

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY, WORK-LIFE BALANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG ENGINEERING EMPLOYEES IN THAI LOW-COST AIRLINES: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of this research was to examine how leadership competency and work-life balance of engineering employees of Thai low-cost airlines affects organizational commitment, with job satisfaction as a mediating variable.

Methodology – This quantitative research employed a survey method using validated questionnaires to collect data from 400 engineering employees in Thai low-cost airlines using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics, including Pearson's product-moment correlation and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for hypothesis testing.

Results – The results confirmed that all measurement constructs achieved acceptable reliability and validity levels. Structural equation modeling revealed that leadership competency and work-life balance had significant positive effects on job satisfaction, while work-life balance and job satisfaction positively influenced organizational commitment. Leadership competency showed a significant negative direct effect on organizational commitment but demonstrated a positive indirect effect through job satisfaction, indicating competitive partial mediation. In addition, job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationships between leadership competency, work-life balance, and organizational commitment. These findings suggest that leadership competency may function as both a motivational and pressure-related resource in high-pressure aviation contexts.

Implications – The findings suggest that Thai low-cost airlines should treat job satisfaction as a key driver of organizational commitment among engineering employees. Leadership development should not focus only on technical and performance skills, but also on supportive communication, fairness, and interpersonal understanding. At the same time, work-life balance should be strengthened through better workload management, shift planning, and recovery time. These actions can help airlines improve employee commitment, retain skilled engineers, and support stable operations.

Originality/Value – This research provides evidence from Thai low-cost airline engineers, a high-pressure and safety-critical context. Its main contribution is showing that leadership competency had an unexpected negative direct effect on organizational commitment, while also having a positive indirect effect through job satisfaction. This competitive partial mediation highlights the paradoxical role of leadership competency in aviation engineering work.

Keywords: Leadership competency, Work-life balance, Job satisfaction, Organizational commitment

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid changes in economic conditions, technology, and consumer behavior have increased operational pressures on service organizations, particularly low-cost airlines. In Thailand, the aviation industry has continued to recover, with passenger traffic returning to a high level in 2024 (Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand, 2025). This recovery has created greater pressure on Thai low-cost airlines, which operate under cost-efficient business models, competitive fares, high aircraft utilization, and strict safety requirements. These airlines must therefore balance cost control, service reliability, aircraft availability, and safety performance.

Aircraft engineering and maintenance employees are important to this context because they support continuous airworthiness, operational reliability, and flight safety. Unlike cabin crew or pilots, engineering employees often work behind the scenes, but their responsibilities directly affect safe and stable airline operations. Previous studies show that aircraft maintenance work involves time pressure, complex technical tasks, human-error risks, stress, fatigue, and demanding work schedules (Latorella & Prabhu, 2000; Santos & Melicio, 2019; da Silva et al., 2024). Studies in Asian aviation contexts also indicate that occupational stress, work–life balance, leadership, and job satisfaction are important issues among aircraft maintenance technicians (Wang et al., 2016; Anggarini & Indrayanti, 2021; Aktas & Kagnicioglu, 2023).

Although aviation research has examined job satisfaction and organizational commitment among flight attendants and general airline employees (Chen, 2006), less attention has been given to engineering and aircraft maintenance personnel, especially in Thai low-cost airlines. In Thailand, existing research on aircraft maintenance personnel has mainly focused on specific career issues, such as the career advancement of female technicians, rather than organizational commitment (Laovoravit et al., 2021). This gap suggests the need to examine how workplace factors influence commitment among this safety-critical occupational group.

Based on this gap, this study asks: How do leadership competency and work–life balance influence organizational commitment among engineering employees in Thai low-cost airlines? How does job satisfaction influence organizational commitment? Does job satisfaction mediate these relationships? Therefore, this research aimed to examine the effects of leadership competency and work–life balance on organizational commitment, with job satisfaction as a mediating mechanism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Commitment (OC)

Organizational commitment represents a fundamental construct in organizational behavior research, defined by Allen and Meyer (1990) as the psychological attachment that binds employees to their organization and influences subsequent work-related behaviors and decision-making processes. Their seminal three-component model delineates commitment into affective, normative, and continuance dimensions, each reflecting distinct motivational bases for organizational membership.

