

# A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT WITH THEIR DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AT ROONG AROON SCHOOL, THAILAND

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this research was mainly to study and compare teachers' perception towards interpersonal relationship and working environment according to their demographic profiles, as well as to determine the relationship of teachers' perception towards interpersonal relationship and working environment at Roong Aroon School, Thailand. All the teachers working at the selected school at different levels during the academic year 2018-2019 were used as participants. The research instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. The collected data from the survey were analyzed by Descriptive Statistics, Frequency and Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation, Independent samples t-test, One-way ANOVA, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study results showed that the level of teachers' perception towards interpersonal relationship and working environment was *high*. No statistical significant differences in the teachers' perceptions towards interpersonal relationship and working environment according to their demographic profiles were found. However, the study revealed that there was a significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and working environment. Based on the results, it was recommended that the teachers take time observing each other to improve their expertise at their job.

**Key words:** Teachers' Perception, Interpersonal Relationship, Working Environment

## Introduction

The working environment these days is constantly changing and is becoming more diverse. Workers now have limitless opportunities. As such, businesses need to meet the needs of their employees to entice them to stay. According to a study conducted by Robert Half International (2012), it was revealed that the most crucial factor in employee satisfaction is working environment. Max

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Messmer, the CEO of the said company, explained that for a growing number of works, the corporate culture is a determinant on whether or not they stay for a long time. Furthermore, in a study conducted by Stoetzer (2010), organizations that seem to be healthy for the employees are perceived as fair, kind, considerate, impartial and the viewpoints are considered. This strengthens the notion that having a good working environment is a key factor in determining the physical and mental health of the employees.

Aside from working environment, interpersonal relationships are also considered an important factor for job satisfaction. Interpersonal relationships refer to the close relationship as one that is strong, frequent, and with diverse interdependence that lasts over a considerable period of time. In sociology, although the classic distinction between primary and secondary relationships has been expanded in the public realm, these close relationships can be categorized as primary groups, which provide support and nurture and socialize individuals to the norms of society (Kelley, 1983).

Several challenges face workplaces in Thailand. For instance, some workers face health issues due to the safety regulations in place at work. The impact of dust in Bangkok is such that women workers are at a high risk of respiratory-related disease. The severity of the disease depends on the amount of dust inhaled. If levels of dust can be reduced, it will lead to savings on medication costs, medical treatment fees and other costly health-related services, and avoid the loss of income from sick workers (Pipitkul et. al., 2017). Another challenge is rank and age. Being a country that builds good relationship among colleagues, respect and politeness are given much expectation from the workers. A certain amount of seniority in organization to the elders affects the working condition and interpersonal relationships. According to Klingshirn (2009), seniority system may prevent an employer from placing its best people in slots where they would be most effective.

Based on the findings of the study conducted by Velmurugan (2016) on interpersonal relationships and organizational effectiveness, recommendations were given on how to improve interpersonal relationships at work. Among these recommendations were to create an open-door policy and scheduling of team-building events on a regular basis. Even if work demands and schedule availability prohibit having communication lines open all day, every day, an open-door policy can be beneficial. For team building activities, hiring a team-building consultant to conduct an annual workshop for employees on premises or at an off-site location would help. Due to these reasons, the researcher conducted a research on the relationship between working environment and interpersonal relationships.

## **Research Objectives**

There were five objectives in this research:

1. To identify the demographic profiles of the RoongAroon teachers including their nationality, age, gender, educational background and years of teaching.
2. To determine the level of teachers' perceptions towards the interpersonal relationships among the teachers at RoongAroon School.
3. To determine the level of teachers' perceptions towards the working environment at RoongAroon School.
4. To compare teachers' perceptions towards interpersonal relationships and working environment according to their nationality, age, gender, educational background and years of teaching at RoongAroon School.
5. To determine the relationship of working environment and interpersonal relationship among the teachers at RoongAroon School.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Interpersonal Relationship***

Interpersonal relationships at work constitutes the day to day interaction between co-workers or managers and employees which is a natural part of the work environment which is pleasant and creative but can also be a source of tension and frustration (Obakpolo, 2015). The Social Penetration Theory suggests the relationship between individuals by disclosing their personal motives, feelings, thoughts and experiences to others.

