The Influence of Organizational Structure on Customer Issue Resolution: A Phenomenological Study on Suvarnabhumi Airport in Thailand

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of division directors of Suvarnabhumi Airport in Thailand in resolving customer issue specifically to understand the influence of organizational structure on customer issue resolution. This study employed qualitative phenomenological approach to explore and describe the central phenomenon. By employing a modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) with structured interview and interview protocol in association with field note taking and observation technique, five core themes emerged including "customer's expectation", "decent structure", "leadership", "human resource management", "merit and patronage systems". Theme two (decent structure) indicated that decent structure improved customer issue resolution. Four out of five themes including decent structure, leadership, human resource management, merit and patronage systems found interrelated when customer issue resolution was addressed. Merit and patronage systems were a surprise finding since this theme did not emerge in the previously similar studies.

Keywords: Organizational structure, issue resolution, influence, airport, Thailand

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อิทธิพลของโครงสร้างองค์การที่มีต่อการแก้ปัญหาให้ลูกค้า: การศึกษาแนวปรากฏการณ์วิทยาของท่าอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิในประเทศไทย

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บทคัดย่อ

การศึกษานี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจและบรรยายประสบการณ์ตรงของผู้อำนวยการระดับส่วนของท่าอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิ ในการแก้ปัญหาให้ลูกค้า และเพื่อให้เข้าใจในอิทธิพลของโครงสร้างองค์การที่มีต่อการแก้ปัญหาให้ลูกค้า การศึกษานี้ใช้วิธีวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพแนวปรากฏการณ์วิทยา โดยใช้แนวทางของ van Kaam ซึ่งปรับปรุงโดย Moustakas (1994) ร่วมกับชุดคำถามแบบมีโครงสร้าง แบบพิธีการสัมภาษณ์ การจดบันทึกรายละเอียด และการสังเกต ผลการศึกษาพบว่า โครงสร้างองค์การที่เหมาะสมจะช่วยปรับปรุงการแก้ปัญหาให้ลูกค้าให้ดีขึ้น ทั้งนี้นอกจากความคาดหวังของลูกค้า สี่ประเด็นได้แก่ โครงสร้างองค์การ ภาวะผู้นำ การจัดการทรัพยากรบุคคล ระบบคุณธรรม และระบบอุปถัมภ์ มีความเชื่อมโยงกันในการแก้ปัญหาให้กับลูกค้า และพบว่า ระบบอุปถัมภ์และระบบคุณธรรมเป็นผลการศึกษาที่ไม่เคยปรากฏในการศึกษาเรื่องนี้

คำสำคัญ: โครงสร้างองค์การ การแก้ปัญหาให้กับลูกค้า อิทธิพล ท่าอากาศยาน ประเทศไทย

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Introduction

Thailand economy depended very much on two major sectors, Export and Tourism. According to UN Trade in 2012, Export generated income to Thailand around 229.5 billion USD equivalent to 2/3 of GDP whilst Tourism produced 29.1 billion USD accounted for six percent of GDP respectively. These days air transport contributes a lot more owing to its advantages of speed and conveniences. Airport is seen as major channel that considerably promotes those two crucial sectors. The incessant influence of globalisation marks air transport more dominant because of non-boundary scheme. Moreover, globalisation made demands of airport user become more complicated. Thesedays airport managers are in a crisis making decision owing to complex environment.

Frontline division directors had been working through complex organizational structure of Suvarnabhumi Airport. Some studies indicated that complex organizational structure appeared to be impediment to customer issue resolution and resulted in customer dissatisfaction (Chan, 2005; Longman & Mullins, 2004). Study on the effects of direct customer contact suggested that there be a great deal of stresses when organizations frustrated employees' ability to satisfy customer demands. Airport administration paid attentions to various issues and found that remedy was so required to develop a better resolution on customer issue to improve customer satisfaction. Along decades, Airport of Thailand (AOT) attended various issues to serve such purpose. Astonishingly, organizational structure was one of the last components to receive attentions. There never were designs or improvements on the structure attempting to accommodate customer satisfaction. Significance of customer issue resolution in relation to organizational structure was omitted whereas dissatisfactions of the customers have been still a great deal. This could be considered as a caveat when Salierno pointed out that weaknesses in the area of client satisfaction tended to pose a significant risk to organization.

