011).

Different theories on motivation have been formed to better understand the employee and know what influences their job satisfaction. Maslow says that people's needs are in order and that individuals progress through a hierarchy of needs in order to maintain satisfaction and reach fulfillment (Maslow, 1970). However, there is criticism of Maslow's approach to the understanding of motivation as it assumes that all people are similar, which threatens the validity of the theory (Nwagwu, 2015). Herzberg (1987) said that there are many factors that are much more important than money, supervision, and policies because people are not inconsistently motivated by these factors, and they can be replaced by greater demands such as achievement recognition and advancement.

In contrast, the process theory of behavior says that a person's behavior changes when they try to fulfill their needs. A person works hard to get the rewards (Van Eerde & Thierry, 1996) or to achieve the goal (Locke, 1968), and a person adjusts themselves based on how they are treated

(Adam, 1963). Therefore, by understanding these theories, the organization can apply these theories in the workplace to trigger the employee motivation to work and satisfy the employee so that they can contribute to the organization effectively.

Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the emotional attachment a person creates to the organization, which helps them remain working with the organization and performing effectively in the organization (Mathur, 2013). It is also defined as a desire to continue working within the organization, accept the values and goals of the organization, and be willing to help the organization to achieve such goals and values (Sharma & Pareek, 2019).

Studies indicate that ethical leadership plays a crucial role in influencing employees' affective commitment (Ribeiro et al., 2018) and can also positively impact retention rates (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). Organizational support and procedural justice also increase the affective commitment, which in return positively influences the employee performance (Sharma & Pareek, 2019), development, and retainment (Malik et al., 2010). A study by Mansour et al. (2017) suggests that when the employees are satisfied with the training they receive, their normative commitment increases and has a positive effect on readiness to transfer learning whilst having a negative effect on absenteeism.

In reflecting on teachers' life in a refugee camp, it is a priceless life that the teachers tribute for their hard work for the future of the refugee students. All the efforts are more of voluntary work for the community (Burma Children Medical Fund, 2018; Oh, 2010). Only 50% of refugee teachers in Thailand actually want to be teachers (Johnston, 2016). Similar to other places, the greatest challenge refugee schools are facing is the retention of teachers and improving students learning outcomes due to lack of support and funding (Ring & West, 2015). Therefore, investigating the level of teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment could shed light on what teachers need to improve their performance.

As such, the following questions are examined in this study:

1. What are teachers' levels of job satisfaction?

2. What are teachers' levels of organizational commitment?

3. What is the correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment?

METHODOLOGY

Sampling

This study involved 156 participants who were teaching full-time in High Schools within the Maela refugee camp, Thailand. Convenience sampling was used in this study to collect the data. The questionnaires were given to teachers who were willing to participate in this study. The instrument was passed to the Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE), who then distributed it to the teachers and principals of all the high schools in the camp. Teachers completed the instrument and returned them to KRCEE's staff and then to the researcher.

Research design and instrumentation

A cross-sectional survey design was used in the study. The participants responded to 66 items on the instrument that assessed the level of teachers' job satisfaction and 24 items that assessed the level of teachers' organizational commitment. In addition, the instrument also included demographic items for describing the population.

Job satisfaction scale

The Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ) was adapted from Lester et al. (1987). There are 9 factors that are referred to in this section of questions in relation to the measurement of teacher's job satisfaction. The 9 factors are supervision, colleague, working condition, pay and responsibility, work itself, advancement, security, and recognition. There are 66 items in total for this section to which participants had to respond using a Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4= agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

TJSQ by Lester was developed based on the work of Maslow related to the hierarchy of needs and the works of Herzberg related to motivation. The TJSQ has been translated into different versions of languages, and there is an acceptable level of reliability and validity of the instrument. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the entire scale is 0.93.