### ***Working Environment***

Work environment can be described as the environment, which people work (Briner, 2000). It includes a wide-range of category that involves job details and external factors. Sekar (2011) explained that relationship between work, the workplace and tools of work becomes a fundamental part of the work.

### ***Background of RoongAroon School***

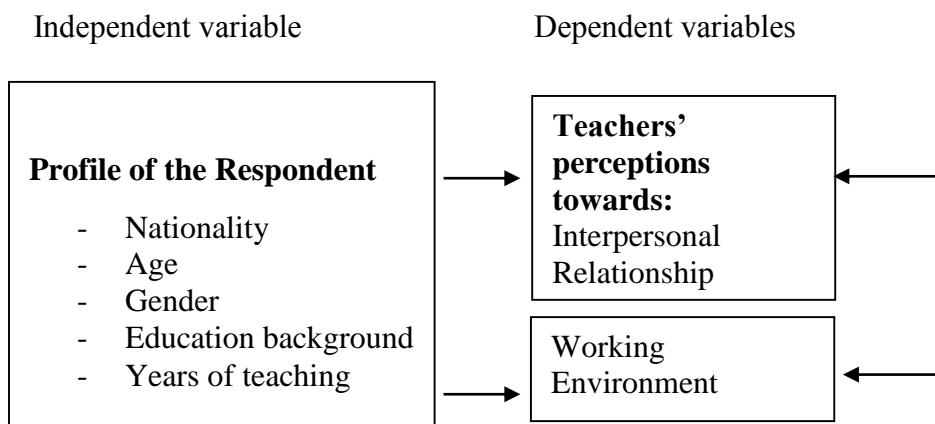
RoongAroon is a non-profit private school. It was set up and accredited in 1997. The school is composed of three independent departments, the kindergarten and the first level (K1- K3), the primary school (P1-6), and the secondary and upper secondary school (M1-M6).

Since the school promotes a cooperative working team, a principal separately manages each department. The principals initiate their own team's considerable initiatives from teacher meetings linking different levels or from a Core Subject team approach. Based on the concept of the holistic learning process, RoongAroon aims to provide a more natural environment and to

promote creative practices that help encourage children at each age level to attain to their own learning potential.

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study had one independent variable, which was the demographic profile of the teachers. There were two dependent variables, namely, working environment and interpersonal relationships. The following Figure1 showed the conceptual framework of this study.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of This Study**

### Research Method

This study was a quantitative and comparative research. The data was analyzed to determine the respondents' demographic profiles and their perceptions in terms of the interpersonal relationships and the working environment at Roong Aroon School firstly, then a comparative design was used to compare the teachers' perceptions towards interpersonal relationships and working environment according to their nationality, age, gender, educational background, and years of teaching; lastly was the collaboration design to test the relationship between the teachers' perception towards interpersonal relationships and working environment at Roong Aroon School. A questionnaire with 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the major variables, and the quantitative data was analyzed.

Part I contained the demographic profile of the respondents. Part II included two sections: Section A focused on the responses of the teachers' perception towards the working environment at Roong Aroon School. Section B focused on the teachers' perception towards interpersonal relationships at Roong Aroon School. Each Section was composed of 10 questions.

## Findings

### *Research Objective One*

Of the 113 respondents, 87.6% (99) are Thais while 12.4% (14) are Foreigners, all of whom are teaching English. The highest frequency of the respondents, 38.1% (43) are in the 40+ age group. It is followed by 20.4% (23) in the 35-40 years old range. There is 17.7% (20) of the respondents in the 31-35 years old range. The youngest age, 20-25 years old, follows with 13.3% (15) respondents, and 10.6% (12) in the 26-30 years old age range.

