



The Performance Puzzle: Unlocking Public Sector Excellence in Thailand's Administrative Reform

Anran Zhang ¹, Haoyu Ma ¹, Shuo Zhao ^{2*}, Pengjun Qian ¹, Jianwu Chen ¹

¹ Valaya Alongkorn Rajabhat University Under the Royal Patronage,
Pathum Thani Province, 13180, Thailand

² Shenyang City University, Sujiatun District, Shenyang, 110112, China

*Corresponding author E-mail: zhaoshuo2025@hotmail.com

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Abstract

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are factors that mediate this relationship. Drawing on a sample of 452 employees from central administrative units, the study uses Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model to explore these processes. The results suggest that work factors are an important predictor of job performance. The results revealed that work-related factors significantly and heavily influence job performance. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment completely mediated the effect here. In relation to the study variables, of the work-related factors, leadership and work environment, particularly, could explain to a greater extent. The results contribute some theoretical and practical implications for public sector performance in Thailand.

Keywords: Work-related factors, public sector performance, job satisfaction, public sector management, and organizational commitment.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the need to acknowledge the role of public organizations in fostering national resilience and competitiveness on a global scale (Dzigbede et al., 2022). As public expectations rise and global standards for public service improve, public officials in the emerging economies of Asia are under more and more pressure to enhance the quality of their administration (Dav-enport et al., 2023). In this context, there has been a renewed focus on Human Resource Management (HRM), including such issues as digitization, service quality, and workforce performance (Zhang et al., 2024). In developing countries, parts of South-East Asia, this has become part of the government administrative reform process, which includes Thailand, the process of refreshing the institutional structure to develop public-sector capability to keep up with the fast and furious changes afoot (Otajonov, 2024). 'Thailand 4.0' is a case of catching up to digital technology and liberalizing public service, but at times, messages are unclear, or infrastructure alone is developed, while deep-rooted institutional culture and motivational challenges among staff are ignored (Kankaew et al., 2022).

One of the growing concerns for the Thai public sector is how to cope with demographic changes in the civil service. Younger and better-educated professionals have higher private-sector-oriented expectations, such as work flexibility, career opportunities, and performance-based rewards (Azad & Kaur, 2024). These expectations are usually in stark contrast to the established bureaucratic principles of seniority, strict hierarchy, and job security.

Conventional human resource management systems are not able to respond to organisational tensions hindering the performance and motivation of individuals. This is further explained by digitalization's speed, thereby making the case even more compelling for another sense of urgency, given that the assumption is that firms can learn and adopt new technologies fast despite limited internal resources and capabilities, leading to an overload of real production instead of capability (Hu & Marcello, 2024). While the formal policy sign is naturally agreed upon on modernization, in practice, it is too muddled, bewildered, and disjointed to implement. But outdated and dogmatic administrative machinery compels top-level managers in service provision and government administration businesses to also somehow provide superior services (including getting workers more productive), adopt new technology, and hold onto quality staff (Thusi, 2023). Even normal extrinsic rewards like career track continuity or top-down mandates will not be sufficient. Young state workers are placing a priority on quality of work, skill development, and career pathway continuity. Otherwise, the social sector won't have access to potential human resources for other sectors. Therefore, it is extremely important to examine the ways in which organizational practices are related to workers' performance and engagement within such changing situations.

Despite much research on public sector performance, there are strong gaps in our understanding of how organizational context may contribute to the combined effects of organizational conditions on employee outcomes. Today's research often analyzes separated organisational elements such as leadership style (Ding et al., 2024) or compensation (Mylona & Mihail, 2020), without considering their interactive impact. This type of fragmentary model does not fully correspond to the dynamic complexity that is found in public organizations. An additional important yet underrated aspect is the two-trails mediating relationship of employee work attitudes, especially job satisfaction and organizational commitment, the translating mechanism between working conditions and concrete outcomes. Although the role of these

mediations has been recognized by some researchers, what is taken into consideration in most of the analyses is the direct effect of the three mediators and not their joint and indirect effect (Ingsih et al., 2020). Doing so also limits the development of a rich theoretical basis, especially for non-Western settings where norms around the organization and workforce could differ meaningfully (Blom et al., 2020). Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, is relatively underexplored in the existing literature on an empirical study of the effects of working environment on the effectiveness of public sector employees (Putra et al., 2024). Due to the bureaucratic nature of hierarchical structure and collectivist values, it is still not clear whether model performance management developed in Western countries can work in these countries (Blom et al. 2020). Without evidence derived from the context, policymakers in China may be led to implement reform assumptions that do not fit local labor markets.

With these restrictions, this study explores employees' work performance by considering five workplace factors of interest: quality of work life, career development, leadership, work environment, and compensation. Moreover, it identifies mediating mechanisms in parallel via job satisfaction and organizational commitment. With empirical evidence from Thailand, this paper contributes a framework that is contextually grounded to connect the theoretical and practical dimensions and to improve the effectiveness of public sector reform in DCs. To achieve this, this work examined two widely theoretical models that are combined: the SET of Blau (1964), and the JD-R model of Demerouti et al. (2001). According to SET, the supportive environment serves as both cause and effect of employee performance, whereby supportive work climates generate a response from employees who are more committed and perform more effectively. The JD-R model fills this gap by describing that organizational resources, i.e., good leadership and positive climate, increase positive employee affect and behavior (Demerouti et al., 2001). The combination of the two theories offers an extremely valuable remark in the context of how various forms of OB support moderate levels of motivation, commitment, and performance among Thai public sector employees amidst much government reform. Three major specific objectives will render the study robust. The first aims to examine the impact of basic work variables: quality of work life, career development, leadership effectiveness, work environment, and compensation, on workers' performance in the Thai public sector. Second, it examines the mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment simultaneously, resulting in the identification of mediating processes. Third, this present study synthesized the SET and JD-R theories and presented an empirically-derived theoretical model that might be useful in both administrative and theoretical practices in Thai and other similar developing nations. The empirical field of the study remains limited enough in the core of the Thai administration. Due to their central role in molding national policy and administrative tradition, these organizations are the best representative live locations for examining how workplace environments influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees in the context of basic institutional transformation. Institutional specificity will be intellectually challenging and practically valuable to maximize human resource management following Thailand's administrative reform and other new nations' public administrations.

