

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH JOB-RELATED STRESS AMONG EXPATRIATE TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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ABSTRACT: *Background:* Cultural has transformed and therefore the power of world and globalization has produced an impact that influences in an education which goes beyond as international context and became a prerequisite of the day. As in Thailand, trend of international schools and expatriate teachers is rising. The research aim was to produce related factors of stress on expatriate teachers working at the international schools in Bangkok, Thailand. *Methods:* A descriptive cross sectional study was used to study the expatriate teachers working at international schools registered in International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT), Bangkok Thailand. The Lucky Draw technique was used to randomly draw 30 of 60 schools to participate. After the schools accepted the request, the questionnaires were distributed as proportional to size of expatriate teachers in the accepted school by using convenience sampling technique (N=220). The 21-item version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) was applied to explore the stress level. Minnesota Satisfaction, General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) and Cross-cultural Adjustment Measure questionnaires were used to produce the factors related to stress among expatriate teachers. *Results:* Among 220 expatriate teachers, 86.4% of them were fall to normal stress (DASS score ≤ 7) and 10.5% were fall to mild stress level (DASS score: 8-9). For socio-demographic factors, only marital status was found statistically negative association with stress level ($p < 0.01$). The working hours also had negative effect to stress ($p < 0.01$). Considering stressors in expatriate assignment, cultural adjustment and job-satisfaction were associated negatively with stress level among expatriate teachers at international schools registered in ISAT, Bangkok Thailand ($p < 0.01$). *Conclusion:* Socio-demographic, Working profile, and Stressors among expatriate assignment were associated to the stress among expatriate teachers who work at international schools registered in ISAT, Bangkok Thailand.

Keywords: Stress, Cultural adjustment, Expatriate teachers, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Here and nowhere in the world people would say that there is nothing change around themselves, it's definitely rapid changes in any ways instead. Regardless of how, the actual that cultural has transformed in nation is expanding almost everywhere, thus it has brought more understanding of cultural and global changes to society. It seems that a national interest is less than a global shared set [1], and this is a key to what people in this

century are coaching to get familiar with the changes.

Therefore, the power of world and globalization has produced an impact that influences in many aspects of our life, including an education which goes beyond as international context and became a prerequisite of the day. Greenlees [2] stated this accelerating global change has been coming as large forcibly and rapidly rising into the demand for an international education. Therefore, a marked effect of global and national changes has brought an issue dealing with English majors' education [3] or so called "the

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rise of English as a global language”.

Furthermore, the ASEAN economic community (AEC) 2015, which is the arrangement of regional economic integration of 10 countries will be real launched in very near future, thus once it is implemented then Thailand will be critical to position itself to meet this rapidly growing market need through international education [4].

In Thailand, “ISAT” or the International Schools Association of Thailand is the place where registered most of the international schools. ISAT stated that “ISAT schools offers a range of curriculum vary from American, British and International systems. In fact, ISAT reports that at the early year it was starting from 45 original members in 1994, and now it has over 95 member schools registered with ISAT [5].

Over the last few decenniums, a sprint in the number of international schools in Thailand has been found [6]. Therefore, the international schools nowadays provide education to the students from pre-school through the tertiary level in preparation for entrance to higher education either in national or international. Moreover, there are various sizes of the schools considerably from number of their students, in which 2000+ students are counted as a large school and those less than 100 students are called small size [7].

Hayden and Thompson [8] have aptly stated that the multicultural variety show the additional to the work demands of the teachers working in the surrounding of international school.

An individual adjustment is required for the staffs working in multicultural environment as at the international schools, also an interpersonal is suggested as well [7]. This issued brings the foreign teachers into an interesting perspective of “expatriate or Sojourner” stress and adjustment.

‘Teacher stress’ was explained by Jarvis [9] that it is a phenomenon with wide ranging impacts. Thus, if we ignored this adjustment problems are possible to result in stress and turnover.

