A Study on Employee Engagement Models for Sustainability of Long-Distance Learning Public Higher Education Institutions in Thailand

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Abstract

The concept of engagement has appeared in recent years as a key factor in enhancing the efficiency and sustainability of employees in organisations. Due to the new-normal economy and the emergence of the ASEAN Economic Community, talent retention has been difficult for most public sector and government agencies in ASEAN countries, including Thailand. The problem of brain drain is one of the more crucial issues in the bureaucratic system. This article firstly investigates four models of employee engagement, namely, the model of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement by Saks, the model of employee engagement by Aon Hewitt, the Job Demands-Resources Model by Bakker, and the Model of Hierarchy of Engagement by Penna. Secondly, it aims to find the essential factors that influence the level of employee engagement and to construct an employee engagement framework for a human resource management action plan in the long-distance learning higher education sector in Thailand. The conclusion of this article indicates that there are some overlapping concepts in the antecedents of employee engagement which can be highlighted as key factors to enhance the level of engagement within such organisations. These include: job resource factors (benefits and financial rewards, career opportunities and advancement, links between individual and organisation performance, the nature of work, organisational support, supervisory support, autonomy, two-way communication, effective and assertive relationships, and personal resource factors (conscientiousness, core self-evaluation, and optimism).

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Employee Engagement Model, Human Capital, Job Demands-Resources Model, Long-Distance Learning, Model of Antecedents and Consequences, Work Engagement

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Introduction

The "new-normal economy" and "economic disruption" are considered to be new critical factors that affect organisations' performance both in the public and private sectors. Many economists agree that the global economy is being completely transformed. Within this era of new challenges, the rapid evolution of new technologies combined with the power of globalisation has overturned the traditional pattern of the world economy and upgraded it to another level. Nevertheless, the advancement and development of technologies such as artificial intelligence, Internet of Things, big data analytics, robotics and drone technology, are expected to be key drivers to enhance the growth of domestic and global economies. Along with this trend there are some important issues that should be closely examined, for instance, the regional integration of investment and trade, and the increasing competition of products and services.

Additionally, the emergence of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015 facilitated the free movement of capitals, such as, skilled labour and services in all ASEAN member countries. A higher education institution gradually expands its operation beyond national boundaries to the regional landscape. These changes create both opportunities and challenges. More importantly, various universities in ASEAN countries, both private and public, are now starting to offer long-distance learning or online programmes. Distance teaching providers, by their very nature, can easily transcend national borders and admit students from different countries. This increases the urgency of establishing employee engagement, since currently, talent retention is proving to be an obstacle for most public higher education institutions in ASEAN countries. In the case of Thailand, public higher education institutions, including ones that operate long-distance learning programmes, are encountering the problems of brain drain and burnout syndrome in the bureaucratic system. Therefore, they must tune their focus to increase employee engagement in order to maintain academic quality and retain high performers who work in crucial areas. What is needed now to drive sustainable growth is more than excellent services, winning strategies, and high technologies.

Admittedly, all the above-mentioned features contribute to superior performance but all of them can be imitated easily. Instead, what a Thai long-distance learning public higher education institution needs now is the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage and unique offering. The workforce, which in modern theories is known as "human capital", is crucial and goes beyond the package of success applied by previous strategies. The human capital or workforce, which can simply be called "employees", can be the competitive advantage one company has over others. Furthermore, people who produce superior performance in their tasks and roles bring uniqueness to their organisations. According to these new challenges, the terms "human capital management" and "human capital" have been the focus of attention among practitioners and academics, since this concept is positively related to organisational performance. The concept of employee engagement has also emerged in recent years as a key factor in enhancing employees' efficiency in organisations. Employee engagement refers to positive and motivational state of mind of an employee towards an organisation and its value.

To date, a complete and suitable model has not been devised specifically for public higher education institutions in Thailand, especially the long-distance ones, due to certain restrictions imposed by bureaucratic rules and regulations. Some models are designed to serve the job characteristics of private higher education institutions, while others provide contested ideas and only mention engagement attributes in general. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate the factor of employee engagement in long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand.