Organizational commitment scale

The Organizational Commitment Questionnaires (OCQ) Scale was adopted by Allen and Meyer (1990). This 24-item questionnaire includes three subscales: Affective commitment, Continuance commitment, and Normative commitment, with 8 items for each subscale. The reliability for each subscale which is measured by the alpha coefficient, is 0.87 for ACS, 0.75 for CCS, and 0.79 for NCS (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Data analysis

Prior to the statistical analysis, a number of the questions on the Teacher Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment Inventory were recorded in order to change negatively worded questions into positively worded questions. The recoding process changed the meaning of the responses given to indicate 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree.

Means and Standard Deviation were used to see the average level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In addition, Pearson correlation was used to determine the significant correlation between the two variables.

Ethical concerns

Permission from the KRCEE was obtained before data collection began. Teachers were invited to participate in this study with the acknowledgement that their participation was voluntary. The participants' identities were not recorded, and after they completed the survey paper, they were asked to put the paper in a big envelope at the front of the room to protect the privacy and confidentiality of their responses. There was no risk of physical and mental harm to those who participated, and a consent statement was placed at the top of the survey paper.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of all the participants, 101 (64%) were female, 88 (56%) respondents were between 21-30 years old, 150 (95%) respondents were teachers, 68 (43%) respondents had between 1- 2 years of teaching experience, and for 75 (47%) respondents, the highest academic qualification attained was high school.

The descriptive statistics were important to understand the overall level of teachers' job satisfaction. Table 1 indicates the descriptive results of the study. The overall mean for job satisfaction is neutral ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.3$). However, the results shown in Table 1 reveal that the lowest mean among the 9 factors of job satisfaction was the pay, where teachers were not satisfied with the pay that they received. While the mean for response is the highest, and the second and third highest are Colleagues and Supervision.

Table 1: Means and Standard Deviation of Job Satisfaction

	Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Supervision	3.97	0.49
2	Colleagues	4.03	0.45
3	Working Condition	3.39	0.37
4	Pay	2.61	0.58
5	Responsibilities	4.16	0.34
6	Work Itself	3.77	0.42
7	Advancement	3.63	0.60
8	Job Security	3.32	0.58
9	Recognition	3.51	0.64
	Total	3.68	0.30

For organizational commitment, the results shown in Table 2 reveal that majority of respondents agree that they have affective commitment while continuance commitment and normative commitment are neutral. The overall teachers' organizational commitment is neutral.

Table 2: *Means and Standard Deviation of Organizational Commitment*

	Kinds of Organizational Commitment	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Affective Commitment	3.72	0.45
2	Continuance Commitment	2.94	0.50
3	Normative Commitment	3.10	0.43

From analyzing the relationship between the two variables, the results show that there is a mild relationship between teachers' levels of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. As the teachers' job satisfaction increases, their organizational commitment also increases. Figure 1 illustrates a scatter plot that shows the results, demonstrating that there is a mildly significant relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and Table 3 shows this relationship.
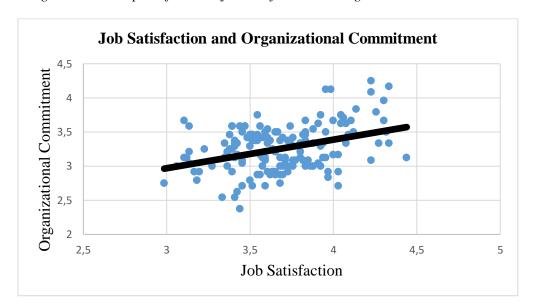
Figure 1: Scatter plot of teacher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment

Table 3: Correlation of Variables

	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment
Job Satisfaction	1	
Organizational Commitment	0.357401345	1

This study produced several important findings. First, the highest factor that influences teachers' job satisfaction is their responsibilities (M = 4.16, SD = 0.34). Teachers strongly agree that they do have responsibilities for their teaching (M= 4.46, SD = 0.04), and they also agree that they are responsible for planning their daily lessons (M= 4.45, SD = 0.05). When generally looking at the teachers within the refugee context, having intrinsic motivation is what drives the teacher to educate the young people. Refugee schools and education systems are neither formalized nor legalized by both hosting and origin states (Burma Children Medical Fund, 2018; Oh et al., 2019). Nevertheless, refugees are proactive in setting up their own schools (Oh, 2010), and teachers are obligated to teach and share their knowledge with the community, whereas only 50% of them wanted to be teachers (Jorgensen, 2016).