Affective commitment denotes the emotional attachment whereby employees remain with the organization because they genuinely want to. This dimension has been consistently associated with favorable organizational outcomes, including enhanced discretionary effort, elevated performance levels, and reduced turnover intentions. Contemporary empirical evidence reinforces its salience, demonstrating that positive work experiences—particularly job satisfaction and supportive organizational climates—significantly strengthen affective bonds, which subsequently translate into improved behavioral and performance outcomes (Anand & Dhamija, 2019; Syahrizal, 2020; Santana-Martins et al., 2022).

Normative commitment reflects employees' internalized sense of moral obligation to remain with the organization, grounded in the belief that they ought to stay. This dimension is particularly relevant in contexts emphasizing organizational values, ethical standards, and regulatory compliance, where employees' commitment manifests through adherence to established norms and procedures (Dharmayanti et al., 2023; Deniz, 2024).

Continuance commitment captures the calculative dimension wherein employees maintain organizational membership because they perceive significant costs associated with leaving, whether through limited employment alternatives or potential loss of accumulated investments. This component is primarily influenced by economic considerations and job-embedded factors, and may sustain retention even in the absence of emotional attachment (Umukoro & Egwakhe, 2019; Kasogela, 2019; Peprah et al., 2019).

Collectively, this tripartite framework provides comprehensive insights into the multifaceted nature of employee-organization relationships and serves as a critical predictor of retention, motivation, and sustainable organizational effectiveness.

Leadership Competency (LC)

Leadership competencies have emerged as a central construct in modern organizational research, particularly in response to rapid technological change, global uncertainty, and evolving workforce expectations. Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes leadership not as an inherent trait but as a set of developable competencies that enable leaders to navigate complexity and sustain organizational effectiveness.

The shift from trait-based to competency-based models is strongly grounded in the work of Mumford et al. (2000), who proposed a skills-based model emphasizing complex problem-solving ability, knowledge, and experience as foundations of leadership performance. Extending this perspective, Mumford et al. (2007) introduced the Leadership Skills Strataplex, demonstrating that leadership competencies differ across organizational levels, with higher-level roles requiring greater strategic and conceptual capabilities.

Relational and motivational competencies are equally critical. Judge and Piccolo (2004), through meta-analysis, confirmed that transformational leadership—characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—is strongly associated with follower satisfaction, motivation, and performance. Complementing this, Harms and Credé (2010) showed that emotional intelligence significantly predicts transformational leadership behaviors and team effectiveness, underscoring the importance of emotional awareness and regulation in leadership practice.

Ethical competence further shapes follower outcomes. Colquitt et al. (2001) demonstrated that perceptions of procedural justice are strongly related to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Similarly, Avolio et al. (2004) highlighted authentic leadership—rooted in self-awareness, transparency, and moral integrity—as a mechanism for building trust and sustainable engagement.

Recent scholarship has extended leadership competency discourse into crisis and digital contexts. Dirani et al. (2020) emphasized that adaptability and crisis leadership capabilities are essential for maintaining organizational continuity during disruption. Additionally, Newman et al. (2014) synthesized evidence on Psychological Capital (hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism), showing that leaders who cultivate these capacities in followers enhance engagement and performance, particularly in turbulent environments.

Although leadership competency is generally associated with positive employee outcomes, recent studies suggest that highly competent leadership in high-pressure and safety-critical environments may simultaneously increase employee strain and perceived pressure due to intensified monitoring and performance expectations (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Harms et al., 2017). Therefore, the relationship between leadership competency and organizational commitment may not always be uniformly positive, particularly in operational aviation contexts. Research findings reveal varied results when examining how leadership competency affects organizational commitment (H1). Transformational and ethical leadership behaviors have been shown to strengthen affective commitment by enhancing trust and perceived fairness (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Colquitt et al., 2001). However, inconsistent application of these competencies may weaken their impact. In contrast, leadership competency demonstrates a clear positive relationship with job satisfaction (H4), as emotionally intelligent and authentic leaders create supportive and transparent work environments that enhance employees' daily experiences (Harms & Credé, 2010; Avolio et al., 2004).

