

## **PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT OF TEACHERS FROM BASIC EDUCATION HIGH SCHOOLS IN SAGAING TOWNSHIP**

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### **Abstract**

The main purpose of this study was to explore professional commitment of teachers from Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township. The study was conducted by descriptive research design and quantitative survey method. The participants were 300 teachers (24 males and 276 females) with the age ranging from below 30 years to 40 years and above old from 15 selected high schools. Professional Commitment Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Ibrahim (2015) was used to assess the perceptions of teachers on their professional commitment. This questionnaire included three subscales, namely, affective, continuance and normative subscale. In general, the results of the study revealed that most of the teachers (76%) in Sagaing Township had average and above levels of professional commitment. Also, it was observed that most of the teachers were better in normative commitment than other subscales. Again, the results indicated that female teachers were a little more professionally committed than male teachers. Next, the results of t-test pointed out that there was a significant difference in professional commitment of teachers with respect to educational background at  $p < 0.001$ . Then, ANOVA results of the three age groups showed that there was a significant difference in professional commitment of teachers with regard to age groups at  $p < 0.001$ . As a result, commitment increases with age and professional commitment of teachers comes with age and professional qualification. It is hoped that this study will help teachers in improving their professional commitment and creating good organizational health.

**Keywords:** profession, commitment, professional commitment

### **Introduction**

The development of a nation depends upon the number of educated citizens who have access to quality education, which in turn depends upon the competence, dedication or commitment and quality of teacher. Teaching is not an easy task and it demands a high degree of professional qualities and commitment which is inculcated in the teacher's personality. To sustain their energy and enthusiasm for the work, teachers need to maintain their individual commitment to the job (Day, 2004).

Commitment is the main factor for effective and efficient work in any field. Commitment is important for teachers because it reflects a personal interpretation of work experience as absorbing and meaningful. It is a significant factor in efforts to improve school outcome, especially student academic achievement (Kushman, 1992). Professional commitment is considered as one of the most important factors determining the behaviour of person's work (Kannan & Pillai, 2008). Professional commitment has been linked to important outcomes such as improved work performance, reduce turnover intentions and greater satisfaction at both organizational and professional levels (Elias, 2007).

Professional commitment is typically conceptualized as a positive, affective attachment to one's work. It is necessary that teachers should feel committed, contented and devoted to their professions. The professions are essentially occupations which have developed a heightened self-consciousness, and an acute awareness or their social distinctiveness (Dr. Khin Zaw, 2001). When teachers are satisfied and committed with their professions, they will perform well.

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Today, the teachers who are working in schools are expected to have more commitment towards their professions for the development of community. The level of professional commitment on the part of a teacher is very important factor in the school progress because it stimulates teacher's readiness to engage in critical practices. Hence, a teacher's professional commitment is the need of today to enhance productivity of the education system and raise the quality of education.

### **Aim of the Study**

The main aim of the study is to investigate professional commitment of teachers from Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township.

The specific objectives are as follows.

1. To explore the perceptions of teachers on their professional commitment.
2. To examine the levels of professional commitment of teachers.
3. To investigate the differences in professional commitment of teachers by their gender, qualification, and age.

### **Definitions of the Key Terms**

**Profession** : It is generally defined as an occupation requiring advanced education and special training.  
(Wang & Armstrong, 2004).

**Commitment** : It is defined as a high level of attachment to an organization (Crosswell, 2006).

**Professional Commitment:** It is defined as a person's belief and acceptance in the values of his or her chosen profession, and willingness to maintain membership in that profession.  
(Vandenberg & Scarpello, 1994).

### **Review of Related Literature**

Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed that organizational commitment is a psychological state linking employees to the organization. The term professional commitment is taken from the psychology and it is developed from more common concept of organizational commitment. Its trajectory study is similar to organizational commitment (Hall et.al., 2005). The study of professional commitment has taken a similar evolutionary pathway to that of organizational commitment (Kerr, 2005).

### **Organizational Commitment Theory**

Organizational commitment theory was developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) who argued the precious effects of psychological state that: characterizes the employee's relationship with the organization; has implications for the decision to continue or discontinue membership in the organization; and reflects a feeling of obligation to continue employment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen developed the Three-Component Model (TCM) of employee commitment survey. Employees having strong affective commitment remain with the organization because they want to. Employees with high level of continuance remain because

they need to do so. Employees with high level of normative commitment have feeling that they ought to remain with the organization.

Theory of professional commitment also states that how much a person invests on commitment to a series of things, its commitment is more difficult to deny. So how much a person be encouraged to enter the job and how much more work be done to encourage, more likely to that the person remains committed to the job (Tayler, 1988).

