

Research Article

Living the Civil Disobedience Movement: An Examination of the Motivations and Consequences for Myanmar's University Teachers¹

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Abstract

This study examines what motivated university teachers in Myanmar to leave their secure positions in the academe and join the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) in the wake of the 2021 coup there. Using a phenomenological approach and semi-structured interviews with CDM university teachers, our findings reveal a high degree of idealism and the conviction that working under military rule would not be tenable. Our research looked at the lived experiences of and longer-term consequences for the university teacher CDM participants, an issue that has not received much scholarly attention. The themes that emerged include belief that the coup

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was unjust, concern for democratic backsliding and worries over the working conditions within universities under military rule, as well as personal safety concerns, economic hardships, social isolation, and repercussions in their professional lives. In communicating through the interviewees' words what it is like to continue to survive, our findings also allow us to identify some common issues. By looking at the economic and emotional, as well as professional, consequences of 'living CDM' and capturing insights into how people survive, we enrich post-coup Myanmar studies and the study of civil disobedience more widely.

Keywords: Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM), Myanmar University Teachers, Non-violent Resistance, Motivations, Consequences

Introduction

On February 1, 2021, a military coup took place that disrupted Myanmar's course to democracy. Following the coup, a civil disobedience movement (CDM) began, and the public was encouraged to take part in non-violent acts in protest. After a prominent physician from the Myitkyina General Hospital, Kachin State, refused to go to work, other healthcare professionals followed and joined the CDM. Many government staff from different sectors joined the CDM, seeming to follow the example of the physician (Anonymous, 2021). The public, including businesspeople, participated in civil disobedience by refusing to pay their taxes and fees to the military regime, or stopped selling products of military-owned and -affiliated firms (NUG, 2021). Hundreds of thousands of government employees such as doctors, nurses, teachers, and other administrative staff participated in that social movement. The contributions of university teachers were also visible.

Civil servants form a major part of the CDM. The participation of nearly 400,000 teachers from basic and higher education was crucial in spearheading the non-violent resistance against the junta. (Spring University Myanmar, 2022). By May 2021, over 13,000 staff or nearly 45% of higher education staff were suspended from their duties due to their involvement in the CDM (Spring University Myanmar, 2023). Student and teacher unions campaigned against reopening schools in June 2021 (Anonymous, 2021) and many students encouraged and supported the participation of university teachers in this movement (Anonymous, 2021). After the coup, some university teachers and students continued to express their opposition to the coup by wearing red

ribbons and joining street protests clad in teachers' uniforms. The military targeted these university teachers in its crackdowns.

The military's crackdown on CDM intensified, with university teaching staff getting evicted from their government-provided housing (Drechsler, 2021) and dismissed from their job positions (Wong & Kareng, 2023). The pressure forced life-altering decisions among the university teachers, with lasting personal and professional consequences (Wai, 2022). Hundreds of lecturers and rectors faced up to three years in prison under Section 505 (a) of the Penal Code, commonly used against political activists, and over 100 educators are now in custody (Moon, 2021).

This study investigates the motivations and consequences of the university teachers' involvement in CDM and sheds light on their personal convictions and the impact of their participation on their academic careers and lives. The significance of this article is in presenting the views of university teachers who joined CDM and continue to live in the country, playing a crucial role in this movement to resist the military coup. These university teachers are "living CDM," living with the consequences of the decision to leave their positions that provided status and economic security.

