The influence of personal and work-related factors on teachers' commitment during educational change: A study on UAE public schools

Ali Ibrahim a,*, Fawzia Aljneibi b

a Foundations of Education Department, United Arab Emirates University, Al-Ain, United Arab Emirates
b Ministry of Education, United Arab Emirates

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ABSTRACT

Despite the significant role that committed teachers play in the lives of their students and for implementing educational reforms and changes, the topic of teachers' commitment has not received due attention in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Therefore, this study attempted to investigate teachers' commitment at one large school district in the UAE where the system has been undergoing substantial change for the last two decades. Specifically, this paper explored personal and school-related variables that could have impacted teachers' commitment. In this study, teachers' commitment is explored through two main dimensions: organizational commitment, which included affective, normative, and continuance commitment, and commitment to teaching, which included commitment to the profession, students, and the subject. The study utilized a quantitative research methodology where commitment was assessed through a survey completed by 737 teachers from 40 schools in Al Ain School District. The results revealed that teachers' commitment to teaching scored higher than their organizational commitment. The study also found that commitment increased with age, length of service, and staying at the same school, and it dampened when teachers had heavy teaching loads, taught multiple subjects, and were given exhausting non-teaching duties. The study concluded with specific recommendations that could help school principals and educational policymakers increase teachers' commitment.

1. Introduction

Research provides abundant evidence on the positive effects of teachers' commitment. Commitment is closely related to improving teachers' performance and ability to innovate and integrate new ideas into their teaching practices (Mart, 2013). Commitment leads to higher teacher attendance and lower turnover rates (Dee et al., 2006). Committed teachers have a great passion for their subjects and demonstrate genuine care for their students (Firestone, 1996; Tyree, 1996; Sun, 2015). They take on more challenging assignments (Tyree, 1996) and their efforts are essential in times of educational change (Kindel, 2011). With the increasing demands for improving teaching quality, policymakers and principals should consider raising teachers' commitment more seriously. This is particularly true in times of change because change often results in feelings of insecurity and confusion for many teachers (Toprak and Summa, 2014).

This study was conducted in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) where the education system has been in a constant state of change. It has witnessed significant transformation over the past two decades, which, undoubtedly, should have influenced teachers' commitment. The system followed a pendulum model where the Ministry of Education (MoE) has been in charge since the establishment of the system in the 1970s with branch offices in all major cities in the country. In 2005, the Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) was established to govern schools in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, the largest emirate in terms of population. This change separated education in Abu Dhabi from that in Dubai and the other northern emirates, which remained under the jurisdiction of the MoE. Further, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) was established to supervise a thriving K-12 private education system in Dubai and northern emirates.

In Abu Dhabi, ADEC embarked on a very ambitious educational project where government schools changed their curricula and adopted bilingual education in English and Arabic, where hundreds of native English-speaking teachers were hired to work side by side with Arabic speaking Emirati and Arab expat teachers. ADEC also developed its own model, the New School Model (NSM), and started its implementation gradually from Kindergarten, leveling it up year after year until it reached high school in 2015/2016 (Azaza, 2018). During these years,
ADEC introduced many reform initiatives such as school inspection, teacher licensing, and curriculum reforms. Then, a decision was made to re-unite the system under the MoE in 2017, following unpleasant high school graduation results in Abu Dhabi schools. In the following year, ADEC was changed to the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEX), and its role became limited to regulating private schools in the emirate of Abu Dhabi.

As this was happening, the country as a whole embarked on a very bold national educational agenda. Precisely, the national system had the objectives of becoming among the 20 highest performing countries in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the 15 highest performing countries in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) assessment by 2021. The development of a “first-rate education system” as stated in the country vision required a complete transformation of the education system and teaching methods (Burton and Warner, 2017). Results of the country on PISA and TIMSS, while improved over the years, were far from attaining the stated objectives. Speculations about the reasons are many: overambitious goals and expectations, rapid and continuous change, top-down management approach to reform, limited teacher agency, and decreasing teachers’ satisfaction and commitment.

1.1. Problem statement

ADEC used to assess the satisfaction of teachers, principals, parents, and students annually. Although these measures had a fundamental flaw of being conducted by ADEC itself, where a participant completes the survey after logging in to his/her account, the results of these surveys give insights into the level of teacher satisfaction and commitment. For example, in the 2013/2014 survey results, teachers expressed negative opinions about their heavy workload (ADEC Research Office, 2014), a factor that negatively affects teachers’ commitment (Billingsley and Cross, 1992; Chirchir et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers shared their concerns about retention plans, career progression plans, and promotion policies. Further, the survey results showed that teachers avoided sharing their opinions openly with senior school staff and were not happy with the professional development provided (ADEC Research Office, 2014). Poor teachers’ attitudes and inconsistent professional development attendance reflect low commitment of teachers (Taylor et al., 2005; Tierney, 2006; Aquino, 2013).

Apart from ADEC’s own assessments of teachers’ satisfaction, educational changes introduced by ADEC set unavoidable demands on teachers. New policies and practices such as teaching the new mandated curriculum resulted in haste completion of tasks without attention to quality, and the growing number of work assignments placed increasing pressure on teachers and schools. Standardization, monitoring, and assessment of teachers increased their burden, and not enough time was granted to complete all the tasks (O’Sullivan, 2015). Pressure to complete additional non-teaching duties further depleted teachers’ time and created anxiety and dissatisfaction (Ibrahim and Al Tameiji, 2019).

With regard to the new system of bilingual education, Gallagher (2011) concluded that ADEC has failed to produce adequate proficiency levels in English amongst its graduates. A similar result was reached by O’Sullivan (2015) and Baker (2017) who found that teachers felt the goals set by the change were unattainable. Furthermore, ADEC teachers felt alienated, as they were not given opportunities to provide input into the curriculum reform process. Badri et al. (2011) also noted that parents in the ADEC system felt entitled to criticize the schools and teachers for their children’s low academic achievement, a factor that might have led to low levels of morale and commitment among teachers.

The above discussion indicates that ADEC changes may have negatively influenced teachers’ attitudes, quality of work, and commitment to their schools and students. While the commitment of teachers is an important research area, research on this topic is rare in the UAE. Yang et al. (2018) found that the social and organizational environment of the school contributes to the organizational commitment of expatriate teachers in Abu Dhabi schools. Further, Yang et al. (2019) found that teachers develop their commitment based on personal attributes, employment, work conditions, and social relationships. However, it is not known precisely what school-system factors and teachers’ personal factors that might have affected the level of teachers’ commitment during this time of educational change. This study aims to fill this research gap by studying teachers’ commitment whether it is their organizational commitment in terms of affective, continuance, and normative commitment or their commitment to teaching in terms of commitment to the profession, students, and their subjects.

1.2. Research questions

This study was guided by four research questions:

1. Do teachers in Al Ain School District have different levels of commitment including organizational commitment (affective, normative, and continuance) and commitment to teaching (profession, students, and subject)?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between teachers’ commitment (overall commitment, organizational commitment, and commitment to teaching) and their personal variables of sex, age, length of teaching experience, highest degree, and school level?
3. Is there a statistically significant relationship between teachers’ commitment (overall commitment, organizational commitment, and commitment to teaching) and the school-related variables of the subject they teach, number of years spent in the same school, number of students taught, teaching load, and non-teaching duties?
4. Do teachers’ personal variables and school-related variables predict teachers’ overall level of commitment?

