

# Exploring the antecedents of employee engagement in vocational colleges in Thailand

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## Abstract

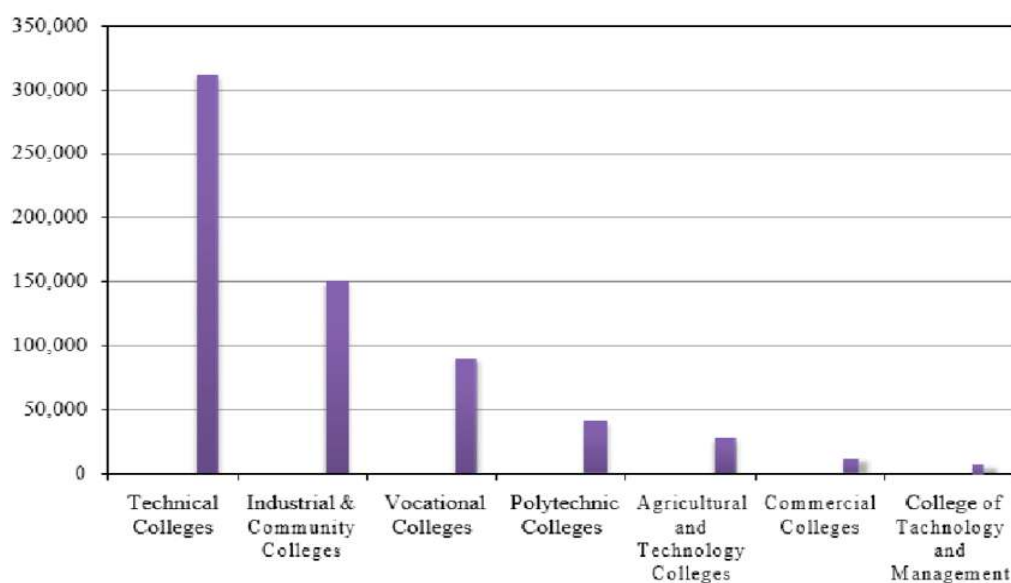
The purpose of this study is to explore the antecedents of employee engagement among the vocational colleges of Thailand. To achieve this purpose, the effect of culture, workforce environment, management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership and promotion is examined on employee engagement. Data is collected from vocational colleges of Thailand. Therefore, population of the study is vocational colleges of Thailand and employees working in these colleges are the respondents of the study. Questionnaire was used for data collection and data analysis is carried out through Smart PLS. Results of the study shows that; culture and workplace environment among vocational colleges of Thailand has no effect on employee engagement. However, management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership and promotion have positive effect on employee engagement. Therefore, management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership and promotion are the antecedents of employee engagement.

**Keywords.** Culture, workforce environment, management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership, promotion, vocational colleges Thailand.

## 1. Introduction

Employees are the major resources of the organization (Kundariyah, Tjahjono, Aini, & Setyonugroho, 2022) and it is most important to achieve higher performance. The capability as well as skills of the employees can play a vital role to get success by achieving higher performance. The employees always lead the organization to achieve sustainable growth. Similar with the business industry the educational institutions are also required better sources of employees. Among the educational institutions, the employees working in colleges must have better skills as well as capability which become an important resource. To achieve this purpose, the employee engagement must achieve a satisfactory level (Bakota, 2020; Carvalho et al., 2020; Dang, Nguyen, Nguyen, Trinh, & Banh, 2020).

However, employee engagement is a challenge for the organizations (Tao, Lee, Sun, Li, & He, 2022). With the increase in employment opportunities, the employees are moving from one organization to other organization. The rate of employee turnover is increasing day by day. It is one of the alarming situations for the organizations. Engagement is also one of the issues in Thailand which is quite low and threatening to the performance among vocational colleges. Figure 1 shows that the number of students is increasing in Thai vocational colleges, however, employee engagement is a problem. Therefore, it is needed to introduce various factors which has significant influence to promote employee engagement among vocational colleges of Thailand (Arrieta, 2020; Çağatay & Erten, 2020; Heland-Kurzak, 2020).



