

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR DEMOGRAPHICS AT AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN BANGKOK

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Abstract: This study mainly aimed to compare the high school students' perceptions towards school environment according to their gender, nationality, grade and years of studying at an International School in Bangkok, Thailand. A total of 90 students from grade 10 to 12 got involved in this study. The adapted questionnaire based on Kate (2005) was used to students' perception towards school environment of 6 indicators including health policies, physical environment, social environment, school-community relation, personal skill building, and access to health services at the selected international school. The collected data was analyzed statistically. The study found the overall level of high school students' perceptions towards school environment at this international school were regarded as high, particularly, the highest perception was for Health Policies, and the lowest perception was for School-community Relations. No significant differences in the students' perceptions towards school environment according to their gender and grade were identified, however, significant differences of the students' perception towards school environment between Non-Thai students and Thai students; between the students studying at the international school of Bangkok for 1-3 years and 10 years and above were determined.

Keywords: High School Students, Perception; School Environment; Demographics; International School in Bangkok.

Introduction

Research concerned about the school environment has proved as a very important topic in the school education field, as students, teachers, administrators, and parents to some degree are all living in the school environment as a kind of school input, which may influence the school output (Naftaly, 1981). Previous studies from different countries in the world had been conducted for this regard. In recent years, the whole society starts to get

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more and more attention on the education environment, especially school environment (Bullard, 2010). School environment studies were important, however, in Thailand, this kind of studies concerned with the school environment are still very limited. In fact, Thailand has a lot of international schools, private or bilingual schools.

According to The International Schools Association of Thailand (ISAT), there are 128 member schools currently, many of them are located in Bangkok city and assembled in the downtown areas. All these international schools are working under the supervision of the Ministry of Education (MOE), and they compete with each other in terms of students' enrollment, teachers' recruitment and school effectiveness. Most of these International Schools in Bangkok are working hard and trying to provide healthy and effective school environment for their stakeholders. Thus, the stakeholders' perception towards the school environment deserves more studies and investigation in those international school of Bangkok. Thus, it is very important to know the stakeholder's perception towards the school environment, while in Thailand, there has been no previous study carried out based on the stakeholder's perception towards school environment in the international schools, neither based on the teachers' perception, nor on the students' perception. In fact, this researcher felt that the students' perspective towards the school environment should be focused since they are directly learning in the school environment.

With this idea and many years of working experiences, this researcher decided to investigate the students' perception and demographics in the international school that is quite popular in Bangkok. It was the primary concern of this researcher, and also got great support and confirmation from the international school leaders. The researcher also believed conducting this study could not only assess the students' perception but also help the school to get more enlightening ideas and feedbacks based on the survey assessment.

Research Objectives

This research was conducted for the following objectives:

1. To identify the students' demographics including their gender, grade, nationality, and years of study at the international school of Bangkok.
2. To identify the students' perception of school environment at the international school of Bangkok.
3. To compare the significant differences on the students' perception towards school environment according to their gender, grade, nationality, and years of study at the international school of Bangkok.

Literature Review

Healthy School Environment

Schools play a role in health promotion is not a new concept. In the early 1950s, the world health organization (WHO) has established a method for young people to improve their health. At first, is to put the health education into the school in an all-round way. They discuss file (Mary, Vivian, and David, 1999) health promoting broad concepts and measures are put forward. In addition, a report by the Canadian Lalonde (1974) proposed a healthy pattern, healthcare- oriented society. Later, the world health organization (WHO) integrated the conference in the 1980 s thought, clarified the nature of the health, healthy control, and the process of improving health (World Health Organization, 1999). Until now, many professionals recognized concept of health education, the interactions with other health promoting ingredients (Downi, Fyfe and Tannahill, 1990; Young &Whitehead, 1993).