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Literature Review

This literature review is divided into two sections. In the first section, four models of employee engagement are discussed in detail. In the second section, employee engagement factors in the context of public higher education institutions in Thailand are presented.

To understand employee engagement in terms of the drivers and consequences, many scholars and practitioners have introduced models of employee engagement. Different models focus on different antecedent factors and various dimensions of employee engagement. However, each model gives an insightful understanding of the multidimensional concepts of employee engagement. This article applied four models of employee engagement: first, the Aon Hewitt Engagement model; second, a model of antecedents (drivers) and consequences (results) of employee engagement by Saks; third, the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model of work engagement; and lastly, the model of hierarchy of engagement by Penna. These models were selected for this study due to following reasons. First, these models represent employee engagement drivers and consequences from the perspectives of both scholars and practitioners. Second, the four models consider various dimensions about antecedent factors of employee engagement from the individual level, group level, and organisational level. Third, these models give an insightful understanding about psychological needs, which is a fundamental driver behind employee engagement behaviour.

Aon Hewitt's Engagement Model

Regarding the perspective of practitioners, the employee engagement model developed by the Aon Hewitt Association, which is a human capital consulting firm, is one of the more renowned models representing factors that have potential impacts on the extent of employee engagement. The Aon Hewitt model of employee engagement was formulated over 15 years of research with 6.7 million samples, comprising employees from more than 2,900 organisations from various countries in different regions: Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Europe, and North America. The main objective of this extensive research was to understand and determine the factors associated with employee engagement within an organisation and the consequences of such engagement. According to Hewitt (2011) the findings of the research indicated that factors associated with the engagement of individual employees within an organisation could be categorised into 6 main groups (work, people, opportunities, total rewards, company practices, and quality of life) with 21 organisational antecedents linked with these factors. Furthermore, the findings of this global research on engagement also pointed out that all 6 of the main factors are interrelated. The Aon Hewitt model displays the consequences of employee engagement as "3s" (say, stay, and strive): "say" – to express their feelings about their organisation in a positive way, "stay" – to have a strong attachment to their organisation (sense of belonging), and "strive" – to want to work in the most effective way and so, make their best effort to meet organisational goals.

Model of Antecedents (Drivers) and Consequences (Results) of Employee Engagement

From the scholars' perspective, the Saks' model of employee engagement is the first and most well-known model which explores the relationship between the antecedents (drivers) and consequences (results) of employee engagement. According to this model, the drivers or antecedents of employee engagement comprise six factors, which are job characteristics, perceived organisational support, perceived supervisor support, reward and recognition, procedural justice and distributive justice. These factors increase the level of employee engagement within an organisation in terms of job engagement and organisational engagement. The consequences or results of employee engagement can be categorised into two groups. First, consequences at the individual level which include job satisfaction,

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organisational commitment, and intention to quit. Second, consequences at the organisational level which refer to organisational citizenship behaviour. (Saks, 2006)

JD-R Model of Work Engagement

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) devised the JD-R model of work engagement, which was developed according to the traditional JD-R model. The traditional JD-R model has two specific groups of work conditions: job resources and job demands. The concept of the traditional JD-R model mentions that every organisation has specific work characteristics, as well as particular work environments and risk factors, which can create job stress and/or employee motivation. In the JD-R model of work engagement, Baker and Demerouti expanded the previous model to include new group of work conditions, and personal resources, as additional key drivers for engagement. According to the new JD-R model of work engagement, "job resources" refer to conditions of the workplace, which help employees to be more effective, to learn, to develop their skills, and to achieve organisational goals. The job resource factors are autonomy, performance feedback, social support, supervisory coaching, etc. In addition, "personal resource factors" are the way employees in an organisation perceive themselves. The personal resource factors are optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and self-esteem. The authors stated that employees who demonstrate a high level of optimism, self-efficacy, resilience, and self-esteem can utilise their job resources better than those who are disengaged. Furthermore, they would normally have greater engagement with their organisation. The results of work engagement, according to the JD-R model of work engagement, include in-role performances, extra-role performances, creativity, and financial turnover.

