

Factors Influencing High Academic Achievement of Stateless Migrant Children in Tak Province, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The knowledge gained from this study will contribute to the field of migrant education and could encourage policymakers and educators to implement education programmes to both meet the needs and enable the success of migrant children. This multi-case study examined five factors—family, individual, school/teacher, peer group, and community/culture—that influenced the academic achievement of migrant children. The key participants were six migrant children in Grade 6 in two Royal Thai Government schools in Mae Sot, Tak Province, Thailand, three class teachers, and six caregivers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. Creswell's five steps of qualitative data analysis was used: organising and preparing data, reading through all data, coding the data, interrelating the themes, and interpreting the meaning of themes. The seven themes were as follows: (1) the value of education; (2) parents/guardians as important agents to support their children's education; (3) individual characteristics contributing to good grades; (4) the impact of peer relationships; (5) healthy relationships with school and teachers; (6) the power of the community; and (7) gratitude as a motivation for a high level of education.

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INTRODUCTION

Thailand's economic expansion has created a demand for labour-intensive jobs that are avoided by Thais. Since 1992, Thailand has become a place where many migrants from Myanmar aim to reside and work to fulfil the need for unskilled labour. Many individuals who migrate to Thailand are uneducated and do not hold the required documents (United Nations, 2015). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated that 200,000 migrant children younger than seventeen were in the country (IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, 2009). These children, according to Physicians for Human Rights (2004), are vulnerable to exploitative labour, human trafficking, drugs, and sexual exploitation. Apart from human rights obligations, the Thai government believes that education will generate a positive attitude among migrant children towards the Thai State. Education will also assist them to assimilate to Thai society. Education is seen as a process that would turn migrant children into strong human capital for Thailand. The Thai National Education Act (1999) states that all individuals shall have equal rights and opportunity to receive 12 years of basic education provided by the state, free-of-charge (Nawarat, 2012). However, the law permitting migrant children to be enrolled in school only went into effect in 2005, as the Thai cabinet passed the resolution to allow both registered and unregistered migrant children to participate in Royal Thai Government (RTG) schools under the free 12 years of basic education

scheme (OEC, 2008, as cited in Nawarat, 2012). This initiative coincided with a global movement launched by UNESCO as part of the 'Education for All' project. This study aims to examine the factors influencing the academic achievement of six stateless migrant children between 12–16 years of age in Grade 6 in RTG schools in Mae Sot, Tak Province, Thailand. The perspectives of their families and teachers are also included.

The model of resilience, together with Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCL) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT), is used as the central concept of this study. The concept of resilience is defined as an individual's ability to overcome adversity or difficult life challenges and continue their normal development (Luthar et al., 2007). One of the most important pioneers in the study of this concept, from the 1970s onwards, was Norm Garmezy (Rutter, 2012). Contemporary models of resilience are presented as including risk and protective factors and also acknowledge the interdependence of interaction systems (Yates et al., 2014). Individual, family, peer, school and teacher, and community and culture are frequently identified as both risk and protective factors. Both SCL and SDT support the model of resilience. SCL proposes that personal agency is socially rooted and influenced by sociocultural factors. The concept of reciprocal determinism in SCL explains that people's behaviour both influences and is influenced by personal factors and the social environment (Cherry, 2014). SCL highlights the importance of social factors—family,

school, and community – that contribute to children becoming resilient. SDT also focuses on how social and cultural factors facilitate or undermine people's sense of volition and initiative (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

The crucial individual factors that influence academic success are self-efficacy, goal setting, intelligence, and individual behaviour that relates to learning curricular content. Self-efficacy, a focus of SCL, can be defined as people's judgements regarding their ability to learn or perform courses of action at designated levels (Schunk & Pajares, 2009). Through their belief in personal efficacy, people choose types of activities and environments that can shape their way of life (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy can be developed from four main sources of influence (Bandura, 1994): mastery experience, social models, social persuasion, and reduction of stress. Self-efficacy beliefs assist people to set their personal goals, gauge how much effort they contribute, realise how long they can endure obstacles, and discover how they react to failure (Bandura, 1994). Most human behaviour is learned through modelling by observing others (Bandura, 1977). A role model can inspire migrant children to succeed. In addition, SDT focuses on the study of life goals that people use to guide their activities. There are two kinds of these goals: intrinsic aspirations and extrinsic aspirations (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, as cited in Deci & Ryan, 2008). Intrinsic aspirations include life goals and personal development, whereas extrinsic aspirations include goals such as wealth, fame, and attractiveness