Work-Life Balance (WLB)

Work-life balance has emerged as a pivotal construct in contemporary human resource management scholarship, particularly in response to accelerating workplace transformations driven by technological advancement, workforce demographic shifts, and evolving societal expectations regarding work and family roles. The conceptualization of work-life balance has evolved beyond simple temporal allocation to encompass the complex interplay among multiple life domains. Given the proliferation of flexible work arrangements and ubiquitous digital connectivity enabling "anytime, anywhere" work patterns, recent discourse has shifted toward work-life integration, which emphasizes synergistic alignment between professional and personal roles (Sham et al., 2024). However, integration-oriented paradigms may not be universally applicable, particularly in sectors characterized by rigid schedules, location-specific operations, and stringent regulatory requirements, where traditional balance mechanisms remain essential.

Boundary Theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding work-life dynamics in contexts where role boundaries have become increasingly permeable. This framework posits that individuals employ varying boundary management strategies along a continuum from segmentation—maintaining distinct separation between work and nonwork domains—to integration—permitting fluid role transitions (Ashforth et al., 2000). Effective boundary management involves deploying strategies such as establishing temporal and spatial demarcations, utilizing symbolic cues for role switching, and implementing personalized rules governing role engagement. These tactics critically influence the extent of role conflict experienced and subsequent well-being outcomes (Wepfer et al., 2018). Notably, boundary control is not solely an individual endeavor but is substantially shaped by organizational policies, workplace culture, and industry-specific constraints.

In digitally mediated work environments, technology serves as a double-edged instrument: while enhancing operational efficiency and flexibility, it simultaneously erodes temporal and psychological boundaries, thereby elevating risks of chronic stress and burnout (Derks et al., 2014, 2015). Individual differences in self-regulatory capacities, particularly temporal and emotional regulation abilities, moderate the impact of boundary permeability on strain outcomes (Allen et al., 2014). Empirical evidence from aviation and related industries demonstrates that irregular schedules, high-stakes responsibilities, and intense operational demands can severely compromise work-life balance unless mitigated through supportive organizational systems and leadership practices (Aziz & Vinodhini, 2021; Anggarini & Indrayanti, 2021; Mohamed & Zaki, 2017). Consequently, work-life balance should be conceptualized not merely as an employee welfare concern but as a strategic imperative for sustaining performance, enhancing well-being, and ensuring workforce retention in contemporary organizations.

Research demonstrates a positive connection between work-life balance and organizational commitment (H2). When employees are able to effectively manage boundaries between work and nonwork domains, they experience lower role conflict and greater psychological well-being, which in turn strengthens affective attachment to the organization (Wepfer et al., 2018; Mohamed & Zaki, 2017). Furthermore, work-life balance contributes to job satisfaction (H5) by reducing technology-induced strain and preventing chronic stress and burnout in demanding environments (Derks et al., 2014; Anggarini & Indrayanti, 2021).

Job Satisfaction (JS)

Job satisfaction has long been recognized as a central construct in organizational research, reflecting employees' overall evaluative and affective reactions toward their jobs. Early conceptualizations define job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences (Locke, 1976) and as the degree to which individuals like or dislike their jobs (Spector, 1997). These perspectives emphasize that job satisfaction is not merely a structural outcome of working conditions but a subjective evaluation shaped by personal expectations, values, and workplace experiences. Building on this view, Affective Events Theory explains how daily work events trigger emotional reactions that accumulate and influence enduring job attitudes, including satisfaction (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that job satisfaction is positively associated with organizational commitment. Employees who experience higher satisfaction tend to develop stronger emotional attachment, loyalty, and willingness to remain with their organizations. This relationship has been supported across sectors and cultural contexts, positioning job satisfaction as a key attitudinal driver of organizational commitment (Mustaqim et al., 2021; Niguse & Hirpesa, 2018).