A majority of the respondents in this study are female which comprises 66.4% (75) of the total respondents while male represents 33.6% (38) of the total respondents.

Most of the teachers in the school have graduated with a Bachelor's Degree, major in Education, representing 59.3% (67) of the respondents. It is followed by Bachelor's Degree graduates of other majors, representing 25.7% (29) of the respondents. Some teachers graduated with a Vocational Degree with 13.3% (15) of the respondents. Only 2 respondents in the school graduated with a post-graduate degree, one with a Master's and one with a Doctorate degree.

Almost half of the respondents 46.9% (53) have 6 years or more in teaching experience. It is followed by teachers with 1-2 years of teaching experience, with a total of 21.2% (24) of the total respondents. It is followed closely by teachers who have less than a year of teaching experience representing 20.4% (23) of the respondents. Only 11.5% (13) of the respondents have 3-5 years of teaching experience.

### *Research Objective Two*

This objective of was to determine the level of teachers' perceptions towards the interpersonal relationship among the teachers at Roong Aroon School.

Table 1. *The Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation towards Interpersonal Relationship*

Interpersonal Relationship Items	Me	S D	Interpretation
1. The culture and emotional climate of the school is generally positive and supportive.	4.23	.682	High
2. I feel like I am a part of a team (shared mission, values, efforts and goals).	4.26	.627	High

Interpersonal Relationship Items	Me	S D	Interpretation
3. My efforts are recognized and acknowledged in tangible ways by my colleague and supervisor.	3.89	.772	High
4. I receive constructive feedback from my colleagues and supervisors.	4.06	.672	High
5. I am encouraged to solve both personal and work-related problems by my colleagues.	4.14	.666	High
6. At work, I am accepted for the person I am.	4.07	.664	High
7. I tend to see problems with colleagues as challenges, rather than as obstacles.	4.04	.849	High
8. I am treated with courtesy by my colleagues.	4.30	.639	High
9. The administrative team provides an environment in which honesty and openness are valued.	4.16	.693	High
10. I am able to keep encounters with other staff professional despite differences in opinions.	4.12	.474	High
Total	4.05	.576	High

Table 1 showed the results of the level of teachers' perception towards the interpersonal relationship. In all 10 statements, the teachers' responses were interpreted as a *high level*; as they all fell under the 3.51-4.50. Item 8 (I am treated with courtesy by my colleagues) received the highest score with a mean of 4.30, while Item 3 (My efforts are recognized and acknowledged in tangible ways by my colleague and supervisor) received the lowest score with a mean of 3.89. The average of all means scores from Items 1 through 10 is 4.05 which is also interpreted as high.

### ***Research Objective Three***

The third objective was to determine the level of teachers' perceptions towards the working environment at Roong Aroon School.

Table 2. *The Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation towards Working Environment*

Working Environment items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. The work is evenly distributed among staff over a reasonable amount of time.	3.57	.924	High
2. My work does not put me in emotionally disturbing situation.	3.58	.853	High
3. I am given enough time to finish work related tasks.	3.51	.898	High

Working Environment items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
4. I have not considered looking for work elsewhere as I am satisfied with my work environment.	3.90	.916	High
5. I am informed well in advance concerning for example important decisions, changes, or plans for the future.	3.31	.897	Neutral
6. My skills or expertise are valued at work.	3.92	.734	High
7. I know exactly what is expected of me at work (job description, assessment criteria, etc.)	3.87	.803	High
8. I have the possibility of learning new things at work.	4.51	.745	Very High
9. The workplace promotes a culture of appreciation for a job well done.	4.06	.782	High
10. The administrators provide feedback on how well the job is carried out.	3.73	.813	High
Total	3.79	.527	High

Table 2 showed the results of the level of teachers' perception towards the working environment. In all 10 items, the teachers' responses were interpreted as *high* as they all fell under the range of 3.51-4.50, similar to the results in the previous section. Item 8 (I have the possibility of learning new things at work) received the highest score with a mean of 4.51, while Item 5 (I am informed well in advance concerning for example important decisions, changes, or plans for the future) received the lowest score with a mean of 3.31. The average of all means scores from Items 1 through 10 is 3.79 which is also interpreted as *high*, although lower than the average of the mean scores in the previous section.