(Deci & Ryan, 2008). Intelligence has been identified as a strong predictor of success (Jamil & Khalid, 2016). Moreover, individual behaviour that relates to learning curricular content, such as learning behaviour (Amirtha & Jebaseelan, 2014), study skills (Fazal et al., 2012), a positive attitude towards subject content (Akey, 2006), and the ability to understand the language of school instruction (Cummins, 2014), contribute to the achievements of immigrant-background students. The amount of exposure to the language may affect vocabulary size and the speed with which children recognise and understand the meaning of spoken words (Konishi et al., 2014). Politeness and respect for elders were described as necessary characteristics in the context of Burmese migrants in Tak Province (International Rescue Committee [IRC], 2011). These two characteristics were also considered successful personality traits in the Thai context (Komin, 1991).

There are many family factors that influence students' academic success, such as socio-economic status, family relationships, and parental involvement. Other important factors that support or hinder a child's opportunity to attend school were how migrant parents value education and the need to earn money (International Labour Organisation [ILO] & Office of Education Council [OEC], 2006). If parents valued education highly, they would provide their children with the opportunity for schooling and keep them at school longer. Conversely, if they considered their child to be a labourer who would work

to provide financial support for the family, they would have less or no opportunity for education. Parents' high educational expectations and communication of their educational beliefs to their children had a powerful effect on their children's academic achievement (Short, 2016). Parenting style (Lam, 2014) also correlates with academic achievement. According to Western parenting style, an authoritative style related to high achievement (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004; Huang & Gove, 2015), while an authoritarian style related to low achievement (Sung & Joohi, 2009, as cited in Huang & Gove, 2015). Conversely, in a study of Asian descendant families who fostered high achievement in children, it was found that their parenting style was authoritarian (Huang & Gove, 2015). The parenting style of Burmese migrants in Tak Province could be defined as authoritarian. In the Burmese migrants' view, it is normal and necessary for parents to discipline their children through the use of physical punishment, scolding, and threats (IRC, 2011). Thus, children had to listen, obey, and respect their parents (IRC, 2011). Simultaneously, parents have a duty to treat their children with *Metta*, meaning love and desire to help in the welfare and well-being of their children. *Metta* is a Pali word that is a virtue integral to the Theravada school of Buddhism and is popularly practised in Myanmar (Bodhi, 2005, as cited in IRC, 2011). The example of *Metta* that Buddharakkhita (1995) provides is a mother who devotes her life to protecting her child and endures every kind of difficulty for the

sake of her child. When the two beliefs are interwoven, their parenting style can be described as a 'tough love'—love and concern expressed in a strict manner to make their children behave responsibly. High parental involvement has a positive impact on academic achievement (Avula et al., 2012; Wilder, 2014). Home supervision, such as guiding their children's daily routine, reminding them about homework, reviewing lessons, and talking about school, has positive effects on school achievement (Ma et al., 2016).

Children who belong to peer groups with good academic behaviour are likely to show positive academic behaviour (Masland & Lease, 2013). Strong peer relationships proved to be supportive positive reinforcement (Lawrence, 2014). Peer pressure and victimisation are examples of peers' negative influence. Peer victimisation can lead children to experience sadness, insecurity, anxiety, depression, reduced self-esteem, isolationism, school absenteeism, and reduced academic performance (Papatraianou et al., 2014). Many previous studies state that family warmth, teacher support, and peer friendships could moderate the effect of being bullied (Karlsson et al., 2014; Troop-Gordon, 2015).