Beyond its direct influence, job satisfaction has also been widely conceptualized as a mediating mechanism linking leadership and work-related conditions to organizational commitment. Transformational leadership can enhance job satisfaction, which subsequently strengthens employees' commitment to the organization (Mustaqim et al., 2021; Nugraha & Dewi, 2022). Similarly, authentic leadership fosters trust, transparency, and ethical conduct, leading to higher job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment (Rukh et al., 2018; Ishak & Romle, 2015). These findings suggest that leadership competency may influence commitment not only directly, but also indirectly through employees' emotional and evaluative responses to their work.

Work-life balance is another important antecedent of job satisfaction. Studies in healthcare, education, and private-sector contexts show that employees who perceive a healthy balance between work and personal life report higher job satisfaction, which then enhances organizational commitment (Azeem & Akhtar, 2014; Sari & Seniati, 2020; Hasan et al., 2021). Recent studies further indicate that job satisfaction may function as either a partial or full mediator in this relationship, highlighting its role in translating supportive work conditions into stronger organizational attachment (Suseno & Dewi, 2024; Monata & Yuliharsi, 2024).

Research consistently shows that job satisfaction drives stronger organizational commitment (H3). Theoretically, job satisfaction also explains how leadership competency and work-life balance are translated into organizational commitment. Based on Affective Events Theory, positive work experiences created by effective leadership, support, fairness, and manageable work-life demands can shape satisfaction and long-term work attitudes. From the Job Demands-Resources perspective, leadership competency and work-life balance may serve as job resources that enhance satisfaction and reduce strain. Therefore, job satisfaction is expected to mediate both the relationship between leadership competency and organizational commitment (H6) and the relationship between work-life balance and organizational commitment (H7) (Nugraha & Dewi, 2022; Hasan et al., 2021; Monata & Yuliharsi, 2024).

Conceptual Framework and Hypothesis

Based on the review of the literature on the influence of leadership and work-life balance on organizational commitment, the conceptual research framework was drawn as shown in Figure 1. In addition, the research hypotheses were drawn in the next part.

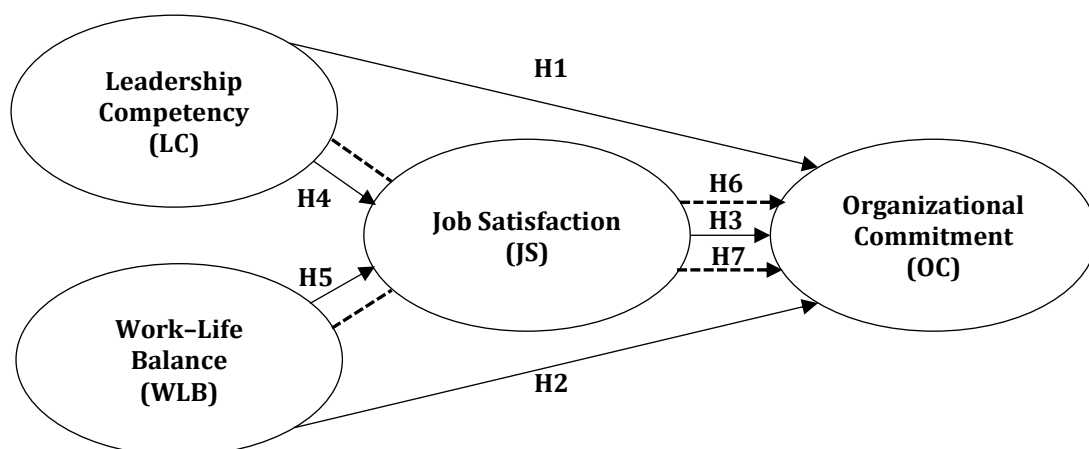


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The research hypotheses were drawn as follows:

H1: Leadership competency has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

H2: Work-life balance has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

H3: Job Satisfaction has a positive influence on organizational commitment.

H4: Leadership competency has a positive influence on job satisfaction.

H5: Work-life balance has a positive influence on job satisfaction.