Serious concerns were looming resulted from remaining series of complaints on various issues and particularly from lower ranking in global arena. Major issues relating to dissatisfactions of airport customers included, frequent delay of the flights, congestions in both airside and landside, passengers missing flights, cargo and baggage left behind or got lost and in the worse cases, aircraft incidents and accidents. These phenomena drove concerned parties, both from public and private sectors, to become more attentive and to call for drastic amelioration with a strong sense of urgency. More importantly, according to the cabinet approval regarding Thailand's transport infra-structure strategies during 2015-2022, enhancing air transport was one of the five action plans essential to the development of the country to improve quality of life for Thai people. Urgent phase of the plan included all modes of transport. Suvarnabhumi Airport thus became more important as the main player in the air transport to help achieve the cabinet's goal.

By examining airport context, it helped make better understanding the influence of organizational structure on customer issue resolution. In general, function of airport was to provide various services particularly to resolve everyday issues of airport users. Its organizational structure could be seen as the rudiment that defined duties, authorities and interconnectedness between internal departments that allowed how airport employees at the implementation level perform their duty to resolve issues of airport users. Consequently, it represented effectiveness and performance of the airport as an organization.

Ineffectiveness of airport was significant in many ways. Since airport services were genuinely public they could create effects covered a wide range of people in society both domestically and internationally. As a protagonist in air transport of Thailand, ineffectiveness of Suvarnabhumi Airport could to a certain extent inhibited economic growth. Most seriously, ineffective issue resolution could even lead to serious accidents or incidents of aircraft operation which inevitably put lives and properties in peril. Moreover, ineffective issue resolution of the airport could be deleterious to reputation of the nation as a whole. Examining the influence of organizational structure on customer issues resolution in the airport context thus not only helped make better understanding but also helped provide constructive guidance for a betterment of the airport organizational structure.

Airport these days was operating under a dynamic environment resulting from the strong stream of globalisation. By this, demands of airport customer became more complicated. To achieve the goal of satisfying customers, airport needed to adapt its components including structure to response in a faster and more effective way. It was inevitable for airport to change in order to fit its dynamic environment. The misfit lowers performance, eventually leading to a performance crisis and adaptive structural change into fit. The current study applied structural contingency theory to elucidated phenomenon as such for better understanding. This theory had a framework on relationship between organizational structure and its environment. Organization according to the theory needed to adjust its structure to survive, even to be more competitive within its environment. The more dynamic of environment, the more necessary of the structure to adapt to fit. Structural contingency theory thus found appropriate to this study.

It was suggested that the structure fit the contingency be the most effective organizational design. Morgan elucidated that organizational structure affected organizational performance. Whilst Donaldson (2001) elaborated that the fit between structure and contingency affected organizational performance therefore structural change was required to move from misfit to fit. What Donaldson proposed seemed corroborative to Galbraith (1977) who suggested that organization whose internal features best matched the demand of environment, achieve the best adaptation and performance.

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Hitherto, there were no previous studies on the influence of organizational structure at the implementation level on customer issue resolution particularly in the airport context. This study thus employs unprecedented setting to relationship as such.

Research Question

The overarching research question of this study was "What are the lived experiences of frontline division directors in resolving customer issues specifically to understand the influence of organizational structure at implementation level on customer issue resolution?"

From the overarching question, sub questions were derived.

a) What were lived experiences of division directors of Suvarnabhumi Airport in resolving customer issues?

b) What factors affected how division directors resolved customer issue?

c) How organizational structure at the implementation level influenced customer issue resolution?

d) What was the recommended organizational structure which bolstered customer issue resolutions in Suvarnabhumi Airport?

Since the samples were division directors (DD) whose duties were to help resolve airport customer problem, question a) thus aimed to explore how division directors of Suvarnabhumi Airport resolved customer issues through their lived experiences. This question provided corpus of data both relevant and irrelevant to the study. Question b) was expected to reveal and allow researcher to categorise emergent factors or group of factors that affected the way division director resolved customer issues. Question c) emphasised on how organizational structure influenced the way division directors resolved customer issues. Either positive or negative of the influence was clarified including to what extent such influence was seen from divisional employees' point of views. Question c) led to question d) which sought what kind of organizational structure division director preferred according to their perspectives for a better customer issue resolution.

Methodology

This study employed qualitative phenomenological method. By phenomenological explanation, it divulged behavioural structure and revealed the lived experiences that constituted the relationship of people and how the world influenced individual behaviours. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the lived experiences of frontline division directors in resolving customer issues at Suvarnabhumi Airport specifically to understand the influence of organizational structure

at the implementation level on customer issue resolution. Qualitative phenomenological study is therefore appropriate to the purpose of the study.

Researcher employed a modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994) incorporation with structured and recorded interviews to obtain intended data. Researcher also applied observation technique along the interview process. Information received during the interview process was triangulated against pertinent document exploration and other employees both in higher and lower rank. The samples comprised nineteen employees in accordance with Creswell's (2007a; 2007b) who suggested sample size for phenomenological studies. These purposive samples were directorial-level employees whose jobs were to provide services or support one way or another to customers. All samples were currently working for Suvarnabhumi Airport. Purposive sampling deliberately selected participants to comprehend the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2007a).