### **Application of Professional Commitment**

Professional commitment has been linked to important outcomes such as improved work performance, reduce turnover intentions and greater satisfaction at both organizational and professional levels (Elias, 2007). Higher levels of professional commitment are associated with positive behaviors that are beneficial to the organization. Individuals with high levels of professional commitment should be less likely to engage in activities that are detrimental to a firm (Greenfield et al, 2008).

Professional commitment increases by the work experience (Sheldon, 1990). Employees move to higher levels in their profession and receive increased rewards and status. The outcomes of commitment are fairly clear. Committed people are more likely to remain with the organization, work toward organizational goals, and invest more effort in their job (Yousef, 2000). Commitment is significantly and negatively associated with turnover and, to a lesser extent, other withdrawal behaviors such as decreased performance and increased absenteeism (Ostroff, 1997).

The concept of professional commitment implies an attitude reflecting the strength of the attachment between an employee and an organization. For a person who is professionally committed, work is the vital part of life (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992). A committed teacher is one whose behavior is consistent with his philosophy of education (Raymond, 1964).

### **Characteristics of a Committed Teacher**

The strength of any profession depends upon the degree of commitment of its members. Teaching is no exception, this mean that the strength of teaching profession depends upon the commitment of teachers. According to Raymond (1964), even though committed teachers differ from each other in many ways, each has the following common characteristics.

***Desire to be a good teacher:*** The committed teacher wants to teach and wants to do this well. ***Being more than purveyor of facts:*** The committed teacher is more than accumulation of factual information. ***Recognizing and accepting the worth of each individual:*** The committed teacher is concerned with all educable youths. He is concerned with the total development of his students, not only the intellectual development. ***Fulfilling his professional responsibility:*** The committed teacher recognizes his professional responsibilities to students, colleagues, administrators, parents and the community.

### **Dimensions of Professional Commitment**

Meyer et al., (1993) distinguished three dimensions of professional commitment:

***Affective professional commitment:*** This dimension is the commitment in terms of positive emotion towards the profession and a strong desire to remain in the profession. Affective professional commitment refers to teachers' emotional connection to, identification with, and participation in the teaching profession (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

***Continuance professional commitment:*** This dimension is the commitment in terms of being aware of the costs of living the profession. Continuance commitment refers to commitment

based on the benefits and costs that is related to stay in the profession (Nazari & Emami, 2012). It is the extent to which individuals believe that they must remain in the teaching profession because of lack of alternatives or possible disruptions resulting from leaving their jobs (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

**Normative professional commitment:** This dimension is the commitment in terms of the feeling of obligation to remain in the profession a person is working. Normative professional commitment refers to the feelings of moral responsibility of people to stay in the profession. It is the sense of obligation of the professional towards the profession to uphold the values (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007).

## Method

### Research Design

This study was conducted by descriptive research design. With the intention of investigating professional commitment of teachers, quantitative approach was employed to collect and analyze the data.

### Participants

The participants in this study were 300 teachers (24 males and 276 females) from 15 selected high schools in Sagaing Township. They were chosen by using stratified random sampling technique. The participant teachers included 63 primary teachers, 151 junior teachers and 86 senior teachers.

### Instrumentation

In this study, professional commitment questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Ibrahim (2015) was used to assess teachers' perceptions on their professional commitment. There are 18 items in this questionnaire including 3 subscales: affective, continuance and normative commitment. The instrument is 5 points likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The whole scale of PCQ questionnaire indicated satisfactory internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.809.

## Findings

After collecting the required data, data entry was computed by using the SPSS 16.0 software (Statistical Package for Social Science). To find out more detailed information, independent sample *t*-test and one-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) were conducted.

### 1. The Perceptions of Teachers on Their Professional Commitment

In term of descriptive statistics, mean score and standard deviation of teachers' professional commitment were presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of Teachers' Professional Commitment**

Subscales	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean%	SD
Affective	300	8	29	18.29	60.97	5.359

Subscales	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Mean%	SD
Continuance	300	7	30	18.49	61.63	4.852
Normative	300	8	30	20.34	67.80	4.976
Over all Professional Commitment	300	29	84	57.12	63.47	12.754

The mean and standard deviation of professional commitment were 57.12 and 12.75 respectively. According to the result, professional commitment of teachers was satisfactory enough in this study because the mean percentage value of professional commitment was 63.47. It can be said that most of the teachers were satisfied with their professional commitment towards their profession.