H6: Leadership competency has a positive influence on organizational commitment through job satisfaction.

H7: Work-life balance has a positive influence on organizational commitment through job satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

Regarding sample and data collection, the research population comprised engineering personnel employed in low-cost airlines operating in Thailand, including Thai AirAsia, Thai AirAsia X, Nok Air, Thai Lion Air, and Thai Vietjet. The target respondents were operational-level staff and first-line supervisors with at least one year of organizational tenure, while top management was excluded to ensure that participants had sufficient work experience to evaluate the research constructs. Because the population size is large and no definitive statistics are available (i.e., the population can be treated as infinite), the required sample size was determined using Cochran's formula at a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$, with the population proportion set at $p = 0.50$ to yield the maximum variance (Cochran, 1953). This calculation produced an estimated sample size of approximately 385 respondents ($n = 384.16$, rounded to 385). Nevertheless, the final sample size was set at 400 to enhance statistical adequacy for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), consistent with recommendations for models with a small number of key constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Samples were obtained using non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling technique. Questionnaires were distributed to engineering employees working in Thai low-cost airlines through professional and organizational networks. Eligible respondents were required to be full-time engineering personnel with direct operational responsibilities in aircraft maintenance or engineering-related functions. Data collection continued until 400 completed responses were achieved.

Measures

The research instrument employed in this research was a structured questionnaire developed from relevant theories, a review of literature, and prior empirical studies. The questionnaire was organized into six sections. Section 1 gathered respondents' demographic and work-related information using closed-ended checklist items, including gender, age, marital status, highest education level, current job position, work schedule pattern, organizational tenure, monthly income, remote-work experience, current work arrangement, and the number of remote-working days per week. A screening item was included to ensure that all participants were engineering employees in low-cost airlines operating in Thailand, consistent with the research's sampling criteria. Sections 2 to 5 consisted of positively worded, closed-ended items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Section 2 assessed leadership competency, adapted from Ellah (2016), comprising 12 items. Section 3 measured work-life balance, adapted from Avadhani and Menon (2022), comprising 8 items. Section 4 evaluated job satisfaction, adapted from Karaferis et al. (2022), comprising 8 items. Section 5 measured organizational commitment, adapted from Zorlu and Nebol (2022), comprising 6 items. For these sections, response options ranged from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). In addition, Section 6 provided an open-ended space for respondents who wished to offer further comments or suggestions.

Sample items included: Leadership Competency - "Your leader considers problems from multiple perspectives and carefully analyzes various alternatives."; Work-Life Balance - "Work pressure does not affect your ability to take care of your family responsibilities."; Job Satisfaction

- "You are satisfied with the nature of the work you are currently doing."; Organizational Commitment - "You feel that the problems of this airline are like your own problems."

Content validity was assessed by three experts, and all items yielded an Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) above 0.80. A try-out with 30 respondents yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients between 0.802 and 0.971, confirming high reliability. The total reliability coefficient for the overall questionnaire was 0.947. To reduce the potential impact of common method bias, respondents were assured anonymity and confidentiality during data collection. In addition, all measurement items were adapted from validated scales and systematically arranged within the questionnaire. The acceptable validity and reliability results further supported the robustness of the measurement model (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Data collection used online questionnaires (Google Forms), resulting in 400 usable responses after data screening and cleaning procedures.

Descriptive statistics used in quantitative data analysis included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. For hypothesis testing, inferential statistics were employed, specifically Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient and Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.0 following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019). The reflective measurement model was evaluated by assessing indicator reliability (factor loadings > 0.70), internal consistency reliability using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (> 0.70), convergent validity via average variance extracted (AVE > 0.50), and discriminant validity using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The structural model assessment included the evaluation of path coefficients, coefficients of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and collinearity diagnostics using tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF). Mediation effects were tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. Indirect effects were considered significant when the 95% confidence intervals did not include zero.