Instrumentation

This study employed three sorts of instrumentation included the researcher per se, the use of structured interview protocol or interview script, and the use of set of structured interview in-depth questions for all participants. Researcher was the primary instrument for collecting descriptive data in a qualitative, phenomenological study (Creswell, 2007a; Denzin & Lincoln). The ability of researcher played a crucial role to study participants in the participants given location (Creswell, 2007b). By using structured interview protocol and the same set of questions for each participant, perception was then set aside ensuring the feelings and perceptions of the participants were accurately uncovered (Husserl, 1981; Moustakas, 1994). This study employed structured in-depth personal interview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) in corporation with participatory observation.

To overcome the weakness of structured interview, researcher included significant keywords (Moustakas, 1994) in interview questions to ensure concise wording to be obtained and comments to be freely spoken during interview process. The use of the word "how" helped participants respond with concise and clear wording whilst the word "perceive" facilitated participants to provide individual perceptions about the question as it related to the individuals' personal experience (Moustakas, 1994). The word "describe" encouraged participants to express details that related to the question and individual experience in an open-ended format (Moustakas, 1994). The word "experience" allowed participants to share the views and opinions of individual experiences which related to the posed research questions (Moustakas, 1994). Set of interview questions in this study was illustrated as following;

Interview Questions
1. Describe the division you work with your roles as division director (DD).
2. Describe if your current responsibility relates to resolving customer issues. Explain how

you resolve those issues.

3. What experiences are most relevant in resolving customer issues? Provide examples for further details.

4. Describe your authority being assigned as DD in resolving customer issues. Provide examples to support your claim.

5. Describe your perception to other divisions when resolving customer issues. Provide examples to support your claim.

6. What suggestions would you make to improve issue resolution?

7. To your perception, explain if organizational structure influences customer issue resolution. Provide examples to support your claim.

8. Base on your experiences, explain how organizational structure influences customer issue resolution. Provide examples you may have.

9. What changes to the organizational structure would you suggest to improve customer issue resolution? Provide examples to support your claim.

10. Based on your experiences what does the recommended organizational structure look like to you to improve customer issue resolutions? Provide examples of any certain cases.

11. (For pilot testing experts only). What additional interview questions would you suggest to improve the proposed research study?

Demographic Question

12. How many years have you been working as division director?

13. What is your highest level of education attained?

14. What is your age range?

Question 1 to 3 intended to capture the lived experience of division director to support the guiding research question including sub question 1.

Question 4 allowed participants to reveal their experiences with specific divisions and their interactions.

Question 5 reflected how organizational structure affected their way of resolving customer issues through their authority. These two questions helped develop a deeper understanding of customer issue resolutions in relation to organizational structure. Either positive or negative experiences answered to these two questions were instructive to prepare participants for the remaining interview questions.

Question 4 to 6 supported sub question 2 by mustering factors that affected how division director resolve customer issues.

Question 7 to 8 supported sub question 3 by demonstrating how organization structure at the implementation level influenced customer issue resolutions.

Question 9 to 10 answered sub question 4 that sought recommended organizational structure from employee's perspective at the implementation level. It helped participants provide constructive inputs for airport leaders to consider when designing an organization structure responsible for customer issue resolutions. In addition, demographic questions were contributing to demonstrate how broad of the perspective was, based on demographic results.

Data Collection

Interview contained two phases. The first phase was pilot test. The purpose of this test was to assure that questions were decent so that participant responded with true experiences and perception without further clarification required. Researcher took two experts who were previous frontline division directors of Suvarnabhumi Airport to conduct pilot test. The second phase was final interview that the researcher further applied for the rest of participants.

Data Analysis

To analyse data obtained from collection process, researcher employed 7 steps modified van Kaam method by Moustakas (1994). Details were as following:

Step 1 Listing and Preliminary Grouping

Listing and grouping data into primary categories and listing every relevant experience (Moustakas, 1994). Researcher meticulously listed every single expression associated with the experiences in the issue resolutions (process known as "horizonalization"). Those expressions could appear in any forms including statements, short phrases or even noun clauses.

Step 2 Reduction and Elimination

Researcher reduced and eliminated participant's experiences to determine invariant constituents by testing whether each expression attained two requirements (Moustakas, 1994).

(a) Whether experience contained a moment of experience that was a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding the phenomenon.

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(b) Whether it was possible to abstract and label this statement. Expression not meet those two requirements were eliminated. Also overlapping, repetitive and vague expressions were eliminated or presented in exact descriptive terms (Moustakas, 1994: 121).