Towards the development of the health promoting school, in the whole world, the school is responsible for providing a healthy environment for students and teachers at the school. Of course, provided by the health information directly affects their health behavior. Different countries follow different goal setting health promotion, but in certain regions HPS need to meet the demand of community (Deschesnes and Rowling, 2003). The school has the nature of education environment, health, and education opportunities for students. Of course, also includes the teacher's health. School physical environment is important, more need to strengthen the education of social relations, thus forming the health promotion of psychological society. The HPS Model (1986) has been developed as a global strategy for strengthening school health, thereby improving the health of teachers and students. HPS contained six important indicators as follows:

The first indicator was health policy, which focused on the school's health promotion policies, checking if any health education programs are developed that can bring biological, ecological, and social perspectives on a healthy environment in the educational organization.

The second indicator was physical environment, which concerned on the student's activity space in the school, including both the indoor and outdoor area. At indoor area, teachers have the autonomy to set up the classroom physical environment, such as the classroom table and desk arrangement and the decoration of the classroom as the physical environment for the students' learning.

The third indicator was social environment, which not only included the current physical environment, but also concerned the school culture, social relations and the ways of internal and external communication in the school community.

The fourth indicator was school-community relation, which focused on how to use the school settings effectively to strengthen the teachers and students of communication and support. At the same time, the school was expected to develop community relation through the existing human and community resources for health promotion.

The fifth indicators concerned with teachers' skill, it in fact emphasized on how schools and communities to provide information and education to develop teachers' skills in personal health and to improve life skills in the living environment.

The last indicator concerned the school's access to health services, which expected the schools should establish various access to promote healthy development projects require the participation of health services.

The above six indicators as the essence of HPS approach were used in many countries as it examined the school's basic environment particularly in terms of the school's health environment, whoever in the school community, including the school staff, parents, and other related people could experience it (Young & Whitehead, 1993).

Health Promoting School (HPS) Model

As mentioned in the last section, the HPS Model (Mary, Vivian, and David, 1999) has been developed as a global strategy for the creation and maintenance of healthy school surroundings and environments. The creation of healthy environments is another basic component of school health promotion model and involves two different and complementary dimensions: Physical dimension and Psychosocial dimension.

Delivery of health and nutrition services and active life activities. There is a long history of health service delivery in the school setting in the Region of the Americas. Over the years, approaches and models in this regard have been characterized by enormous variation from country to country, reflecting changes in public health trends and the different ways in which nations have moved forward in the reform of their health systems. The "school hygiene" model, derived from European experiences at the beginning of the last century, evolved into school programs that included wide vaccination campaigns and

health education topics, and subsequently into the design of more comprehensive interventions in which health and education became active partners in the achievement of common objectives and goals (Meresman, Bundy, and Cerqueira, 2001).

The delivery of health and nutrition services, and active life activities for schoolchildren should be organized according to the policies, mechanisms, models and relevant contents responding to the needs of students, and resources allocated in each case—country, region, or municipality—for the healthcare of the population in general. In this regard, a Health-Promoting School (Cerqueira, 1996).

Previous Studies on School Environment

There were quite a few studies conducted in the concerns of school environment in different countries, but all of them were focused on the teachers' perceptions towards the school environment. In the earlier study, Nebor (1984) had mentioned the role of teachers and students in the social environment shows that "positive" was very important because the teacher is the pillar of the educational system, and suggested the school to develop policies, to intervene, and implement the policy continuously.

Into the 21st century studies, Bogler (2001) stated for the purpose of cultivating a better school environment, the principals and teachers could share beliefs and values of the school, to better promote the communication between the principal and staff, promote the cooperation of employees in the work, to the achievement of hard work. In order to shape an idea or positive school environment, the school leadership and staff's cooperation and sharing, was very necessary and crucial for the teachers and students in the face of the school environment satisfaction effect.

Kate (2005) suggested the HPS model also provided an approach to make the teachers working in a happy and healthy environment, thus reduce the working pressure. She believed the HPS method could be regarded as an effective management mode, to promote a healthy working environment. Such as evaluating the teacher's health, absenteeism and injury ratio, the school will provide a measure of the school environment.

Another study conducted by Stewart (2016) pointed out that the conceptualization of the classroom social environment required the school to develop the relevant health theory into all learning activities, as well as to establish the access to students with preventative health services through school-based management.