**Figure 1.** Thai Vocational College Students

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify the antecedents of employee engagement among vocational colleges of Thailand. This study proposed various factors which may have influence on employee engagement. According to this study, culture is one of the influential factors in employee engagement. Furthermore, workplace environment among the colleges can also play an important role. Besides this study also focused on management behavior and leadership skills (Graves, Sarkis, & Gold, 2019; Setiyani, Djumarno, Riyanto, & Nawangsari, 2019) in the vocational colleges. It is also highlighted that compensation as well as promotion of the employees has the ability to enhance employee engagement. The final factor which is focused by the study is the employee rights. Therefore, the current study proposed that employee engagement problem among the vocational colleges in Thailand can be managed with the help of better culture, workplace environment, management behavior, leadership compensation, employee rights and promotion. Literature has carried out research on employee engagement (Rasool, Wang, Tang, Saeed, & Iqbal, 2021; Riyanto, Endri, & Herlisha, 2021; Wang, Xu, Zhang, & Li, 2020) however the employee engagement among vocational colleges of Thailand is ignored by previous studies. The previous studies also ignored the antecedents of employee engagement in vocational colleges of Thailand. In this way, this study provided several implications for management of vocational colleges to promote employee engagement.

## 2. Hypotheses Development

An organization's culture defines the appropriate way to behave within the organization. This culture contains shared beliefs as well as values recognized by leaders and then communicated and reinforced through various methods, eventually shaping employee perceptions and behaviours along with understanding. The culture of any organization is based on the unique beliefs as well as values of organization which has influence on the employees. Employees working among the organizations always require positive values and beliefs of the organization in the favor of employees. These values and beliefs have influence on the engagement of the employees with the organization and with working activities. It has influence on employee job activities because for job a supportive culture to the employees of the organization always increases the employee engagement. As given in previous studies that employee engagement is linked with culture of the organization (Colleoni, Bonaiuto, Illia, & Bonaiuto, 2021; Suharti & Suliyanto, 2012).

Along with the culture of the organization workplace is also important for the employees. The workplace conditions among the organizations have influence on the working activities of the employees. The working conditions at workplace is an environment which has influence on the employees. At workplace the comfortable environment led the employees to work with the full potential.

However, negative work environment at workplace can lead to decrease the overall performance. On the other hand, it has long term effect on the employees because the working environment generally shape the employee engagement. A positive work environment can increase the employee engagement. The relationship between the employees and management creates a friendly working environment which causes to promote employee engagement. Therefore, at workplace the engagement of the employees is based on several factors. Along with other factors, work environment playing an influential role to shape employee engagement (Setiyani et al., 2019)

Management behavior is another important element which has relationship with employees and most importantly it has significant relationship with employee engagement. As reported in the literature that behavior of the management has influential role in the activities of the employees in any organization (Attiq, Wahid, Javaid, & Kanwal, 2017; Hoque, Awang, Siddiqui, & Sabiu, 2018). The management behavior is based on the dealing of the top management with the subordinates. The behavior of dealing and the way of dealing with the employees in relation to the various activities of the company and various individual matters of the employees has influence on employee engagement. A supportive behavior of the management towards the employees always encourages the employees. The satisfaction level of the employees is also based on management behavior which has influence on engagement level. In organizational activity, the positive behavior of top management (Jung, 2021) to sport employees with the help of various instructions can lead to the effective working conditions, however strict management behavior with the employees towards the activities of the business may lead to the negative effect on employee engagement. Therefore, the dealing of top management along with the managers with the subordinates may have significant effect on employee engagement (Ajah, Ajah, & Obasi, 2020; Erturk & Ziblim, 2020; Fisch, 2020; Jonah & Kanyangale, 2021).

The leadership skills of the managers have influence on the employees. It also has influence on the overall performance of the business. The leadership skills among the managers can lead the employees. Leadership is based on the

management of a group or individual towards the working conditions and fulfill the requirement of the employee performance along with business activities. A positive leadership has influence to promote employees in business activities. The quality leadership causes to increase the employee engagement and decrease the turnover intention of the employees. This study proposes that employee engagement is influenced by leadership as reported in previous studies (Kertiriasih, Sujana, & Suardika, 2018; Khan et al., 2019).