Most of the teachers were better in normative commitment than other subscales because the mean percentage of normative commitment 67.80 was the highest in all subscales. So, it can be assumed that most of the teachers were capable more in their ability to have the feeling of obligation to remain in the profession, and to reflect the feeling of moral responsibility of people to stay in the profession.

On the other hand, the mean percentage values of affective subscale and continuance subscale were 60.97 and 61.63. So, it may be assumed that affective commitment and continuance commitment of the teachers were satisfactory enough.

## 2. The Levels of Professional Commitment of Teachers

The participants in this study were classified into three groups of professional commitment such as high, moderate and low. According to Poglar & Thomas (1995), the scores from teachers' perceptions on their professional commitment were categorized into three levels by using the formula of  $M \pm SD$  (Mean  $\pm$  Standard Deviation).

**Table 2 Levels of Professional Commitment among Teachers**

Variable	Level	Number	Percent
Professional Commitment	High	58	19.3%
	Moderate	170	56.7%
	Low	72	24.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The mean score of overall professional commitment possessed by 300 teachers was 57.12 with standard deviation 12.754. Based on the descriptive analysis on professional commitment, 58 (19.3%) of the teachers who attained in total professional commitment more than 69.87 ( $M+SD$ ) were identified as high level; 72 (24.0%) having less than 44.37 ( $M-SD$ ) as low level; and 170 (56.7%) having between 44.37 ( $M-SD$ ) and 69.87 ( $M+SD$ ) as moderate level.

It may be interpreted that 228 (76%) of the teachers from 15 selected schools in Sagaing

Township possessed moderate and above levels of professional commitment. With reference to the assumption of Meyer and Allen (1997), it may be concluded that the teachers' professional commitments were developed through work experiences like job challenge and the relationships between them.

**Table 3 Descriptive Statistics and Mean Comparison of Each Subscale of Professional Commitment by Group Level**

Level	N	M/SD	Aff	Con	Nor	PC
High	58	Mean	25.14	24.34	25.38	74.86
		SD	2.290	2.633	3.183	3.581
Moderate	170	Mean	18.68	18.82	20.97	58.47
		SD	3.455	3.338	3.803	6.346
Low	72	Mean	11.85	12.99	14.81	39.64
		SD	2.746	2.841	2.991	2.739
Total	300	Mean	18.29	18.49	20.34	57.12
		SD	5.359	4.852	4.976	12.754

**Note:** PC = Professional Commitment, Con = Continuance, Aff = Affective, Nor = Normative

Out of the three groups, it was found that the teachers from high group had the highest mean scores in overall professional commitment and its three subscales. Based on the report of Allen & Meyer (1990), it can be concluded that high committed teachers adapted to and accepted change and changing conditions more readily than less committed teachers. The teachers with higher professional commitment showed more pro-social and citizenship behaviour.

It can be observed that the teachers from moderate group had the second highest mean scores in overall professional commitment and its three subscales as compared to the teachers from the other groups. With respect to the attribution of Allen & Meyer (1990), it can be assumed that the committed teachers were likely to be associated with personal attitudes, such as feeling of belonging, security, efficacy, purpose in life and a positive self-image. Among the three groups, it can be observed that the teachers from low group had the lowest mean scores in overall professional commitment and its three subscales. Based on the assumption of Abdul (2009), it can be interpreted that the teachers who were less committed were under pressure and stress. They were more likely to leave the school organization in extreme cases than those who were strong committed.

### 3. Comparison for Professional Commitment of Teachers by Gender, Qualification and Age

#### 3.1 Mean Comparison of Professional Commitment by Gender

**Table 4 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples *t*-test Results of Teachers' Professional Commitment by Gender**

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	MD
Professional Commitment	Male	24	57.04	13.473	-0.031	298	0.975	-0.085
	Female	276	57.13	12.716				

According to Table 4, the mean scores of male and female teachers were found to be 57.04 and 57.13. The mean value of female teachers was slightly higher as compared to male teachers. It can be stated that female teachers were a little more professionally committed than male teachers. Based on the assumption of Mowday et al. (1982), it can be interpreted that women generally have to overcome more barriers to attain their positions within the organization. The results of *t*-test revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers in professional commitment. This finding was confirmed with the study of Para (2017) on organizational commitment among secondary school teachers. His study revealed that professional commitment was not significantly different by gender.

### 3.2 Mean Comparison of Professional Commitment by Qualification

**Table 5 Descriptive Statistics and Independent Samples *t*-test Results of Teachers' Professional Commitment by Qualification**

Variable	Qualification	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	MD
Professional Commitment	BEd/MEd	101	60.73	11.949	3.563***	298	0.000	5.446
	BA/BSc/MA/MSc	199	55.29	12.787				

\*\*\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level.