School culture and environment can play an important role in supporting academic success for at-risk students (Downey, 2008). Ethnically diverse schools can increase students' sense of belonging because they have friends from a similar culture (Downey, 2008). Students who have a sense of belonging in the school

community are more likely to display higher self-esteem and tend to have better educational outcomes compared to students who feel isolated (Butler et al., 2011, as cited in Webb & Thomas, 2015). Safe and orderly environments encourage and reinforce positive classroom behaviour (Durlak et al., 2011). Teachers are important agents in the school in supporting and promoting protective factors of at-risk students by nurturing their learning skills, academic knowledge, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, and persistence to overcome obstacles (Masten et al., 2008).

In 2015, it was estimated that ten percent of the European Union population were migrants, and five percent of this group were children under the age of 15 (Janta & Harte, 2016). Due to this high percentage of migrants, the EU launched education policies to enhance education among migrant children. First, they introduced inclusive education systems in which migrant children had opportunities to learn with native children, and that enabled them to improve their educational outcomes (Dumclaus et al., 2013, as cited in Janta & Harte, 2016). Second, it is important to ensure that migrant children have access to early childhood education and care. A study by Borgna and Contini (2014, as cited in Janta & Harte, 2016) revealed that 15-year-old migrant children who attended preschools or day-cares from an early age exhibited minimal differences in their educational outcomes compared to native students. The EU, therefore, proposed the educational policy to ensure that migrant

children had this access to early childhood education and care. Third, promoting a good relationship and communication between schools and parents (Janta & Harte, 2016) is necessary, as parental involvement can benefit a student's academic success. Finally, the support of host-country language learning should start in early childhood. Mother-tongue language support also has several benefits for migrant children, as bilingualism can enhance intercultural skills and employment prospects (Salai, 2011; Sirius, 2014, as cited in Janta & Harte, 2016).

Neighbourhoods have an effect on family and individual outcomes (Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004; Iruka et al., 2015). Adult neighbours who offer structure and monitoring can be an important source of support for children experiencing risk in their families (Werner & Smith, 1982, as cited in Corcoran & Nichols-Casebolt, 2004). Moreover, community members can create programmes and out-of-school activities that aim to enhance their children's academic abilities and good health (Williams & Portman, 2014). Culture and the beliefs of families regarding the value of education are extremely important for the academic achievement of their children. Another important belief of Burmese migrants in Tak Province was that children had an obligation to show gratitude to their parents. It meant that a child had to look after the parents when they reached adulthood (IRC, 2011). However, some respondents used the example of a child dropping out of school to work to relieve the parents' economic

burden (IRC, 2011) as a way to show their gratitude.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A qualitative multiple-case study design was used for this study. As a strategic choice, the author first determined two selection criteria for the study cases: migrant children who (1) were in Grade 6 in RTG schools in Mae Sot district, Tak Province, Thailand, and (2) were above the ninetieth percentile of their year groups. However, the incidence of high-achieving migrant students was considered rare. Therefore, RTG schools with a high percentage of migrant students (eighty percent of students) were recruited because they would be more likely to have high achievers who were above the ninetieth percentile of their year groups. There were six schools that met this criterion. The principals of these schools were contacted to explain the objectives and procedures of this research. The principals of the two schools agreed to participate, and these two schools were recruited. All students were ranked, and only migrant children in the top ten percent, a total of six children from the two schools, were chosen to participate. The data collection instruments selected were a semi-structured interview and observation. Most parts of the semi-structured interview were guided by the interview guide, making it more systematic and comprehensive (Patton, 2002). I interviewed six student participants, three class teachers, and six caregivers. The interviews were in Thai, and each participant was interviewed

individually. There were two rounds of interviews, separated by one week between rounds. The purpose of the two rounds was to revisit any unclear evidence collected during the first interviews and observations during the second interview. To establish data triangulation, the observation was used in conjunction with the interview. Observation also assisted the author to better understand the context (Merriam, 1998), and the information gained from the observation could also be used as reference points for the second interview. Data were collected using direct overt observation. Student participants were observed in a natural setting while they were studying in class and taking part in extra-curricular activities without direct participation in the activity. The observation record of the study consisted of the physical setting, people within the setting, and the interaction of the participants with peers and the teacher in context.