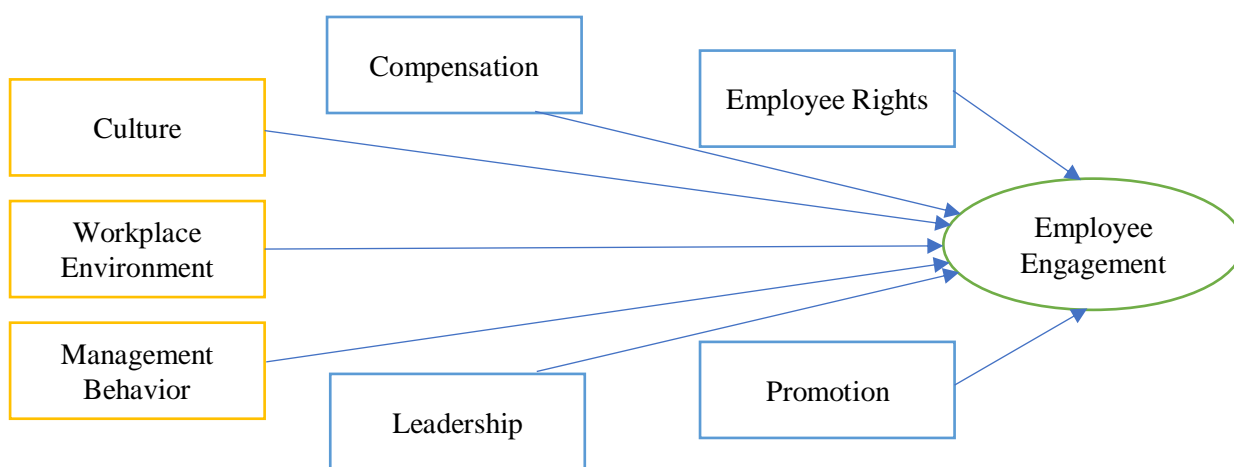
Compensation to the employees is the basic rights of employees. The compensation in form of various benefits for the employees in relation to the good performance can motivate the employees. Along with the motivation it helps the employees to stick with the organization and do not move towards other organizations for job opportunities. Therefore, compensation is one of the important instruments which increase the retention level of employees. Therefore, it can be further described as compensation is helpful to increase employee engagement. The compensation could be financial as well as non-financial to the employees, however, both have influence on employee engagement. The financial benefits to the employees based on their performance may have positive influence to enhance employee engagement (Hoque et al., 2018).

Furthermore, promotion is the basic right of any employee working in any organization. The opportunities given to the employees for the promotion is mandatory for the organization because it has influential role on the employees. The promotional activities of organizations may be based on the performance of the employees. These opportunities may be based on the experience of the employees. However, whatever the condition the employees must receive promotional opportunities from the organizations because it can help to enhance employee performance. Therefore, the benefits taken by the employees for promotional opportunities has important role to enhance employee management. Thus, this study highlighted that promotion has significant role to promote employee engagement (Riyanto et al., 2021; Rumman, Al-Abbadi, & Alshawabkeh, 2020).

Nevertheless, the current study also addressed that employee rights also have important role in

employee engagement. Employee rights may have different types; however, all the employee rights must be provided to the employees to encourage them for better performance. The rights of the employees may include the rights to a better position in the organization as every employee always want a better position in the organization which may have better benefits related to the financial as well as non-financial. Therefore, the eligible candidates must be given a better position in the organization. The employee rights are also based on the working

conditions among the organizations. It is the responsibility of the organization to provide a better working condition for the employees. Various other benefits such as vacations, recognition and appreciation are the basic rights of the employees which must be fulfilled by the organization. All these employee rights have positive influence to enhance employee engagement among the organizations. Finally, from the above discussion, the framework of the study proposed in Figure 2, along with the seven hypotheses.



