

## **INTEREST TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY: A STUDY BASED ON TEACHERS WHO TEACH TAMIL AS FIRST LANGUAGE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study explores the interest towards professional responsibility of teachers who teach Tamil as first language. As the first language teaching influences the achievement of other subjects as well, it was expected that these teachers should have professional responsibility. However, a lack of this interest was reported in some forums. A mixed method approach was used in this study to explore the situation. The study sample comprised of 181 Tamil teachers who teach Tamil as first language and 25 principals. Five In-Service-Advisors (ISAs) and five Additional Directors (ADs) are also selected as convenient sampling representing all five Educational zones. Quantitative data collected with the questionnaires are analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, ANOVA, with the facilitation of the SPSS software. Significant differences in the interest of teachers towards professional responsibility are shown among the factors such as type of school, qualification, type of degree (internal or external), and Tamil as subject for degree. The factors gender, age group, civil status, teaching experience, residential place and mode of travelling have variation in the interest. Among the three levels of interest, namely high, middle and low, considering teacher-related, school-related and student-related factors, the interest of many teachers towards professional responsibility are spread over the middle range. Accordingly, 5 influential factors are identified. Department-related factors and peer teacher-related factors are more influential than other factors. Teacher-related factors, student-related factors and school-related factors are influential in the medium level. Peer teacher-related factors have high influence. Student-related factors are of low influence.

**KEYWORDS:** First language, interest, professional responsibility, Tamil, teachers

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Language teaching is being carried out on many bases such as first language teaching, second language teaching, and other languages. In the current school curriculum of Sri Lanka, the first language, the second language, English language and some other language are taught in the secondary level classes. Tamil and Sinhala are taught as the first language at this level. Interest of teachers is influenced by teaching learning process in classrooms. Teachers are expected by school administration, parents, Departments of Education and the students to be responsible in their duty. Teacher education, teacher empowering, teacher professional development, and School Based Teacher Professional Development (SBPTD) opportunities are implemented in several ways to increase teaching learning process at school level. While concern for teacher development is increasing, student achievement is expected to increase.

Especially, competency in first language of the students is also a necessity for their future life. Performance analyzes by the Ministry of Education reveal that the results of the G.C.E. Ordinary Level Examination have been declining in recent times as compared to the national results. G.C.E. Ordinary Level candidates with Tamil as their first language have a lower achievement level compared to Sinhalese students (Department of Examination, 2016, 2017 and 2018). Thus it can be observed that the chances of Tamil students getting into G.C.E. Advanced Level are relatively low. When they fail to do so,

they have to drop out from school education and face difficulties to get a job in government sector. The teachers are also responsible to fail of students' learning of first language of eleven years in school. As a teacher is a member of the society, different factors influence the interest of teachers towards professional responsibility who teach Tamil as a first language. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to examine the interest of teachers towards professional responsibility who teach Tamils a first language; to evaluate the influence of gender, type of school, age range and service range of teachers in relation to interest of professional responsibility; to identify the influential factors in the interest of teachers in professional responsibility; to examine the influence of identified factors on their professional responsibility; to compare the factors which have influenced the interest in professional responsibility.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Every profession has a set of ethics principles, guidance, responsibilities, and norms to guide the conduct and behavior of its profession. Accordingly, in teaching as a profession, there are various guidelines, principles, norms of morality, and accountability which a teacher has to follow in the teaching profession while dealing with the students, stakeholders, and community. Every teacher needs to follow these principles and should be accountable for his/her profession (Kanica, 2016). At a time when the work and professional identity of teachers appear to be ever more circumscribed by external controls, and by a culture of surveillance, it is all the more important that critical analysis is undertaken transformation, not merely passive recipients of policies (Louise Poulson, 1998. p.431).

A person carrying the responsibility for the functioning of a system in an educational institution in which others participation may or may not be called to account for the functioning of the system for which he/she is responsible. Similarly, an individual member of the teaching staff carries the responsibility for their own actions influencing colleagues and may or may not be called to account for their influencing/leadership actions. It is an expectation associated with the professional nature of teaching and the individual may be called to account for their influencing actions. The obligation that these two facets of educational responsibility entail as a result of delegation and professional expectations cannot be respectively casually handed on to another or legitimately denied (Michael Connolly, Chris James & Michael Fertig, 2017).