Since 1988, nationwide protests for democracy have been held in Myanmar, and later, protests against the government's policies and laws have occurred. In Myanmar's history, many revolutions against military regimes arose by defending non-violent movements. For example, the 1988 democracy uprising, and the Saffron Revolution were non-violent movements (King, 2022). The yearly commemoration of 1988 serves as an occasion for Myanmar people to recognize present injustices and advocate for political

change. Present-day protesters coopt and transform the memory of the past to fit their political views, using the memory of 1988 as a weapon in their protests against the Burmese government (Allen, 2021). The 2021 CDM can be seen as part of the lineage of previous nonviolent movements. It strengthened the movement, however, by promoting its objectives in digital platforms and incorporating these platforms into its mobilization. It also helped build solidarity with Myanmar's ethnic communities and mobilize all people to participate in the movement. The story of Myanmar's resistance to the military since 2021 is unfinished, recording and reflecting on the voices of those taking part is vital and this is a key aim of our study.

The Research Objectives

This article's first research objective is to examine university teachers' motivations for joining the CDM in Myanmar after the 2021 coup. The second objective is to assess the CDM's challenges and consequences for their professional and personal lives. In analyzing the consequences, we respond to Schock's observation that most literature on civil disobedience focuses on defining what it is, or its philosophical or political justifications, but much less attention is given to its consequences (Schock, 2021).

Research Questions

Two key research questions drive this study: 1) what are the individual motivations of university teachers in Myanmar for engaging in the CDM, and 2) which challenges and consequences did they face in participating in this movement?

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

This research draws on both civil disobedience and the sense of duty to defend democracy that university lecturers expressed. Within the literature on civil disobedience, our study gives priority to the notion of intent and the convictions of individuals who choose to take part in it; this is known as “principledness.” Brownlee and Delmas highlight the aspect of a person’s moral sense and deep commitment in joining civil disobedience: “[T]he person must intend to protest laws, policies, institutions, or practices that she believes are unjust on the basis of her sincerely held moral or political commitments. The agent may not be correct or even entirely reasonable about her convictions, but she holds them sincerely” (Brownlee & Delmas, 2023). The deliberate and principled features of civil disobedience are often brought together under the umbrella of conscientiousness and equated with seriousness, sincerity, depth of conviction, and selflessness (Brownlee & Delmas, 2023). Barbara A. Peterson’s definition civil disobedience as “nonviolent action that purposely breaks what is perceived to be an unjust rule, policy, or law in order to bring about a more just improvement” (Peterson, 2019) was also a particularly useful explication.

The literature discussed here maps the concepts most salient to the findings and tracks how the concept of civil disobedience was used by activists in the wake of the coup within Myanmar. Recent scholarship draws attention to the fact that ‘classic’ and successful civil disobedience movements took place within what are ultimately liberal democratic regimes. (Scheurman, 2022) and the situation of military rule in Myanmar is quite different,

not least of all because of the repression that CDMers face. Aware of the divergences between the landscapes in which philosophers such as Thoreau or Rawls wrote and the extreme (and potentially violent) repercussions that Myanmar's CDM participants face, we nonetheless include the theorist/philosophers as they were referenced by the activists following the 2021 coup. This was how the respondents came to know what the concept meant, as will be seen in the Findings section.

Political philosopher John Rawls defines civil disobedience as a public, nonviolent, conscientious, yet political act contrary to law, usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or government policies. By acting in this way, one addresses the sense of justice held by most of the community and declares that in one's considered opinion, the principles of social cooperation among free and equal humans are not being respected (Rawls, 1999).

Zain and Yusoff argued that in engaging in civil disobedience, the citizen must disobey the law and most often the law that is being broken is considered unjust. The citizen must have an honest belief that his or her actions are intended to correct a grave injustice, the act must be nonviolent, and the citizen must be willing to accept the consequences of his or her action (Zain & Yusoff, 2017). This latter point is especially relevant: the lecturers interviewed for this research have accepted the consequences of joining and living CDM. While our findings are not sufficient to draw conclusions for comparative civil disobedience studies, we hope this article can contribute to the scholarship.

Diverse factors influenced the decisions of university teachers to participate in the CDM including a strong sense of

personal conviction, a view that the coup was unjust and a concern that it would lead to backsliding. Proserpio and Fiori's (2022) work has been very useful. They identify three common perceptions among CDM academics: that the military cannot be trusted when it comes to education, that the autonomy which higher education reform was bringing about would be a grave loss, and that low levels of education and restrictions on higher education would be revived after the military coup.