**Figure 2.** Framework of the Study

**Hypothesis 1.** Culture has positive influence on employee engagement.

**Hypothesis 2.** Work environment has positive influence on employee engagement.

**Hypothesis 3.** Management behavior has positive influence on employee engagement.

**Hypothesis 4.** Compensation has positive influence on employee engagement.

**Hypothesis 5.** Leadership has positive influence on employee engagement.

**Hypothesis 6.** Promotion has positive influence on employee engagement.

**Hypothesis 7.** Employee rights positive influence on employee engagement.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Design and Questionnaire Development

The current study used a survey approach to examine the relationships and identify the antecedents of employee engagement. While conducting a survey, the current study used a questionnaire approach. 7-point Likert scale is designed and various questions were asked from the employees. The questionnaire measures the culture with help of values and beliefs of the organization towards the employees. Culture is considered in relation to the culture of the managers to deal with the subordinates. Workplace environment is considered to measure with the help of environment related to the place of working in the colleges. In this way the current study considered the relationship between the employees along with the line managers to observe the workplace environment. Management behavior is measured with the help of the role of managers to deal with the employees. In management

behavior, it is observed that how the top management deal with the employees in relation to the various mistakes on workplace or excellent work performance. Furthermore, leadership is considered in relation to the capability of the management to lead the employees. Compensation is based on various rewards given by the management to the employees. It includes financial compensation as well as non-financial compensation. Additionally, promotion is measured with the help of opportunities provided to the employees to promote within the organization. Employee rights are considered in relation to the various rights of the employees on workplace rewards and place given to the employees. All these variables are designed on 7-point Likert scale and data collection is made from the employees (Danielle & Masilela, 2020; Danjou et al., 2020; Fatima Bennouna, 2020; Friend, Grieve, Kavanagh, & Palace, 2020; Mnisi & Ramoroka, 2020).

### 3.2 Data Collection

The population of the study is the vocational colleges in Thailand. The employees working in vocational colleges of Thailand are selected as the respondents of the study. The unit of analysis of the current study is individual. Therefore, the questionnaire is distributed among vocational colleges employees in Thailand. Before distribution of questionnaires, it is ensured that the response will remain confidential and only used for the research study. Finally, 600

questionnaires were distributed among these employees. The convenience sampling is used to distribute the questionnaires which is most suitable. 325 valid questionnaires were received (Alnusairat, Elnaklah, Abd Hamid, Ariffin, & Tham, 2021; Emina, 2020; Salavrakos, 2020).

### 4. Data Analysis

The current study collected primary data with the help of questionnaire and data entry is carried out to bring the data in software for data analysis. In this process the errors in the data are expected which include missing value, outlier and normality of the data is also needed to examine before data analysis. While data screening it is found that workplace environment has five missing values. Leadership found three missing values. Employee rights found four missing values and finely employee engagement found eight missing values. These values in the data can change the results of the data. It is found that employee engagement has five outliers along with three outliers in workplace environment and management behavior. All these missing values and outliers in the data are treated with the help of recommended methods. In addition to this this study also examined the normality of the data, however normality of the data is not required because the current study is using Smart PLS which is helpful to analyze the non-normal data. Finally, the data statistics are given and Table 1.