To produce credible results, the author was concerned about the validity, reliability, generalizability, and ethical considerations of the study (Merriam, 1998). The data triangulation process and prolonged time in the field were to increase internal validity. To establish data triangulation, three different people were interviewed. Observations of student participants in the class and during activities were recorded in field notes. Information was also triangulated by using all of the above data sources to establish a theme (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data from each case were collected over approximately one week. Triangulation and an audit

trail were used to increase reliability. An audit trail is a technique for establishing reliability (Merriam, 1998) that involves explaining in detail how decisions are made throughout an inquiry (Merriam, 1998). An audit trail was created by attempting to show how the research instrument was developed and data were collected over six weeks at two school sites. To enhance the generalisability of the study, a replication approach and multisite design were used. Replication logic is similar to that used in multiple experiments (Yin, 2018) meaning that more experiments are conducted to replicate the findings. Two selection criteria were determined for study participants. Six participants at two school sites were selected to support the generalisability of the findings (Merriam 1998). To protect participants' rights, ethical principles were followed. The study was conducted in accordance with The University of Leicester's Research Ethics Code of Practice 2016, and approval from the University of Leicester Ethics Committee was obtained prior to conducting the research.

Creswell's (2009) five steps of data analysis in qualitative research was used. In the first step—managing and organising data—24 MP3 files, recorded during the interviews with the participants, were transcribed into Word documents. All the data were read in the second step. In the third step, the cases and their context were described, and in the fourth step, codes and categories were created for the qualitative data analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Major categories in each case were

compared and then consolidated in multiple ways, whereafter thematic analysis was used (Saldana, 2016). The final step of the case study approach was to develop a naturalistic generalisation of 'what was learned' (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

After data from the interview transcript and observation, notes were coded, major categories and sub-categories from clusters of coded data were created. Seven themes emerged: (1) the value of education; (2) parents/guardians as important agents to support their children's education; (3) individual characteristics contributing to good grades; (4) the impact of peer relationships; (5) healthy relationships with school and teachers; (6) the power of the community; and (7) gratitude as a motivation for a high level of education.

The Value of Education

The value that parents placed on education influenced whether they would send their children to school. Parent participants viewed education as a means to gain better socio-economic status for their children—a way to escape from hard work and poverty, acquire a well-paid job, and experience a more positive future. Their desire to support their children to achieve a high level of education can be defined as extrinsic aspirations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). They used extrinsic aspirations to set educational goals for their children. Educational goal-setting is one of the important factors influencing academic achievement (Lawrence, 2014).

Five out of six caregivers had told their children what educational expectations they had of them. Student participant 4 said, '*Dad always told me if I want to get a better job, I need a qualification. I believe Dad's advice*'. Communicating their high educational goals and expectations to their children is a form of verbal persuasion. Verbal persuasion from their caregivers, who are regarded as the most influential people in their lives, leads them to try hard to succeed (Bandura, 1977).

Parents/Guardians as Important Agents to Support Their Children's Education

There is no rule regulating migrant caregivers to arrange their children's education. This lack of secure status is why parental support is particularly crucial for these students. Caregivers in this study played an important role in supporting their children's education. They provided the opportunity for their children to learn in school and supported them to stay in school as long as possible. Without the support of parents/guardians, it is extremely unlikely that children will be able to attend school. Notably, difficulties such as language, legality, and knowledge are confronted by parents to enable their children to gain access to schooling when they move to a new country. Socio-economic status was one of the most important factors affecting the opportunities of Burmese migrant children in Thailand to access education (ILO & OEC, 2006). All the families who were interviewed experienced some sort of hardship and financial difficulty. However, some parents viewed these difficulties as

the drive that pushed them to continue to support their children to stay in school as long as possible. To these parents, education was a pathway to better jobs and living conditions. Student participant 2 mother said, '*I am very poor, I have no money, and I don't know my future. However, I hope that my son will study in a university and complete a bachelor's degree course*'.