Conceptually, this research has indeed been a major contribution to the way validity of the SET and JD-R models was assessed in a culturally appropriate context for Southeast Asia. Concurrently estimating intervening variables (job satisfaction and organizational commitment), it introduces an extension of the single-mediation model employed in most of the previous research and suggests an ecological tendency of OS-EA relationships in exerting influences on outcomes. At the practice level, these findings provide evidence-informed policy-maker guidance to tackle specific areas (such as leadership development, delivery of career programs, and overall pay arrangements) where policy-makers can impose conditions that facilitate the long-term performance of the public sector. The consequent implications are an intelligent empirical basis on which to establish persistent attempts at reform in Thailand's administrative machinery and representative instances towards meeting performance improvement results in public service delivery and organizational system performance in the case of such institutions in other parts of the world.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work-Related Factors in Public Sector Performance

The concept of work-related factors influencing public sector performance is deeply embedded in organizational behavior and human resource management theories. Such factors embody organizational resources, policies, and supportive mechanisms explicitly designed to influence employee behaviors, attitudes, and overall effectiveness within the unique context of government institutions (Fawehinmi et al., 2024; Wijayanti et al., 2022).

Quality of Work Life (QWL)

Quality of Work Life is a broad concept and includes the perception of the employees about the overall working conditions, including how job-related factors meet their personal needs, psychological needs, and needs related to their health status (Siziba & Barnard, 2023). In the context of public sector organizations, QWL involves creating conditions that balance job demands with personal life responsibilities, job security, stress management, and overall employee well-being. It extends beyond mere physical work conditions to include psychological and emotional dimensions, emphasizing employees' perceptions of meaningfulness, autonomy, and safety at work (Jayaraman et al., 2023). It is also observed that an increase in QWL in governmental institutions results in a corresponding increase in employee engagement, job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions, which subsequently impact organizational performance and stability in a positive way (Zeng et al., 2025).

Career Development (CD)

Career development in the public sector refers to planned and organized dimensions of the construct that seek to facilitate ongoing professional development, skill building, and advancement of staff within an organization (Sokolović et al., 2023). Among public sector organizations, CD may consist of formal career pathways, structured development and training, ongoing learning, and formal mentoring relationships to enhance skills and provide career prospects (Okolie et al., 2020). Career development programs play a prominent role in improving employees' commitment, motivation, and long-term retention as well as improving employees' and organization performance in the public sector context (Arifuddin et al., 2021; Shiri et al., 2023).

Leadership (LD)

In public sector contexts, leadership is the behavior, style, and approach undertaken by managers to motivate, inspire, and shape the performance of staff so that it will lead to the achievement of established organizational goals. It includes a leader's talent in communicating a compelling vision, letting fairness and transparency prevail when evaluating and making decisions, and offering emotional and practical assistance to their subordinates, as well as the development of cohesive and effective team processes (Jerab, 2023). Among the influence types, transformational leadership has been found to have a strong impact on employees' attitude, motivation, and productivity in the context of government organizations (Munahar & Kesuma, 2023; Rahmadani et al., 2020). These types of leadership styles work make us whole that pave the way for maintaining high-quality public service.

Work Environment (WE)

Work Environment in public sector institutions is defined by both tangible and intangible elements that collectively create the organizational atmosphere and physical conditions under which employees perform their duties. Physical facilities, workspace layout, access to updated equipment, and access to required digital tools are a few of the tangible components that are necessary to provide efficient service delivery (Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024). Intangible elements encompass organizational culture, collegiality, and collaboration norms, reflecting interpersonal relations and institutional values that significantly impact employee satisfaction and productivity. Empirical research consistently demonstrates that a supportive and conducive work environment positively influences employee morale, reduces job-related stress, and enhances the quality of public services delivered (Ngcobo & Mhlanga, 2022).

Compensation (COM)

Compensation within the public sector comprises various financial and non-financial rewards provided to employees as recognition for their contributions. It usually consists of formulated pay plans, overall compensation plans (health insurance, pensions, paid leaves, and others), performance-related rewards, and special allowances that are job-specific or job-responsible (Alrafi et al., 2023). Although public sector compensation is often perceived as less competitive compared to private-sector offerings, modern compensation frameworks in government institutions increasingly emphasize holistic reward systems, known as total rewards strategies. Such strategies integrate both monetary and non-monetary incentives designed to meet diverse employee needs and preferences (Saman, 2020). Extensive empirical research supports the premise that fair, competitive, and transparently administered compensation significantly enhances employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention, thereby directly contributing to improved organizational performance (Bryson & White, 2024). Importantly, the impact of compensation structures can vary across cultural and institutional contexts, underscoring the need for localized empirical studies in settings such as Thailand and other developing nations.

2.2 Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the overall emotional and intellectual evaluation of a person based on his/her work experience, such as the type of work, working conditions, and organizational relations. The term was first suggested by Hoppock (1935) but has been at the forefront of organizational behavior literature since then, particularly in terms of employee motivation and retention. Job satisfaction is a unique measure of worker contentment with the job, the quality and quantity of job that they undertake, and the setting in the state of the public sector (Knies et al., 2024; Sánchez-Sánchez & Puente, 2020; Fleischer & Wanckel, 2024).

Job satisfaction in the public sector is grounded in several important dimensions that capture the heterogeneity of the experience of government work. The first dimension is intrinsic differences, including autonomy of task, degree of ability to use skills, role clarity, and organizational guidance, including organizational support for performing, administrative efficiencies, and fair treatment of organizational resources (Baxi & Atre, 2024). The second dimension indicates that the role of interpersonal variables, including support by supervisors, relationships with coworkers, and quality of communications, is also a key variable for determining the level of satisfaction of the employee. The third dimension of satisfaction is career development and professional growth program opportunities, support services that are positively oriented for employees to promote positive job attitudes, reflecting both supervisor and organizational engagement for employee development. Finally, the second dimension of public sector satisfaction is the level of job satisfaction obtained by the employee for the result of what they do and the congruence with the public service values that increase the intrinsic satisfaction of government work (Sánchez-Sánchez & Puente, 2020).