Penna's Model of Hierarchy of Engagement

Penna (2007) also studied employee engagement, and her research report presented a new model called hierarchy of engagement. It is similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs model. The bottom line of the model shows the basic needs of pay working hour benefits. When the basic needs are fulfilled, an employee will look for the next opportunity, which is the learning and development step. They might consider pursuing the possibility of promotion and development. As a result, self-development encourages their leadership until they gain trust and respect. At the peak of the pyramid, the employees may aim for meaning in their jobs.

Employee engagement factors in the context of long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand

There is a clear distinction between a mainstream university and a university that provides long-distance learning. Instead of bringing all students to one campus, long-distance learning institutions give them the opportunity to study while living elsewhere. Nowadays, long-distance learning education institutions in ASEAN and especially in Thailand are growing very fast beyond national borders. Digital technologies enrich and support universities, both public and private, to provide online learning courses for individual students across regions, and even across the globe. However, currently, there is no research or studies that directly investigate or examine the factors related to engagement in long-distance learning public education institutions in Thailand. However, there are some academic studies related to employee engagement in mainstream higher education institutions in Thailand. Wuttaphan (2016) conducted research based on a literature review, documentary research, and investigation of a variety of academic journals, reports, and documents. There are various antecedent factors related to the engagement of faculty members in public higher education institutions in Thailand. These are personal characteristic factors, management factors, organisation factors, jobs and task factors, and relationship factors. Moreover, according to the research findings from Sadangharn (2010),

organisational and job engagement are significantly associated with employee engagement with the public sector in Thailand. Additionally, major challenges in most Thai public higher education institutions are the lack of long-term human resource development plan to enhance employee engagement and the lack of engagement factors, such as empowerment, two-way communication, and participation. It has been argued that communication satisfaction and job satisfaction are strongly associated with employee engagement in private higher education institutions in Thailand (Pongton & Suntrayuth, 2019).

The antecedent factors described in the four models presented above are in accordance with the factors identified in documentary research in the context of Thai higher education institutions and can be applied in the context of long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand as well.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:
i.   Investigate the interconnections and similarities between four models of employee engagement, namely, the model of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement by Saks, the model of employee engagement by Aon Hewitt, the JD-R model of employee engagement by Bakker, and the model of hierarchy of engagement by Penna.
ii. Find the key drivers of engagement as a recommendation for HR practice or an organisational approach to promote employee engagement for testing and application in Thai long-distance learning public higher education institutions.

Methodology

This article is a conceptual article. Document analysis and literature review were conducted and used as secondary data. The integrative literature review technique was applied. Relevant information about employee engagement models from various sources such as journals, books, electronic journals, and official reports, was explored and analysed to provide insight into the related concepts and practices. Moreover, the technique of meta-synthesis was applied to integrate the results from a number of different but interrelated studies to identify the similarities in different models, interpret their functions, and present the findings in both text and table forms.

Findings

Overlaps and Similarities Between Four Models of Employee Engagement

The four models described above have overlaps and similarities. In terms of similarities, the four models are based on the same theories, which are the need-based theory of motivation, social exchange theories, the big five personality dimensions, and core self-evaluation. The most common factors include reward and recognition, social support, supervisory support, career opportunities, and job characteristics. The details are shown in Table 1.

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Table 1

Overlaps and Similarities Between Four Models

Models	Focus	Theories	Common Factors
Aon Hewitt's Engagement Model	• Practitioners' perspective (holistic viewpoint)	• Need-based Theory of Motivation	• Reward and recognition
Saks's employee engagement model	• Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement	• Social Exchange Theory • Big Five Personality Dimensions	• Social support • Supervisory support • Career opportunities
The JD-R model of work engagement	• Personal resource factors • Job resource factors • Job demands	• Core Self-Evaluation	• Job characteristics
Penna's model of hierarchy of engagement	• Psychological needs		