More recently, Ruilian (2017) has conducted a study to determine the teachers' perception towards school environment according to their demographics at Zhaotong experimental primary school. The study found that the total 156 teachers' perception towards school environment were positive. She found there was a significant difference of teachers' perception towards school environment among teachers according to different grade level at Zhaotong experimental primary school.

Previous Studies on Students' Perception in International School of Bangkok

No previous study focusing on students' perception towards the school environment in intentional schools of Bangkok was conducted, however there were a few studies investigating the students' perceptions in different international schools of Bangkok towards different issues. Since these studies also reported the student's demographic profiles and compared the students' perception with their grade, age, nationality and years of learning at the international schools of Bangkok, the researcher felt to review their findings were necessary and valuable for understand the international school students' demographics and the comparative design of this study.

Among those studies that were mentioned, Robert (2010) started a study to investigate the students' perception towards the learning materials when studying ESL social studies according to the gender, age and years of learning at Saint Joseph School in Bangkok, which is also an international school in Thailand. Robert found that students who stay at the international school for different length showed different perceptions towards the social study academic exercises. The one stayed at the school longer would be more positive than the one stayed for a short time.

Han (2015) also studied high students' perceptions towards learning strategies from the international school at Bangkok. According to the demographic findings of Han in the international school that she studies, the number of Grade 12 students was reported as the least, while the number of Grade 10 students was the most. Han (2015) also found that students' perceptions towards learning strategies from the international school at Bangkok were significant different according to their nationalities, in the way that Non-Thai students had higher perception than the Thai students in the international school that she studied. Moreover, as for the students' demographics in the international school of Thailand, another researcher Weila (2017) explained in her study for school leadership behaviors that the ratio of boy and girl students was quite equal as the school administrators also tried to keep the balance of it.

Andrej (2013) conducted a cross-cultural study and implied that different culture played an important part in people's perception, thus, people from different nationalities may also have different perceptions towards the same issue. Meanwhile, The Interface Theory of Perception (Hoffman, 2006) also pointed that perceptual set was concerned with the active nature of perceptual processes and clearly there would be a difference cross-culturally in the kinds of factors that affect perceptual set and the nature of the effect. The interdisciplinary concept of perception is complex and has many layers (Freeman, 1991).

Background of the Selected International School at Bangkok

The selected International School of Thailand was founded in 2001 at the time, this school has five campuses and uses the Singapore (Primary) and UK courses (Secondary- High school) as the basis for the teaching model. This current study will be conducted to the high school students, as they are the most mature ones compared with other kids in the school.

At the high school level, there are 90 high school students including different nationalities from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, and Thailand. Starting in August 2016, the school introduced boarding houses to the secondary school district. The boarding school staff and instructor teachers guided and helped the children to form independent personality and living habits, allowing, and providing opportunities for them to learn and care in a challenging and challenging environment.

For pursuing cultural appreciation, mutual respect and understanding in conjunction with individuals and communities, the school established a school community. The School community strived to inculcate important social awareness for students, create opportunities to understand society and people and things, and build a sense of responsibility with them. Students learned the importance of society, developed relationships locally and in a wider area to understand the importance of transcending school and family relationships.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below shows the framework of this study, which is designed based on the theoretical framework.