2. Theoretical framework

Early writings about Organizational Commitment (OC) by Becker (1960) viewed the concept from a “side-bet” perspective, where employees’ commitment increases with time, as they get accustomed to work and fear losing the time and effort they invested. Thus, it becomes difficult for the employees to disengage from the consistent pattern of activity and this leads them to continue their organizational membership. Porter et al. (1974) and Mowday et al. (1979) shifted the focus of commitment from side-bet to being an attitude toward the organization, which was characterized by an attachment to the organization’s goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort for the organization, and a strong desire to remain in the organization.

O’Reilly and Chatman (1986) constructed their approach by defining commitment as the psychological attachment to the organization, which reflects adoption and internalization of the organization’s characteristics and values. They argued that commitment could take three forms: compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance happens when an employee exhibits consistent behaviors required by the organization to perform the tasks. When the employee perceives himself/herself in a satisfying relationship with the organization, identification happens and when the existing values of the organization are congruent with the attitudes and behaviors of the employee, internalization happens. Due to absence of clear distinction between identification and internalization, O’Reilly and Chatman (1986) merged the two concepts to form what is now known as Normative Commitment (NC).

Meyer and Allen’s (1991) approach to the study of OC gained more popularity. They developed two scales, one representing Affective Commitment (AC) and the other representing Continuance Commitment (CC). The AC scale measures commitment in organizations, where employees have positive feelings of identification with, attachment to, and involvement in organizations. The CC scale measures the extent to which employees feel committed to the organization by virtue of the cost they feel is associated with leaving the organization. Later, Meyer and Allen (1991) proposed a third dimension, Normative Commitment (NC) where
they defined it as “...a feeling of obligation to continue employment” (p. 67), as it is the right thing to do even if the employee was not happy. Consequently, OC was perceived as a three-dimensional concept (Meyer and Allen, 1991; 1997; Meyer et al., 2004) and it happens with the incorporation of all three themes or mindsets: First, the individuals’ affective attachment to an organization (i.e., they remain at work because they want to). Second, the individuals’ perceived cost of leaving an organization (i.e., they remain at work because they need to). Third, the individuals’ sense of obligation to continue working at the organization (i.e., they remain at work because they ought to). The original scale comprised 24 items divided equally on the three domains. Vandenberg and Sief (1993) and Ko et al. (1997), among others, criticized the scale. For example, it was not clear how to separate NC from AC conceptually. However, the confirmatory factor analyses consistently showed that NC and AC items are separate (Caldwell et al., 1990; Jaros, 1997), even though they are highly correlated. This and other critiques led to improvement of the scale (Powell and Meyer, 2004), and different versions are now in place such as an 18-item scale. In addition to the general organizational commitment as described above, Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) and Carmell and Freund (2004) asserted that school teachers might commit to multiple objects, such as the profession, their school, subject matter, and students. Tyree (1996) also criticized using organizational commitment surveys to measure teachers’ commitment, as these scales would fail to capture the complexity of teachers’ commitment, which include commitment beyond workplace conditions, such as making a difference in the lives of their students or advancement of the subjects they teach. Commitment to teaching, as conceptualized by Tyree (1996), is a psychological link between teachers and the profession and it is reflected through their willingness to focus efforts on providing effective teaching, showing greater enthusiasm for their subjects, and devoting extra time to students (Firestone and Pennell, 1993; Tyree, 1996).

Commitment to the profession (CP) implies extra involvement in teaching that goes beyond completing expected workload of preparing lessons, instruction, and maintaining good rapport with students. Thien et al. (2014) found that teachers with strong commitment to their profession have more positive feelings towards teaching than others, and they feel rewarded by improving student learning and achieving higher standards (Firestone and Pennell, 1993). Commitment to teaching students (CS) reflects a genuine empathy for students’ developmental needs through a concern for each student as an individual, rather than as groups of instructional recipients. Therefore, teachers with CS target their students’ strengths and weaknesses in their planning and deliver more individualized learning (Kushman, 1992). Firestone and Rosenblum (1988) reported that CS might lead teachers to form strong emotional bonds with students, and take the role of a friend or counselor in meeting their students’ needs. Teachers who are committed to their subjects (CSB) spend more time reading and searching for information on the subject they teach. They prepare lessons and revise them, and plan for activities that allow students to learn their subject better. Tyree (1996) described them as teachers who may spend more time in meetings about the curriculum, share ideas, activities and materials while participating voluntarily in local subject organizations. Joffres and Haughey (2001) argued that the findings from most studies on teachers’ commitment were inconsistent. The reasons relate partly to methodological issues and partly to limitations in existing theoretical frameworks for identifying and integrating the variables that guided most of the research on teachers’ commitment. Based on the previous discussion, this study conceptualizes teacher commitment (C) to include two major dimensions: teacher organizational commitment (OC) and teacher commitment to teaching (CT) and it is measured as an arithmetic average of both components. Teacher organizational commitment (OC) will follow Meyer and Allen’s conceptualization and consists of three dimensions: affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC). Commitment to teaching (CT), on the other hand, consists of three dimensions: commitment to profession (CP), commitment to students (CS), and commitment to subject (CSB). Figure 1 summarizes these components.

3. Literature review

3.1. Change and organizational commitment

Change may affect employee commitment through influencing the psychological contract that an individual has developed with their workplace. According to Morrison and Robinson (1997, p. 229), the psychological contract is an employee’s belief about the reciprocal obligations between the employee and the organization based on promises made. This contract could be transactional or relational in nature. Transactional contracts consist of distinct, short or long-term financial obligations (e.g., payment for service) that require limited attachment of the employee to the organization. Relational contracts, in contrast, have extensive, open-ended, and long-term obligations. They derive from the exchange of financial and socio-emotional elements, including loyalty and dedication (Rousseau and Parks, 1993).
Robinson (1996) argued that conflict might start following organizational changes, which could affect the employee commitment. For example, organizational changes, which cause significant departure from the status quo, might create a situation where the psychological contract is violated, especially when the explicit or implicit promises made by the organization such as job security in return of diligence and productivity are broken. Employees will attempt to comprehend the reasons for the contract violation and whether it could be avoided. Robinson (1996) found that employees with high levels of initial trust in the organization reacted less negatively to contract violations than those with lower trust, where trust is defined as one’s expectations, assumptions, or beliefs about the likelihood that another future action will be beneficial, favorable, or at least not detrimental to one’s interests (p. 576).

Meyer et al. (1998) noted that AC is likely to be most influenced by change initiatives in the relational contract, which lead to employees demonstrating a weaker affective bond with their organization. The reason is that employees view the organization as violating their trust by implementing these changes in the organization’s own best interest, with limited or no attention to its employees’ wellbeing. By its nature, CC is tied to the transactional aspects of the psychological contract where changes that result in benefits such as ongoing employment and the costs associated with leaving the organization are the focus. Thus, change can definitely influence CC levels. NC is based on the sense of duty to reciprocate for the benefits that an employee has received. It might be influenced by changes too. For example, in times of change, employees might evaluate whether they have fulfilled the expectations placed on them as a result of investments made on their behalf by the organization. Those who have fulfilled their obligations might experience a lowered NC. However, for employees who have not yet repaid their debts, NC could become a determining factor in their decision about whether or not to stay with the organization (Meyer et al., 1998).