Non-violent resistance is also a key form of contestation against repressive regimes. In the face of dangers such as social punishment campaigns, threats, and intimidation (Anonymous, 2021), those who participated chose to join based on their principledness and conscientiousness. They participated in this movement because of their seriousness, sincerity, depth of conviction, and selflessness. The CDMers respondents kept to non-violent resistance even though there was a pull for many towards armed conflict (Vrieze, 2024). As observed by other scholars, people pay a high price in resisting authoritarian regimes (Tarrow 1998, Stephan & Chenoweth, 2011).

Research Methodologies

Given the sensitive nature of the CDM in Myanmar, the authors faced unique challenges in conducting this research. The team comprises three authors: the third author is based outside Myanmar and the first and second authors who are active participants in the CDM live in Myanmar. The identities of the authors living in Myanmar are not disclosed to ensure personal safety and to avoid potential repercussions. Their insider perspective

has been crucial in providing an authentic and nuanced understanding of the motivations and consequences faced by university teachers involved in the CDM. The involvement of an external author has facilitated a broader perspective, enabled a comprehensive analysis while maintained the necessary detachment for objective evaluation. This diverse collaboration has enriched the study, melding firsthand experiences with academic rigor.

This study employed a phenomenological research method to explore the lived experiences of university teachers who joined the CDM against the coup and their understanding of their experience. Phenomenology “seeks meaning through experience and seeks to explain that meaning in terms of the individual’s lived experience” (Smith & Smith 2018).

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather in-depth insights into the university teachers’ motivations, challenges, and consequences. This approach fostered trust, allowing participants to openly share their personal experiences on sensitive topics and offered a flexible framework for expression. The researchers ensured ethical treatment of their stories, given the high-risk nature of discussing their involvement. The researchers’ positionality also played an important role: as university teachers themselves, they gained the trust of respondents. “The importance of a researcher approaching their participant with an open mind cannot be overemphasized,” according to Smith and Smith (2018). Their positionality also enabled them to interpret what the respondents said and what the respondents considered important based on their common experiences. In phenomenological research, “In order to fully understand their lived experience, the researcher has to seek

to understand the world from their participant’s point of view,” said Smith and Smith (2018).

Fifteen respondents from various universities in Myanmar were interviewed between December 2023 and January 2024. To ensure the intersectionality of perspectives, participants of different ages, genders, roles, and years of service were selected. Due to repressive conditions in Myanmar, respondents were recruited via email, phone, or personal contacts, as had been approved by Mahidol University’s Institutional Review Board. Some had fled to Mizoram, India, while others remained in undisclosed locations within Myanmar. Interviews were conducted securely online, with full participant consent. As sensitive information was included in this study, the names of all participants were kept confidential, and all data were kept securely.

Data analysis was carried out during and after the interviews. After data was collected, thematic coding was used to analyze the interviews. Analysis in phenomenological research “involves being able to transform someone’s lived experience into a written form that we interpret, and from which we can extract meaning” (Smith & Smith, 2018). Themes were then drawn out from the interviews and based on the research objectives.

The 15 interview participants are university associate professors, lecturers, and tutors. With only one male participant, the rest of them are female. We reached out to three male educators, but only one responded to our message. Given that 80% of lecturers in universities in Myanmar are female (Proserpio & Fiori, 2022), the participants’ distribution according to gender was acceptable. The respondents’ ages range from 34 to 51 years old. Out of the 15

individuals, two are Chin, one is Mon, one is Rakhine (additional with Karen), the remaining individuals are all Burmese. Additionally, there is a difference in their years of service, from a minimum of four years to a maximum of 21 years.