Key Antecedent Factors of Engagement from Four Models

When comparing the four engagement models stated above with perspectives from both academic research and private consultancy firms research, it can be seen that there are some similarities in terms of the antecedent factors of employee engagement. Different models address different drivers of engagement. However, this article generalises the key antecedent factors of engagement extracted from four models and categorises them into two main groups as follows: job resource factors and personal resource factors (see in Table 1.) Moreover, the authors use Penna's model of hierarchy of engagement as a framework to explain job and personal resource factors. There are five categories within the pyramid, which are pay and work-hour benefits; learning and development; opportunities for promotion and development; leadership, trust, and respect; and meaning. The details are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Key Drivers of Employee Engagement

Job Resource Factors		
Driver	**Definition**	**Indicative Models**
✓ *Pay and work-hour benefits (Penna's model)*		
Benefits and financial rewards	• Benefits referring to non-cash compensation that employees receive from organisations such as pension fund, paid vacation, and insurance • Financial rewards include the salary employees earn as monthly pay and incentive bonus, which employees receive based on their performances.	• Saks' Model (rewards and recognitions) • Aon Hewitt model (benefits, pay, brand reputation)

Job Resource Factors		
Driver	**Definition**	**Indicative Models**
✓ *Learning and development (Penna's model)*		
Career opportunities and advancements	• Employees' perception of their career growth or advancement, which includes self-development, learning opportunity, and achievements at work	• The JD-R model (supervisory coaching, self-efficacy) • Saks' Model (perceived organisational support) • Aon Hewitt model (career opportunity, learning, and development)
✓ *Opportunities for promotion and development (Penna's model)*		
Linking individual and organisational performances	• The goals and achievements of employees must be aligned with organisational goals and objectives to enhance organisational performances • Performance management must apply organisational goals. Any promotion of individual employees should be based on these criteria.	• JD-R model (self-esteem, optimism) • Saks' Model (rewards and recognitions) • Aon Hewitt model (recognitions, performance management, brand reputation)
Nature of work	• Jobs which are challenging, creative; and requiring employees to use their best skills and create new skills	• Saks's Model (job characteristics), • Aon Hewitt model (nature of work) • Penna's model (opportunities for promotion and development)
Organisational support	• Perception of employees that an organisation values, its support systems and its interest in their overall wellbeing	• JD-R model (supervisory coaching, social support) • Saks's Model (perceived organisational support, procedural justice, and distributive justice) • Aon Hewitt model (safety, work life balance, job security, enabling infrastructure, diversity, and inclusion)
✓ *Leadership, trust, and respect (Penna's model)*		
Perceived supervisory support	• Employees' perception about their supervisors in terms of trust, fairness, accountability, encouragement, and support	• JD-R model (supervisory coaching) • Saks's Model (perceived supervisory support) • Aon Hewitt model (supervision, senior leadership)
Autonomy	• The authority that employees have to perform their tasks, to make decisions, and adjust work procedures	• JD-R model (autonomy) • Saks's Model (perceived supervisory support) • Aon Hewitt's Model (empowerment and autonomy)

Job Resource Factors		
Driver	**Definition**	**Indicative Models**
Encourage two-way communication	• Clear expectations from supervisors about what they want from employees • Feedback from employees about what they want from supervisors and the organisation	• JD-R model (performance feedback) • Saks's Model (procedural justice) • Aon Hewitt model (communication)
Effective and assertive relationship	• Supportive camaraderie, and positive environment among co-workers within organisation	• JD-R model (social support) • Aon Hewitt model (collaboration)