Each teacher is accountable for the quality of their performance. Also, since educational investment and resources are provided directly or indirectly with expectations from society itself, responsibility or accountability to the entire society is a major challenge for teachers (Kalamani, 2016). It is important to raise the professionalism of teachers and how the guidelines should be organized. If the teaching profession is to be considered as a professional job, the teachers are concerned about the learning and teaching activities of their clients, the students, and are responsible for their profession. Teachers should not escape from it (Sinnathampi, 2009).

Teachers' personal problems and weaknesses in school management, supervision, and motivation reduce the effectiveness of training. Teachers become reluctant to expand their responsibilities and roles beyond societal expectations and needs. Teachers must accept that concrete changes are necessary in such matters (Karunanithi, 2008). Three aspects are important in the professional development of teachers: competency, performance and behavior. Teachers are agents of change. So they should develop the characteristic elements of profession. As the expectations on teachers have increased, the need for their accountability has been increased (Kalamany, 2014).

Four types of teacher competencies are: (1) Cognition and interpretation, (2) Teaching, Classroom Management and Planning, (3) Organizing, assessments, recording the data, and accountability, (4) Other professional activities (Saba Jeyarasa, 2011). Teachers need to improve their effectiveness in teaching, improving classroom climate and environment, improving classroom organization and management, improving learning- teaching opportunities, improving classroom-level communication, and

improving student achievement and performances. Social background of the teachers, their age, gender, civil status, their educational background and interest in continuing education are important, their involvement in school work is based on their idea of profession, interest of profession, vision, and beliefs in values (Sinnathampi, 2009).

The need for new approaches in the teaching of Tamil language learning to change this situation, the qualifications of language teachers, and the role of language teachers in developing the ability of students are important. The role of language teachers in improving the skills of students and in simplifying the understanding of the difficult nature of education is also evident. It is expected to be very helpful to language teachers in teaching Tamil language learning. The teaching techniques used by the ancestors and the teaching techniques relevant to the contemporary context are mentioned. We must properly teach our students the pride and usage of the language (Bhakkialakshmi, 2021).

Socio-economic factors like attendance in the class, family income, and mother's and father's education, teacher-student ratio, presence of trained teacher in school, sex of student and distance of school have also affected the performance of the students. (Raychauduri et al., 2010). Student is the most important pillar in any education system. Today, teacher should have concern on the total development of child's personality. To achieve the optimal learning of the child the teacher should take care of the students' progress according to their capability. Hence the motto of the teachers should be always for the benefits of their students because the success of the students depends essentially upon the competences of teachers, their sense of dedication and accountability (Kanika, 2016).

The teacher is the key person on which the future of children and humankind depends. This is to say that teachers play an important role in shaping and molding the personality of the individual not only in schools but in society at large (Ekundao, Omodan & Omodan, 2019). Teachers should attend workshops, seminars and in-service training to upgrade their teaching activities, encourage students to improve their attainments and develop their personalities and make themselves available to students and guide them on difficult-to-learn topics (Olusola Bolarinwa Adeniyi, Odekunle & Oluwakemi Omowumi Amusa, 2019).

Education is given excessive importance in the development of individuals and nations. Therefore, education is highly valued in this contemporary society. The quality of education provided by schools is generally measured by their academic records and performance. Teachers, leaders and society that influence the upgrading of school performance are affected by many factors such as school culture (Badri, et al., 2014; Bhengu & Mthembu, 2014; Scheerens, Witziers & Steen, 2013; Vadi, 2007) which also affects teachers' job satisfaction (Hosseinkhanzadeh, Hosseinkhanzadeh & Yeganeh, 2013; Michaelowa, 2002; Somech, Drach-Zahavy & Anat, 2000; Treputtharat & Tayiam, 2014).