Empirical studies have consistently established employee job satisfaction as an important antecedent to positively predict several organizational outcomes in the public sector. Specifically, highly satisfied employees are likely to demonstrate better job performance, higher service quality, and stronger organizational commitment. Abdullahi et al. (2025) highlight the mediating role of job satisfaction as a conduit through which support mechanisms stand connected with enhanced employee performance, underscoring the centrality of satisfaction in a complex work environment. Additionally, studies such as those by Lamsal and Gupta (2022) confirm that employee satisfaction directly correlates with citizen satisfaction levels and overall service efficacy, highlighting its pivotal role in public service excellence.

2.3 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is regarded as employees' psychological connection and affective attachment to their organization, which demonstrates a sense of who the employees are in terms of organizational goals, values, and tasks (Yasin et al., 2023). Within the context of public sector institutions, this commitment takes on additional significance due to the inherent mission-driven nature of public service, surpassing traditional employment relationships and often manifesting in employees' deeper sense of duty towards societal welfare and public interest (Herdiyanto et al., 2024).

Organisational commitment in the context of public service is frequently defined in terms of three prominent dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative (Lee & Kim, 2024). Affective commitment represents the emotional attachment and sincerity of employees to organizations' values, objectives, and missions, and reflects the intrinsic motivation and correspondence of personal values to organizational objectives. This type of commitment is particularly high in public sector organizations, where mission fit is an important predictor of employee motivation and performance.

Continuance commitment, on the other hand, is the result of employees calculating the price of leaving the organization. This aspect is frequently employment stability, secure income, transfer benefits, and the difficulty of finding equivalent work outside the public sector (Onur et al., 2024). Continuance commitment thus highlights the utilitarian tendencies of public organisational member retention, most relevant in environments replete with job security and potent institutional perks.

Normative commitment is characterized by employees' felt moral obligation to remain with their organization, often reinforced by professional ethics, loyalty norms, and an intrinsic commitment to public service values (D. Kim & Vandenberghe, 2021). Employees experiencing high levels of normative commitment typically perceive continued organizational membership as a social responsibility, shaped by the societal impacts of their professional roles and the broader public-service ethos prevalent in government organizations.

Empirical studies consistently emphasize organizational commitment as a critical determinant of positive organizational outcomes within the public sector. For instance, Asif & Rathore (2021) found that committed public-sector employees are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, demonstrate higher performance levels, and deliver superior quality public services. Furthermore, organizational commitment acts as a pivotal mediator between organizational support practices and employee performance outcomes, thus enhancing overall organizational effectiveness Hoo et al., 2023). This mediating role underscores the strategic importance of fostering robust organizational commitment as part of comprehensive human resource management strategies, particularly in the ongoing modernization of Thailand's public sector and other similar developing contexts.

2.4 Job Performance

Job Performance in public sector organisations reflects the extent to which the employee effectively performs their tasks and responsibilities that lead to organizational success and the delivery of high-quality public services (Jakobsen et al., 2023). In contrast to metrics of the private sector, which are more focused on profitability, performance management in government contexts is focused more on the delivery of mission-driven goals, service quality, and public value creation, which are unique to and expected of public service roles (Knowles, 2025).

Employees working in public organizations are typically assessed on several interrelated dimensions representing, altogether, the enhancement of the complexity and diversity of government work. The most basic dimension includes task performance, which is defined as the effective and efficient discharge of individuals' assignments and the compliance with standard quality requirements. The significance of teamwork, interpersonal coordination, and cooperation is highlighted by work, acknowledging the relatedness and interdependency of roles in public service organisations. Furthermore, by performing or engaging in the process of continuous improvement work, individuals such as workers actively seek ways and opportunities for improvement in their work and work processes, thus encouraging organizational agility, innovation, and adaptability within the dynamic public service context (Ludviga & Kalvina, 2024).

Performance in the public sector is often measured by many different factors and dimensions that are related to the public or private sector. The organizational and employee attitude conditions of the public and private sectors can also contribute to different performance ratings. For example, evidence in the literature shows that if roles and performance expectations are clear, if supervisory practices are grounded in supportive-worker practices, and if the job is highly organized, employers are more likely to experience increased productivity and effectiveness in working toward public service goals (Adhikari & Budhathoki, 2024). The same literature shows that affective beliefs, including job satisfaction and a commitment to the organization, can affect motivation, engagement, and ultimately job performance. Literature published as recently as Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2023) stresses the importance of these attitudes in generating increased results and service excellence in public sector organizations as a result. Therefore, understanding and being able to manage the factors that contribute to or detract from performance are invaluable for ongoing public sector reform agendas in Thailand, or any organization in a comparable administrative environment, on the journey towards greater effectiveness and responsiveness.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study are based on the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to consider how workplace elements determine employee outcomes in public organizations. Social Exchange theory (SET) (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964) contends that the basis of workplace interactions is grounded in the reciprocal exchanges between employees and their employers. SET posits that when employees are enabled to experience desirable working conditions, they would view such resource provision as valued resources in return, for which they would tend to respond in turn by becoming more committed to other organizations and by performing better on the job. In the context of government organizations, of specific interest to this study, SET helps explain the process through which organizational support (e.g., quality of work life, formal career plans, supportive leadership behavior, working conditions, fairness of compensation, and recognition based on performance) leads to such favorable employee behaviors because of employee awareness of the principle of reciprocity.

Alongside SET, the JD-R (Job Demands-Resources) model by Demerouti et al. (2001) extends and integrates this research to better understand how characteristics of the workplace influence employee well-being and performance via two separate but interrelated processes – the health impairment process and the motivational process. For the public sector, such a model explains how different forms of organizational resources—involving supportive leadership, clear career progression pathways, a sustaining physical and psychological work environment, and fair compensation arrangements—may attenuate the adverse effects of job demands, in turn, facilitating positive motivational states and enhancing performance outcomes. The JD-R model also provides a theoretical explanation of how such resources contribute to the increase of critical employee attitudes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, that directly or indirectly result in better job performance and increased effectiveness of the organization, as an expression of the general conclusions based on various empirical studies (Katou et al., 2021).

Empirical studies employing these two theoretical frameworks consistently underscore their complementary explanatory power within public service contexts. Ng et al. (2022), for instance, demonstrated that SET effectively captures how perceived organizational support positively influences employee behavior through reciprocal performance enhancements. Similarly, Ramaci et al. (2024) have empirically succeeded in using the JD-R model to demonstrate how the availability of sufficient workplace resources enhances employees' job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity in the public service. In bridging these theories, the present article offers a comprehensive and strong analytical framework that resonates well with the study and interpretation of workplace politics in the Thai public sector, also considering continued administrative reform efforts to promote state capacity and responsiveness.