RESULTS

The results of the research showed that most of the respondents were male, accounting for 73.8%, while 51.0% were aged between 30 and 34 years old and 70.8% held a bachelor's degree. In terms of job level, operational staff accounted for 94.5%, followed by supervisory or front-line management personnel at 4.8% and middle management personnel at 0.8%. Regarding work arrangements, 67.5% reported working rotating shifts, whereas 32.5% reported regular working hours. The descriptive analysis indicated that respondents reported moderate to relatively high perceptions across the research constructs. As presented in Table 1, work-life balance recorded the highest mean score, followed by leadership competency, with both variables classified at the agree level. In contrast, job satisfaction and organizational commitment were evaluated at a neutral level.

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation for Variables

Latent Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Agreement Level
Leadership Competency (LC)	3.57	0.87	Agree
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	3.65	0.63	Agree
Job Satisfaction (JS)	3.33	0.70	Neutral
Organizational Commitment (OC)	3.19	0.79	Neutral

Validity and Reliability

The reflective measurement model was assessed following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2019). Indicator loadings ranged from 0.528 to 0.896. Although several indicators exhibited loadings between 0.50 and 0.70, they were retained because construct reliability and convergent validity met the recommended criteria. Internal consistency reliability was supported, as Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.777 to 0.954 and composite reliability values ranged from 0.846 to 0.961, exceeding the threshold of 0.70, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor Loading, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient (CA), Composite Reliability (CR) and Average variance extracted (AVE) for Measurement Model

Latent Variable	CA	CR	AVE	Indicators	Loads
Leadership Competency (LC)	0.954	0.961	0.710	LC1	0.796
				LC2	0.855
				LC3	0.778
				LC4	0.872
				LC5	0.824
				LC7	0.878
				LC8	0.896
				LC9	0.896
				LC10	0.795
				LC11	0.877
Work-Life Balance (WLB)	0.777	0.846	0.528	WLB3	0.764
				WLB4	0.701
				WLB5	0.845
				WLB7	0.727
				WLB8	0.567
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.859	0.891	0.510	JS1	0.794
				JS2	0.640
				JS3	0.715
				JS4	0.656
				JS5	0.528
				JS6	0.756
				JS7	0.770
				JS8	0.810
Organizational Commitment (OC)	0.862	0.898	0.598	OC1	0.615
				OC2	0.765
				OC3	0.890
				OC4	0.840
				OC5	0.824
				OC6	0.668

Note: Items WLB1, WLB2, WLB6, LC6, and LC12 were dropped from the scale after measurement purification.

As shown in Table 2, convergent validity was examined using the average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values ranged from 0.510 to 0.710, surpassing the minimum criterion of 0.50, thereby confirming convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results indicate that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variables	Leadership Competency	Work-Life Balance	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment
Leadership Competency	0.843			
Work-Life Balance	0.346	0.726		
Job Satisfaction	0.587	0.614	0.714	
Organizational Commitment	0.292	0.541	0.694	0.773

Note: The values in the main diagonal were the square roots of AVE.

As shown in Table 3, discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square roots of AVE exceeded the inter-construct correlations. Furthermore, all HTMT values ranged from 0.301 to 0.776, which were

below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity among the constructs (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4. Multicollinearity Test using Tolerance and VIF Values

Variables	Tolerance	VIF
Leadership Competency	0.276	3.623
Work–Life Balance	0.516	1.940
Job Satisfaction	0.330	3.031
Organizational Commitment	0.436	2.294

To assess potential multicollinearity, tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values, as shown in Table 4, were examined. All tolerance values ranged from 0.276 to 0.516, exceeding the recommended minimum threshold of 0.20, while VIF values ranged from 1.940 to 3.623, remaining below the conservative threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2019). These results indicate that multicollinearity is not a critical concern in the structural model.

Analysis of Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model analysis in this research revealed that the direct effects yielded an R^2 value of 0.522 for the dependent variable, Organizational Commitment (OC), indicating that 52.2% of the variance in organizational commitment was explained by the independent variables. For the indirect effects, the R^2 value for the mediating variable, Job Satisfaction (JS), was 0.536, suggesting that the independent variables explained 53.6% of the variance in job satisfaction.