A study has been conducted based on schools in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka about job satisfaction of teachers. Gender, age, family size, teaching subject, educational qualification, place of work, work experience were influenced in job satisfaction. No significant difference was found between age, employment status and job satisfaction. Whereas, a significant difference was found between family size and job satisfaction. Also, partial significant difference was found between teaching subject, academic aptitude and teaching experience and job satisfaction (Achchuthan, Jasingha & Umanakenen, 2014).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Mixed method was adopted for this study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected from the sample. Stratified random sampling was used to select the samples from type 1AB, 1C and Type II schools from five Education zones in Jaffna district.

**Table 1: Selection of Samples**

Education zone	Number of the schools				Number of teachers	Sample of the teachers	Principals	ADs Tamil	ISAs Tamil
	1AB	1C	Type II	Total					
Jaffna	14	10	41	65	108	59	5	1	1
Valikamam	13	14	39	66	88	48	5	1	1
Vadamaradchi	10	8	29	47	61	34	5	1	1
Thenmaradchi	6	5	20	31	49	27	5	1	1
Island	4	7	20	31	23	13	5	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>329</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

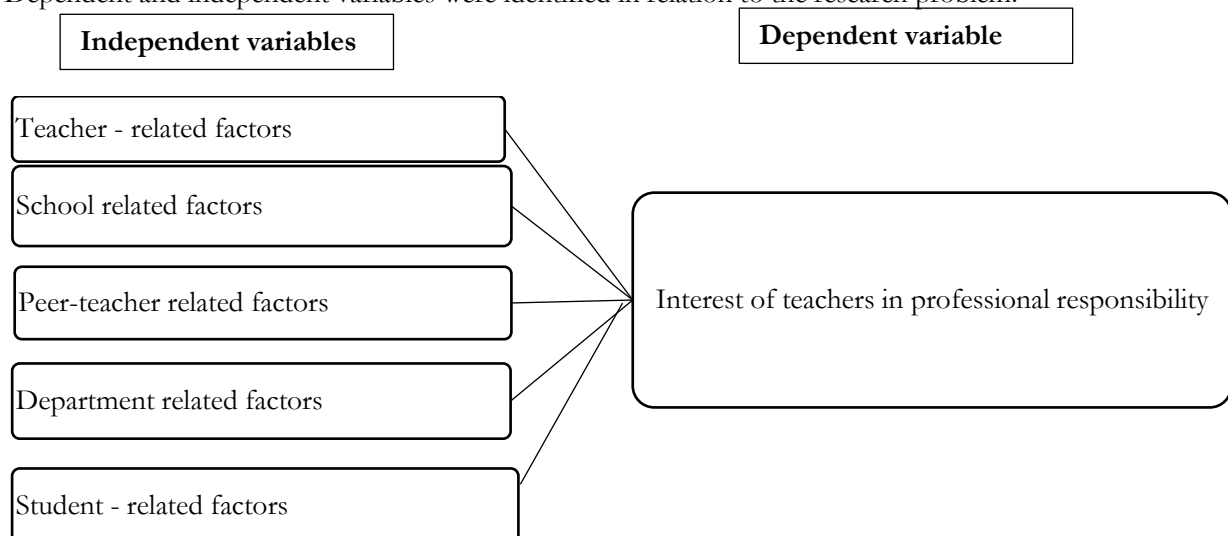
Source: EMIS Northern Province

Questionnaires consisting of open-ended and five-point Likert scale ranking closed-ended questions have been used for data collection from the teachers. Ranking was from 1 to 5 Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree (5). Focus group interview was conducted with the principals and Semi-structured interviews were arranged with Ads and ISAs.

The collected data were analyzed with the help of SPSS software Descriptive data analysis was followed and interest was divided in three levels according to the Likert – scale, namely high (5-3.5), middle (3.5-2.5), low (2.5 – 1) and illustrated using t-test and ANOVA.

#### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

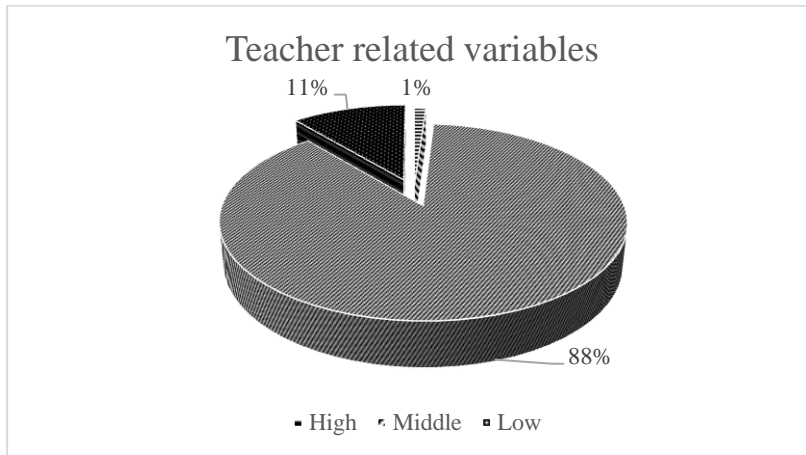
Dependent and independent variables were identified in relation to the research problem.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Frame of the Variables**

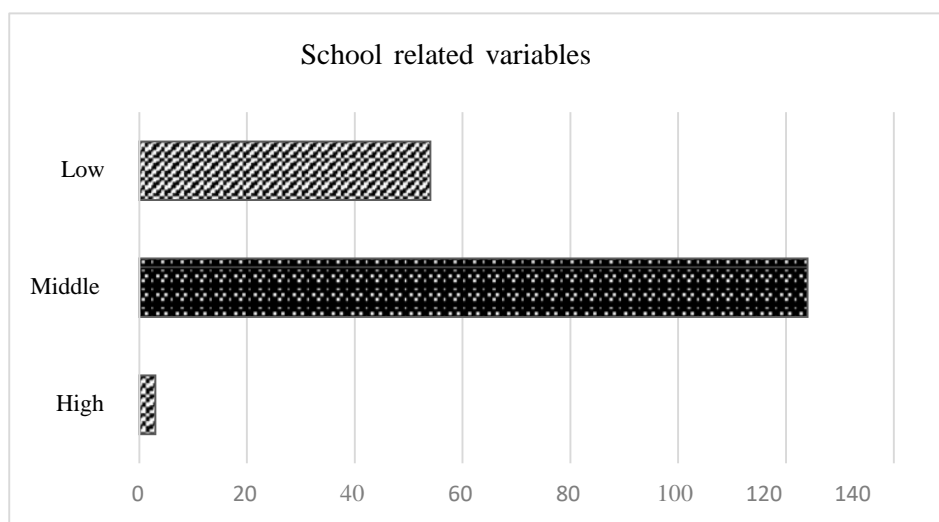
## 5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

From the sample of the data collected to examine the interest of teachers who teach Tamil as a first language towards professional responsibility are found out. 12 questions related to the teacher related variables were included in the questionnaire.



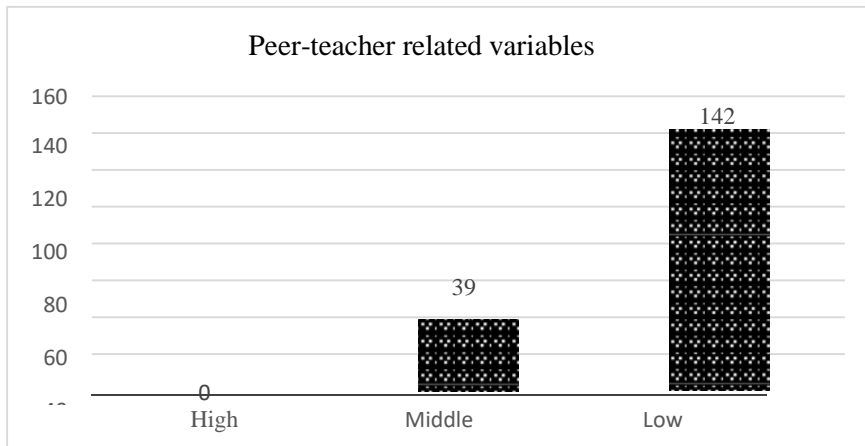
**Figure 2: Interest of Teachers - Teacher Related Variables**

Both samples were reported high levels of response to questions asked to determine how teacher-specific factors influence the level of interest in professional responsibility and 88% of the sample were middle level of interest. School related questions were asked about how to stimulate interest in teachers' professional responsibilities such as: notes of lesson is supervised by subject related qualified teacher in schools, tasking given them to do extra activities, cooperation given to co-curricular activities, cooperation given to teachers' professional development, other responsibilities given, internal supervision, quality circle activities, end-of-term workload etc. The scales are shown in the figure 3.