The nationwide levels, data show that departure rates across occupations have found the teaching turnover rate is 15% [10]. Moreover, Julie Bilz [11] indicated that teacher turnover is 4% higher than employee turnover when compared to other occupations, and teachers who have taught between 0 to 5 years have the highest turnover rate, additionally by Heller [12] pointed out one of the main reasons that new teachers leave is isolation.

The researcher views the disenchantment of the day-to-day frustrations of school life that expatriate teachers are faced as a bitterness of working life. Moreover, towards the expatriate

teachers, cross-cultural adjustment and factors related stress should be concerned to reduce the difficulties in their life-adjustment.

Lastly, the expatriate teachers who work at the international schools in our country, especially in Bangkok region became an interesting population to the current research as the study aims to produce an association of related stress factors on expatriate teachers working at the international schools in Bangkok, Thailand.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample size and sampling technique

A cross-sectional study was used to study the expatriate teachers working at international schools registered in ISAT, Bangkok Thailand. The sample size was determined based on Hair’s rule of thumb [13]. The sample to variable ratio indicated as N:p ratio where N indicates to the number of participants and p indicates to the number of variables. Hair’s rule recommended a general rule is that the desired level is 20 participants for each independent variable to determine adequate sample size. In this study consists of 11 variables, thus the sample size was equal 220 expatriate teachers.

The sampling technique starts from random the international schools in Bangkok that registered as a member of ISAT total 60 schools. Then, the Lucky Draw technique was used to randomly draw 30 schools to participate. After that, an invitation letters were sent through the randomly drawn 30 schools. There were 10 schools accepted to the request, so the questionnaires were distributed as proportional to size of expatriated teachers in the accepted schools.

Questionnaire

Demographic and working profile

Respondents were asked to report their general information and their working profile. General information was related to their gender, monthly income, and marital status including number of their children. Also, they were asked to report their teaching experience, teaching level, duration of working per day and days of working per week.

Stress

The 21-item version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS 21) to measure stress which contains 7 items was used. The respondents scored each item to indicate their agreement on statement using a scale of 0 – the statement did not apply to them at all, 1 – the statement applied to them to some degree or some of the time, 2 - the statement

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Variables	n (%)
Gender	
Male	119(54.1)
Female	101(45.9)
Monthly income (THB)	
From 50,000-79,999	8 (3.6)
More than or equal 80,000	189 (85.9)
Missing value	23 (10.5)
Marital status	
Single	135(61.4)
Married	49 (22.3)
Widow	1 (0.5)
In a relationship	34 (15.5)
Missing Value	1 (0.5)
Number of children	
None	180(81.8)
Single child	14 (6.4)
Two children	19 (8.6)
More than 2 children	7 (3.2)

applied to them to a considerable degree, or a good part of time and 3 - the statement applied to them very much, or most of the time. The results were characterized to the severity of stress according to the DASS Severity Ratings (Stress) as the following: Normal (score: 0-7), Mild (score: 8-9), Moderate (score: 10-12), Severe (score: 13-16), and Extremely severe (score: more than 17).

Stressor in expatriate assignment

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Short-form) [14] to measure job satisfaction of respondents was used which is the resulted of how content of individual is with his or her job, as well as, overall emotional individual feeling have about their job as a whole. It composes of 20 items with 5 likert-scales (very satisfaction to very dissatisfaction). In addition, the General Self-Efficacy Scale Questionnaire (GSE) [15] was used to measure self-efficacy of respondents which refers to sense that originates general confidence in one's own power to handle multi-tasks in different environmental demand situations. It contains 10 items which ranks to 4 likert-scales. Measuring cultural adjustment of expatriate teachers, Cross-cultural Adjustment Measure Questionnaire [16] was scored by respondents. There are 9 questions with 5-likert-scales to measure an adjustment that expatriate faced with the job, host country nationals, and to general working environment.