The parental style of parent participants in this research was an authoritarian parenting style. Five out of six parents in this study mentioned that physical punishment and scolding were used for discipline and behaviour management. They also described the positive methods that they used simultaneously. Parent participants treated their children with *Metta*—love, and desire to help in the welfare and well-being of their children (IRC, 2011). They had goodwill towards their children to teach them to be good people (Buddharakkhita, 1995). Student participant 2's mother said that she would fight every kind of difficulty in her life for the sake of her children's education. This corresponded with the example of *Metta* given by Buddharakkhita (1995). Parent participants' authoritarian style was interwoven with *Metta* and can be described as 'tough love' or love and concern expressed in a strict way to make their children behave responsibly.

In general, parental involvement refers to parental participation during their children's education. Most parents in this study did not have much formal education. They reported that they were unable to help or understand their children's

homework due to their limited knowledge of the subject and language. However, some parents' statements and actions supported their children's learning. For example, they either asked or reminded their children about homework, encouraged their children to perform well in school, and provided a quiet space for their children to concentrate on their homework. Student participant 6 said, *'When I get home, my father always asks how the school is, what I did today and if I have any homework'*. The ability to understand and communicate in Thai was important for the success of learning, as Thai was the language medium of both learning and teaching. The amount of exposure to the Thai language affected children's ability to understand Thai (Konishi et al., 2014). Every caregiver in this study facilitated their children's use of Thai. Although most of the student participants spoke Burmese to their parents, they spoke Thai to their siblings at home.

Individual Characteristics Contributing to Good Grades

All student participants reported that they either liked learning or at least had one subject that they enjoyed. When students liked or perceived the usefulness of particular subjects, they became interested in them and paid attention to them, which affected their academic achievement. Four student cases reported they were happy with their grades and believed in their own ability. The other two student participants observed their sisters successfully support themselves studying at a higher level and believed that

they were capable of doing the same. These cases illustrated their self-efficacy beliefs, developed through mastery experience and social models (Bandura, 1994). Good learning behaviour is the key to gaining academic achievement and achieving good grades. Behaviours that teachers felt supported their students to succeed were as follows: their mental ability, creative and analytical skills, problem-solving skills, active participation in class, such as asking and answering questions, and sharing their opinions. Study skills that the participants mentioned were the following: paying attention to and remembering what their teachers taught, always attending classes, having a high level of responsibility, submitting their classwork and homework on time, reading their textbooks, reviewing their lessons, time management, searching for necessary information on the internet, study groups, and effective ways to take a test. These skills supported them in obtaining good grades (Fazal et al., 2012). All student cases mentioned more than one study skill that assisted them to attain a good grade. Although parents and teachers in this study were from different cultures, both of them had high regard for the values of politeness and obedience (IRC, 2011; Komin, 1991). A polite and obedient personality afforded the students a better opportunity to stay in school and participate in leadership roles. Parents tended to support their children's education if they believed that their children were polite and obedient. Student participant 1's mother said, *'Studying in school has made her become stubborn. I did not send*

her to school to come back being stubborn and arguing with me. If she still argues with me, I will not support her education'. Politeness and obedience were qualities that teachers perceived as good behaviour, and they were one of the most important criteria for choosing student leaders. Teacher participant 2 described the criteria that were used for choosing leaders of school activities: *'They should be polite, careful, neat, tidy, responsible, and unselfish'*.