Meyer et al. (1998) highlighted that all of these commitment components might be impacted by organizational changes without being mutually exclusive. They emphasized that the impact of change depends on the result and the extent to which each commitment component is involved, as employees assess their relationship with the organization after change. They also concluded that organizations benefit the most from employees who have high levels of AC. Other benefits are gained by fostering a strong sense of NC, where it is distinguished from AC by being more limited and shorter. In contrast, employees with high CC are less likely to exercise the level of effort expected by the new change.

Meyer et al. (1998) added that following an organizational change, employees who remain are likely to reconsider the nature of their psychological contract with the new environment. Those who view change as a contract violation are less likely to trust the organization enough to enter in a new relational contract. Therefore, it is unlikely that they will maintain or develop a strong AC. Instead, they might view their contract with the organization in transactional terms, leading to the development of CC or NC depending on the employee focus. Employees who accept a contract violation as unavoidable rather than a violation are likely to be more amenable to a new relational contract which might result in high levels of AC (Meyer et al., 1998).

3.2. Factors affecting teachers’ commitment

According to Meyer and Allen (1997), Anari (2012), and Çogaltay (2015), research on the personal characteristics of teachers and how they influence their commitment has focused on two types of factors: the demographic factors (such as sex, age, tenure, marital status, and qualification), and dispositional factors (such as personality, values, and teacher attitudes towards non-teaching duties). Additionally, Firestone and Pennell (1993) and Kindel (2011) emphasized school and work conditions such as school level, teaching loads, and the number of students taught as possible factors that impact teachers’ commitment.

Studies have reported inconsistent findings between sex and OC. Huang (2011) found no significant difference between the commitment of male and female teachers. Marsden et al. (1993) concluded that men tend to have slightly higher overall levels of OC than women. Irving et al. (1997) concluded that women might feel less affectively attached to their work because of the possibility that many female employees might feel trapped in lower level jobs with lower status and pay. Coladarci (1992), Reyes (1992), and Billingsley and Cross (1992) reported that women had higher OC compared to men and Billingsley and Cross (1992) attributed their findings to the greater obstacles that women have to overcome to secure a place in the workforce in comparison to men.

Similar to the variable of sex, studies reported inconsistent findings between age and OC. While Austin-Hickey (2013) considered age to be a relevant factor when examining OC, it was found that age has small but measurable effect on commitment. Furthermore, employees’ education, years of teaching experience, and employment status provided more meaningful evidence for OC than age itself (Austin-Hickey, 2013). Meyer and Allen (1984) suggested that older employees have greater AC because they are in better positions and they represent a special group, or because they have justifiable reasons to remain in the organization. Mathieu and Zajac (1990) stated that it is impossible to separate the unique influences of age, tenure, and job level on commitment. Assuming some opportunity for advancement within organizations, they claimed that age serves as a proxy for seniority, and seniority is associated with chances to better one’s position in the organization.

Meyer and Allen (1997) found that employees’ educational levels appear to be unrelated to AC. Irving et al. (1997) also found that the education level is not significantly related to any form of commitment. They stressed that the investments in education might cause employees to be less likely to sacrifice these investments by switching occupations to better ones. Therefore, with the opportunity for better jobs that higher levels of education provide, employees are more likely to become rooted in their positions to have good chances of job advancements (Irving et al., 1997). Mathieu and Zajac’s (1990) explanation for declining commitment with increased education relates to the fact that the organization might not be able to meet employees’ high expectations because of their higher level of education.

Mathieu and Zajac (1990) and Meyer and Allen (1997) found that an employee’s psychological attachment to an organization is built over years and that employees need time with an organization to become strongly attached to it. Moreover, long years of service at the same organization is likely to yield greater side-bets, such as a good pension plan, and therefore, employees might develop a greater calculative commitment. Meyer and Allen (1984) suggest that some costs associated with leaving will increase over time such as pension plan contributions and seniority privileges, whereas other costs may decrease with leaving such as the opening opportunities for work elsewhere. However, once employees have obtained more experience, alternative employment opportunities may increase for them while decreasing the costs associated with them leaving their current jobs. That is why Stevens et al. (1978) argued that more teaching experience in the same organization should be considered as a double-edged factor, whereby it may bring stability and increased investments; however, it may also lead to decreased opportunities elsewhere and reduced mobility within the organization itself.

Commitment of teachers differ as teachers progress in their careers. In the early stage, commitment is influenced more by organizational support such as training provided to finish the teaching tasks (Owan et al., 2022), whereas commitment in later career stages is influenced more by organizational conditions that affect the core instructional approach in the organization (Rosenthal and Simons, 1990). Researchers also found that beginning teachers are expected to have high levels of commitment as their definition and management of the boundaries within which the teaching tasks are performed are influenced by organizational support. Veteran teachers may complain of monotony, boredom, and professional stagnation, as they experienced the system and may have no or little expectations of advancement.

Riehl and Sipple (1996) found that commitment of teachers is affected by the number of classes and the number of students taught, as
these factors reflect the volume and intensity of the teaching context. Schools may fail to engage teachers if they teach too few classes. Teaching too many classes can drain teachers' energy. This is particularly true in secondary schools, where teachers focus their work on the conditions under which teaching takes place rather than on assessments of how motivating the work of teaching is.

Teaching workload is associated with teachers’ capacity to adequately prepare for the lessons, teach students, and monitor their performance. Workload is reflected in the number of weekly lessons taught, the number of different subjects taught, and class size with its related concerns of diversity in students’ abilities, experiences, and attitudes (Firestone and Pennell, 1993). Work overload is perceived to negatively affect OC where it emerged as the largest negative predictor in the work of Stevens et al. (1978). Reyes (1992) also found that teacher workload predicts OC, where the higher the number of extra hours assigned to teaching, the lower the level of OC to the school.

Non-teaching duties are added responsibilities on teachers such as touring school grounds during recess or supervising students getting on/off school buses. Those duties are reported as a source of discontent to teachers, as they take time away from preparing their lessons, teaching, and interaction with students (Ibrahim and Al Taniei, 2019). Further, Rosenholtz (1987) found that OC was affected by the amount of paperwork that teachers do, and the time required for recording and testing students; all of which they perceived as needless encroachments on their teaching because it reduces both student-teacher interaction and student learning.

4. Method

4.1. The instrument

To answer the research questions, this study followed a quantitative research methodology. To create the instrument, the researchers checked existing surveys. For items in the three sub-domains of OC, statements developed and tested by Meyer and Allen (1997) in the original and the revised scales for AC and CC were used, and for NC, the original and revised scale by Noordin et al. (2010) were used. For items in the three sub-domains of CT, items about CP were driven from a scale created by Park (2005) and Rosenholtz (1989) as cited in Tyree (1996) in the original and the revised scale versions. Items about CS were driven from Rosenholtz (1989) found that OC was affected by the amount of paperwork that teachers do, and the time required for recording and testing students; all of which they perceived as needless encroachments on their teaching because it reduces both student-teacher interaction and student learning.