At this step, the remaining list of expressions constructed sets of invariant constituents of each participant.

Step 3 Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents
The remaining invariant constituents of the experience from step 3 were relevant and then clustered into thematic label. They were put into categories and those categories were seen as themes. The clustered and labeled constituents described the core themes of the experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Step 4 Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application
Researcher compared the invariant constituents and their accompanying themes against the full transcripts for each participant to check validity as follows (Moustakas, 1994).

(a)Were the invariant constituents and themes expressed explicitly in the full transcripts?
(b) Once they were not explicitly expressed, were they compatible representation?
(c) Once they were neither explicit nor compatible with the full transcripts, they were not relevant to the participant's experience and the description of the phenomenon and were deleted.

In doing so, it required every participant's transcript be re-read to ensure for accuracy of each invariant constituents. This step was seen as modification or re-categorising invariant constituents.

Step 5 Individual Textural Description
Researcher used the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes to develop an individual textural description for each participant on the experience related the influence of organizational structure on customer issue resolutions. This step included verbatim examples from the transcripts (i.e. what DD experienced in resolving issues) (Moustakas, 1994). Textural description aimed to describe any certain events that the participants came across, or what and how the participants did.

Step 6 Individual Structural Description
Researcher constructed an individual structural description to explain the participant's experiences (i.e. how DD experienced issue resolutions) by using the individual textural descriptions and imaginative variation. By imaginative variation, it meant the process of describing how one

experienced the phenomenon, attempting to find possible meanings by varying frames of reference and distinctive perspective of vantage points (Moustakas, 1994: 121).

Step 7 Individual Textural-Structural Description

Researcher constructed a textural-structural explanation (description) for each participant by using the individual textural description and the individual structural description. The textural-structural description demonstrated synthesis of the invariant constituents, the meanings, and themes that provided an integrated description of the essences of the experiences of each participant (Moustakas, 1994).

Interview Findings and Implications

By examining each statement of the participant during data analysis and reduction, researcher ensure it was essential for understanding the influence of organizational structure on customer issue resolution and it was accurately labeled. As a result, this process extracted and reduced horizonalized statements to 329 statements. Those invariant constituents were clustered and put into categories which considered as themes of the intended Phenomenon. Researcher used his own way of thoughts to label and organise the data. By this, core textural themes that represented experiences of the DDs pertinent to customer issues resolution emerged. To corroborate the textural themes were explicitly expressed and compatible to each participant's experience, researcher compared the invariant constituents and textural themes against full transcriptions. By preliminary listing and grouping, seven themes were derived from categorizing of invariant constituents described by the participants. Each theme was comprised of invariant constituents emerged from relevant statements. Those themes included (1) Issue types associated with internal functions (2) Customer concerns (3) Forms of resolution (4) Internal departments related to issue resolution (5) Factors that affected issue resolutions (6) Perceptions to current structure (7) Recommended structure.

The fifth theme was the key message of the study describing factors affected issue resolutions. Intriguingly, every DDs elaborated these themes by providing far more details than others. This theme was developed from ten invariant constituents included (1) Organizational structure (2) Personal relationship (3) Human resources (4) Merit and patronage systems (5) Leadership (6) Authority at the implementation level (7) Management patterns (8) Culture (9) Clear goals and misions (10) The use of IT.

All nineteen DDs admitted that organizational structure genuinely affected issue resolutions. To be more specific, two DDs emphasised on team base structure. DD01 stated that "Working as a team I repeated is very important especially during the crisis or in an urgent case. Only one person is definitely unable to handle under the circumstance as such. That's why everyone really needs to

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work as a team" Fifteen DDs indicated that structure promoting interconnectedness played a significant role in the issue resolutions. DD19 pointed out that "There are many internal functions thus when we work it is essential to cooperate with those functions as in many cases we cannot work alone. You can see that there is always interdepartmental interaction".

Thirteen DDs were even more thoughtful by describing that the design of structure must be done properly to resolve issues. DD14 for example emphasised that "At least the designed should focus on the demand of airport users. Once we can make it perfectly settle at one place then everyone gets happy".

Six DDs found that appropriate structure could promote quick response to resolve issues. Another six DDs pointed out that a good structure made it easier to resolve the issue around the clock. DD12 described that "our current structure dose not accommodate the way airport provide its services. Particularly, for an operation side, working around the clock is a must but we cannot response effectively". Only one DD however explained that a structure which contained supportive functions could facilitate better issue resolutions. Interestingly, three DDs insisted that a structure with the hierarchy would be supportive to issue resolutions.