**Table 1.** Data Statistics

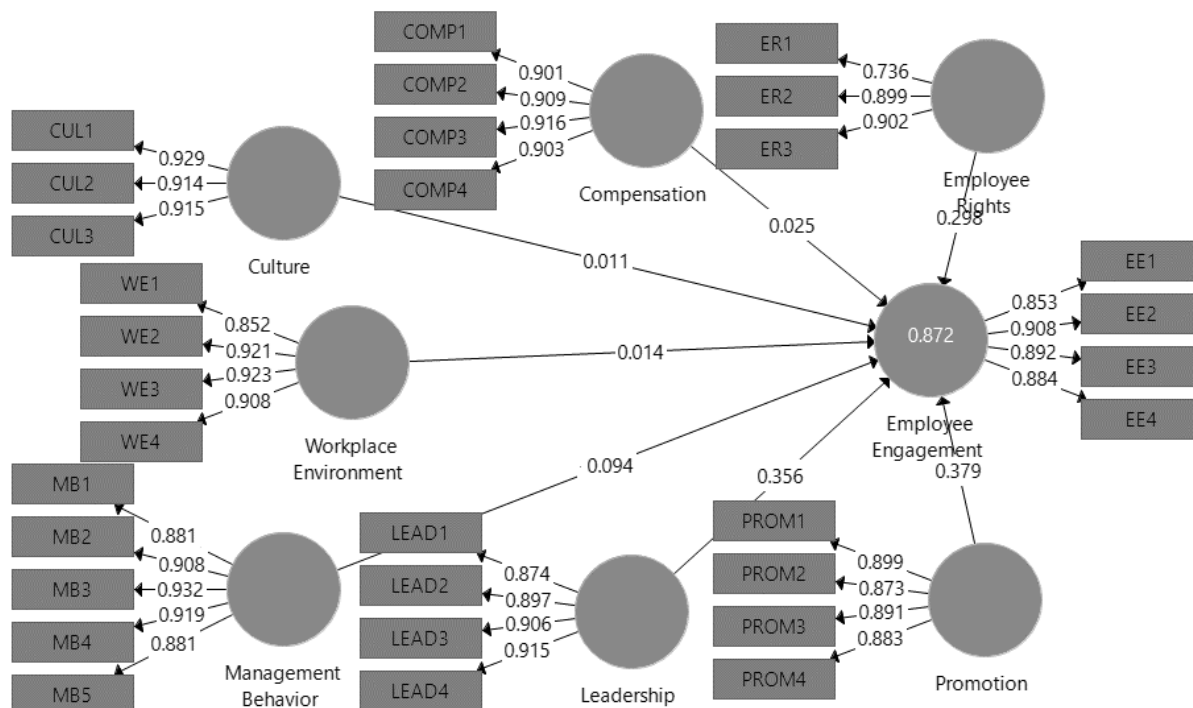
	No.	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
CUL1	1	0	3.17	3	1	7	1.445	-0.317	0.076
CUL2	2	0	3.166	3	1	7	1.752	-0.47	0.479
CUL3	3	0	3.43	3	1	7	1.83	-0.617	0.386
WE1	4	0	3.381	3	1	7	1.825	-0.547	0.466
WE2	5	0	3.43	3	1	7	1.647	-0.193	0.357
WE3	6	0	3.381	3	1	7	1.729	-0.512	0.268
WE4	7	0	3.377	3	1	7	1.757	-0.738	0.167
MB1	8	0	3.601	4	1	7	1.826	-0.632	0.28
MB2	9	0	3.637	3	1	7	1.833	-0.639	0.362

MB3	10	0	3.587	3	1	7	1.915	-0.655	0.44
MB4	11	0	3.48	3	1	7	1.841	-0.553	0.449
MB5	12	0	3.525	3	1	7	1.838	-0.556	0.407
COMP1	13	0	3.534	3	1	7	1.86	-0.668	0.363
COMP2	14	0	3.439	3	1	7	1.786	-0.38	0.504
COMP3	15	0	3.444	3	1	7	1.879	-0.797	0.272
COMP4	16	0	3.386	3	1	7	1.783	-0.455	0.409
ER1	17	0	3.556	3	1	7	1.73	-0.384	0.36
ER2	18	0	2.946	3	1	7	1.407	0.171	0.67
ER3	19	0	3.018	3	1	7	1.339	1.021	0.903
LEAD1	20	0	3.09	3	1	7	1.246	1.495	0.935
LEAD2	21	0	3.013	3	1	7	1.321	0.789	0.739
LEAD3	22	0	2.982	3	1	7	1.267	0.489	0.54
LEAD4	23	0	3.036	3	1	7	1.335	0.41	0.548
PROM1	24	0	2.978	3	1	7	1.258	0.662	0.655
PROM2	25	0	2.919	3	1	7	1.38	-0.059	0.466
PROM3	26	0	3.072	3	1	7	1.272	0.685	0.641
PROM4	27	0	3.004	3	1	7	1.374	0.333	0.66
EE1	28	0	2.982	3	1	7	1.336	0.454	0.658
EE2	29	0	3.081	3	1	7	1.293	0.144	0.501
EE3	30	0	3.027	3	1	7	1.291	0.299	0.503
EE4	31	0	2.928	3	1	6	1.247	-0.198	0.472