#### ***Research Objective Four***

The fourth objective of the study was to compare the teachers' perceptions towards interpersonal relationship and working environment according to their nationality, age, gender, educational background and years of teaching at Roong Aroon School.

1. *Comparison of Teachers' perceptions towards interpersonal relationship according to their nationality, age, gender, educational background and years of teaching at Roong Aroon School.*

Table 3. *t-test Comparison on Different Teachers' Perception*

Nationality		t	Mean	SD	Sig.(2-tailed)
IR	Thai	-.753	4.11	.477	.453
	Non-Thai		4.21	.462	

Table 3 showed in terms of the interpersonal relationship, the mean of scores among Thai teachers is 4.11 while it is 4.21 among foreign teachers. As the p value is a result of .453 in the t-test computation, it can be interpreted that there was no statistical significant difference in the responses in terms of nationality.

Table 4. *Teachers' Perception towards Interpersonal Relationship According to Their Age (One-way ANOVA)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.927	4	.482	2.237	.070
Within Groups	23.263	108	.215		
Total	25.191	112			

Table 4 showed the results on the significant difference on the responses of the respondents in terms of age, using the One-Way ANOVA. As the p value is a result of .070, there was no statistical significant difference in the responses based on age.

Table 5. *Teachers' Perception towards Interpersonal Relationship According to Their Gender*

Gender		t	Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig.(2-tailed)
IR	Male	108	4.13	.479	.914
	Female		4.12	.475	

Table 5 showed the difference in the mean scores of the responses based on gender, with a mean of 4.13 among male and 4.12 among female respondents. As the p value is a result of .914 after the t-test computation, it reveals that there was no statistical significant difference on the responses when compared according to gender.



Table6. *Teachers' Perception towards Interpersonal Relationship According to Their Educational Background (One-way ANOVA)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.117	4	.529	2.477	.058
Within Groups	23.074	108	.214		
Total	25.191	112			

Table 6 showed the significant difference on the respondents' responses in terms of educational background using ANOVA. As the p value is a result of .058, it shows that there was no statistical significant difference in their responses.

Table 7. *Teachers' Perception towards Interpersonal Relationship According to Their Years of Teaching (One-way ANOVA)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.494	3	.165	.727	.538
Within Groups	24.696	109	.227		
Total	25.191	112			

Table 7 showed the significant difference on the responses in terms of years of teaching experience. Using One-Way ANOVA to compute for the results, it shows that there was no statistical significant difference in the responses, since the p value is a result of at .538.

2. *Comparison of Teachers' perceptions towards working conditions according to their nationality, age, gender, educational background and years of teaching at RoongAroon School.*

Table 8. *Teachers' Perception towards Working Environment According to Nationality*

Nationality	t	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.(2-tailed)
Thai	-.709	3.786	.526	.480
Non-Thai		3.893	.544	

As Table 8 showed, in terms of the working environment, the mean of scores among Thai teachers is 3.786 while it is 3.893 among foreign teachers. As the p value is a result of 0.480 in the t-test computation, the results show that there is no statistical significant difference in the responses in terms of nationality.

Table 9. *Teachers' Perception towards Working Environment According to Age (One-way NOVA)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.672	4	.418	1.533	.198
Within Groups	29.458	108	.273		
Total	31.130	112			

Table 9 showed the results on the significant difference on the responses of the respondents in terms of age, using ANOVA. As the p value is a result of .098, there is no statistical significant difference in the responses based on age.