For other invariant constituents, eight DDs explained that personal relationship was imperative to the issue resolutions. DD05 explained that "Once director has not enough relationship, it could cause lots of trouble when interdepartmental cooperation required in resolving issue. If the director is qualified in this sense, instead of using written paper, simply making a phone call is more than enough". Another six DDs claimed that human resource were crucial to the issue resolutions. DD19 reported that "Instead, I believe that problem is our basic resource which is human. On the contrary to other private sector, we have unlimited budget but so very poor and low performance employees". By this, seven DDs focused on appropriate skills of the employees whilst another seven DDs emphasised on the motivation. Six DDs mentioned the function of recruitment and selection. And five DDs explained more about putting the right person to the right job.

Surprisingly, eight DDs described how merit and patronage systems affected the issue resolutions. DD01 described that "Regardless of structure, to promote anyone to the higher position, it is necessary not to ignore the background and experiences. Do not take personal relationship or partisanship as the rudiments otherwise the most damages will go to the one who promote people as such". Thirteen out of nineteen DDs obviously stated that leadership affected issue resolutions. DD012 expanded that "In reality, directors can do nothing but comply the boss who imposes the policy. We may be able to propose some ideas but it truly depends on the boss, whether he will help to push or not". DD16 expressed that "Finally, it appears that structure is nothing since everyone turns back to

ask for permission from the boss though the structure has already authorised you". DD15 exemplified that "The general manger don't recognised an increasing workloads that caused by structural change so she does not allow for more workforce".

Eleven DDs explained that an authority at the implementation level to some extents affected issue resolutions. Four DDs exemplified that a decent management pattern could help resolve issues. Five DDs mentioned that culture could indirectly affect issue resolutions whilst four DDs explained that only clear goals and missions could make issue resolutions successful. DD08 stated that "When coordinate with other unit, once they clearly understand the goals and missions of the airport, it would be easy to resolve any issue. You do not need to make any request since they are well aware what they have to do". The last three DDs saw the use of IT important for resolve issues effectively. Figure 1 illustrated factors affecting customer issue resolutions.
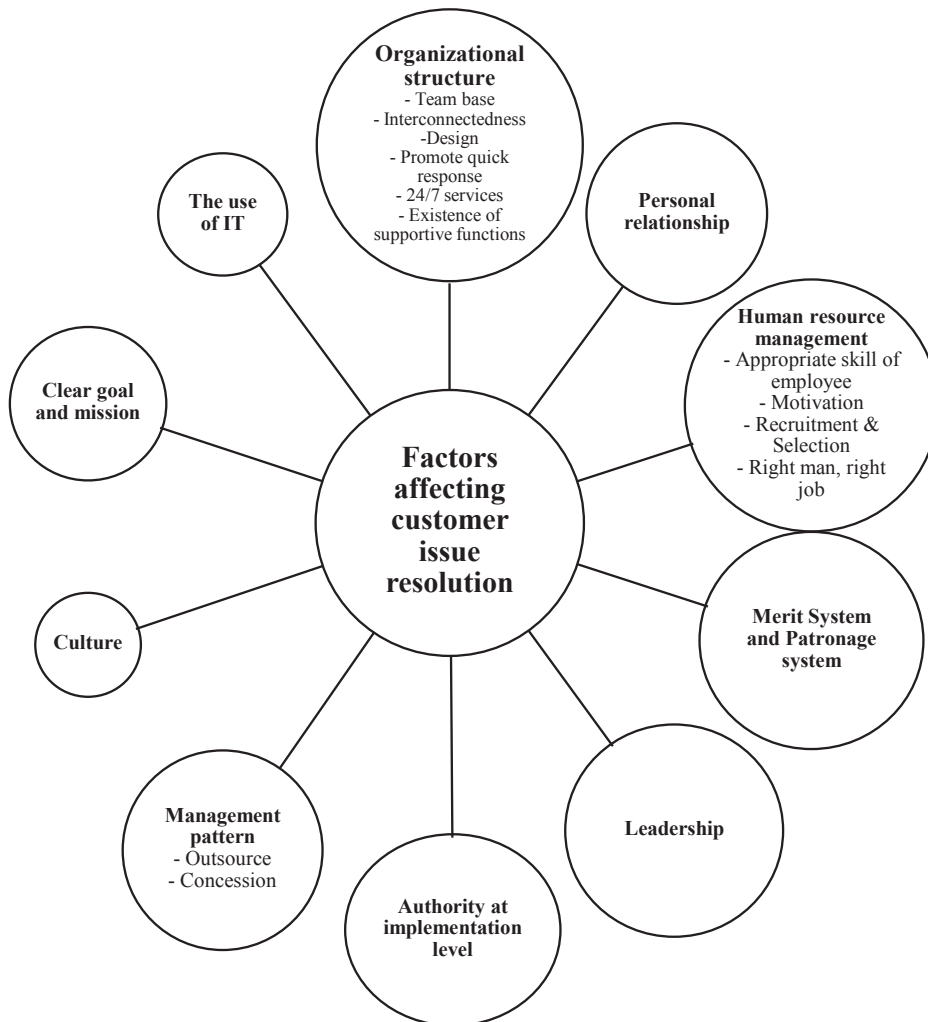
Figure 1. Factors Affecting Customer Issue Resolutions.