In contrast to the previous points, Peters (2013) suggests that too much responsibility or workload can lead to stress and early retirement. However, there are studies that are aligned with the finding of the study by Ghavifekr & Pillai (2016), which implies that teachers who were given a chance to partake in decision-making and responsibility have higher levels of job satisfaction.

The second and third highest factors that influenced teachers' job satisfaction were the support they received from their colleagues (M = 4.03, SD = 0.45) and the supervision (M = 3.97, SD =0.49) they have received. This finding showed that peers play a big role in influencing teachers' job satisfaction. The one reason that teachers in the refugee camp have supportive colleagues and supervisors is that they have many similar experiences in life. UNHCR (2021) reported that 93%

of the population in Mae La camp are of the Karen ethnic group; they have influenced other people in the camp by their language, their culture, and their education system. In addition, teaching is a profession that people in the Karen or refugee community can be proud of because refugee schools are far better than the civilian schools in Myanmar, and the community fully trust teachers ability to educate young people (Yeo et al., 2020)

Several studies have investigated the reasons why teachers have high job satisfaction due to the supervision of the leader and being a part of a team with their colleagues. Ilgan et al. (2015); and Suchyadi and Nurjanah (2018) said that the more the principal supervises the teachers, the more satisfied teachers tend to be. And the interaction and friendship that is created among teachers highly enhances teachers' satisfaction in their career (Crawford & Jenkins, 2018; Krammer et al., 2018).

Although teachers reported neutral to moderate job satisfaction and commitment, there was a concern with the pay (M = 2.61, SD = 0.58), job security (M= 3.32, SD = 0.58) and working conditions (M = 3.39, SD = 0.37). All of these three factors are somehow related to the lack of funding available. The result showed that teachers strongly disagree that their income is adequate for normal expenses (M= 2.12, SD = 0.86). Indeed, the income that teachers receive in the refugee school is only US $15 and US$ 24 a month (Burma Children Medical Fund, 2018; S. A. Oh, 2010). This amount of income is not sufficient to support the whole family (Burma Children Medical Fund, 2018).

Because of financial limitations, teachers do not feel secure in their work. Karen News (2018) mentions that many schools in refugee camps are struggling to keep open after the peace agreement was made between the Myanmar government and the representatives of insurgent ethnic groups as funding from the international community has shifted away from the refugee camp towards Myanmar. Adding to the lack of budget, restrictions, and policies imposed by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) to Non-Government Organization (NGO) that no permanent school building may be constructed and the area designated for school buildings cannot be expanded has directly affected the working condition of the teachers (Oh, 2010).

Despite the concern of not having sufficient funding to support the teachers and educational facilities and resources, teachers' overall level of job satisfaction is moderate due to having the responsibility to develop the community and having supportive relationships with their colleagues and supervisors. This finding does not agree with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs which states that only love and belonging come after the safety needs have been met, because the finding of teachers in the refugee camps shows that though teachers safety needs were not fulfilled, they still obtain the higher level of needs such as love and belongingness from their coworkers and supervisors.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the level of teachers' job satisfaction and their organizational commitment in High schools within the Maela refugee camp. The results of this research showed that teachers are moderately satisfied with their job and have a moderate organizational commitment. In addition, there was a mild relationship between teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Knowing these facts may help the educational institution of the refugee to become aware of different factors that may increase the teachers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment and also inform the future policies and procedures aimed at enhancing

teachers' job satisfaction. It is recommended that future studies should use both qualitative and quantitative research methods to understand better what influences a teacher's job satisfaction and commitment.

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