2.6 Hypotheses Development

Based on Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model, this study develops hypotheses examining the relationships between work-related factors, employee attitudes, and performance in Thailand's public sector context.

Work-related factors significantly influence job satisfaction in public institutions through social exchange mechanisms. When organizations provide supportive work environments, fair compensation, and career development opportunities, employees experience enhanced job satisfaction as a form of reciprocity. Previous research by Wijayanti et al. (2022) Demonstrates that organizational support factors positively affect public sector employee satisfaction. Therefore:

H1: Work-related factors (quality of work life, career development, leadership, work environment, and compensation) positively influence job satisfaction.

Similarly, these work-related factors foster organizational commitment through the provision of valuable resources. The JD-R model suggests that workplace resources strengthen employees' emotional attachment and obligation to their organization. Ramaci et al. (2024) Found that comprehensive organizational support enhances public sector employee commitment. Thus:

H2: Work-related factors positively influence organizational commitment.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment serve as crucial determinants of performance outcomes. Social exchange principles suggest that satisfied and committed employees reciprocate through enhanced performance. Hertina (2021) Demonstrated these relationships in public sector contexts. Therefore:

H3: Job satisfaction positively influences job performance.

H4: Organizational commitment positively influences job performance.

The mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment emerge from the integration of SET and JD-R frameworks. These attitudes transform organizational investments into performance outcomes through reciprocal exchange mechanisms. Shah et al. (2024) Validated these mediating relationships in public institutions. Thus:

H5: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between work-related factors and job performance.

H6: Organizational commitment mediates the relationship between work-related factors and job performance.

Following established research practices in public sector studies, this research incorporates key demographic variables as controls: gender, age, education level, position level, and working type (government employee status). Working type is particularly relevant in Thailand's public sector context, where different employment arrangements (permanent civil servants versus contracted employees) may influence work attitudes and performance outcomes. Thus, Fig.1 shows the conceptual framework of the research by illustrating the role of work-related factors, including quality of work life, career development, leadership, work environment, and compensation in job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which subsequently leads to job performance. It is based on Social Exchange Theory and the JD-R model that identifies major pathways that define employee outcomes in the public sector reforms in Thailand.

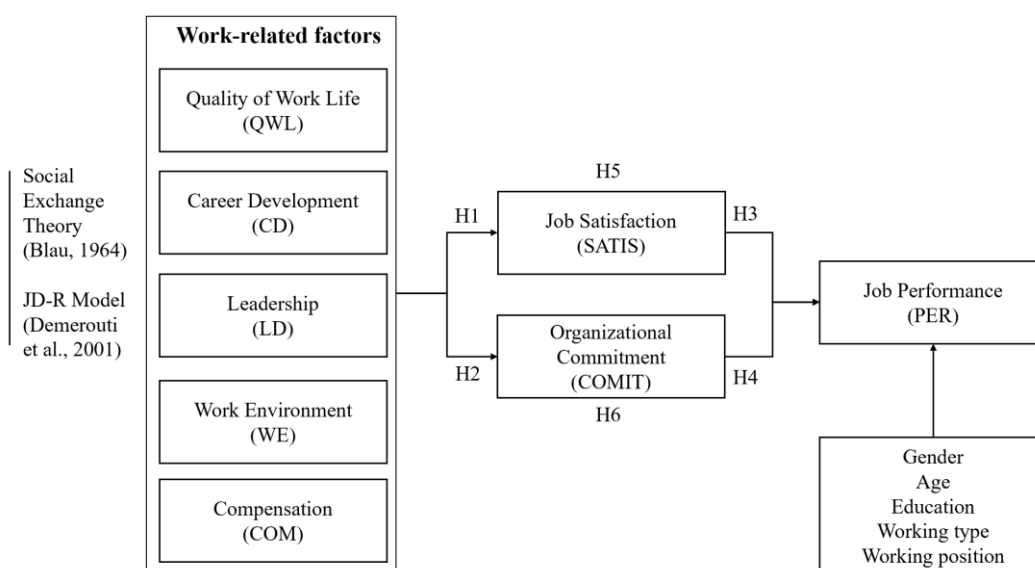


Fig.1: Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a robust quantitative research approach, utilizing a structured survey methodology to systematically explore the relationships among work-related factors, employee attitudes, and job performance in Thailand's public sector. The choice of a quantitative design is underpinned by several critical considerations that enhance the study's validity and practical applicability.

Firstly, the research aims to empirically validate hypothesized relationships derived from Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, both of which inherently require rigorous statistical verification. Employing a quantitative methodology facilitates precise testing of these theoretical relationships through advanced analytical techniques, thereby strengthening the scientific rigor of the findings. Secondly, the constructs central to this research—work-related factors, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance—have been extensively operationalized and validated in existing literature, providing reliable and well-established measurement scales. Utilizing these pre-validated scales ensures methodological consistency and enhances the comparability and generalizability of the study's results. Thirdly, given the complex and multifaceted nature of public sector management, a quantitative approach supports collecting data from a sufficiently large and representative sample. Such a design enables sophisticated statistical analyses, including structural equation modeling (SEM), to comprehensively explore direct and mediating relationships among variables, thereby delivering nuanced insights that are both statistically robust and practically meaningful. Furthermore, to strengthen the research quality and mitigate potential methodological biases, this study incorporates measures to address common method variance and multicollinearity explicitly, enhancing the validity of the empirical findings. Additionally, by clearly defining and rigorously operationalizing each construct and systematically validating measurement instruments through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the study further ensures high reliability and validity standards essential for publication in high-quality academic journals. Collectively, these methodological enhancements position the research not only to advance theoretical understanding of public sector performance but also to provide actionable, evidence-based insights for policy-makers and practitioners involved in administrative reforms and organizational management in Thailand and similar contexts.