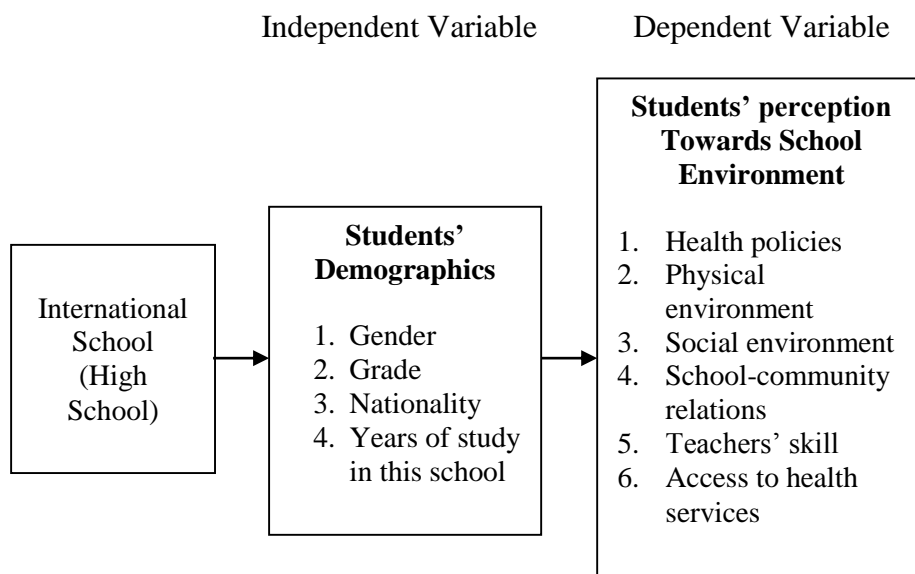


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of this study

Research Instrument

For conducting this research, the researcher used the questionnaire based on the HPS Model (1986). The questionnaire included two part: part I was used to survey the students' demographics, including their gender, grade, nationality and years of study at the international school of Bangkok; part II was to determine the students' perceptions on the school environment, which had 34 questions, concerning the 6 important indicators of school environment.

Population

This study was conducted in an international school of Bangkok, especially with the high school students, in the academic year of 2018. The entire population of students from Grade 10 to Grade 12 in this international school were used as the participants, which were 90 students.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The researcher adapted a questionnaire of 34 items under 6 indicators of teachers' perception towards school environment based on the study of Kate (2005). The previous researcher, Kate (2005) conducted had used this questionnaire in her study to assess the teachers' perception toward school environment, and the reliability of her questionnaire as Cronbach's Alpha was .88. Ruilian (2017) also used this questionnaire to survey the primary school

teachers' perception in Yunnan province of China, her report of the overall questionnaire reliability reached .89.

However, since this study assessed the high school students' perception towards the international school' environment, the original teachers' questionnaire was adjusted and rewording based on the students' perspective, though the majority items are kept, the ways of writing each item were slightly adjusted for the easier and better understanding in the student's way. Therefore, this researcher also did a pilot test for the adapted questionnaires since some items were adjusted a bit from the original one. The researcher used 30 of Grade 9 students in the same school to do the pilot test so as to test the reliability of the questionnaire firstly, the alpha value as the pilot test showed was .71, and it reached .80 in the main study.

Findings

Research Objective One

Research objective one was to identify the students' demographics including their gender, grade, nationality, and years of study at the international school of Bangkok.

The research findings about students' gender, grade, nationality, years of study at the international school of Bangkok were shown from Table 1 to Table 4.

Table 1. *The Numbers of Students at the International School of Bangkok Categorized by Gender*

Gender	Number	Percentage
Boy	44	51.2
Girl	42	48.8
Total	86	100.0

Table 1 above presented gender of the respondents. The results showed that, among 86 students, 44 (51.2%) of respondents were boys; 42 (48.8%) were girls. Therefore, the number of boys was more than that of girls.

Table 2. *The Numbers of Students at the International School of Bangkok Categorized by Grade*

Grade	Number	Percentage
Grade 10	38	44.2
Grade 11	34	39.5
Grade 12	14	16.3
Total	86	100.0

Table 2 above presented grade of the respondents. 44.2% of students (38) were learning in Grade 10, 39.5% of students (34) were learning in Grade 11 while 16.3% (14) were in Grade 12. The result showed that the least number of students were from Grade 12 and the most students were from Grade 10.

Table 3. *The Numbers of Students at the International School of Bangkok Categorized by Nationality*

Nationality	Number	Percentage
Thai	65	75.6
Non-Thai	21	24.4
Total	86	100.0

Table 3 presented the findings of respondents' nationality. The result showed that, out of 86 students, 65 students (75.6%) were Thai while 21 students (24.4%) were Non-Thai. The result indicated that the number of Thai students was more than Non-Thai.