Data statistics in Table 1 shows that the current data is fine to proceed for further analysis. Therefore, in the next step of data analysis, the current study used structural equation modeling (SEM which is recommended to check the relationship between variables from primary data (Afthanorhan, 2013; Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, & Thiele, 2017; Khan et al., 2019). In first step of data analysis the current study carried out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA is used to check the factor loading of scale items in which 0.5 is considered as minimum threshold level for loadings. All the results of factor loadings are given in Table 2 and measurement model is given in Figure 3. From the results it is found that culture is measured with the help of three items and all the items

have factor loading above 0.9. Furthermore, workplace environment is considered through four items and all the items have factor loading above 0.8. Additionally, management behavior is highlighted in Figure 3 with the help of five items and all the items having factor loading above 0.8. Furthermore, compensation is measured through four scale items with factor loading about 0.9 and employee rights is measured with the help of three scale items having factor loading above 0.7. The other two independent variables, namely leadership and promotion are measured through fours items each and it is found that the factor loading of all these items are above 0.8. Finally, the dependent variable namely employee engagement is measured through four items and none of the

scale item is below 0.8. Thus, all items have achieved the minimum factor loading, therefore, these items are retained.



**Figure 3.** PLS Measurement Model

**Table 2.** Factor Loadings

Variables	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Compensation	COMP1	0.901	0.928	0.949	0.823
	COMP2	0.909			
	COMP3	0.916			
	COMP4	0.903			
Culture	CUL1	0.929	0.909	0.943	0.846
	CUL2	0.914			
	CUL3	0.915			
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.853	0.907	0.935	0.782
	EE2	0.908			
	EE3	0.892			
	EE4	0.884			
Employee Rights	ER1	0.736	0.807	0.885	0.721
	ER2	0.899			
	ER3	0.902			

Leadership	LEAD1	0.874	0.92	0.944	0.807
	LEAD2	0.897			
	LEAD3	0.906			
	LEAD4	0.915			
Management Behaviour	MB1	0.881	0.944	0.957	0.918
	MB2	0.908			
	MB3	0.932			
	MB4	0.919			
	MB5	0.881			
Promotion	PROM1	0.899	0.909	0.936	0.786
	PROM2	0.873			
	PROM3	0.891			
	PROM4	0.883			
Workplace Environment	WE1	0.852	0.923	0.945	0.813
	WE2	0.921			
	WE3	0.923			
	WE4	0.908			

Convergent validity is presented in Table 2 with the help of composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE). The minimum criteria of composite liability and AVE must be achieved to confirm the convergent validity. The minimum criteria for composite liability are 0.7 and it is 0.5 for AVE. Results indicated that composite reliability is above 0.7 and AVE is above 0.5. All the variables confirmed

convergent validity. Finally, it is also important to examine discriminant validity which is given in Table 3. The discriminant validity statistics (Afthanorhan, 2013; Attiq et al., 2017; Riyanto et al., 2021) are highlighted with the help of cross-loading and this study also confirmed the discriminant validity along with convergent validity.