While some of the items were stated as negative statements, the researchers preferred to word them for convenience. For example, we used, “I feel emotionally attached to this school” instead of “I do not feel emotionally attached to the school. The statements were also randomized to avoid a participant’s attempt to answer without careful reading. The questionnaire originally had 34 items measured by a four-point Likert-scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The four choices were used to overcome the problem that can be caused from including a middle category, i.e., neutral, as it may encourage respondents to “sit on the fence” which some respondents might do with sensitive or controversial questions. After piloting the questionnaire and measuring its reliability, the final version had 30 items.

4.2. Validity

Three types of validity were considered in this research: construct, face, and content validity. The theoretical framework where commitment of teachers was built on a clear theoretical basis and the fact that questionnaire items were pulled from previous questionnaires helped in achieving construct validity. Face validity was established by sharing the questionnaire with two doctoral students and three teachers to check language and content. The questionnaire was shared with a jury of education professors at one national university to determine adequacy of each sub-domain and insure content validity. Finally, the survey content was reviewed and approved by the Social Studies Ethics Committee at the United Arab Emirates University.

4.3. Reliability

In order to achieve reliability, two pilot studies were conducted on 74 participants, from three schools, who were excluded from the research sample. The first pilot study, conducted on 35 teachers, aimed to examine internal consistency. The second pilot study was conducted on 39 teachers from one school who completed the survey twice. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), a pilot study would assist in identifying possible issues with the instrument and set the stage for the actual study. In the pilot schools, the surveys were administered in group meetings, but each teacher completed their own copy individually. The original questionnaire contained 34 items to measure commitment and 10 items to measure personal and school-related variables. Table 1 presents the pilot study’s analysis of Cronbach Alpha before and after deletion of items.

Cronbach values of all items in the survey was $\alpha = 0.908$ and for any sub-domain, it was above 0.7 as shown in the above table, which indicates high reliability. Split half analysis was conducted between the first and second halves of the commitment questionnaire and the correlation coefficient was 0.791, which yields high correlation (Muijs, 2004). The second pilot of the questionnaire was done to assess the degree of consistency of participants’ scores over time or the strength of the relationship between the two sets of scores obtained (Frenkel and Wallen, 2009). For this research, the test-retest reliability coefficient was conducted on 39 teachers at one school, and the reliability coefficient was 0.884.

4.4. Participants

The study population consisted of K-12 teachers of all subjects at government schools in the Al Ain School District. The total number of schools in the Al Ain in the academic year 2017/2018 was 110, with 6813 full-time teachers. In total, 800 surveys were distributed in June of

| Table 1. Cronbach Alpha Coefficients before and after deletion of questionnaire items. |
|---|
| Domain | No of items before deletion | Alpha Coefficient before deletion | Deleted item | No of items after deletion | Alpha Coefficient after deletion |
| AC | 8 | 0.534 | I think that I could not easily become attached to another school as I am to this one. | 7 | 0.846 |
| CC | 6 | 0.678 | I am afraid of what might happen if I quit my teaching job without having another one lined up. | 5 | 0.717 |
| NC | 4 | 0.734 | I do believe that a teacher must be loyal to his or her profession. | 3 | 0.795 |
| CP | 7 | 0.807 | - | 7 | 0.807 |
| CS | 5 | 0.645 | I cannot wait to see my students every lesson. | 4 | 0.707 |
| CSB | 4 | 0.810 | - | 4 | 0.810 |
| Total | 34 | - | 4 items | 30 | 0.908 |
2018, 370 in English and 430 in Arabic. The surveys were delivered to schools as hard copies. School administrators were responsible for administering the survey in their schools along with informed consent forms which were completed by all participants in each school. The surveys were collected a week after the distribution process. Using a proportional stratified random sampling, the targeted number of teachers in each school level was identified, and for convenience, the sample was selected from around one-third of the total number of schools, i.e., 40 schools, with eight schools to represent each category of the schools (KG, primary or cycle 1, middle or cycle 2, high or cycle 3, and common or a school having all grades). Although the acceptable sample size for the population was 605 participants, the number of responses was 737. Table 2 presents information about the participants.

### 4.5. Data analysis

In order to answer the first research question, univariate analysis through central tendency and descriptive statistics of the six subdomains of commitment was used. This was followed by calculating the values of the two domains of OC and TC, as well as the overall commitment of teachers (C) as an average of OC and TC values. To answer the second and third research questions, bivariate analysis of the variables of overall commitment (C) and the domains of OC and TC and their six subdomains was used. The T-test was used for the sex variable, whereas the one-way ANOVA test with Post Hoc was used with the variables of age, highest degree, teaching experience, school cycle and the school contextual variables of subject taught, number of years spent in the same school, number of students taught, teaching load, and non-teaching duties. To answer the fourth research question, multivariate analyses through generalized linear regression model (GLM) between the overall commitment of teachers (C) and the personal variables and school-related variables were conducted.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1. Results of question 1

Question 1 investigated the different levels of commitment including organizational commitment (affective, normative, and continuance) and commitment to teaching (profession, students, and subject) of teachers in Al Ain School District. Table 3 presents the results.

Overall teachers’ organizational commitment (M = 3.02) is lower than their commitment to teaching itself (M = 3.33). Their level of NC was the lowest (M = 2.87), followed by CC (M = 2.92) while AC was high (M = 3.28). Their CSB was the highest (M = 3.47), followed by CS (M = 3.44) and then CP (3.08). These results indicate that the teachers are...
Table 3. Teachers’ commitment levels.

| Commitment dimension |  M   | SD  |
|----------------------|------|-----|
| Affective Commitment (AC) | 3.28 | .18 |
| Continuance Commitment (CC) | 2.92 | .20 |
| Normative Commitment (NC) | 2.87 | .40 |
| Overall Organizational Commitment (OC) | 3.02 | .22 |
| Commitment to Profession (CP) | 3.08 | .34 |
| Commitment to Students (CS) | 3.44 | .17 |
| Commitment to Subject (CSB) | 3.47 | .11 |
| Overall Commitment to Teaching (CT) | 3.33 | .22 |
| Overall Teacher Commitment (C) | 3.18 | .22 |

5.2. Results of question 2

Question 2 sought to find whether there are significant relationships between teachers’ commitments (overall level of commitment, teachers' organizational commitment, and commitment to teaching) and their personal variables of sex, age, highest qualification, length of teaching experience, and school level.

5.2.1. Sex

The independent samples t-test was conducted to test the relationship between sex and commitment variables and the results are shown in Table 4. A significant difference was found between male and female teachers in ADEC schools in their AC, NC, OC, CP, CT and overall level of C.

5.2.2. Age

In order to determine whether commitment differed based on the age of the teacher, a one-way ANOVA test was used. It demonstrated a significant difference between age and AC only at the 0.05 level. Tukey HSD test was used to determine the source of the difference. The results are shown in Table 5.

The results confirmed a significant difference between teachers who are 50 years and above and teachers who are 20–30 years old in AC, which means that the former group had more AC levels.