**Figure 3. Interest of teachers - school related variables**

It can be observed that the answers of most of the teachers were not satisfactory when asked about the support provided by the peer - teachers towards the professional responsibility of the teachers who teach Tamil as the first language.



**Figure 4. Interest of Teachers – Peer-teacher Related Variables**

According to figure 4, none of the teachers reported a high level of support from peer - teachers in their professional responsibilities and approximately 90% of teachers reported low levels of support. 10 and 14 questions were asked respectively regarding the support provided by the Department of Education and the students in increasing their interest in their professional responsibilities. It was revealed that the support provided by the Department of Education was at low level and provided by the students was at middle level.

**Table 2: Interest of Teacher – Department of Education and Students Related Variables**

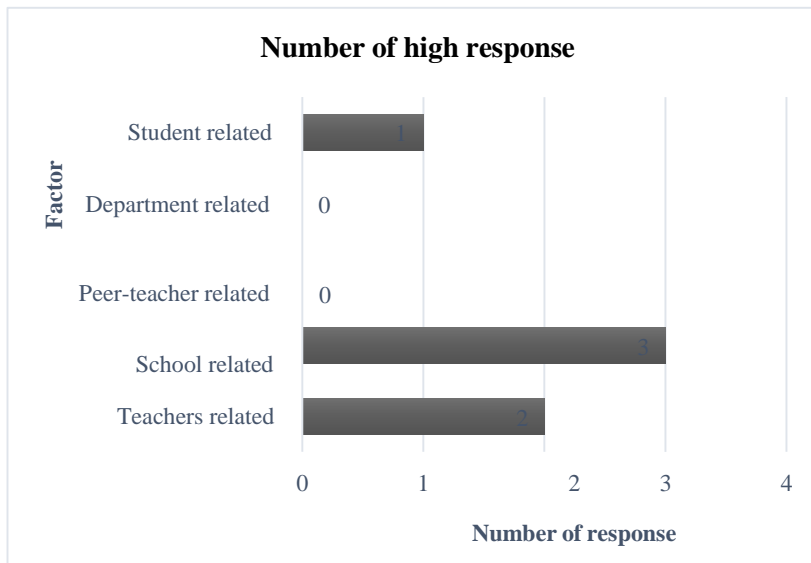
Interest	Department	Student
High	0	1
Middle	39	108
Low	142	72

Poor responses were found in high level on both Department of Education and student related variables.

ANOVA and t-test were carried out to find whether there was significant differences related to the 10 factors namely: gender, age group, civil status, teaching experience, residential place, mode of travelling, type of school, recruitment qualification, Tamil as a subject for the degree and type of degree. 0.05 is taken as the significant level for the verification. It was found that there was no significant difference in relation to the above 10 factors.

Five influential factors have been identified through literature review in relation to the study. These are teacher related factors, school related factors, peer-teacher related factors, department related factors and student related factors.

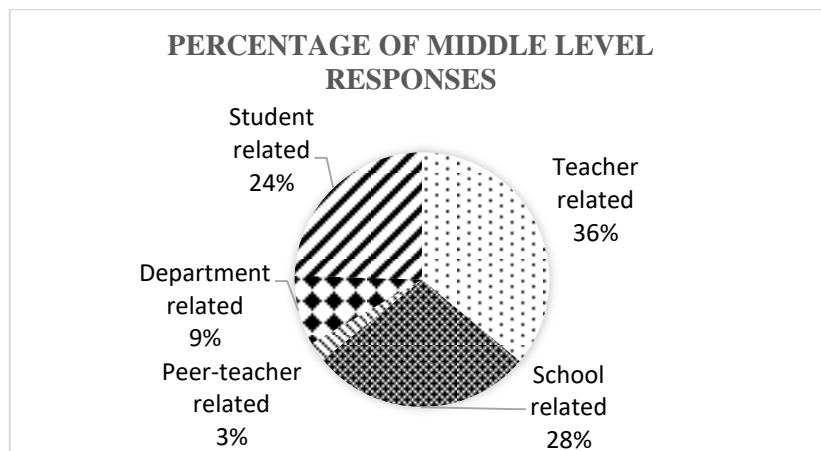
When the interest of professional responsibility is high, classroom learning - teaching activities can be expected to be effective. Teachers are expected in high level of commitment in class room activities such as lesson planning, organizing, implementing and evaluating, and in co- curricular activities. High level interest of teachers are shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5. High Level Interest**