Table 4. *The Numbers of Students at the International School of Bangkok Categorized by years of study at the international school of Bangkok*

Years of Study at the School	Number	Percentage
1-3 years	23	26.7
4-6 years	25	29.1
7-9 years	15	17.4
10 years and above	23	26.7
Total	86	100.0

Table 4 above presented the numbers of students categorized by years of study at the international school of Bangkok. The years of study of respondents was grouped into four groups: 1 – 3 years, 4 – 6 years, 7 – 9 years and 10 years and above. The result showed that 26.7% of respondents were study at the international school of Bangkok for 1 – 3 years, 29.1% of students were study in the target school for 4 – 6 years, 17.4% of students were study in the target school for 7 – 9 years and 26.7% were 10 years and above. According to the research finding, there was the biggest proportion of students who were study at the international school of Bangkok for 4 – 6 years while students who were study at the international school of Bangkok for 7 – 9 years were the smallest. Therefore, the majority of respondents were students who were study at the international school of Bangkok for 4 – 6 years.

Research Objective Two

Research objective Two was to identify the students' perception of school environment at the international school of Bangkok.

Table 5 showed the overall result of the mean score of six indicators for students' perceptions towards school environment at the international school of Bangkok was 3.56, in the range of 3.51- 4.50. It was interpreted as students had high perceptions towards their school environment at the international school of Bangkok. Table 5 also showed the detailed information about total mean scores of students' perceptions towards school environment at the international school of Bangkok for each indicator. The total mean scores from the high to low were: Health Policies (3.89) as the highest, Physical Environment (3.73), Social Environment (3.66), Teachers' Skill (3.38), Access to Health Services (3.41), and School-community Relations (3.30) as the lowest.

Table 5. *Summary of Overall Students' perceptions towards School Environment at the international school of Bangkok (n=86)*

Students' perception	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. Health policies	3.89	.46	High
2. Physical environment	3.73	.62	High
3. Social environment	3.66	.51	High
4. School-community relations	3.30	.63	Moderate
5. Teachers' skill	3.38	.54	Moderate
6. Access to health services	3.41	.62	Moderate
Total	3.56	.42	High

Research Objective Three

Research objective three was to compare the significant differences of the students' perception towards school environment according to their gender, grade, nationality, and years of study at the international school in Bangkok.

For this objective, researcher used independent samples t-test and One-way ANOVA was utilized to analyze and compared means for students' perception of school environment according to their grade and years of study at the international school of Bangkok. Research findings were presented in following Table 6 to Table 10.

Table 6. *Comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment at the international school of Bangkok according to gender*

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig.(2-tailed)
Boy	44	3.52	.36	.943	.349
Girl	42	3.60	.47		

Table 6 above showed the comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment according to their gender at the international school of Bangkok. It was interpreted as there was no significant difference in the students' perceptions towards school environment according to their gender at the international school of Bangkok.

Table 7. *Comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment at the international school of Bangkok according to grade*

Grade	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.515	2	.258	1.484	.233
Within Groups	14.401	83	.174		
Total	14.916	85			

Table 7 above indicated there was no significant difference in the students' perceptions towards school environment according to their grade at the international school of Bangkok.

Table 8. *Comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment at the international school of Bangkok according to nationality*

Nationality	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2- tailed)
Thai	65	3.50	.41	2.26	.027
Non-Thai	21	3.73	.40		

Table 8 above showed the comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment according to their nationality at the international school of Bangkok. It was interpreted as there was a significant difference in the students' perceptions towards school environment according to their nationality at the international school of Bangkok, and the mean scores showed Non-Thai students had higher perception towards the Thai students.