Validity and reliability of questionnaire

The reliability of the instrument was tested via a pilot test conducted in a group of 30 expatriate teachers working at the schools in Bangkok with an interval of one month to assess test-retest reliability.

The feedback and responses from the pilot test will then be used to make changes and incorporate them into the final instrument. In this study, reliability' scale was estimating through Cronbach's alpha and showed good results: DASS 21 (Stress) $\alpha = 0.70$; Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Short-form) $\alpha = 0.87$; The General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) $\alpha = 0.92$; Cross-cultural Adjustment Measure $\alpha = 0.89$. Despite the questionnaires that have brought up to apply in this study are standard questionnaires, the validity from the previous studies were mentioned.

Statistical analysis

Data that obtained from the participants were analyzed by SPSS program version 17 (Chulalongkorn University's license). The descriptive statistic (Mean, Standard deviation) and Percentage), was used to describe – the socio-demographic and working profile. Pearson Correlation was used to identify multicollinearity of independent variables. Multiple linear regressions with ENTER method were used to find an association between stress level of expatriate teachers and related factors.

Ethical consideration

The study had been approved by the Ethics Review Committee for Research Involving Human Research Subjects, Health Sciences Group, Chulalongkorn University with the certified COA No. 066/2557.

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics of respondents

In Table 1, a total number of the 220 expatriate

Table 2 Prevalence of stress among expatriate teachers

Prevalence	n (%)
Normal stress	190 (86.4)
Mild stress	23 (10.5)
Moderate stress	5 (2.3)
Severe stress	2 (0.9)
Extremely severe stress	-

Table 3 Multiple linear regressions with ENTER method to find association between related factors and stress among the expatriate teachers

Factors	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients ^a		
	B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	10.779	5.520	-	1.953	.052
Socio-demographic					
Gender	.227	.291	.052	.779	.437
Educational level	.893	.653	.092	1.369	.173
Monthly income	-.493	.733	-.046	-.672	.502
Marital status	-.382	.133	-.193	-2.874	.005*
Number of children	.053	.211	.018	.252	.801
Working profile					
Year(s) of teaching experience	.285	.267	.087	1.067	.287
Year(s) of teaching in Bangkok, Thailand	.134	.151	.068	.888	.376
Working days	.930	1.958	.031	.475	.635
Working hours	-.821	.281	-.203	-2.961	.004*
Teaching levels	-.596	.375	-.119	-1.590	.114
Stressors in expatriate assignment					
Cultural adjustment	.115	.036	.227	3.218	.002*
Self-efficacy	-.058	.074	-.058	-.778	.438
Job-satisfaction	-.081	.024	-.249	-3.456	.001*

^a Dependent variable: stress among expatriate teachers

* Statistically significant with *p-value* ≤ 0.005

teachers in this study, 54.1% and 45.9% are male and female respectively. Thus we could see that male was slightly higher than female. In addition, 85.9% was majority of the expatriate teachers having monthly income more than or equal 80,000 THB. Marital status was resulted in 61.4% of both male and female were single, and 81.8% of them do not have children.

Stress among expatriate teachers

The severity of stress among expatriate teachers working at international schools registered in ISAT, Bangkok, Thailand was presented in Table 2. A total number of 220 expatriate teachers who did response the self-administered questionnaire, 86.4% were fall to normal stress, 10.5 % were fall to mild stress, 2.3 % were fall to moderate stress, 0.9 % were fall to severe stress, and none of them were fall to extremely severe stress, stress level were defined according to Dass21 severity rating score.