In particular, the sixth theme was the perception of all DDs to the current structure. This theme developed from thirteen invariant constituents including (1) Impinged decision making (2) Rigid hierarchy (3) Misleading of structural design (4) Too many broken internal structures (5) Maladroit responsiveness (6) Interdepartmental disparity and conflict (7) Not support mission and purpose (8) Not support career path (9) Difficulty at the implementation level (10) Caused more workloads (11) Affected competency and productivity (12) Strong sense of bureaucracy (13) Management pattern did not help to overcome structural problem.

The last theme was the recommended structure. Nineteen DDs put forward ten characteristics of recommended structure which were (1) One single unit to resolve issue (2) Simplified structure (3) Put together similar functions (4) Bolster adequate authority at the implementation level (5) Line and staff functions to be separated (6) Clear structure (7) In line with mission (8) Promote quick responsiveness and interconnectedness (9) Self-administrated structure (10) Designed on the basis of both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

Emergent Themes and Discussions

There were five core themes emerged during interpretation of the data obtained from interview process. The first core theme revealed that once the airport employees were well aware of and profoundly understood "customer's expectation" it brought about an increasing level of customer's satisfaction. The second core theme delineated that a "decent structure" of the organization could promote the better issue resolutions. The third core theme suggested that "leadership" play its part by influencing issue resolutions in certain areas. The fourth core theme illustrated that embracing "human resource management" in effective ways contributed to the issue resolutions. The fifth core theme disclosed a surprise finding in that "merit and patronage systems" were the issues that interestingly affected issue resolutions.

Theme 1 Customer's Expectation

Being aware of and understanding customer's expectation in each area of services and response appropriately were imperative to issue resolutions. Once DDs could provide services effectively to complete customers' expectation their satisfaction was obviously increasing. Not just to meet an expectation but how an expectation could be met was the case as well. Expectation of the customers of the airport came in several different forms. Convenience, for example, included "one-stop services", "24/7 responsiveness" and "thoroughness of information". To provide convenience to airport customers inevitably required cooperation amongst different departments. To fulfil airport customer's satisfaction, interconnectedness between each individual department was necessary.

Speed or how fast they could response was another aspect that airport customers concerned. For issue resolutions, speed became even more crucial. For general irregularity, it was typical that the issue being resolved speedily tended to satisfy customers. For emergency cases or in critical situation such as during short connecting time of the flight, even more so in the case of the aircraft accidents or incidents resolutions with full speed was tremendously necessary. Speedily response could also insure safety or at least alleviation of damages, both for life and properties in case of an accident or incident of the aircraft. In addition, issue resolution that related to either safety or security was other aspect to which airport customers always paid heed. By that, for airport customer's expectation, the cosier, the faster and the safer, the better. Moreover, how effective airport employees were in resolving issues explicitly brought about the satisfaction of airport customers.

Theme 2 Decent Structure

Organizational structure of the airport apparently affected customer issue resolution. In the extent to which organizational structure of the airport influenced issue resolution, it emerged in both positive and negative ways. Poor structure was an impediment to the issue resolutions in various dimensions. Structure that contained too many layers and too many separated departments could cause more workloads, confusions, maladroit responsiveness, interdepartmental disparity and confliction. Maladroit responsiveness demonstrated unfavourable results in terms of interrupting work processes including increasing unnecessary communication between relevant departments. All of this inhibited promptness in issue resolutions that appeared to be one of the most crucial aspects amongst customer's expectation. By this, it indicated that these negative effects of poor structure explicitly impinged resolution for the airport customer issues.

On the contrary, structure that decently accommodated interconnectedness amongst internal departments found the most preferable to resolve issues for airport customers. Interconnectedness was key success factor that helped provide utterly better issue resolution. Apart from the structure itself, how to design the structure was not less crucial. Many DDs far preferred the structure that was designed decently. By decent design, a structure must be clear, simple without too many layers and separated departments and customer centric. In particular, a structure must support interdepartmental cooperation. To provide services to airport customers, each DD was unable to achieve without cooperation as such. Furthermore, a structure should promote empowerment and career path of the relevant employees. Attributes of the structure influenced the quality of customer issue resolutions by playing another part as motivation factors. A structure that exhibited lucid and solid career path appeared to be an impetus for employees to resolve issue in a more effective way as they expected future rewards in terms of promotion. Future career paths were obviously defined and guaranteed where demonstrated through a clear structure. As a result, employees tended to dedicate more to resolve customer issues.