3.2 Sample

The attention in this study is also given to the central office staff in Thailand who have been working in the same role for at least 1 year. That comprised the individual experience, the institution, and colleagues' experience as well; therefore, the data gathered are more comprehensive and accurate. Sampling offers the most diverse staff from across hierarchical levels, from the operational towards the senior specialist (contract and salary-paid staff and temporary employees), which offers space for testing differences and thorough examination of their forms of organizational structure. Central administrative agency sampling is selected as the focus of research because these are central to the application of national policy programs and public sector modernization in Thailand. They are peak-point nodes of those networks linking state and national bureaucracy and exert strong influences on standards and best practices of national administration. As

members thereof are strongly engaged in such a process of ongoing, dynamic administrative reform - modernisation of administration, they offer an extremely valuable setting for studies of complicated interactions between organisational context, staff attitudes, and their consequences for performance. Furthermore, the HRM models' standardization and the self-obvious organisational frameworks of the firms enable strict measurement of the theoretical hypotheses in the research. Consequently, the strategic selection of this level of specificity most significantly enhances the applicability, extensibility, and potentiality of transferability of the research results to the management reforms in the public sector in Thailand and comparable cases elsewhere in the world.

3.3 Sampling Methods and Data Collection

The study utilizes a strategically integrated sampling method that has been traditionally used for convenience sampling (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016) and snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961) to efficiently sample employees working in central-administrative organizations in Thailand. Convenience sampling is largely pragmatic in opting to utilize pre-existing organizational contacts and providing an expedient means to approach potential participants. At the same time, snowball sampling supplements this approach with the ability to increase the coverage through participant referrals, contributing to a more diverse and representative pool. Sampling is followed by a strategy for suitable organizational gatekeepers (human resource managers, departmental supervisors) who are employed to gain entry to qualified employees. Initial respondents serve as information sources also, capitalizing on their colleagues in and below company staff hierarchies as well as on the several types of staff, thus establishing comprehensive and multifarious samples of recruitment contacts employed by initial respondent networks. This was accomplished through the employment of advanced web-based questionnaires sent thoughtfully through institutional email networks and professional contacts. Thai and English questionnaires were used to provide comprehensiveness and conciseness, and in an attempt to provide the best available response rate, as well as instructions that are easy to follow and assurances of respondent privacy and confidentiality. This systematic approach to methodologies is intended to provide research data quality, reduce response error, and maximize respondent ease and cooperation. The careful and strict processes employed in this study are an investment in sound method and thereby constitute some form of contribution to the validity of our findings and enable the potential transferability of our findings to contemporary administrative change and management practice as it is currently being pursued throughout the Thai public sector and beyond.

3.4 Measures

All constructs are measured using five-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), adapted from validated scales in public sector research. Work-related factors comprise five constructs: quality of work life (QWL, 5 items, adapted from Siziba & Barnard, 2023), career development (CD, 5 items taken from Sokolović et al., 2023), leadership (LD, 5 items, Jerab, 2023), work environment (WE, 5 items, Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024), and compensation (COM, 5 items, Alrafi et al., 2023).

Job satisfaction (5 items, Hoppock (1935) and Jayaraman et al. (2023)) measures employees' overall work contentment and fulfillment. Organizational commitment (5 items, Lee & Kim, 2024; and Subedi & Bhandari, 2024) assesses employees' psychological attachment to their organization. Job performance (5 items, Katou et al. (2021)) evaluates task achievement and work quality.

Control variables include demographic factors: gender (categorical), age (ordinal: 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60), education level (ordinal), position level (ordinal), and working type (categorical). All measurement scales demonstrate strong reliability and validity in previous public sector research.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics Analysis

The analysis of main variables reveals consistently positive evaluations across all work-related factors, employee attitudes, and performance measures in Thailand's public sector. The mean scores demonstrate generally favorable perceptions, with relatively small variations in standard deviations indicating consistency in responses. Job performance notably shows the highest mean score, while career development opportunities are rated comparatively lower, suggesting potential areas for organizational attention (Table 1).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables

Variables	Mean	SD
Quality of Work Life	3.864	0.830
Career Development	3.873	0.837
Leadership	3.872	0.858
Work Environment	3.971	0.782
Compensation	3.859	0.926
Job Satisfaction	3.990	0.814
Organizational Commitment	3.961	0.811
Job Performance	4.032	0.728

The demographic composition of the sample reflects significant characteristics of Thailand's contemporary public sector workforce. Notable patterns include a substantial female majority, predominantly young age distribution, and high educational attainment levels, suggesting a modern and well-qualified workforce structure.

As shown in Table 2, the sample demographics indicate a workforce dominated by females (76.3%), with the majority under 40 years old (84.5%), comprising 43.1% aged 20-30 and 41.4% aged 31-40. Regarding educational attainment, 57.7% hold bachelor's degrees, 38.5% have education below bachelor's level, and only 3.8% possess master's degrees.

Table 2: Sample Characteristics

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	345	76.3
	Male	107	23.7
Age	20-30	195	43.1
	31-40	187	41.4

Education	41-50	63	13.9
	51-60	7	1.5
Position	Bachelor	261	57.7
	Below Bachelor	174	38.5
	Master	17	3.8
	Other	256	56.6
	Operational level	86	19.0
	Expert/proficient level	83	18.4
	Specialist level	19	4.2
	Expert level and above	8	1.8

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The confirmatory factor analysis confirmed robust model fit indices (Table 3). The model fit indices meet all recommended criteria: $\chi^2/df = 1.986$ is below the threshold of 3.00, CFI = 0.957 and TLI = 0.949 exceed 0.90, while RMSEA = 0.058 and SRMR = 0.042 are well below 0.08, indicating good model fit.

Table 3: Model Fit Indices

Fit Indices	Values	Recommended Criteria
χ^2/df	1.986	< 3.00
CFI	0.957	> 0.90
TLI	0.949	> 0.90
RMSEA	0.058	< 0.08
SRMR	0.042	< 0.08

All standardized factor loadings presented in Table 4 clearly demonstrate robust convergent validity, with values consistently exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging precisely from 0.815 to 0.858. These high factor loadings confirm that each measurement item effectively reflects its respective latent construct. Additionally, the mean scores indicate that employee perceptions across all measured constructs are generally positive. Specifically, the job performance items received notably high evaluations, ranging from 3.923 to 4.179, indicating strong employee confidence regarding their capability to fulfill organizational expectations effectively. In contrast, items measuring compensation were rated relatively lower, with mean values spanning from 3.783 to 3.976, highlighting potential areas where compensation structures may require closer managerial attention or policy refinement. Overall, these empirical findings provide strong evidence supporting the reliability and validity of the measurement model, thus laying a solid foundation for subsequent structural analyses.