Table 10. *Teachers' Perception towards Working Environment According to their Gender*

Gender	t	Mean	Std. Deviation	Sig.(2-tailed)
Male	.276	3.812	.547	.783
Female		3.790	.521	

Table 10 showed the difference in the mean scores of the responses based on gender showing a mean of 3.812 among male and 3.790 among female respondents. As the p value is a result of .783 after the t-test, it reveals that there is no statistical significant difference on the responses based on gender.

Table 11. *Teachers' Perception towards Working Environment According to Their Educational Background (One-way ANOVA)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2.159	4	.540	2.012	.098
Within Groups	28.971	108	.268		
Total	31.130	112			

Table 11 showed the significant difference on the respondents' responses based on educational background using ANOVA. As the p value is a result of .098 as the result, it shows that there is no statistical significant difference in their responses.

Table 12. *Teachers' Perception towards Working Environment According to Their Year of Teaching (One way ANOVA)*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.779	3	.260	.932	.428
Within Groups	30.351	109	.278		
Total	31.130	112			

Table 12 showed the significant difference on the responses in terms of years of teaching experience. Using ANOVA to compute for the results, it shows that there is no statistical significant difference, since the p value is a result of 0.428.

#### *Research Objective Five*

To compute for the results, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used as Table 13 shown. Based on the relationship of the results of the responses of 113 respondents, the p value is .000, which was very significant, and the r is .733. All these revealed that there was a strong positive significant relationship of teachers' perception towards working environment and interpersonal relationship.

Table 13. *Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Perception towards Interpersonal Relationship and Working Environment*

Variables		Interpersonal relationship
Working	Pearson Correlation	.733**
Environment	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

\*\*P value is significant at .001 level

### **Discussion**

Based on the results of this study, it was revealed that the respondents generally have a positive perception towards the interpersonal relationship among the teachers at Roong Aroon School. Every descriptive statement fell within the 3.51-4.50 range which is *high*. The teachers also spend two to three weeks during the term break to discuss plans for the next term, and in the process, collaborate with each other, to come up with useful ideas. In relation to the study done by Obakpolo (2105), an opportunity for discussion and collaboration increases the level of interaction, communication and compatibility between the workers. The statement "I feel like I am a part of a team" may have received one of the highest scores for this reason.

The results of the study also showed that the teachers have a positive

perception towards the working environment at Roong Aroon School. Nine of the ten statements were classified as high as they were within the 3-51-4.50 range. However, the overall mean score for working environment is generally lower than interpersonal relationship. Although generally high, there are some aspects under working environment that could indicate the need for further improvement towards the better perception of the teachers at the school

On the other hand, the statement on the possibility of learning new things received the highest mean score. This may have something to do with the school's philosophy of self-discovery which does not only apply to students, but also among teachers. According to this philosophy, discovery is a way of learning which allows the individual to learn by doing. Roong Aroon promotes self-discovery that encourages their teachers to be creative and take initiative by having wider perspectives and insights. Using t-test and ANOVA, the study shows that there is no statistical significant difference in the responses of the respondents for both working environment and interpersonal relationship when grouped according to each category.

It reveals that the respondents generally had a positive perception for both working environment and interpersonal relationship regardless of their age, gender, educational background, and years of teaching at Roong Aroon School. These results show that there is no major concern specific to a certain group of teachers in the school.

The results of this study are in contrast with the study of Stoetzer (2010) which indicates that there is significant difference in the perception of the respondents on working environment and interpersonal relationships. The analysis included 4,049 persons that consist of 2,273 women and 1776 men. The interpersonal relationships are potentially affected by working conditions rooted in the organizations supported by the high demands as a serious conflict at work. The presence of high demands are a measure of work load as predictors of difficult working environment, thus indicates stress that eventually affected interpersonal relationships. In this study, having a positive working condition may help to diminish conflicts and exclusion. Promoting good interpersonal relationships at work may help to reduce the risk of employees developing problems at the workplace. The result indicated that there is a casual relation between working environment and interpersonal relationship.

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