There is no any response in high level in relation to Department of Education related and peer-teacher related factors and out of 181 participants only 3 have responded for high level.

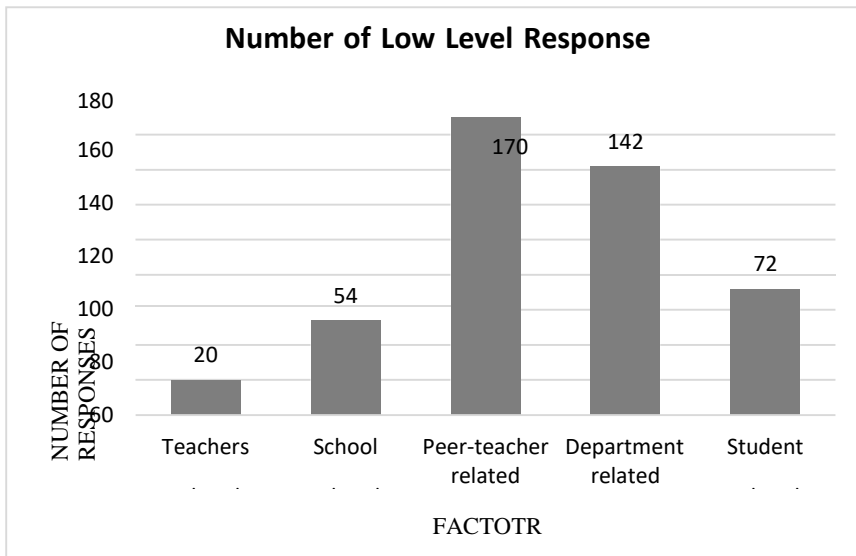
Most of the responses are observed in middle and low level of interest of teachers in professional responsibility who teach Tamil as a first language. Percentage of Middle level responses



**Figure 6. Middle Level Interest**

According to Figure 3, teacher-related factors had the most influence (36%) on the middle level of interest in professional responsibility. However, the school-related factor and the student-related factor are found to be 28% and 24% respectively. It is found that the factors related to the Department of Education and fellow teachers are less than 10%.

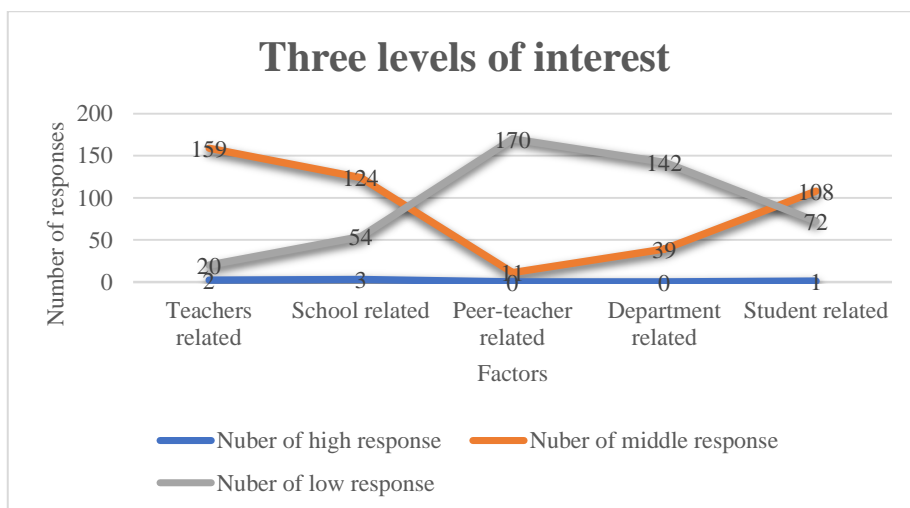
Figure 7 shows the low level interest of teachers in professional responsibility based on the data collected from the samples regarding the specific 5 factors (Teacher related factors, School related factors, Peer-teacher related factors, Department related factors and Students related factors).