Added to that structure that bolstered twenty-four hour services was another crucial feature as it would truly serve the unique characteristic of airport services. A decent structure found support resolving customer issues in a more favourable way.

Theme 3 Leadership

Leadership could affect issue resolution for airport customers both directly and indirectly and both in positive and negative ways. On the one hand, according to their authorities and position powers, leaderships played significant roles to facilitate how and when restructuring to improve issue resolutions once it so required. In doing so, airport leaders could be satisfactorily successful providing that they gained adequate and accurate information regarding a structural design including other necessary requirements. By this, leaders were able to determine the consequences in terms of the performance of a current structure such as series of report on complaints, customer's satisfaction survey, lower ranking in the world class arena etc. More importantly, they were obliged to recognise the interrelationships between the goals and missions of the airport as an organization and its structure. This could be achieved providing that the airport leader must be open-minded and have a strong intent to improve the issue resolutions. Leaders who paid attention to the empowerment tended to delegate a relevant decision making to employees at the implementation level. This demonstrated the results on faster and more effective issue resolutions since unnecessary chain of command was shortened or even obliterated.

Unfavourable designed of the structure that impinged issue resolutions might be emergent by an approval of the leader who did not recognise the influence of an organizational structure on customer issue resolutions. A leader whose focal point was to reward particular group of employees for career promotions by making use of a structure appeared to inhibit issue resolutions relatively. By this, the airport structure was unnecessarily expanded. Consequently, the more on structure being expanded and broken into too many parts, the more unnecessary communication and longer work processes resulting in a red - tape and maladroit response thus brought about poor issue resolutions. On the contrary, in the event of a decent structure, the leader could possibly assign or promote wrong persons on the basis of partisanship to the right structure again resulting in low quality of issue resolutions. Furthermore, authorities of the employees at the implementation level including proper chain of command that appropriately allowed by existing decent structure could be distorted and, in some cases, utterly dictated by the leader whose attribute was overly self – centric. By this, the advantages of the empowerment, self - administrated team and team base, provided by a decent structure could be interfered or even inhibited. Instead of promptly resolving customer issues, employees were unlikely to be at a liberty to work but rather unnecessarily obliged to get back to leaders for further decision making. This resulted in an unfavourable slowness in customer issue resolution.

Theme 4 Human Resource Management

The professional level of human resource management affected the quality of issue resolutions to a certain extent. Human resource management played significant part through the competency and the willingness to work of employees who resolved customer issues. The roles of human resource management included recruitment and selection functions to ensure the right employees to join the organization. The more professional human resources management towards those functions, the more qualified employees the organization was likely to gain. Consequently, the more qualified employees the organization stood to gain, the better the issue resolutions. Added to that, to develop employees with proper training programmes and educating schemes, for instances, to fulfil qualification that might be further required for intended job assignments was crucial. This process normally attempting to prepare employees with appropriately additional skills and knowledge for both current position and future promotion there might be.This function was usually under responsibility of human resource management. Employees with appropriate skills considered as highly competent appeared to resolve customer issues satisfactorily. To retain those well - trained employees within the organization was even more crucial and again fell into the responsibility of human resource management. By this, career path was a significant motivation factor. To that extent, it was necessary for human resource management to provide adequate and accurate information of the right employees to leaders in the event of career promotion with the sense of transparency. By so doing, leaders would be able to consider and promote the qualified persons to the right positions in relation to their competencies. This very process would strikingly motivated employees for higher willingness and dedication resulting in a betterment of customer issue resolutions. Failure of this process tended to demonstrate the reverse results.

### Theme 5 Merit and Patronage Systems

Albeit there were several factors found affected issue resolutions, merit and patronage systems were frequently referred in association with other factors. Merit system was what employees expected everywhere in the workplace. Whenever this system was genuinely functional, not only employees were likely to be happily working, their willingness and dedication to work were also increasing resulting in greater customer issue resolutions.