**Table 3.** Cross-Loadings

	Compensation	Culture	Employee Engagement	Employee Rights	Leadership	Management Behavior	Promotion	Workplace Environment
COMP1	0.901	0.795	0.485	0.626	0.528	0.86	0.501	0.802
COMP2	0.909	0.815	0.492	0.638	0.529	0.855	0.515	0.804
COMP3	0.916	0.826	0.533	0.66	0.57	0.866	0.567	0.866
COMP4	0.903	0.809	0.538	0.696	0.581	0.824	0.557	0.8



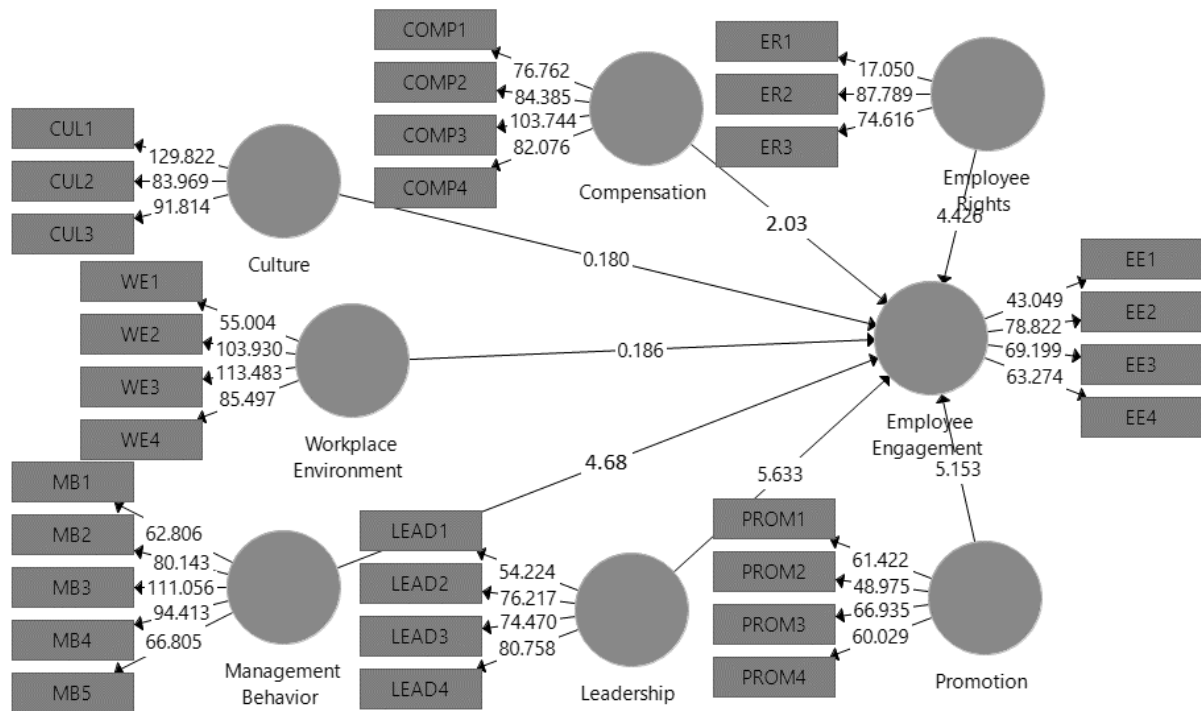
CUL1	0.824	0.929	0.593	0.68	0.645	0.825	0.628	0.803
CUL2	0.83	0.914	0.488	0.619	0.531	0.83	0.537	0.837
CUL3	0.816	0.915	0.509	0.626	0.518	0.833	0.538	0.815
EE1	0.534	0.546	0.853	0.748	0.796	0.55	0.771	0.55
EE2	0.471	0.47	0.908	0.774	0.794	0.492	0.811	0.499
EE3	0.477	0.472	0.892	0.777	0.811	0.504	0.805	0.486
EE4	0.52	0.564	0.884	0.774	0.811	0.545	0.831	0.572
ER1	0.825	0.772	0.534	0.836	0.563	0.793	0.558	0.789
ER2	0.525	0.528	0.846	0.899	0.807	0.551	0.807	0.565
ER3	0.588	0.566	0.787	0.902	0.822	0.595	0.807	0.595
LEAD1	0.531	0.527	0.798	0.796	0.874	0.562	0.805	0.531
LEAD2	0.527	0.554	0.835	0.8	0.897	0.567	0.827	0.564
LEAD3	0.571	0.587	0.804	0.78	0.906	0.607	0.85	0.587
LEAD4	0.563	0.556	0.827	0.768	0.915	0.593	0.86	0.581
MB1	0.832	0.811	0.469	0.63	0.55	0.881	0.515	0.84
MB2	0.884	0.816	0.543	0.67	0.602	0.908	0.597	0.835
MB3	0.864	0.851	0.563	0.678	0.59	0.932	0.579	0.868
MB4	0.845	0.795	0.547	0.662	0.579	0.919	0.569	0.829
MB5	0.814	0.801	0.54	0.652	0.606	0.881	0.572	0.781
PROM1	0.583	0.612	0.815	0.801	0.861	0.631	0.899	0.626
PROM2	0.545	0.573	0.775	0.793	0.819	0.548	0.873	0.589
PROM3	0.482	0.508	0.805	0.746	0.823	0.52	0.891	0.497
PROM4	0.486	0.509	0.83	0.737	0.797	0.528	0.883	0.518
WE1	0.801	0.809	0.556	0.675	0.583	0.835	0.598	0.852
WE2	0.819	0.784	0.56	0.686	0.577	0.826	0.569	0.921
WE3	0.811	0.803	0.528	0.645	0.562	0.838	0.57	0.923
WE4	0.818	0.802	0.497	0.633	0.544	0.807	0.523	0.908