Table 9. *Comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment at the international school of Bangkok according to years of study at the school.*

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.609	3	.536	3.305	.024
Within Groups	13.307	82	.162		
Total	14.916	85			

Table 9 above indicated that the probability significant value was .024, which was less than .05 at the .05 level of significance. Thus, the researcher continued to use the Post Hoc Tests to recheck the significant value of students' perception towards school environment according to their years of study at the international school of Bangkok. According to the Post Hoc Scheffe tests shown in Table 10 below, the results showed that the significant differences of the students' perception towards school environment only existed between the students studying at the international school of Bangkok for 1-3 years and 10 years and above.

Table 10. *Multiple comparison of students' perceptions towards school environment according to their years of study at the international school of Bangkok (n=86)*

Years of study at the school (I)	Years of study at the school (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
1-3 years	4-6 years	.222	.309
	7-9 years	.273	.252
	10 years and above	.362	.031
4-6 years	7-9 years	.050	.985
	10 years and above	.139	.697
7-9 years	10 years and above	.088	.931

Discussion

The demographic profiles of the high school students as found by this study at the international school showed the ratio of boy and girl students was similar, Grade 10 students were the most, and Grade 12 students were the least. Thai students were more than Non-Thai students, and most of them were studying there for 4 – 6 years, the ones studying for 7 – 9 years were the least. This described profiles were very similar to the high school students' profiles as previous researcher reported for the international school in Bangkok (Han, 2015; Weila, 2016).

This study found the level of high school students' perceptions towards school environment at this international school were regarded as high, which is consistence with the study of Ruilian (2015), though she conducted the study to investigate the teachers' perception towards school environment in China, her finding also revealed the overall level of the teachers' perception towards school environment was high. Moreover, the same to Ruilian's (2015) study, the highest perception was towards *Health Policies*, the lowest perception was towards *School-community Relations*.

Nebor (1984) found the role of teachers and students in the social environment shows that "positive" is very important because the teacher is the pillar of the educational system, and suggested the school to develop policies, to intervene, and implement the policy continuously. Stewart (2016) also supported this study' finding, as it was pointed that the conceptualization of the classroom social environment required the school to develop the relevant health theory into all learning activities, as well as to establish the access to students with preventative health services through school-based management.

Moreover, this study found no significant differences in the students' perceptions towards school environment according to their gender and grade at an international school in Bangkok. But significant differences of the students' perception towards school environment between Non-Thai students and Thai students; between the students studying at the international school of Bangkok for 1-3 years and 10 years and above were existing.

In terms of these findings, most previous researcher conducted studies at international schools in Bangkok also revealed the different perceptions of students compared with the students' nationalities and years of learning at the school, though none directly investigate the students' perceptions towards school environment at the international schools in Bangkok. Han (2015) also found Thai and Non-Thai students' perceptions towards learning strategies from the international school at Bangkok were significant different. The study of Robert (2010) conducted with the international school students in Bangkok about their perceptions towards the academic exercises in social study subject, also proved that students who stay at the international school for different length showed different perceptions towards the social study academic exercises. The one stayed at the school longer would be more positive than the one stayed for a short time, as Robert (2010) confirmed, it was also true in this study. A cross-cultural study conducted by Andrej (2013) also implied that different culture played an important part in people's perception, thus, people from different nationalities may also have different perceptions towards the same issue. Meanwhile, The Interface Theory of Perception (Hoffman, 2006)

also pointed that perceptual set was concerned with the active nature of perceptual processes and clearly there would be a difference cross-culturally in the kinds of factors that affect perceptual set and the nature of the effect. The interdisciplinary concept of perception is complex and has many layers (Freeman, 1991).

The possible reason for why Thai and Non-Thai students' perceptions towards learning strategies from the international school at Bangkok were significant different according to the researcher's experiences of teaching at this international school was, because most Thai students were very familiar with the international school environment, they knew Thailand had many different international schools, they liked to compare with their Thai friends who studying in different international schools, and by the comparison, they had more expectations for their own school environment. While the non-Thai students, they were foreigners studying as boarding students at this school, they don't have too much information from the other international schools, so they didn't compare often, were easier to be satisfied with the current environment. These phenomena were happening often as the school administrators mentioned, and this researcher experienced as well.

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