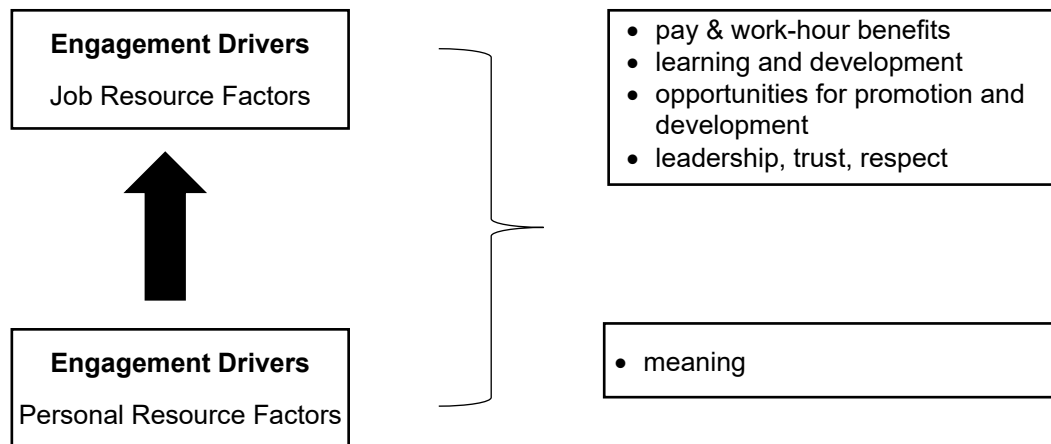| Personal Resource Factors		
Driver	**Definition**	**Indicative Models**
✓ *Meaning (Penna's model)*		
Conscientiousness	• Characteristic of employees which manifests in terms of being well-organised, neat, strongly motivated to achieve personal goals, hard-working and responsible	• JD-R model (self-efficacy, self-esteem)
Core self-evaluation	• Employees' perception of themselves, which include self-efficacy, self-esteem, emotional stability, and locus of control	• JD-R model (self-efficacy, self-esteem, resilience)
Optimism	• A strong belief, or a cheerful and positive perception about the outcome of work	• JD-R model (optimism)
Sense of accomplishment	• A feeling of pride or pleasure when completing tasks or overcoming challenges	• Aon Hewitt model (work-sense of accomplishment)

Discussion

The Four Models of Employee Engagement

Personal resource factors refer to the personal characteristics of each employee, which enhance the employees' capacity to better utilise and apply the job resource factors provided by organisations. The drivers of engagement under personal resource factors are conscientiousness, core self-evaluation, and optimism. Job resource factors refer to an environment or condition of the workplace, which is provided by an organisation to support and promote employees at all levels to perform their job more effectively and smoothly. The drivers of engagement under job resource factors are benefits and financial rewards, career opportunities and advancement, links between individual and organisational performance, the nature of work, organisational support, supervisory support, encouraging two-way communication, effective and assertive relationships, conscientiousness, core self-evaluation, and optimism. Personal and job resource factors can be explained and categorised by five physiological factors, namely, pay and work-hour benefits; learning and development; opportunities for promotion and development; leadership, trust, and respect; and meaning. Figure 1 illustrates the supportive relationship between personal and job resource factors and psychological factors.

Figure 1

Relationship Between Personal Resource Factors and Job Resource Factors and Psychological Factors

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┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│   Engagement Drivers    │              │ • pay & work-hour benefits       │
│                         │              │ • learning and development       │
│   Job Resource Factors  │              │ • opportunities for promotion and│
└─────────────────────────┘              │   development                    │
            ▲                            │ • leadership, trust, respect     │
            ▲                            └──────────────────────────────────┘
            █
┌─────────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│   Engagement Drivers    │              │ • meaning                        │
│                         │              │                                  │
│ Personal Resource Factors│             └──────────────────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────┘
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Role of Personal and Job Resource Factors to Enhance Employee Engagement in Long-Distance Learning Public Higher Education Institutions in Thailand

For long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand, faculty members and staff are considered an important asset and essential to the development of a high-quality and skilled labour force of the nation in the future, especially in this new normal era. According to the result of the analysis of the four models of employee engagement, this article proposes several antecedent factors of engagement, which can be separated into two main categories of job resource factors and personal resource factors. Details of both are given below.

Job resource factors

The job resource factors can be defined as the psychological forces that affect employees' behaviour. First, **benefits and financial rewards** refer to when faculty members and staff feel valued and appreciated for the efforts they make for their organisation. This is also key to achieving engagement. A formal reward and recognition system is crucial. Rewards can take the form of both intrinsic (non-financial) and extrinsic (financial) benefits, such as financial bonus and certificate of distinction. The human resource departments of public universities should initiate such policies and strategies.