Table 4: Standardized Factor Loadings and Descriptive Statistics of Measurement Items

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	Mean
Quality of Work Life (QWL)	QWL1: You have a good work-life balance	0.825	3.546
	QWL2: You feel job security	0.842	4.177
	QWL3: You have adequate rest time during work	0.838	3.699
	QWL4: You can manage work-related stress well	0.845	4.033
	QWL5: Work does not affect your health	0.832	3.863
Career Development (CD)	CD1: The organization has clear career paths	0.835	3.869
	CD2: You receive opportunities for continuous knowledge and skill development	0.848	3.916
	CD3: The organization supports beneficial work training	0.842	3.916
	CD4: You have opportunities for promotion based on ability	0.815	3.681
	CD5: The organization has a mentoring system that helps with career development	0.828	3.838
Leadership (LD)	LD1: Your supervisor has a clear vision	0.838	3.907
	LD2: Your supervisor listens to subordinates' opinions	0.845	3.960
	LD3: Your supervisor provides useful work guidance	0.832	3.743
	LD4: Your supervisor is fair in performance evaluation	0.848	3.942
	LD5: Your supervisor creates motivation for the team	0.835	3.808
Work Environment (WE)	WE1: The workplace is safe and hygienic	0.838	3.894
	WE2: Work equipment and tools are modern	0.842	4.082
	WE3: The work atmosphere is conducive to collaboration	0.835	3.892
	WE4: The workplace has adequate facilities	0.845	4.046
	WE5: You can easily access the necessary work resources	0.832	3.942
Compensation (COM)	COM1: Your salary is appropriate for your workload	0.828	3.887
	COM2: The benefits meet your needs	0.835	3.958
	COM3: The performance evaluation system for salary increases is fair	0.832	3.783
	COM4: Special compensation/bonuses are appropriate	0.825	3.976
	COM5: Medical benefits are adequate	0.822	3.692
Job Satisfaction (SATIS)	SATIS1: You are satisfied with your current job	0.835	3.923
	SATIS2: You feel proud of your work	0.852	4.142
	SATIS3: Your work matches your knowledge and abilities	0.842	3.947
	SATIS4: You can use creativity in your work	0.848	4.015
	SATIS5: You have autonomy in decision-making for your responsibilities	0.832	3.925
Organizational Commitment (COMIT)	COMIT1: You feel part of the organization	0.842	3.865
	COMIT2: You are willing to dedicate effort to organizational success	0.858	4.175
	COMIT3: You are proud to work in this organization	0.845	3.816
	COMIT4: You want to work in this organization long-term	0.852	4.011
	COMIT5: You are ready to support and protect the organization's reputation	0.848	3.936
Job Performance (PER)	PER1: You can achieve set goals	0.842	3.923
	PER2: Your work meets quality standards	0.855	4.102
	PER3: You can solve work problems efficiently	0.838	4.002
	PER4: You can work effectively with others	0.842	3.954
	PER5: You continuously improve your work methods	0.848	4.179

4.3 Common Method Bias and Multicollinearity Test

To detect the common method bias, this study adopts the Harman single-factor test method. (Aguirre-Urreta & Hu, 2019). In the factor rotation matrix analysis results, the highest interpretation of the first factor is 32.8%, far below the critical value of 50% (Aguirre-Urreta & Hu, 2019), so the common method bias in this study is not a serious problem. The variance inflation factor (VIF) of all independent and intermediary variables in this study ranged from 2.91 to 3.84, which was less than the threshold value of 5, so there was no multicollinearity problem in this study.

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

The structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis reveals strong support for all hypothesized relationships in our research model. The model demonstrates good explanatory power for both mediating variables and the dependent variable (Figure 2).

The analysis of work-related factors' effects on job satisfaction (H1) shows significant positive relationships, with work environment exhibiting the strongest influence ($\beta = 0.855$, $p < .001$), followed by leadership ($\beta = 0.789$, $p < .001$), career development ($\beta = 0.738$, $p < .001$), quality of work life ($\beta = 0.681$, $p < .001$), and compensation ($\beta = 0.648$, $p < .001$). These factors collectively explain 67.2% of the variance in job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.672$).

Similarly, work-related factors demonstrate significant positive effects on organizational commitment (H2), with work environment again showing the strongest impact ($\beta = 0.773$, $p < .001$), followed by leadership ($\beta = 0.764$, $p < .001$), career development ($\beta = 0.703$, $p < .001$), quality of work life ($\beta = 0.656$, $p < .001$), and compensation ($\beta = 0.615$, $p < .001$). The model explains 64.5% of the variance in organizational commitment ($R^2 = 0.645$).

The analysis of mediating effects on job performance reveals strong positive relationships for both job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.770$, $p < .001$) and organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.817$, $p < .001$), supporting H3 and H4. Notably, organizational commitment demonstrates a slightly stronger effect on job performance compared to job satisfaction. Together, these mediating variables explain 62.9% of the variance in job performance ($R^2 = 0.629$).

The results provide compelling evidence for the mediating roles of job satisfaction (H5) and organizational commitment (H6) in the relationship between work-related factors and job performance. The significant path coefficients and substantial R^2 values indicate that both mediators effectively transmit the effects of work-related factors to performance outcomes in Thailand's public sector context.

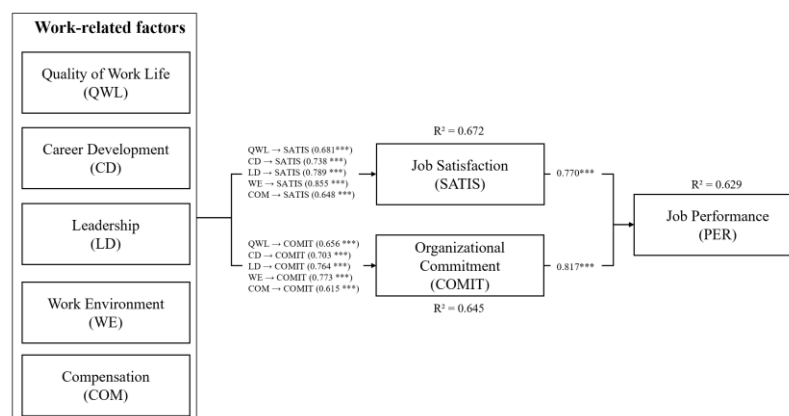


Fig. 2: Research model with results

Figure 2 represents the results of the research model, indicating that there are very high impacts of work-related factors to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which are very strong predictors of job performance. Leadership, work environment, and career development are verified to be critical drivers by high path coefficients. The model accounts for high levels of variance ($R^2 = 0.672$ on satisfaction, 0.645 on commitment, 0.629 on performance).