Results and Discussion

Part I: Motivations for Joining CDM

Decades of military rule left Myanmar's education system neglected, underfunded, and in need of major reforms (Kamibeppu, 2017). Universities operated under military-imposed restrictions. After the 1988 uprising, universities faced long closures, and the State Law and Order Restoration Council or SLORC government imposed further restrictions on academic freedom (Smith, 1992). Faculty members were burdened with non-teaching duties, including monitoring student activities, and were held accountable for students' actions (Cemmel, 2009).

After the start of civilian rule in 2011, reforms were gradually carried out, improving conditions for students and academic staff. The National Education Law, passed in 2014 and amended in 2015, brought some autonomy for universities, for example the right to organize unions and academic control over curricula, changes associated with hallmarks of democratic governance (Kamibeppu, 2017).

After the coup, most university teachers left their jobs to continue resisting and defied military orders through strikes, boycotts and refusal to pay taxes. Many were involved in the parallel education system under the National Unity Government (NUG) while facing the threat of arrest and repression (Moon, 2021). Some have fled to Thailand, while others continue teaching through

alternative platforms (Wong & Kareng, 2023). Moreover, Myanmar's civilian NUG founded the online Myanmar Nway-Oo University, as well as interim university councils through which CDM teachers try to provide courses for students participating in boycotts (Nora, 2023).

Days and weeks after the coup, most university teachers became exposed to the idea of civil disobedience through newspapers and Facebook and other social media. One lecturer said that his ideas about civil disobedience had mostly been associated with Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent resistance. Admitting that "I didn't study it extensively at first," a male university teacher searched online about it after the coup. A female university teacher who has 15 years of service did not know about civil disobedience before the coup, but through social media and Facebook, she learned that it would work to "stop all government machinery". In her words, "I believed that the coup would fail if people joined together peacefully in this movement, and I chose to participate in this movement to help."

An assistant professor said she decided to participate in the CDM because she thought that the coup went against the 2008 Myanmar Constitution. A lecturer explained that she had little knowledge of CDM before the coup and she had not been interested in politics. After the coup, however, she "felt that this military coup was unjust" so she decided to participate in the CDM.

Most of the respondents participated in civil disobedience to restore justice and democracy in the country. More than half of all respondents said that they worried about the country moving backward and that reforms in higher education would be lost. An assistant professor predicted that she would be dismissed under the

Civil Service Law but explained “I had no desire to work under the junta because I felt that this coup was unjust. So, I decided to continue participating in CDM for justice and for the next generation.”

The process of enacting and amending the National Education Law had been evolving to ensure inclusiveness, openness, and transparency, which are essential features of a democratic government. Kamibeppu and Chao mentioned that Myanmar needs to consider the requirements for nation-building and the contribution of higher education through citizenship education to ensure sustainable development and transition to democracy (Kamibeppu & Chao, 2017). Many CDM university lecturers shared the view that higher education reform was a fundamental aspect of the democratic transition. They believed that they had a responsibility to try and preserve the gains made during the period of the reforms.

Proserpio and Fiori (2022) highlight that standing up for a functioning higher education system is one of the motivations why university teachers joined CDM. Our respondents echo this in expressing the fear that progress in education would be stopped. Some respondents worried that the improvements in the education system would be reversed after the coup. The reform of higher education, starting from 2011, had allowed universities to enjoy more academic freedom in letting university staff set the teaching agendas (Proserpio & Fiori, 2022). However, as Proserpio also notes, contradictions and complexities marked the period of transition in which the higher educational reforms were undertaken such that “tangible pushes for progressive social change coexisted with authoritarian currents and the reinforcement of the position of dominant elites in society” (Proserpio, 2022).