The Impact of Peer Relationships

The findings of this study indicated that strong peer relationships were also a supporting factor (Lawrence, 2014) as they were reported to help the participants to overcome challenging situations such as bullying and slurring from other peers. The support from friends was mainly academic or personal. They spent time together, helped each other in finishing their homework, reviewed lessons, and so forth. They also provided personal and emotional support at a time of need. The personal and emotional support was, for example, giving advice or providing moral support. Both kinds of support were equally important as academic support contributed to a better understanding of the lessons while personal and emotional support could limit the effect of the pressure from friends and could lead to better decision making. Student participant 5 said, *'They help me studying and guide me. When I am alone, I am kind of lost. They remind me and point out things that are important. When I don't understand,*

they help me. If an exam is approaching, they warn me to start reading this and that'.

A negative peer relationship was also described as having a negative effect on students' academic performance as it was reported to make student participants feel uncomfortable and not wish to attend school (Papatraianou et al., 2014). Bullying in school and friends leaving school to work were reported risks. A small, thin, male student participant reported that he was antagonised and bullied by other boys, both in class and at the dormitory, and that the incident subsequently made him dislike attending school and staying in the dormitory. His mother, his class teacher, and the warden teacher protected him from being bullied. Student participant five was accused of stealing her classmate's cell phone; she was upset and wanted to move to another school. Her elder sister helped her solve the problem, and her four close friends told her not to worry, not to cry, and that they believed that she did not steal the phone. Student participant 5 said, *'When the person who accused me of stealing the phone spread the rumour and cursed me, one of my close friends told me to ignore it as I didn't do it. Others also supported me'*. When her close friend dropped out of school to work in a factory, in Grade 5, student participant three wanted to follow her friend's example. However, her uncle suggested that she graduate from Grade 6 before deciding. Consequently, she decided to further her studies in Grade 6. The findings confirmed that family warmth, teacher support, and peer friendships could

protect student participants from unpleasant situations (Karlsson et al., 2014; Troop-Gordon, 2015).

Healthy Relationships with School and Teachers

Schools and teachers were important factors related to the academic achievement of their students. A supportive school climate and activities, a positive attitude and a sense of belonging towards school, and good relationships with teachers were related to positive outcomes for at-risk students.

An ethnically diverse school could increase students' sense of belonging as they would have friends from a similar culture (Downey, 2008). It was clear that both schools used in this study had ethnically diverse groups of students. The six migrant students at both schools who participated in the study reported that they did not feel isolated or singled-out in school. Teacher participant 1 said, *'They do not feel inferior when they study here because they have the same status as most of their friends'*. Positive parent-teacher relationships were key to the success of students (Janta & Harte, 2016). Both schools managed two activities that promoted parent-teacher relationships. They were parent meetings and visiting students' residences. The purpose of the parent meeting programme was to notify parents about school policies and inform them about what schools and teachers needed from them. The visiting students' residence programme promoted good relationships between parents and teachers. Teacher participant 3 said, *'They love to be*

visited by teachers. They will discuss their children's problems, for example, if their children are addicted to online games'. All students and parents reported having a positive attitude towards their schools. In the case of the student participants, the main reason seemed to be that they did not feel isolated or discriminated against in school. Caregivers felt appreciative of the teachers' attentiveness towards their children and the facilities and services provided by the school.

Students reported having good relationships with teachers. All the teachers who were interviewed had had long experience in that area of Thailand and were familiar with Burmese students. From the interviews, they were not prejudiced and treated students equally, regardless of race or ethnicity. Teachers had a good understanding of the migrant students, especially their language limitations and economic constraints. Good teacher-student relationships, especially when they were in the elementary level, played important roles in students' academic development throughout their school lives. Students who had good relationships with their teachers felt safe and secure at schools and enjoyed their lessons. Student participant 6 said, *'I like the teachers here. They are kind and they teach me to be an optimist'*.