**Figure 7. Low Level Interest**

Influence of Peer-teacher related factors in the interest of the teachers in professional responsibility who teach Tamil as a first language was reported by the majority of the sample to be low. That is, most of them stated that the support they provide is not enough to increase the interest in professional responsibility. And also, 142 participants have reported that the cooperation provided by Education Department were not enough. Most of the respondents exposed that the cooperation provided by teachers, school and students is above the low level.

The following figure illustrates the interest of teachers comparatively.



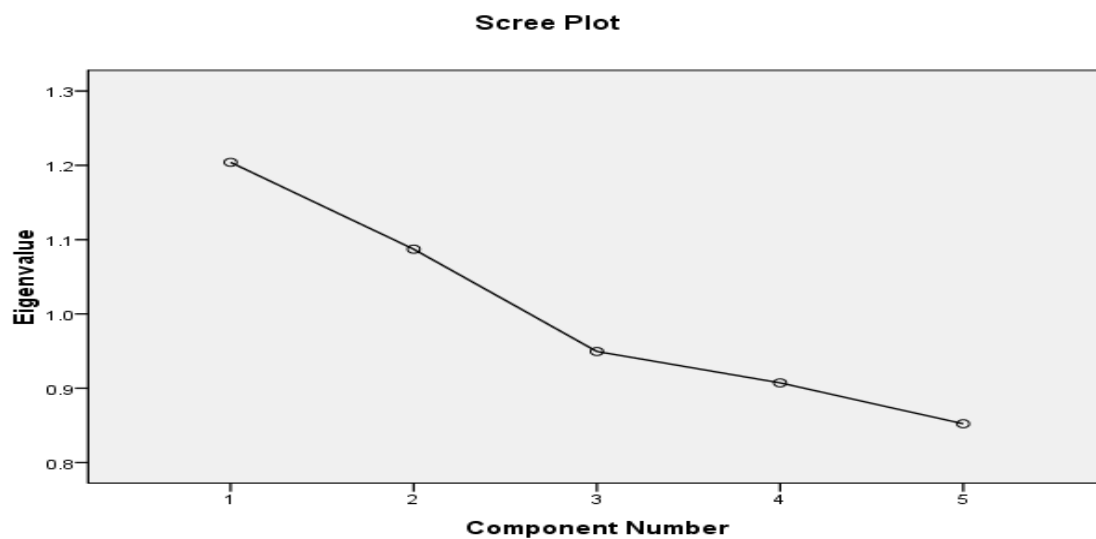
**Figure 8. Three Levels of Interest**

According to the extraction method: Principal Component Analysis, it is found only the factor1 (Teacher related factor) has contributed to the total variance. The Eigen values and the ScreePlot show this result. That is, the teacher related factor and school related factor as the highly influence in the interest of teachers who teach Tamil as a first language toward professional responsibility.



**Table 3: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis**

Component	Total Variance Explained					
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.204	24.081	24.081	1.204	24.081	24.081
2	1.087	21.742	45.824	1.087	21.742	45.824
3	.949	18.989	64.813			
4	.907	18.144	82.957			



5	.852	17.043	100.000
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**Figure 9. Eigen Values and the Scree Plot**

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to find out the level of interest in the professional responsibility of the teachers who teach Tamil as a first language. Interest was divided into three levels namely, High, Middle and Low in the study. High level of interest in professional responsibility was shown by few numbers of sample and middle or low level responses were revealed by most percentage of the sample. Consequently, it is observed that their interest in professional responsibility could be increased by the Department of Education, schools, peer-teachers and students by providing effective support to increase the level of interest. Influential factors were identified through literature and the impact of them was found out. Only six respondents had their interest at high level in relation to the said factors. The teacher-related factor has contributed mostly to the total variance.

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