Some respondents worried that the 2021 coup would reinstate restrictions and limitations to the freedom of expression in research. A lecturer described the impact of restrictions in doing research in the period before 2012: researchers faced certain limitations if they conducted research on human rights and democracy. Under the civil government, however, “the conditions for conducting research were freer.” When the coup happened, she could not accept that universities would lose those freedoms. A lecturer with nine years of university experience said that she joined CDM with “a deep conviction for justice and the opportunities of the next generation.” Even as her department called her back to work with the promise of a promotion, she decided not to go back until the CDM’s objectives were fulfilled.

An assistant professor who grew up in the old education system under the previous military government and has 16 years of teaching service worried that international cooperation with universities outside the country might be stopped because of the coup. She cites as an example her experiences of not learning any research methodology both when she was still studying and when she was serving as a teaching staff. She gained experience in conducting research, however, through programs supported by cooperation with other countries. She didn’t want to lose the benefits of higher education reforms. “Reform of the education system and policies would be great for the new generation,” she said. Another lecturer with 12 years of service spoke about why she did not want the country to return to military rule. Prior to 2015, many barriers to conducting research with international scholars existed. She explained: “When I studied with a scholarship abroad,

I had exposure to excellent educational systems. Moreover, I saw that people in those countries enjoy human rights, and their country is modernized. During the regime of former president U Thein Sein, education had been seen as transforming.

University CDMers face many difficulties and challenges, but they continue to participate in CDM, showing their principledness and conscientiousness. Echoing Rawls' (1999) view that civil disobedience gives voice to conscientious and deeply-held convictions, the university teacher CDMers show their convictions in standing up for their beliefs about truth and justice. They took part in the CDM with the deep conviction that it was necessary to pursue justice and to oppose the coup until power could be restored to the duly-elected government.

Part II: Consequences

In this section, we investigate the numerous challenges faced by university teachers during their participation in the CDM from personal safety concerns to emotional stress, and economic hardships. According to Schock, the individual consequences of civil disobedience may be costly, including arrest, along with violence and humiliation that often accompany arrest. Furthermore, jail sentences and criminal records can have turbulent effects on everyday relationships, such as family relations, education, and employment (Schock, 2021).

Safety was the most important concern of the respondents. The lives of CDMers have been in constant danger as the military raided their homes and arrested many of them. Some teachers have been hiding in villages far away from their families for fear of reprisal.

The military does not shy away from blackmailing CDM teachers using family members and forcing teachers to turn themselves in (San, 2021).

One lecturer who worked for the Ministry of Education for nine years and lives in a rural area says that when her students were arrested, she was afraid that she would be arrested too. This fear affects her daily life. “I cannot sleep at night. If I am not at home, I am terrified that the military will do something to my family.” In the village, her life became a shadowy one. “When I lived in the village, I lived carefully without communication with other persons, because of my safety. I did not use social media for over a year. I changed my name when I later used social media. I had to change locations frequently when I would hear that soldiers were approaching the village.” Whenever the army arrived in a village, she would hide her phone and laptop. The army might enter if lights are on in a house, so people turned lights off.

Another respondent said that she was told if she continued to teach outside her home she would be reported to the police. She became careful in her daily activities as she is unsure of who might be dangerous. Among the people who support the CDM, participants are considered as heroes. However, to others, CDM members could be considered as criminals.

One participant who has worked for 20 years at a university noted that “there may be no one to protect us, and anyone can hurt us at any time.” She participates as much as she can in various local groups. These organizations, however, cannot protect her. She said that “there is a Migrant Workers Association for Myanmar. There are also other non-governmental organizations for refugees, but no organization can provide security.” When the clashes between the

military and the anti-coup resistance forces escalated in northwest Myanmar, CDM participants were joined by others in fleeing the violence. According to the Chin Human Rights Organization, more than 52,000 people from Myanmar fled to Mizoram state in India (Fishbein, 2023).