To find out the education effect, the teachers were categorized into two groups by their qualification; BEd/MEd degree and BA/BSc/MA/MSc degree. Table 5 showed that the mean value of BEd/MEd teachers were higher than that of BA/BSc/MA/MSc teachers. It became apparent that the teachers who got BEd/MEd degree possessed higher professional commitment as compared to the teachers who got BA/BSc/MA/MSc degree.

The result of *t*-test by qualification revealed that there was a significant difference between BEd/MEd teachers and BA/BSc/MA/MSc teachers ( $p < .001$ ). In the overall professional commitment, it was observed that the mean score for BEd/MEd teachers was significantly higher than that of BA/BSc/MA/MSc teachers at 0.001 level. The reason might be that the teachers with higher qualification in teacher education were more aware of their work and felt more satisfied with their profession. When a comparison of professional commitment of teachers having different qualifications was made, it was found that qualification affected the commitment of teachers positively.

This result is in line with the finding of Gupta and Jain (2013) who investigated professional commitment among teacher educators. Their study revealed that significant difference was found on the basis of educational qualification.

### 3.3 Mean Comparison of Professional Commitment by Age

**Table 6 Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA Results of Teachers' Professional Commitment by Age**

Variable	Age	N	Mean	SD	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Professional Commitment	Below 30 years	29	50.41	10.878	2, 297	8.654***	.000
	30-39 years	66	54.08	12.978			
	40 years & above	205	59.05	12.466			

\*\*\*The mean difference is significant at the 0.001 level.

To investigate the age effect, teachers were categorized into three groups by their age; below 30 years group, 30-39 years group and 40 years and above group. The ANOVA results of the three age groups revealed that there was a significant difference in professional commitment among the different age groups of teachers. It can be said that professional commitment of teachers was so different with respect to their age differences.

According to Table 6, the mean value of teachers (40 years and above age group) was higher than other age groups in professional commitment while the youngest teachers (below 30 years age group) possessed the lowest mean value in this commitment. The result showed that the older teachers possessed the higher professional commitment. It may be interpreted that the teachers' professional commitment may be dependent upon their existing ages. When the analysis was made of teachers having different age, it was found that commitment level increased with the increase of age of teachers in professional commitment. This result was supported by the research finding of Solangi, et al. (2015) who mentioned that aged teachers were more committed to their profession as compared to younger teachers.

**Table 7 The Results of Tukey HSD Multiple Comparisons for Professional Commitment by Age**

Variable	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference (I-J)	$\rho$
Professional Commitment	40 years & above	Below 30 years	8.635**	.002
		30-39 years	4.973*	.014

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

To obtain more detailed information in which age groups had differences, the Post Hoc test was executed by Tukey HSD method. It can be seen that the teachers of 40 years and above age group were significantly greater than the teachers of 30 to 39 years age group and below 30 years age group in professional commitment.

Therefore, it can be concluded that overall professional commitment was found at maximum level in the teachers with age group (40 years and above), at average level in the age group (30 to 39 years), and at minimum level in the age group (below 30 years).

## Discussion and Conclusion

### Discussion

The following discussions are provided for exploration based on the results of the study and analysis regarding levels of professional commitment, and factors of gender, qualification, and age. The result of the study showed that out of 300 teachers from 15 selected schools in Sagaing Township, 58 (19.3%) teachers were identified as high group in professional commitment. It can be said that higher levels of professional commitment are associated with positive behaviours that are beneficial to the organization. According to the attribution of Jha (2005), it can be assumed that the highly committed teachers always recognized professional responsibilities and always tried to improve professional qualities so that professional outcome gradually improved. These teachers not only taught all round development of students put to their charge but also worked hard for their own professional growth to contribute their best to the profession as teachers.

The result of the study revealed that out of 300 teachers in Sagaing Township, 170 (56.7%) teachers were identified as moderate group in professional commitment. Based on the



assumption of Allen and Meyer (1990), it can be concluded that the teachers who are committed are more likely to remain with organization, work toward organizational goals, and invest more effort in their job. These teachers tend to highly perform their duties in more or less as if the school belongs to them.

In this study, it was found that out of 300 teachers, 72 (24.0%) teachers were identified as low group in professional commitment. Based on the report of Abdul (2009), it can be assumed that the teachers with low commitment were under pressure and stress, and they could not have an enough extent of commitment towards teaching and their students efficiently. Lower commitment affects the schools and causes teachers to be left the profession in extreme cases.