PLS structural model is given in Figure 4 which indicates the relationship between variables (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2019). It is highlighted in Figure 3 which is also known as inner model. Inner model shows the t-value of the relationship along with the beta value to confirm the direction of the relationship. In this part of data analysis in which the significance level of the t-value is

considered 1.96. Results given in Table 4 shows that culture has no effect on employee engagement as the t-value is 0.180. Furthermore, work environment also has no effect on employee engagement as the t-value has 0.186 which is below 1.96. In case of management behavior, it is found that it has significant and positive effect on employee engagement as the t-value is 4.68 with positive beta value.

Leadership also has positive effect on employee engagement as t-value is 5.633. It is found that promotion also has significant effect on employee engagement with t-value 5.153. It is also found that compensation has positive and significant effect on employee engagement with the help of t-value 2.03. It is found that

employee rights also have a significant positive effect on employee engagement with t-value 4.426. Therefore, it is found that; management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership and promotion have positive effect on employee engagement



**Figure 4.** PLS Structural Model

**Table 4.** Results of Direct Effect

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Compensation -> Employee Engagement	0.025	0.027	0.012	2.03	0.038
Culture -> Employee Engagement	0.011	0.016	0.062	0.18	0.857
Employee Rights -> Employee Engagement	0.298	0.294	0.067	4.426	0
Leadership -> Employee Engagement	0.356	0.364	0.063	5.633	0
Management Behaviour -> Employee Engagement	0.094	0.096	0.02	4.68	0
Promotion -> Employee Engagement	0.379	0.37	0.074	5.153	0
Workplace Environment -> Employee Engagement	0.014	0.017	0.074	0.186	0.853

## 5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the antecedents of employee engagement among the vocational colleges of Thailand. With the help of literature support, the current study highlighted seven antecedents of employee engagement which include; culture, workforce environment, management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership and promotion. Results of the hypotheses highlighted that management behavior is one of the antecedents of employee engagement. Because it is found that it has significant and positive effect to promote employee engagement. Better management behavior among the vocational colleges of Thailand has influence to promote employee engagement. Furthermore, employee rights are also become the antecedent of employee engagement if the organization fulfill the rights of the employees. The employee rights may include; rewards, returns, better environment and vocations of the employee. Furthermore, it is found that compensation also has direct role to promote employee engagement. It is also found that leadership and promotional activities provided to the employees has the ability to enhance employee engagement. Among the vocational colleges of Thailand both the leadership and promotional opportunities has the ability to enhance employee engagement. However, culture and workforce environment are not proved to be the antecedents of employee engagement. Hence, this study found that employee engagement among the vocational colleges of Thailand have five antecedents which include; management behavior, compensation, employee rights, leadership and promotion.

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