5.2.3. Highest qualification

One-way ANOVA test on teachers’ qualifications and commitment demonstrated meaningfully significant differences at the 0.05 level for all commitments except for CT and its sub-dimensions of CS, and CSB. The source of difference was examined using Tukey HSD test. Table 6 presents the results.

The results show that bachelor’s holders always have higher commitment means than master’s holders. The lowest mean score of commitment was for teachers with doctorate degrees.

5.2.4. Length of teaching experience

The one-way ANOVA test on the number of teaching years in the UAE and various commitment components showed a meaningfully significant difference at the 0.05 level for overall C, OC and all of its subcomponents, but not for CT and its subcomponents. Table 7 presents the results.

Using the Tukey HSD test, the most repeated group difference for AC, CC, NC, OC, and C was the difference between teachers who had 1–5 years of teaching experience and those with over 15 years, and consistently showing higher commitment for the latter group.

5.2.5. School level

The one-way ANOVA test conducted on school level/cycle and various commitment components showed significant differences at the

Table 4. Independent samples T-test of sex and commitment dimensions.

| Item | t-test | df  | Sig. | t-test expression | Effect size | Cohen’s D |
|------|--------|-----|------|------------------|-------------|-----------|
| AC   | 2.68   | 735 | .008*| t = 2.68, df = 735, p < .05 | 0.20 Weak effect |
| CC   | .71    | 735 | -.   | -                | -            | -.         |
| NC   | 3.33   | 735 | .001*| t = 3.33, df = 735, p < .05 | 0.25 Modest effect |
| OC   | 2.63   | 735 | .009*| t = 2.63, df = 735, p < .05 | 0.20 Weak effect |
| CP   | 2.5    | 555 | .013*| t = 2.50, df = 555, p < .05 | 0.19 Weak effect |
| CS   | -0.01  | 735 | .995 | -                | -.           | -.         |
| CSB  | 1.91   | 735 | .056 | -                | -.           | -.         |
| CT   | 2.06   | 735 | .040*| t = 2.06, df = 735, p < .05 | 0.15 Weak effect |
| C    | 2.51   | 557 | .012*| t = 2.51, df = 557, p < .05 | 0.19 Weak effect |

P < 0.05*.

attached more to their subjects, students, and teaching in general than to ADEC as an organization.

Table 5. One-way ANOVA and Post Hoc: Age and AC items.

| Item | (a) 20–30 (n = 60) | (b) 31–40 (n = 308) | (c) 41–50 (n = 263) | (d) 50 and above (n = 106) | F     | Sig. | Groups with differences |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------|-----|-------------------------|
| M    | SD    | M    | SD    | M    | SD    | M    | SD    | M    | SD    |
| Affective Commitment (AC) | 3.16 | .54 | 3.24 | .55 | 3.29 | .56 | 3.40 | .58 | 2.927 | .033* (a-d) |

p < 0.05*.

Table 6. One-way ANOVA and post hoc of teachers’ qualification and commitments.

| Item | (a) Diploma (n = 12) | (b) Bachelor (n = 574) | (c) Master (n = 139) | (d) Doctorate (n = 12) | F     | Sig. | Groups with differences |
|------|----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------|-----|-------------------------|
| M    | SD    | M    | SD    | M    | SD    | M    | SD    | M    | SD    |
| AC   | 3.29 | .62 | 3.32 | .55 | 3.11 | .57 | 3.10 | .66 | 5.439 | .001* (b-c) |
| CC   | 2.88 | .66 | 2.99 | .65 | 2.65 | .73 | 2.72 | .76 | 9.619 | .000* (b-c) |
| NC   | 2.75 | 1.00 | 2.94 | .67 | 2.59 | .75 | 2.64 | .81 | 10.347 | .000* (b-c) |
| OC   | 3.04 | .62 | 3.13 | .48 | 2.86 | .52 | 2.88 | .62 | 12.370 | .000* (b-c) |
| CP   | 3.05 | .63 | 3.13 | .55 | 2.91 | .57 | 2.87 | .70 | 6.685 | .006* (b-c) |
| CS   | 3.35 | .41 | 3.44 | .45 | 3.4 | .41 | 3.29 | .72 | 3.586 | .623 - |
| CSB  | 3.25 | .46 | 3.47 | .48 | 3.51 | .46 | 3.33 | .54 | 1.508 | .211 - |
| CT   | 3.18 | .50 | 3.30 | .45 | 3.21 | .42 | 3.11 | .63 | 2.376 | .069 - |
| C    | 3.11 | .54 | 3.22 | .43 | 3.03 | .42 | 2.99 | .61 | 7.624 | .000* (b-c) |

*p < .05.
Table 7. One-way ANOVA and post hoc for teaching in the UAE and commitment.

| Item | (a) Less than a year (n = 34) | (b) 1–5 years (n = 165) | (c) 6–10 years (n = 124) | (d) 11–15 years (n = 153) | (e) Over 15 years (n = 261) | F. | Sig. | Groups having differences |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----|------|------------------------|
| M    | SD                          | M                      | SD                      | M                      | SD                        |    |      |                        |
| AC   | 3.08                        | 0.66                   | 3.08                    | 0.56                   | 3.33                      | 0.54 | 3.31 | 0.49                  | 3.37 | 0.57 | 8.421 | .000* | (a-e), (b-c), (b-d), (b-e) |
| CC   | 2.54                        | 0.71                   | 2.65                    | 0.68                   | 2.99                      | 0.71 | 3.06 | 0.63                  | 3.02 | 0.63 | 13.286 | .000* | (a-c), (b-e) |
| NC   | 2.65                        | 0.59                   | 2.73                    | 0.68                   | 2.79                      | 0.73 | 2.95 | 0.71                  | 2.97 | 0.72 | 4.734 | .001* | (b-d), (b-e) |
| OC   | 2.81                        | 0.51                   | 2.87                    | 0.60                   | 3.11                      | 0.49 | 3.16 | 0.46                  | 3.17 | 0.50 | 13.556 | .000* | (a-c), (a-d), (a-e), (b-d), (b-e) |
| CP   | 3.02                        | 0.56                   | 3.04                    | 0.52                   | 3.09                      | 0.54 | 3.06 | 0.58                  | 3.12 | 0.60 | 0.703 | .590 | - |
| CS   | 3.43                        | 0.44                   | 3.47                    | 0.41                   | 3.51                      | 0.45 | 3.44 | 0.47                  | 3.43 | 0.53 | 1.341 | .253 | - |
| CSB  | 3.56                        | 0.45                   | 3.51                    | 0.44                   | 3.51                      | 0.45 | 3.44 | 0.47                  | 3.43 | 0.53 | 1.341 | .253 | - |
| CT   | 3.27                        | 0.43                   | 3.28                    | 0.38                   | 3.31                      | 0.41 | 3.21 | 0.42                  | 3.23 | 0.47 | 1.112 | .350 | - |
| C    | 3.04                        | 0.44                   | 3.08                    | 0.40                   | 3.21                      | 0.41 | 3.21 | 0.42                  | 3.23 | 0.47 | 4.280 | .002* | (b-e) |

*p < .05.

0.05 level for the overall C, OC and CT with all of their subcomponents, except for CC. Table 7 presents the results.