The Power of the Community

From interviews, parents reported that their community served as a source of information when they first arrived in Thailand. Many parents had little knowledge

of Thailand, and they did not know what public services were available to them as migrants. Owing to their lack of command of the Thai language, they could not or were too frightened to seek information directly from Thai schools. Instead, they asked people in their community for information, such as which schools accepted migrant children. The father of student participant 4 reported, *‘At the time, I really wanted my kids to be in school, I kept asking people in the village. I asked them if the school accepted Burmese. I am a Burmese. I kept asking until I knew that Wang Ta School and Ban Tha School accepted migrant children’*. In addition, adult neighbours could assist enhancing academic abilities (Williams & Portman, 2014). A good example was student participant 6 who was living in a Christian community. First, the Christian centre provided a free-of-charge minibus to transfer the students in the community to and from school. Second, if the student did not understand her Thai and English lessons, the pastor’s son was able to help her. Third, the pastor’s wife taught her English three days a week after school.

Gratitude as a Motivation for a High Level of Education

The culture of gratitude to their parents was frequently mentioned by both children and their parents during interviews. The child’s obligation to show gratitude to their parents, which meant that the child had to look after the parents when they became an adult, was a common norm of the Burmese migrants in Tak Province (IRC, 2011). The children

were brought up to highly value gratitude in a person. They strongly believed that showing gratitude to parents was the act of a good person. Therefore, children’s desire to show gratitude to their parents was an intrinsic motivation because the activity itself was intrinsically satisfying (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The children also conceived that to look after their parents well, it was necessary for them to obtain good jobs and earn sufficient money. Therefore, they had to study hard and achieve good grades. This kind of belief affected their academic achievement; however, the idea of showing gratitude was a short-sighted view and also had its drawbacks. Some participants wanted to quit school when they reached 15 years of age—the minimum age of employment. IRC (2011) similarly suggested that some respondents used the example of a child dropping out of school to work as a way to relieve the parents’ economic burden to show gratitude to them.

CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that the Thai cabinet resolution in 2005, which permitted both registered and unregistered migrant and stateless children access to RTG schools, provided subsidies for tuition fees, school uniforms, textbooks, learning materials, lunch, and granted them 10-year residence permits, has broadened the educational opportunities for these children. However, access to education is not sufficient. To turn migrant children into strong human capital, the Thai Ministry of Education should follow the EU example by creating specific educational policies that

enable success in education among migrant children (Janta & Harte, 2016). In addition, they should aim to increase a positive racial climate associated with higher academic accomplishment and provide education that is relevant and responsive to the needs of migrant children. Multicultural education, designed to deal with increasing cultural diversity within society, is appropriate. It teaches students intercultural skills, to appreciate various traditions and ethnic values (Shafritz et al., 1988), and raises the cross-cultural awareness of students. Furthermore, it aims to provide every child, regardless of their status and ethnicity, equal opportunity to access education and acquire an equal chance to succeed academically (Arphattananon, 2012).

Schools and teachers are important factors related to the academic achievement of their students. Therefore, they should be aware of the importance of promoting the academic achievement of their migrant students. It was found that parent participants were too fearful to approach the school and ask for information. To support migrant students' educational success, school leaders and teachers should create a friendly atmosphere in the school. Schools should create activities that encourage parents to visit and seek information. An activity might, for example, take the form of an 'open house day'. It would be useful if school leaders and teachers could inform parents of the ways to support their children to be successful academically. They could use existing activities such as parent meetings and home visits to share

knowledge about how to support their children's learning and persuade migrant parents to see the value of education. It was found that the parenting style of migrant caregivers was authoritarian. The use of physical and verbal forms of punishment was often mentioned. Teachers should make caregivers understand the negative results of violent physical punishment, especially as parents tend to punish their children more severely when angry. This kind of punishment will harm their children physically and psychologically and cause behavioural problems. Teachers should advise them to punish their children with *Metta* by providing them with reasons for the punishment, and making them understand their wrongdoing, and should guide caregivers in using non-violent forms of discipline instead. From the results section, it was evident that bullying in schools and negative peer relationships discouraged participants from attending school. Teachers thus play a crucial role in deterring bullying in school and providing support for the victims of the bullying. Study skills are vital tools for successful learning, and teachers should use the content and activities in core subjects as opportunities for students to practice study skills and should provide support to assist them in applying these skills. If students are equipped with useful study skills, they will have a better chance of succeeding academically.

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