The CDM university teachers face a well-founded fear of legal repercussions. Someone may put them in danger because they joined the CDM. One participant who is an associate professor with 16 years at a university shared about her relatives being detained by police after people not belonging to the CDM filed complaints against them. Her cousin, who also participated in the CDM, was arrested because of a complaint from an individual who did not support the CDM. The teacher said, “my sister lived in the city where she joined the CDM. A non-CDM complained about her because she was teaching online. After about a month, she was released in exchange for a confession.” University teachers who joined the CDM can be prosecuted, resulting in a criminal record. This can have an impact on their personal and professional lives, affecting relationships, education, and employment opportunities.

The effects of CDM on people can be profound, mentally, physically, and economically. Another participant, an associate professor with 21 years of service, said that her academic career of over two decades has vanished. “I feel like, apart from death, this is the worst of all... A job that many people respect and believe in is no longer in existence.” Most university lecturers feel emotional strain, such as worries about potential threats to their family, lack of family support, disappointment at not having a job, depression, fear of leaving the house and anxiety about the future. One participant,

who is a tutor and has served for four years in the university, shared that because of fears and constant worrying, she could not even hear phone calls. Although she has since received help from a doctor, she says that during the peak of her anxiety, she felt that she couldn't even whisper and that her "heartbeat was so fast." She lacked confidence and was worried about her future.

Many university teachers do not interact with non-teaching staff, administrators, supervisors, colleagues, or students who are not CDMs, either in real life or on social media platforms like Facebook. Individuals and communities are struggling under the junta's current policy towards CDM participants and the current approach breeds increasing levels of social division and violence (Soe & Anonymous, 2023). A lecturer with nine years of service expressed how she is taking precautions to avoid interactions due to the political sensitivity and potential repercussions of being associated with the CDM. In her words, "I experienced trauma. I have no desire to meet people. When visitors arrive at my house, I stay inside because I'm afraid they will ask questions regarding the CDM. I don't want to respond to questions about why I don't go to school. For security reasons, I avoid using my real name on social media."

A lecturer with 12 years of service reported that while her relationships with her friends, relatives, and colleagues have not deteriorated because of her involvement in the CDM, family relationships have: "My sister and I have a completely broken relationship." As a result of the CDM, the social relationships among university lecturers have changed. Their social relationships have become fewer and less strong.

Since they have no more work, the university lecturers' income has disappeared, and they are facing economic hardships. Based on the respondents' answers, only one teacher received money from the Union of Students. She is an associate professor who has been serving for 20 years. She commented that "I have received only thirty thousand kyats from the Union of Students, an activist organization that joined the CDM. Until now, I have not received any support from any other organizations". Another lecturer with 12 years of service had to sell her house. She said "I was depressed when I had to sell my house".

These challenges also affected married couples. They may not have enough money to support their spouse, or they may have to borrow from others due to financial constraints. One lecturer who has served for nine years and is his family's primary breadwinner explained that not having a job was financially difficult. It was the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, and his father was in constant need of medicine. He had to sell food to earn an income. He expressed his worries over his father's medications and expenses for the house. "I couldn't provide my wife any money. I felt emotionally hurt because I had no income."

Most of the respondents are working as part-time, short-term freelance teachers or freelance researchers. Two out of the 15 respondents are working for their own small business, for which they do not feel that they have been trained. Three out of the 15 respondents are not working. The respondents who worked for about four years have much less confidence in themselves based on their experience. They also faced loss of educational opportunities and difficulties in research. As one lecturer who has

nine years of service stated, she was awarded an education scholarship by a university abroad, but she was not able to travel there for onsite classes. She also said that she was unable to do any work in her own name. People who participate in CDM lose their opportunity to study abroad because they are barred from going abroad. They face restrictions with studying and working under their own name.

Furthermore, since all participants have lost their job, they were unable to carry on with their professional work. Some people are operating their own businesses during this time, even as they are unable to do so under their own names. They fear that their businesses will be closed if they conduct transactions under their name. They also run the risk of losing money because they are not qualified for positions outside of teaching.