The Tukey HSD test showed real differences between KG teachers when compared to teachers who teach in “common schools” (i.e., schools that cater for more than one level), indicating that common school teachers had higher commitments. There is also a significant difference between Cycle 1 teachers and Cycle 3 teachers for CS, with the conclusion that the former group had more commitment to teaching students.

5.3. Results of question 3

Question 3 sought to find whether there are significant relationships between teachers’ commitments (overall level of commitment, teachers’ organizational commitment, and commitment to teaching) and the school-related variables of the subject they teach, number of years spent in the same school, number of students taught, teaching load, and non-teaching duties.

5.3.1. Subjects taught

The One-way ANOVA test showed a significant difference with all commitment components at the 0.05 level between the subject a teacher teaches and their level of commitment, except for CS and CSB. The Tukey HSD test was conducted to determine where the differences occurred and it was found that teachers who teach religion and Arabic language had more commitment than the EMT teachers (teachers who teach the three subjects of English, Math, and Science).

5.3.2. Years spent at the same school

One-way ANOVA test on the number of years spent at the same school and commitment shows a meaningfully significant difference at the 0.05 level for the overall C, OC and all of its subcomponents, but not for CT. Only CP as part of CT demonstrated a statistically significant difference. The Tukey HSD test showed that the difference is between teachers with 1–2 years and those with 10 years and above, with the latter group showing more commitments. Table 9 presents the results.

5.3.3. Number of students taught

The one-way ANOVA test on the number of students a teacher teaches and his/her commitment level showed no meaningfully significant difference at the 0.05 level.

5.3.4. Teaching load

The one-way ANOVA test on teaching load and teachers’ commitment showed a meaningfully significant difference at the 0.05 level for OC and all of its subcomponents. In contrast, overall C, CT and its subcomponents of CP and CS demonstrated no statistically significant differences with teachers’ teaching load. Table 10 presents the results.

Examining the differences using post hoc tests did not detect the groups that caused the real significant differences in commitment subcomponents, except between the two groups of teachers who teach less than 12 periods per week and those who teach between 25 and 30 periods. The former group shows a higher commitment level for CC and a lower commitment level for CSB, whereas the latter group shows a higher commitment level for CSB and a lower commitment for CC.

5.3.5. Non-teaching duties

For how teachers feel about the non-teaching duties and its relationship with their commitment, one-way ANOVA test showed statistically significant differences at the 0.05 level for the overall C, OC and TC with all of their subcomponents. The difference between teachers who

Table 8. One-way ANOVA and post hoc of school cycle and commitment.

| Item | (a) KG (n = 93) | (b) Cycle 1 (n = 154) | (c) Cycle 2 (n = 142) | (d) Cycle 3 (n = 120) | (e) Common (n = 228) | F. | Sig. | Groups having differences |
|------|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----|------|------------------------|
| M    | SD             | M                      | SD                      | M                      | SD                        |    |      |                        |
| AC   | 3.12           | 0.65                   | 3.28                    | 0.55                   | 3.22                      | 0.53 | 3.21 | 0.55                  | 3.41 | 0.53 | 6.036 | .000* | (a-e), (c-e), (d-e) |
| CC   | 2.80           | 0.79                   | 2.86                    | 0.68                   | 2.92                      | 0.65 | 2.90 | 0.66                  | 3.02 | 0.65 | 2.433 | .046* | - |
| NC   | 2.64           | 0.73                   | 2.82                    | 0.70                   | 2.78                      | 0.71 | 2.72 | 0.65                  | 3.13 | 0.67 | 12.952 | .000* | (a-e), (b-e), (c-e), (d-e) |
| OC   | 2.91           | 0.56                   | 3.05                    | 0.46                   | 3.03                      | 0.46 | 3.01 | 0.48                  | 3.22 | 0.50 | 8.543 | .000* | (a-e), (b-e), (c-e), (d-e) |
| CP   | 2.91           | 0.54                   | 3.09                    | 0.57                   | 2.98                      | 0.55 | 2.96 | 0.57                  | 3.28 | 0.53 | 11.991 | .000* | (a-e), (b-e), (c-e), (d-e) |
| CS   | 3.41           | 0.48                   | 3.49                    | 0.41                   | 3.43                      | 0.40 | 3.32 | 0.45                  | 3.47 | 0.47 | 3.274 | .011* | (b-d), (d-e) |
| CSB  | 3.35           | 0.53                   | 3.45                    | 0.48                   | 3.51                      | 0.44 | 3.40 | 0.54                  | 3.54 | 0.44 | 3.625 | .006* | (a-e) |
| CT   | 3.16           | 0.44                   | 3.29                    | 0.44                   | 3.24                      | 0.40 | 3.17 | 0.48                  | 3.40 | 0.44 | 7.963 | .000* | (a-e), (c-e), (d-e) |
| C    | 3.04           | 0.46                   | 3.17                    | 0.43                   | 3.14                      | 0.38 | 3.09 | 0.44                  | 3.31 | 0.43 | 9.650 | .000* | (a-e), (b-e), (c-e), (d-e) |

*p < .05.

p < .01**.
believe non-teaching duties are “manageable task[s]” showed more commitment than teachers whose answer was “extremely exhausting” in most of the commitment components and subcomponents, with the latter group having less commitment levels.

5.4. Results of question 4

Question 4 attempted to find out whether teachers’ personal variables and school-related variables predict teachers’ overall level of commitment in times of change. To answer this question, the Generalized Linear Model (GLM) of regression analysis was used, after confirming the assumptions of normality, where the personal and school-related variables were independent variables and the commitment of teachers (C) was the dependent variable. The results are presented in Table 11.

As shown in Table 11, the mean commitment level of a female teacher is expected to be (M = 3.153) and that of a male teacher is (M = 3.253), which is significantly higher than a female teacher (p < 0.01). This indicates that the sex of a teacher can be a predictor of commitment favoring higher commitment of male teachers. Second, the mean commitment level of a teacher who is above 50 years is expected to be (M = 3.315). Teachers staying over 10 years at the same school is expected to have the highest commitment level (M = 3.333), with significantly higher commitment levels (p < 0.01). Teachers who teach in KG is expected to have the lowest commitment level (M = 3.075). This indicates that school level can be a predictor of teachers’ commitment level favoring higher commitment for those teachers working in common schools than all other school levels.

Finally, the mean commitment level of teachers in common schools which have students from K-12 is expected to be the highest (M = 3.333), with significantly higher commitment levels (p < 0.01). Teachers who teach in KG is expected to significantly have the lowest commitment level (M = 3.075). This indicates that school level can be a predictor of teachers’ commitment level favoring a higher commitment for those teachers working in common schools than all other school levels.

Table 12 presents the results of the GLM tests between commitment and school-related factors. The results indicate that the mean commitment level of teachers who stay for over 10 years at the same school is expected to have the highest commitment (M = 3.315). Teachers staying less than a year in the same school is expected to significantly have a lower commitment level compared to teachers in most other groups (p < 0.01). This indicates that staying at the same school especially for more than 10 years can be a predictor of higher teachers’ commitment.