When the analysis was made of teachers with regard to gender, it was found that female teachers showed slightly higher mean value of professional commitment than male teachers. The possible reasons may be that for female teachers, teaching profession has been seen as the comfortable profession. Generally, men only opted for teaching profession when they found themselves unable for other fields. Also, females were not so distracted that they were more capable to concentrate on their professional responsibilities, while men commonly found to be distracted by known social goings-on of life. In this study, the result of *t*-test revealed that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers in professional commitment. This finding was consistent with the study of Kohli (2005) on professional commitment of teacher educators in relation to their teaching experience and job satisfaction. His study revealed that no significant difference was found between male and female teachers with respect to professional commitment.

When a comparison of teachers having different qualifications was made, it was found that the teachers who got BEd/MEd degree possessed higher professional commitment as compared to the teachers who got BA/BSc/MA/MSc degree. The reason might be that based on the qualification, the teachers differed significantly on professional commitment. It was found that qualification was linked with the professional commitment of teachers. Similarly, teachers having higher academic and professional qualification (higher teacher education) were more professionally committed. In this study, the result of *t*-test indicated that there was a significant difference in professional commitment of teachers with regard to qualification. This finding was corresponded with the study of Joseph (2003) on the professional commitment of primary school teachers in relation to working conditions. He reported that there was a significant and positive relationship between professional commitment and qualification.

When the analysis was made of teachers having different ages, it was observed that professional commitment was found at maximum level in the teachers with age group (40 years and above), at average level in the age group (30-39 years), and at minimum level in the age group (below 30 years). The possible reasons may be that more aged teachers were considered to be more experienced teachers who possessed more professional commitment. It was found that commitment increased with age, and there was a strong link between age and professional commitment. The results of the study highlighted that aged teachers were more professionally committed as compared to younger ones. So, professional commitment of teachers came with age and professional qualification.

The ANOVA results of the three age groups revealed that there was significant difference in professional commitment among the different age groups of teachers. It can be concluded that professional commitment of teachers was so different with respect to their age differences. This finding was in line with the study of Anwer, Tahir & Batool (2012) on professional role of

teachers in government colleges and higher secondary schools. Their study revealed that there was a strong association between age and professional commitment.

Based on the findings of the study, some of the recommendations are proposed as follows.

- The present study identified professional commitment as an important factor contributing to the effectiveness of the education system.
- This study will contribute for giving the knowledge of various aspect of professional commitment.
- This study will contribute to compare the professional commitment of teachers in different types of school.
- This study will help teachers in improving professional commitment and creating good organizational health.
- By knowing professional commitment, each of the teacher will try to enhance the quality of school and education.

### **Conclusion**

This study investigated professional commitment of teachers from Basic Education High Schools in Sagaing Township. The instrument used in this study was the professional commitment questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Ibrahim (2015). The whole scale of this questionnaire indicated satisfactory internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of 0.809. It is evident that this questionnaire has high reliability to access professional commitment.

According to the findings of this study, professional commitment of teachers was satisfactory enough because the mean percentage value of professional commitment was 63.47. It was observed that most of the teachers were better in normative commitment than other subscales. So, it can be assumed that the teachers had the feeling of obligation to remain in the profession, and to reflect the feeling of moral responsibility to stay in the profession.

In this study, the teachers were classified into three groups of professional commitment such as high, moderate and low. It was found that most of the teachers (76%) in Sagaing Township had moderate and above levels of professional commitment. It can be concluded that professional commitment of teachers was developed by the work experience and the teachers had satisfactory level of professional commitment in their profession. In this study, teacher's personal factors or teacher's demographic factors such as gender, qualification and age group were considered to be influential on professional commitment.

Educational institutions are dependent on human resources for their performance. Teachers are the main input source of any educational institutions and teacher's adequate work and responsibility towards the institution makes it good or bad. Teacher's aim is to be a change agent transforming light of knowledge, wisdom, imagination and enlightenment. A committed teacher is an asset to the school and occupies a more important place in educational system because they are in charge of the future of the nation. Teacher commitment is at the core of quality education. It has influence on promoting teaching profession, work performance, school and student achievement (Billingsley & Cross, 1992).

Teaching is complex and demanding work and there is a daily need for teachers to fully engage in that work with not only their heads, but also their hearts (Day, 2004). It appears to be a professional necessity for teachers to be emotionally committed to their work, for without this emotional connection, teachers face the constant danger of burn-out in an increasingly intensified

work environment (Nias, 1996). The need for improving teacher's professional commitment has been considered paramount because lower commitment causes teachers to be less successful in their professional performance.

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