The participants are having trouble finding a new job as business owners are unable to hire them due to their participation in the CDM. The security forces and government officials strictly monitor and prohibit any organization, including private businesses, NGOs, and CSOs, from employing any public servant involved in the CDM. It is regarded as a crime punishable by prison terms and fines and by revocation of business licenses and registrations (Soe & Anonymous, 2023).

Together with the mostly negative consequences are some positive consequences for CDM participants. People who engage in CDMs can think of their experience as very empowering and liberating. They can take active roles in shaping their society and standing for what they believe in, which is a very deeply fulfilling experience (Schock, 2021). Despite the challenges and risks, most participants felt satisfied with themselves for standing up for what

was right through civil disobedience, reflecting the personal fulfillment and a sense of purpose derived from their actions (Moon, 2021). Most of the teachers felt satisfied with themselves because they helped create the CDM and they stood up for what was right. They have gained new experiences outside the university and civil service since they are no longer government employees, and others have developed self-confidence because they have overcome the worst. They were satisfied with the opportunity to live with their families, such as having more time for religious work, research, personal study, and doing more domestic work. Many of them receive support and encouragement from their families.

Conclusions

This research probed Myanmar university teachers' motivations for joining the CDM and the consequences that they faced. Most CDM university teachers were not fully aware of the definition of civil disobedience. Despite this, their reasons are consistent with the ideas of many scholars and thinkers mentioned above. Their understanding of this concept pertains to an act of shutting down the government machinery by joining together peacefully to prevent a military coup from succeeding. However, the main reason they joined this movement was to achieve true democracy and justice. This research finds that their reasons are in line with Thoreau's idea that when a government is unjust, the people have a desire and right to stop that government. Moreover, the CDM university lecturers conscientiously and deliberately broke the law in the interest of justice, not for their self-interest. In other words, they are willing to accept the consequences of their actions.

Therefore, they participated in the CDM with a strong conviction that they will not return to normal life until they get justice and democracy.

The university teachers identified the many reasons and motivating factors for participating in the CDM. Among those factors, their fight for a functioning higher education system is one motivation, because the progress and reform in the field of education in which they served gradually improved during the civil government regime. They worried that this transformation in the education sector will revert to the underdeveloped state of education under the previous military administration. However, respondents felt that the coup was unjust and damaged the country's transformation toward a democratic state. In addition, they participated with a deep conviction to get justice based on their conscientiousness and principledness.

It is impossible to ignore the challenges and consequences faced by university teachers who participated in the CDM. They endure threats to personal safety due to their involvement. The economic and emotional challenges also impacted their lives. They face legal repercussions including arrests and charges. Their social relationships became narrower. Their professional lives have been disrupted, affecting research and teaching. Despite these risks, they persist in advocating for change. While the revolution may bring positive outcomes if it succeeds, for now, the impacts are cumulatively negative.

Future research can examine the motivations of, and consequences for, other sectors of society that are major participants in Myanmar's CDM. They can also compare the motivations and consequences discussed here with those of university teachers or other

sectors of society that participated in other CDMs. As long as people feel that rulers are unjust, CDMs are most likely to continue erupting in other countries and participants' motivations and the consequences that they face will likely continue to be compelling areas of research.

Suggestions

It is obvious that Myanmar's higher education system faces unprecedented challenges at present. The courage of the CDM university teachers underscores the need for continued support and advocacy. Legal aid initiatives should be provided for lecturers facing charges. Emotional trauma and stress among lecturers must be addressed through counseling services. Emergency funds should be established to relieve financial burdens that threaten both the lecturers and their families. Collaboration needs to be encouraged between Myanmar scholars and international scholars to document the impact of the CDM on education and the wider society. Strategies should be developed for rebuilding the higher education system post-conflict, emphasizing inclusivity and democratic values.

In conclusion, Myanmar's university teachers continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the country's future. Their sacrifices and resilience inspire hope for a democratic Myanmar.

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