Factors associated stress among expatriate teacher

In Table 3 the associations between related factors (socio-demographic, working profile,

stressors among expatriate assignment) and stress among the expatriate teachers were described. According to Multiple linear regressions with ENTER method were used to find an association between stress level of expatriate teachers and related factors, its equation as the following:

$$\text{Stress} = 10.779 + 0.227 (\text{Gender}) + 0.893 (\text{Educational Level}) - 0.493 (\text{Monthly Income}) - 0.382 (\text{Marital Status}) + 0.053 (\text{Number of Children}) + 0.285 (\text{Years of teaching experience}) + 0.134 (\text{Years of teaching in Bangkok}) + 0.930 (\text{Working Days}) - 0.821 (\text{Working Hours}) - 0.596 (\text{Teaching Levels}) + 0.115 (\text{Cultural Adjustment}) - 0.058 (\text{Self-Efficacy}) - 0.081 (\text{Job-satisfaction})$$

In this study found there was a relationship between increasing stress and socio-demographic, as the variable of socio-demographic, "marital status" was observed as statistically significant with *p-value* at .005, where $b_4 = -0.382$, in this study found 61.4% was single, so it indicates that marital status: single was associated with increasing stress

among the expatriate teachers. In contrast, gender, monthly income and number of children had no association with increasing of stress level.

Therefore, in the working profile, there was a relationship between increasing stress and working profile among the expatriate teachers as “working hours” variable was observed as statistically significant with *p-value* at .004, where $b_9 = -.821$. It indicates that increasing number of teaching hours associated with increasing in stress level. Nevertheless, in this study, year(s) of teaching experience, year(s) of teaching in Bangkok, Thailand, working days and Teaching level was not associate with increasing in stress level among the expatriate teachers.

Moreover, in the stressors among expatriate assignment had found there was a relationship between increasing stress levels on expatriate skilled teachers and the stressors in expatriate assignment. It was obviously seen that “cultural adjustment/shock” was statistically significant with *p-value* at .002, where $b_{11} = .115$, so it points out that high level of cultural adjustment associated with the increasing in stress level. Last but not the least, “job-satisfaction” was also statistically significant in this study with *p-value* at .001, where $b_{13} = -.081$, represents high level of job-satisfaction associated with decreasing the stress level.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher would discuss about the result of the study that 86.4% were fall to normal stress because of the expatriates teachers here mostly were applied the job by their willingness, so they probably had well prepared about the host country's environment or oversea assignment, another important point is that this study was target in the international school in Bangkok thus this implied to the expatriate teachers here have been socializing with peer expatriates group and having well social supported from their network, unlike those expatriates who had got international assignment from their country. It can be discussed related to previous study of Wang and Kanungo [17] that stressful could be high in expatriation as it is considered as uncertain event, nevertheless, social support and peer expatriates socialize from local nationals are having tremendous powers to facilitate the expatriates to adjust to new environment which full of stress for them.

Even though the level of stress in this study was normal stress, but many of previous studies were mention some levels of expatriates stress and turnover, “Teacher stress” was explained by Jarvis

[9] that it is a phenomenon with wide ranging impacts. Thus, if we ignored this adjustment problems are possible to result in stress and turnover. Moreover, Julie Bilz [11] indicated that teacher turnover is 4% higher than employee turnover when compared to other occupations, and teachers who have taught between 0 to 5 years have the highest turnover rate, additionally by Heller [12] pointed out one of the main reasons that new teachers leave is isolation.

Lastly, as in the study of Hobfoll [18] about the COR's theory that he explained that personal strengths, social attachments and cultural were termed “resources, which not individually determined, but are both transcultural and products of any given culture”, and in his study had found 74 resources that dealing with gain and loss process related to stress outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This research was conducted to describe general characteristics and working profile of expatriate teachers, the stressors among expatriate teachers, and to identify the factors influence on stress related to job among expatriate teachers among expatriate teachers working at the international schools registered in ISAT, Bangkok, Thailand. The total number of 220 expatriate teachers who did response the self-administered questionnaire, 86.4% were fall to normal stress, stress level were defined according to Dass21 severity rating score. Nevertheless, from the study of relationship between increasing stress and the independent variables in this research, resulted in marital status, working hours, cultural adjustment/shock and job-satisfaction were observed as statistically significant with *p-value* at .005, .004, .002 and .001 respectively.

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