Second, in terms of **career opportunities and advancement**, equal opportunities in career path increase employees' engagement with their organisation. The division of human resource development of public universities should create a career opportunity and advancement plan that is in every division and section of the organisation. The more employees know about their jobs and duties, the more confident they will be. This will increase their self-efficacy and commitment. The supervisors or heads of department of each division are important in this process, as they can advise and encourage faculty members to develop the right skills for their academic posts. In addition, supervisors must tackle the development of faculty members under their supervision and encourage them to feel confident about their skill development. More importantly, the performance management and promotion procedures must be equitable.

Third, in the aspect of **links between individual and organisational performance**, faculty members and staff must feel that their efforts are important to the organisation's

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success. Moreover, employees have to perceive themselves as one way to achieve organisational prosperity. When employees feel the nature of their work is important to the organisation, the level of employee engagement will increase. The human resource department of public higher education institutions in Thailand can apply performance management methods to evaluate and promote employees according to their capacities and skills that ameliorate organisational effectiveness.

Fourth, for **the nature of work**, the characteristics of work have a clear influence on employee engagement as witnessed in Saks' model of antecedents and consequences of employee engagement and in the Aon Hewitt model. When the nature of a job is challenging, creative, and existing, employees will need to use their best capabilities and create new skills to successfully do their job. Moreover, these kinds of job characteristics stimulate employees to feel attached to the organisation. Normally, the nature of work or job characteristics of academics in long-distance learning public universities in Thailand is quite challenging. However, top administrators in public universities can increase the challenges and creative elements in the job characteristics of faculty members by applying the performance management method to evaluate and promote employees according to their capacities and skills for improving organisational effectiveness.

Fifth, **organisational support** is directly concerned with the top management team. The top administrators of long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand should ensure that their organisation provides the tools that employees require to complete their tasks, in terms of physical or material, financial, and information resources. Since the nature of work in a long-distance learning university is different from that in a mainstream university, it is important that the supportive systems and devices help employees to complete their tasks. Furthermore, the feeling that they are supported in every dimension helps forge a bond between employees and their organisation. Additionally, human resource departments can initiate and implement a work-life balance plan and create a knowledge base on an e-learning platform for all faculty members to access, so that they can develop their skills and knowledge to keep abreast of new challenges.

Sixth, **supervisory support** represents the importance of leadership. Leaders with confidence, accountability, clear vision, and who is able to distribute appropriate level of autonomy to employees in decision-making can increase the level of engagement. High leadership commitment through clear mission, vision, and values is needed to build employee engagement. Therefore, the top management team of long-distance learning public universities in Thailand must ensure such style of leadership is cascaded throughout their organisation. At the same time, they should improve employees' leadership role as well. Being a good example for employees to emulate is a way that a top administrator can enhance employees' leadership skills.

Seventh, **autonomy** is a situation where the faculty members of an organisation have the power to perform their tasks, make decisions, and adjust their work procedures. According to the nature of work, online teaching requires multiple communication skills and the freedom of creative thinking. Long-distance learning universities should give autonomy to faculty members. As a result, the faculty members will have a greater sense of organisational citizenship. Moreover, they will have a clear picture of what they can do for their organisation to improve performance. Autonomy at the individual level increases the level of engagement.

Eighth, encouraging **two-way communication** refers to the way clear and consistent communications are delivered to employees. They expect to receive specific and unambiguous content from their supervisors. Furthermore, in order to build a positive relationship with the organisation, employees should be urged to convey their messages back to their supervisors regarding their jobs and lives. Two-way communication paves the

way for an engaged workforce. Supervisors should involve their employees and always show appreciation for the input given. Participative decision-making from both sides intensifies sense of belonging to the organisation. The human resource division of a public higher education institution can conduct an employee satisfaction survey to evaluate the satisfaction of employees in relation to their human development programme.

Ninth, **effective and assertive relationship** represents a friendly environment between co-workers that is critical and must be applied on all levels, that is, between supervisors and employees, and between employers and employees. Developing an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust creates a culture characterised by engagement and collaboration. Supervisors can demonstrate trust to employees under their command by distributing some authority and responsibilities to the employees. Thus, activities to facilitate friendly and supportive relationships between co-workers, such as arranging an annual sports day annually to increase team collaboration, co-worker relations, and good health and well-being of everyone can be organised.