Second, the mean commitment level of teachers who teach over than 120 students is expected to be the highest (M = 3.237). Teachers in this
Table 11. Generalized linear model tests on teachers' personal factors and commitment.

| Parameter estimates between C and Sex using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.153 | .000** |
| [Sex = 1.00] male | .100 | .001** |
| [Sex = 2.00] female | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Age using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.255 | .000** |
| [Age = 1.00] 20-30 years | -.122 | .064 |
| [Age = 2.00] 31-40 years | -.087 | .060 |
| [Age = 3.00] 41-50 years | -.048 | .037 |
| [Age = 4.00] above 50 years | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Qualifications using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.130 | .000** |
| [Qualifications = 1.00] Diploma | .016 | .922 |
| [Qualifications = 2.00] Bachelor | .100 | .413 |
| [Qualifications = 3.00] Master | -.089 | .480 |
| [Qualifications = 4.00] Doctorate | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Years of Experience using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.464 | .000*** |
| [Experience = 1.00] Less than a year | -.220 | .003*** |
| [Experience = 2.00] 1-5 years | -.188 | .000** |
| [Experience = 3.00] 6-10 years | -.055 | .213 |
| [Experience = 4.00] 11-15 years | -.049 | .234 |
| [Experience = 5.00] Over 15 years | 0 | |

Table 12. Generalized linear model tests on school-related factors and commitment.

| Parameter estimates between C and Teaching Years at the Same School using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.315 | .000** |
| [Years at the same school = 1.00] less than 1 year | -.222 | .000** |
| [Years at the same school = 2.00] 1-2 years | -.221 | .000** |
| [Years at the same school = 3.00] 3-5 years | -.136 | .002** |
| [Years at the same school = 4.00] 6-9 years | -.078 | .095 |
| [Years at the same school = 5.00] over 10 years | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Number of Students Taught using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.237 | .000** |
| [Number of Students Taught = 1.00] less than 30 | -.631 | .498 |
| [Number of Students Taught = 2.00] 31-60 student | -.099 | .631* |
| [Number of Students Taught = 3.00] 61-90 student | -.036 | .446 |
| [Number of Students Taught = 4.00] 91-120 student | -.073 | .161 |
| [Number of Students Taught = 5.00] over than 120 | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Number of Selected Subjects using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.237 | .000** |
| [Subject = 1.00] English | -.110 | .115 |
| [Subject = 13.00] Math | .257 | .039* |
| [Special Need Subject = 15.00] EMT | -.318 | .000** |
| [Subject = 10.00] Social Science | .167 | .020* |
| [Subject = 4.00] Science | .085 | .206 |
| [Subject = 11.00] Arabic | -.128 | .113 |
| [Subject = 20.00] Islamic | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Teaching Load using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.032 | .000** |
| [Teaching Load = 1.00] 12 periods or less | -.108 | .282 |
| [Teaching Load = 2.00] 13-18 periods | .158 | .075 |
| [Teaching Load = 3.00] 19-24 periods | -.200 | .020* |
| [Teaching Load = 4.00] 25-30 periods | .107 | .236 |
| [Teaching Load = 5.00] over 30 periods | 0 | |

| Parameter estimates between C and Non-teaching Duties using GLM |
| Parameter | B | Sig. |
|-----------|---|-----|
| Intercept | 3.121 | .000** |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 1.00] manageable | -.259 | .000** |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 2.00] non-manageable | .207 | .010* |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 3.00] | .130 | .100 |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 4.00] | .007 | .926 |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 5.00] | .694 | .169 |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 6.00] | .033 | .657 |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 7.00] | .027 | .725 |
| [Feelings about Non-teaching duties = 8.00] | -.059 | .340 |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 9.00] extremely exhausting | .057 | .510 |
| [Non-teaching Duties = 10.00] extremely exhausting | 0 | |
group are showing significantly higher commitment level compared to all other groups \( (p < 0.01) \). Teachers who teach 31–60 student is expected to have significantly lower commitment level compared to teachers in all other groups as well as to teachers in the control group \( (p < 0.05) \). It may indicate that the number of students a teacher teaches can be a predictor of teachers’ commitment level favoring higher commitment for teachers teaching over than 120 students than all other groups, considering that three group results were not statistically significant.

Third, the mean score for teachers who teach over than 30 periods a week is expected to be \( (M = 3.032) \) and this group has the lowest level of commitment \( (p < 0.01) \). If teachers teach 19–24 periods a week, then the mean commitment level is expected to be 3.232, which is significantly higher than that of teachers in the control group \( (p < 0.05) \). This indicates that the teachers’ load can be a predictor of teachers’ commitment, favoring a higher commitment level of teachers who teach 19–24 periods than teachers who teach over 30 periods.

Non-teaching duties was measured on a scale of 1 (manageable) to 10 (extremely exhausting). The control group was teachers who answered 10. The mean commitment level of this group is expected to be \( (M = 3.121) \). The mean commitment level of teachers who saw non-teaching duties as manageable work is expected to be \( (M = 3.380) \), which is significantly higher than the mean of the control group \( (p < 0.01) \). This may indicate that teachers’ feelings toward non-teaching duties can be a predictor of teachers’ commitment level favoring a higher commitment level of teachers who feel it as manageable.

Finally, teachers who teach Arabic and Islamic was considered the control group, and their mean commitment level is expected to be \( (M = 3.237) \). Teachers who teach special needs students are expected to have a statistically significant mean \( (M = 3.494) \). EMT teachers (who teach English, Science, and Mathematics using English) are expected to have significantly lower commitment level than teachers in the control group \( (M = 2.919, p < 0.01) \). It may indicate that the subject taught can be a predictor of teachers’ commitment level favoring a higher commitment levels of teachers who teach special needs students than many of other groups.

6. Discussion

6.1. Discussion of question 1 results

The results of question 1 indicate that the overall commitment of teachers was not very high \( (M = 3.17) \) on a 4-point Likert scale, commitment to ADEC as an organization was lower \( (M = 3.02) \), and commitment to teaching was higher \( (M = 3.33) \). Teachers’ NC was the lowest \( (M = 2.87) \) and CC came second \( (M = 2.92) \). The highest commitments were to subject \( (M = 3.47) \) and students \( (M = 3.44) \). The results mean that teachers are committed to their subjects and students more than ADEC/MoE. This can be justified as many of these teachers are on contracts and they need to have good evaluation in their teaching and relationship with students to continue employment. In addition, working with students and seeing them succeed are important factors that provide satisfaction to teachers \( (Ibrahim and Al Taneiji, 2019) \). One reason for the low CC level could be the new changes introduced after the merge of ADEC and MoE. As mentioned in the literature review, teachers assess their relationship with the employer based on a psychological contract. Previously teachers in ADEC had higher salaries and benefits, but after the merge, the MoE started to change the contracts of expat teachers to align them with its salary scales. Some teachers mentioned that their contracts were no longer attractive and there was ambiguity in terms of their rights and obligations (personal communication). The changes undertaken by ADEC and MoE such as new compulsory national teachers licensing certificate \( (Tamim and Colburn, 2019) \) and the massive Western employees’ end of services that took place in June of 2018 are clear reasons for teachers to have low levels of OC.