4.5 Mediation Effect Analysis

Table 5: Mediation Effect Analysis Results

Path	Direct Effect (c')	Indirect Effect (a*b)	Total Effect	VAF
QWL → SATIS → PER	0.601***	0.524***	1.125***	46.6%
QWL → COMIT → PER	0.601***	0.536***	1.137***	47.1%
CD → SATIS → PER	0.658***	0.568***	1.226***	46.3%
CD → COMIT → PER	0.658***	0.574***	1.232***	46.6%
LD → SATIS → PER	0.698***	0.608***	1.306***	46.6%
LD → COMIT → PER	0.698***	0.624***	1.322***	47.2%
WE → SATIS → PER	0.723***	0.659***	1.382***	47.7%
WE → COMIT → PER	0.723***	0.631***	1.354***	46.6%
COM → SATIS → PER	0.577***	0.499***	1.076***	46.4%
COM → COMIT → PER	0.577***	0.502***	1.079***	46.5%

Note: *** $p < .001$; VAF = Variance Accounted For (indirect effect/total effect)

The mediation analysis reveals significant parallel mediating effects through both job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the relationship between work-related factors and job performance. The results demonstrate that all hypothesized mediating relationships exhibit partial mediation, with VAF values consistently falling between 20% and 80%, aligning with the criteria established by Hair et al. (2017).

The analysis of job satisfaction mediation (H5) indicates significant indirect effects across all work-related factors. Work environment emerges as the strongest predictor, with an indirect effect of 0.659 ($p < .001$) through job satisfaction, while quality of work life shows a

relatively lower but still substantial indirect effect of 0.524 ($p < .001$). The mediating effect of job satisfaction demonstrates remarkable consistency, accounting for approximately 47% of the total effects across different work-related factors.

Similarly, organizational commitment mediation (H6) reveals significant indirect effects of comparable magnitude. Work environment again shows strong indirect effects through organizational commitment (0.631, $p < .001$), closely followed by leadership (0.624, $p < .001$). The indirect effects through organizational commitment range from 0.502 (compensation) to 0.631 (work environment), with VAF values between 46.5% and 47.2%. Notably, the mediation effects through organizational commitment are slightly stronger than those through job satisfaction for most work-related factors, particularly for quality of work life and leadership. These findings provide robust empirical support for both H5 and H6, confirming the parallel and complementary mediating roles of job satisfaction and organizational commitment in Thailand's public sector context.

5. Discussion

5.1 Discussion

The empirical findings of this study robustly confirm significant interrelationships among workplace factors, employee attitudes, and performance outcomes within Thailand's public sector. Notably, the work environment and leadership emerged as the most influential determinants shaping job satisfaction, aligning closely with Social Exchange Theory (SET) as posited by Blau (1964). SET underscores a reciprocal dynamic where employees respond positively to favorable organizational conditions by enhancing their attitudes and behaviors. The marked impact of working environment and leadership implies that enhancements of physical space, digital equipment, and transformational leadership should be the focus of continuing administrative reform in Thailand. These investments could go a long way towards increasing the employees' sense of well-being and the organization's fitness for purpose. An important theoretical implication of the results is that the mediating effects of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are correlated in the relationship between workplace characteristics and employee performance. This two-step mediation model evidently indicates a compounding nature of the mediation effects of employee attitudes, by which organizational investments are interpreted through essential conduits, so that they eventually generate actual performance results. This has important implications for the Thai government entities, as such organisations will need to have integrated human resource management systems that seek to develop both job satisfaction and organisational commitment. This approach is necessary to increase employee productivity and to help achieve the wider administrative modernization goals that Thailand currently seeks to reach.

Notably, the results of the study indicate that out of all the work-related stressors, reward has a somewhat lower impact on work satisfaction and commitment. This perspective raises a question against the traditional view that salary is the main and most significant motivator of the workforce in the government sector. In line with previous studies in developing countries (Azad & Kaur, 2024), the findings illustrate that non-monetary motivators, including job security, organizational reputation, intrinsic job rewards, and public service values, have great significance to public employees. In the context of Thailand, a variety of cultural and institutional factors help account for this smaller impact of compensation. Three issues are particularly relevant here. First, Thai culture is strongly based on collectivist values in which social harmony, reciprocity among humans, and honor take precedence over economic interest. For some people, being treated with respect, in a psychologically supportive working environment, with future opportunities for career advancement, may take precedence over pay increases. Second, the publicly employed Thai government has rigid wage scales and little variation, so financial incentives seen as an avenue for differentiation are not plausible. For this reason, workers may regard income as a fundamental right, rather than a source of motivation, with the possibility of income also accompanied by job security and career development, which is more important in the long run. The stability of government service jobs in Thailand is evidence to support this notion that the intrinsic value-seeking of helping organizations in some way weakens the communication power of financial incentives. Moreover, the cultural and institutional issues explored in the study illustrate how compensation is given a comparatively lower position as a driver of satisfaction or commitment than leadership, career development, and work context, even though pay is clearly important.

Besides this, career development programs significantly influenced the mediating factors and their positioning on the strategic side of employee performance and motivation in the Thai public sector. With the modern workforce population being more educated and younger (Kankaew et al., 2022), professional training, education, mentoring, and lifelong learning are most likely to be a part of the practice of human resources. Moreover, quality of work life (QWL) was identified as another essential variable influencing the attitude of the employees, in line with the long-time increasing worldwide emphasis on work-life considerations, welfare of employees, and general experiences at work (Hu & Marcelo, 2024). Working conditions improvement, such as safe practice methods, comprehensive health programs, and stress management, can play a significant role in improving QWL and bringing about favorable, lasting changes in performance. Generally, the results offer complex theoretical and practical issues and implications to Thailand's citizen-based management, and other developing countries with distinctive features. With the direct intervention of leadership and the working climate, two attitudinal currents of organizational commitment and job satisfaction, re-engineering a blueprint of hierarchical and money-minded motivation, the Thai public administration would be better able to manage the challenges of modernization and would be more effective in terms of its long-term impact on organizational performance.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study makes an important contribution to Social Exchange Theory (SET) as it demonstrates the continued validity of the theory in the Southeast Asian public sector, in this case, Thailand. The research contributes to the explanatory power of SET by showing empirically that the organizational support mechanisms in terms of leadership effectiveness, improving the work environment, and providing planned career development can elicit reciprocal responses from employees in terms of the two attitudinal channels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It questions the usual single mediator approach that the authors have found in the literature to date (Mohammad et al., 2021) and suggests a dual mechanism of how the presence of the attitudinal reactions collectively influences the desired outcomes of the organization in the specific cultural and institutional contexts.