Personal resource factors

Personal resource factors include elements such as personality, core self-evaluation, and attitudes, which affect employee behaviour when performing various tasks. Personal resource factors are a combination of a number of elements: (1) **conscientiousness** referring to the characteristics of employees or individuals, which manifests in terms of being well-organised, neat, and strongly motivated to achieve personal goals, hard-working, and responsible; (2) **core self-evaluation** which is the employees' perception of themselves, which includes self-efficacy, self-esteem, emotional stability, and locus of control; (3) **optimism** reflecting a strong belief or a cheerful and positive perception about the outcome of the work; and (4) **sense of accomplishment** that suggests a feeling of pride or pleasure when completing tasks or overcoming challenges. All four factors are the specific characteristics of each individual employee that can boost their capacity to better utilise the job resource factors. Psychological test can be included within the organisation's recruitment process to recruit suitable employees who embody the characteristic factors that enhance engagement with the organisation.
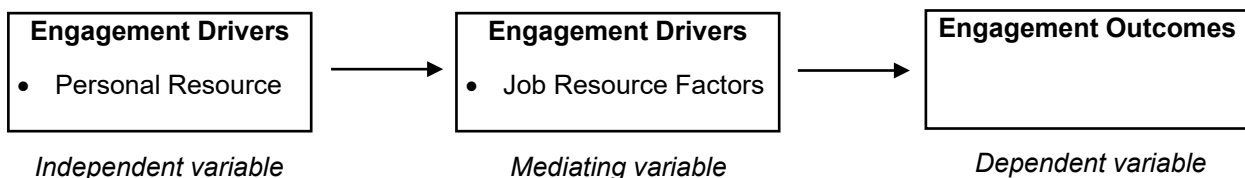
Implications for long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand

For long-distance learning public higher education institutions in Thailand, a "one size fits all" approach might not be suitable, as it will not be applicable to all cases. This is because employee engagement can be diverse and so must be adjusted according to the nature of the organisation. Each organisation is different in terms of its culture, structure, vision and goals. However, there are some recommendations and implications that can be applied to enhance employee engagement in Thai public higher education organisations. According to Wuttaphan (2016), engagement is a combination of physiological factors that arise from both the individual and organisational levels; consequently, communication between an organisation and its employees is very important. As such, in order to achieve a satisfactory level of engagement, all stakeholders must be aware of the importance of engagement and its effects on organisational performance. Furthermore, employee engagement is a long-term process and requires cooperation among faculty members and top administrators (Pongton and Suntrayuth, 2019). Moreover, engagement is a combination of organisational supportive factors and individual personal factors, which can be increased or decreased over a period of time. The nature of the work or job characteristics in most Thai public higher education organisations should be adjusted to comply with changing global trends, to be more flexible and to decentralise decision making and autonomy to employees so that employees can utilise their best current skills and develop new skills (Wuttaphan, 2016).

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This article scrutinised the antecedent factors of employee engagement to offer suggestions and recommendations to public higher education institutions in Thailand. The meta-synthesis is based on literature review and document studies. However, the antecedent factors highlighted in this article have not been tested yet, so future research should verify the results from this article and in various contexts of long-distance learning higher education institutions and study the outcomes of engagement (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Proposed Model of Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement

Engagement Drivers	Engagement Drivers	Engagement Outcomes
• Personal Resource	• Job Resource Factors	
Independent variable	*Mediating variable*	*Dependent variable*

Conclusion

This study investigated four models of employee engagement. It aimed to find the essential factors that influence the level of employee engagement and to construct an employee engagement framework for a human resource management action plan in the long-distance learning higher education sector in Thailand. Document analysis and literature review were conducted and the findings were used as secondary data. The integrative literature review technique was applied. According to the findings, job resource factors (benefits and financial rewards, career opportunities and advancement, links between individual and organisational performance, the nature of work, organisational support, supervisory support, autonomy, two-way communication, effective and assertive relationships), and personal resource factors (conscientiousness, core self-evaluation, and optimism) are important factors to be studied further under the context of long-distance higher education institutions.

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