According to Meyer and Allen \( (1997) \), a low level of NC results from having low feelings of obligation to remain in the school or organization. The problem of having a low NC level is that teachers become disloyal to the organization’s direction, do not sacrifice for the organization, criticize the system \( (Scholl, 1981) \), and do not feel the responsibility for the organization’s success \( (Yaghi and Aljaidi, 2014) \). As it is the objective of the UAE to develop a first-rate education system with very high ranking on international exams, it is difficult to do this with teachers who exhibit low levels of NC and CC. Therefore, policy makers are invited to consider recommendations of this study to increase the organizational commitment of teachers.

6.2. Discussion of question 2 results

While the results showed that male teachers had a little more commitment than female teachers, this result needs more investigation. It is known that teaching is not a lucrative job for Emirati males who can find positions in other government sectors such as the army and police. However, the result might be because of expat male teachers in the sample. Further, the lower level of CC could be because female teachers tend to take leaves to care for the family and raise children \( (Riehl and Sipple, 1996) \). Teachers in this study who remained for over 15 years in the system showed higher commitment levels compared to teachers who had 1-5 years. This is an expected result, since teachers need time with the school system to build affective attachment, while these years are likely to yield greater side-bets and develop greater calculative commitment \( (Matthieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1997) \). This result also confirms another result, teachers who were 50 years and above had more AC than teachers who were 20-30 years, which also matches previous research \( (Meyer and Allen, 1984; Allen and Meyer, 1993) \). The MoE can capitalize on these results by establishing mentoring programs where committed/positive veteran teachers \( (Lowe et al., 2019; Day and Gu, 2009) \) provide professional support to younger teachers. In return, veteran teachers can be given teaching load reduction and this might increase the commitment of both groups.

The results of the study indicate a difference in commitment of teachers who have a bachelor and those who have a PhD with lower commitment to those holding a PhD. The reason might be that having a PhD may encourage teachers to change their occupations \( (Irving et al., 1997) \) and also having a PhD might mean that teachers become more critical of the system. The results also indicate that teachers’ commitment differed by the type of school (KG, elementary, middle, high, or common schools). Teachers in common schools had more commitment. This can be because in common schools, students attend more years and teachers see them grow and develop than in other schools or that teachers in common schools have more chances of work and social relationships with many teachers \( (Yang et al., 2018) \).

6.3. Discussion of question 3 results

The results of question 3 showed different commitments of teachers based on the subject they teach. The lowest commitment level in this regard was for EMT teachers who also the group of teachers which happened to carry the most teaching load in the ADEC system. These teachers are mainly native English speakers who were hired to serve the bilingual project. While they were primarily prepared to teach English only, they were required to take on Math and Science, which they might not have been adequately prepared for. Teaching additional subjects and an average of 30 periods a week are perhaps the reasons for the low level of these teachers’ commitment.

Teachers’ CS and CSB have not been affected by the changes made in the ADEC system, as teachers showed high levels of commitments to students and subjects. This means that teachers are still committed to provide the best they can to students and their subjects. The results also indicate that staying for 10 years or more in the same school increases teachers’ commitment as teachers develop attachment with the school and colleagues \( (Bogler and Somech, 2004; Day et al., 2005) \) and
sometimes they consider the problems at their schools as their own problems (Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). This is unlike teachers who are in their first years on the job who need time to settle and adapt to their work environment (Hurst, 2010).

One result of this research that contradicts previous literature and needs further investigation is the relationship between the number of students a teacher teaches and their levels of commitment. This study found that teaching a high number of students, over 120, does not lower the commitment of teachers. In contrast, Riehl and Sipple (1996) found that the higher the number of students reflects the intensity of teaching, leads to a low commitment, and drains teachers' energies.

The results of this study indicate that teachers who think that non-teaching duties are manageable had a higher commitment level than those who believe these duties are extremely exhausting. This is true especially when non-teaching duties add to the busy schedule of teachers. Previous research (Ibrahim and Al Taneiji, 2019; O’Sullivan, 2015) indicated that teachers were not happy with these duties as they decrease the time allocated to teaching and caring for students. Non-teaching duties in the ADEC system included supervising students during recess, attending to buses, the school cafeteria, etc. These are mainly administrative tasks which can be handled by the non-teaching staff.

6.4. Discussion of question 4 results

The results of question 4 provide important predictors of teachers' commitment in Abu Dhabi government schools. Teachers who are 50 years and above, those who hold bachelor degrees, those who have over 15 years of experience, and those who teach in common schools are more committed than their counterparts. These results provide important policy guidelines. For example, the education system should make use of veteran teachers and position them as mentors of teachers who show lower levels of commitment. Further, as commitment is high in common schools which include more than one cycle, it is advisable to see more of these schools than the ones which cater only for one cycle.

The results also indicate that staying at the same school for many years, teaching an acceptable load of around 19–24 periods a week, and having manageable non-teaching duties can predict teachers' commitments. Therefore, the MoE is invited to consider these factors.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

Although generalization of the results should be made with caution as they report on a sample from one school district at the time of data collection, the results provide significant implications for the MoE and schools. First, CT was higher than OC and therefore policymakers should acknowledge that teachers care for developing their teaching repertoire. One way to increase commitment, then, is to provide them with chances to develop and grow (Thien et al., 2014). It is true that ADEC and MoE have provided teachers with professional development and it is a requirement for teacher evaluation, but much has been written on the shortcomings of professional development conducted at schools as they are carried out as an obligation and the topics are repeated (Ibrahim, 2020). Therefore, teachers should be given chances to tailor their own professional development and allowed time to attend them outside school. CS was the second highest commitment, which means that teachers want to address students' personal and academic needs (Louis, 1998) and therefore the MoE should provide teachers with enough time in their schedules to do so. Previous research found that teachers complain about the additional tasks that take away precious time they could spend with students (Ibrahim and Al Taneiji, 2019). Therefore, MoE is invited to focus the work of teachers on instruction and perhaps hire additional administrators and staff to carry out other non-instruction duties.

OC in this study was not as high as CT. The lowest level of commitment was for NC followed by CC. This means that teachers are not identifying with ADEC nor having a high sense of obligation to remain in the system with all the changes happening. As mentioned previously, change could result in feelings of insecurity and confusion for the teachers, especially if it is fast-pace change. A low level of CC is also an indication that teachers might leave, as the cost of staying might be higher than the cost of leaving. Lower levels of NC and CC can be also seen as a result of a top-down leadership approach where teachers are expected to follow the rules, have little or no autonomy, and are not fully satisfied with their salaries. Therefore, the MoE should start to think of a different approach to change and leadership in the system. Some stability in the education system is needed and teachers should be listened to and given chances to see themselves through the objectives and values of the system. Further, the salaries of teachers, which were changed after the MoE took charge in 2017, should be reviewed, as this affects teachers' CC. Another area that requires attention from the MoE is teaching load as this has affected teachers' commitment especially in the case of EMTs and teachers who do not find time to prepare for their lessons during the school day. The MoE is encouraged to consider a fair distribution of teaching load for all teachers in all subjects.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Ali Ibrahim; Fawzia Aljneibi: Conceived and designed the experiments; Performed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

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Data availability statement

Data will be made available on request.

Declaration of interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information

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