Furthermore, the study contributes greatly to the theoretical richness of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory by supporting the validity of the model within the context of a large-scale reform of the public sector. The results support the central assumption underlying the JD-R model that organizational resources (especially supportive leadership and a favorable working environment) are effective buffers against the negative effects of job demands, which increase the motivation and output of employees (Katou et al., 2021; Ramaci et al., 2024). Placing these relationships in the context of the Thai public sector, the research confirms and broadens the applicability of the JD-

R model to various organizational and cultural contexts and closes an acute gap in the empirical validation of the model in non-Western public institutions.

Additionally, this research contributes uniquely by proposing and empirically validating an integrated theoretical framework that captures the complex interplay between organizational support and individual development in shaping employee performance through parallel mediation processes. This integrative approach extends beyond conventional frameworks by illustrating how multiple workplace factors collectively and interactively influence employee outcomes. The framework significantly enhances theoretical clarity regarding the dynamic interactions between organizational inputs and employee attitudes, offering a comprehensive model particularly suited to public sector management in reform-driven contexts (Azad & Kaur, 2024; Jayaraman et al., 2023; Oladimeji, 2024; Song & Cuijten, 2024; Subedi & Bhandari, 2024). Finally, the study makes a significant theoretical contribution to public sector motivation literature by highlighting the relatively greater impact of non-monetary motivational factors compared to financial compensation. This finding directly challenges traditional motivational theories that emphasize monetary incentives and underscores the necessity for developing culturally sensitive and context-specific motivational frameworks. Thus, the research calls for a reevaluation and refinement of existing motivational theories to better reflect the diverse motivational drivers prevalent in developing economies' public sectors.

5.3 Practical Implications

The empirical findings in this article have implications for the government administrators and policymakers who are considering how to enhance employee performance in the public sector in Thailand. First, the clear role of the work environment makes a compelling case for not only investment in the physical infrastructure but also creating a modernized digital environment. A modernized, well-equipped workplace not only can greatly improve efficiency, it will undoubtedly enhance employees' morale and satisfaction. Second, when the concept of leadership assumes significant importance, the public sector organizations may place overriding emphasis on building the transformational leadership skills while organizing their leadership development initiative. Leadership development should emphasize visioning, vision making, decision making by consultation, evaluation utilized in a disinterested manner, and informativeness by communicating, which are of the highest importance for public sector administration during modernization.

Additionally, HR policies must unambiguously trade off between short-run job satisfaction and long-run commitment to the organization. Routine feedback and unambiguous criteria for advancement can do a great deal to retain people. Broadly inclusive total rewards programs will become the most common form, and will maintain all of the components of total compensation and benefits, awards and recognition programs, work-life balance programs and systems, with only cash rewards are not sufficient. This approach also reflects changing workforce trends, with a larger proportion of younger, college-educated employees searching for public management work. Finally, a formal training and development program must be intentionally integrated into HRM. Career advancement must be supported by mentoring programs, skills training programs, and career pathways. The initiative should be strongly integrated into the overall public management reform agenda in Thailand, and should help strengthen the integration of employees' development needs with creating agile organizations. In conclusion, these practical application principles will prove applicable for public management reform for Thailand's purpose, and their goal to fully push for the most effective and efficient government services.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the many contributions of this research, there still remain several limitations that provide avenues for future research. First, the study design's cross-sectional nature limits the study's conclusions related to causal inferences. Future research with a longitudinal or experimental design could better capture the related influences occurring over time in the workplace, the employee's attitudes, and performance outcomes. These methods are better able to capture changes over time and causal relations, particularly at a time of significant changes in administration. Second, the only studied central administrative organizations located in Thailand limit the broader ability to generalize the findings to other forms of public organizations and governmental contexts. Additional research should extend their study site across various organizational structures, including local government agencies, specialized public service agencies, and independent public agencies, which could verify and strengthen the external validity of the identified connections. Third, measuring employee attitudes and productivity with self-report data may allow some biases to be introduced despite statistical controls. Future research could consider the use of objective performance measures, supervisory ratings or third-party evaluations to offer a more thorough and independent evaluation. Incorporation of quantitative methods with qualitative methods (in-depth interviews, focus groups) may also provide more nuanced understanding of contextual factors shaping these associations.

Lastly, this research focused on comparatively fewer organisational and attitudinal variables and, as a result, left some issues of interest behind. Some other constructs, like organisational culture, PSM, readiness for technology, and employee resilience, must be investigated by upcoming researchers. It would then be interesting to test these variables empirically, which could shed further light on what initiates the public employees' performance. Thus, the Thailand study presented here provides some useful examples for comparative cross-nation research in South-East Asia and more widely in the developing world. Examining culture, institutional, and demography to determine how they might mediate the forms of relationship constructed in our study would provide theoretical and practical understanding and be more of an addition to wider literature on public sector management and reform.

6. Conclusion

This study adds to the exploration of workplace factors in employee performance in the Thai public context by integrating Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands-Resources model. In addition to the empirical validation of the two models, there is a theoretical contribution in extending the models to a Southeast Asian context of mass administration, thereby filling an important gap in the non-Western organizational literature. In practical terms, the findings should highlight the value of holistic human resource practices that consider not only compensation, but also other work behaviors such as leadership, job satisfaction, career development, and work-life quality. These findings are relevant to the ongoing public administrative reforms in Thailand and other developing economies that are modernizing their administrative organizations. Future research of this study could pursue a longitudinal design to emphasize the dynamic nature of change over time, or take a cross-national comparisons approach across Southeast Asia to place Thailand's experience in a broader comparative context. These types of research would advance our understanding of culture and institutional effects on performance in the public sector and subsequently improve subsequent policy and managerial practices.

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