To a surprising extent, many DDs referred to a patronage system far more frequently and explicitly than the merit system. Some DDs used the term "unexplained system" and described that it was an iniquitous and yet ubiquitous system in their workplace. Most DDs seemed overly frustrated owing to this very system. All implied patronage system in terms of partisanship. It made much of the facts that every position relevant to customer issue resolutions stringently required specific skills and experiences to complete their duties. Regardless of that, some employees whose skills and experiences were inappropriate were assigned or even promoted to the position pertaining

to the issue resolution because of partisanship. Consequently, the quality of issue resolutions found frequently dissatisfactory. Various complaints from airport users was claimed owing to a poor issue resolution with incompetent employees. Moreover, owing to patronage system, a structure of the airport was unnecessarily expanded to create more positions just to reward certain employees with those newly broken structures. This phenomenon caused longer work processes and unnecessary communication across internal departments. In some cases, it even brought about more workloads and resources dispersal. Those consequences caused defects in customer issue resolutions.

Intriguingly, amongst theme two (decent structure), theme three (leadership), theme four (human resource management) and theme five (merit system and patronage system), there seemed to be implicit interrelationships when a customer issue resolution was addressed. This interrelationships emerged whenever DDs described each of the four themes, they frequently expressed in relation to the rest of the others. This interrelationships appeared along with a high number of DDs and times of referring. Figure 2 illustrated summary of five core themes that found influences customer issue resolutions and the interrelationships in between.
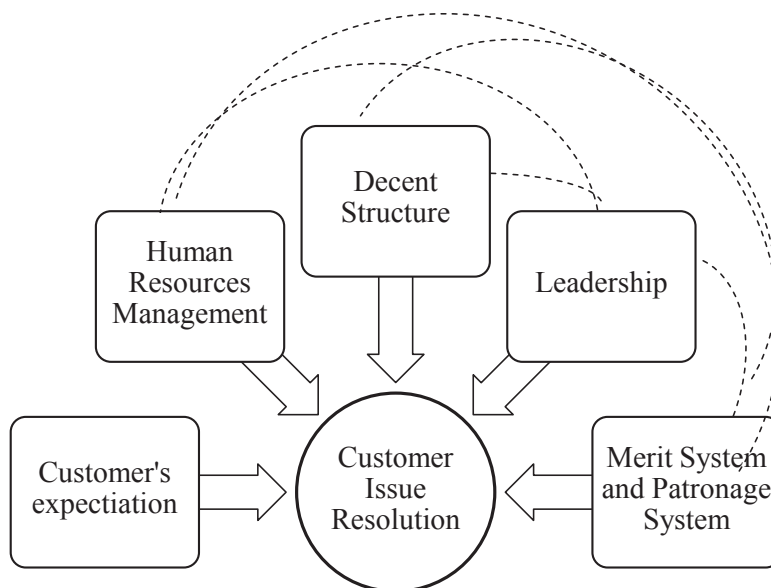
Figure 2. Five Core Themes Emerged and Interrelationships in Between.

Source: Author

Conclusions

The purpose of the current qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore and describe the real lived experiences of frontline division directors in resolving customer issues at the Suvarnabhumi Airport. In particular, it aimed to understand the influence of organizational structure at the implementation level on the customer issue resolutions. Outcomes of the study supported its purpose as lived experiences of nineteen division directors in resolving customer issues were explored and described exhaustively. Theme two emerged from the result of the study indicated that a decent structure could improve the customer issue resolution. This theme found consistent with several scholars who indicated that an ineffective organizational structure impeded customer issue resolutions (Gibson & Cohen, 2003).

Comparatively, this study found not entirely consistent with previous studies. On the one hand, the current study divulged three core themes in line with the previous work of Salas (2009). Three of them emerged and portrayed in terms of organizational structure, leadership and issues pertaining to customers such as expectation, satisfaction and relationship to the customers. Similarity as such indicated that, structure, leadership and customer's issue were factors that influenced customer issue resolutions regardless of different settings.

This study revealed other two different core themes included human resource management and the merit and patronage systems. Albeit the setting of both studies was two different kinds of corporates, their function was similar in the sense of service provisions yet different areas of expertise. The settings of this study however affected far wider range of customers according to the nature of airport services. More specifically, a bureaucratic culture appeared to be strongly dominant in the settings of this study. The differences as such implied that those two core themes, human resource management and the merit and patronage systems that found affecting customer issue resolutions emerged in relation to the different details of setting. It appeared to guide the extent of the directions of further studies.

The result of this study provided a constructive information for leaders of Suvarnabhumi Airport to scrutinise when restructuring an organization was required to improve customer issue resolutions. Implicit interrelationships amongst factors that influenced customer issue resolutions suggested that the airport leaders be far more thoughtful when attempting to improve customer issue resolutions. Interestingly, merit and patronage systems were surprise findings because in the previously similar studies, never this theme emerged. Another point to be noted was that the social context of this study as it was conducted in an organization whose culture was governed and orchestrated by a strong bureaucratic sense. Merit and patronage systems typically found far more dominant in the context as such. This made it become of more challenging for further study in a similar topic.

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