Additionally, the evaluation of the model's predictive performance was conducted using the Stone-Geisser criterion (Q^2). The Q^2 values for Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction were 0.293 and 0.526, respectively, which are both greater than the minimum threshold of 0. This indicates that the exogenous constructs, such as Leadership Competency and Work–Life Balance, were capable of predicting the endogenous constructs, Organizational Commitment and Job Satisfaction (Hair et al., 2013).

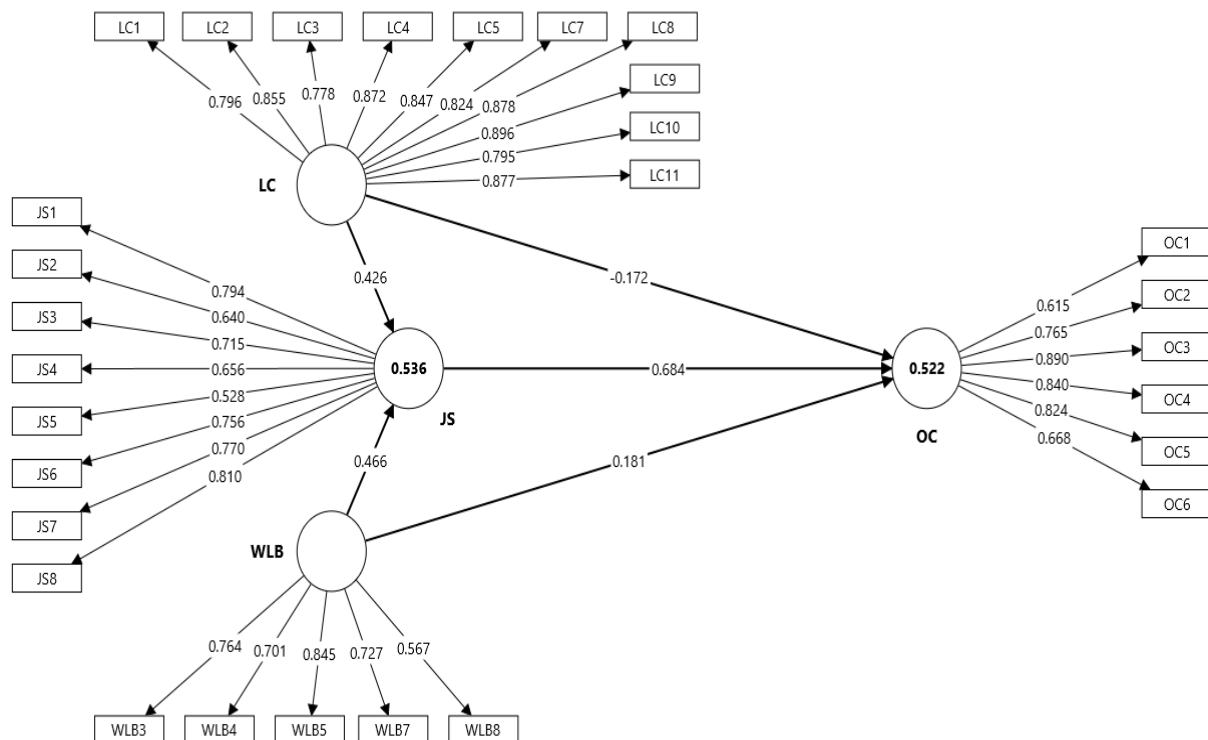


Figure 2. The results of testing the structural model of the theoretical framework

Table 5. Structural Model

Hypothesis		β	t statistics	p-value
Direct Effects				
H1	LC $\rightarrow$ OC	-0.172	4.627	.000***
H2	WLB $\rightarrow$ OC	0.181	3.090	.002**
H3	JS $\rightarrow$ OC	0.684	12.376	.000***
H4	LC $\rightarrow$ JS	0.426	9.545	.000***
H5	WLB $\rightarrow$ JS	0.466	12.039	.000***
Indirect Effects				
H6	LC $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ OC	0.291	7.302	.000***
H7	WLB $\rightarrow$ JS $\rightarrow$ OC	0.319	8.300	.000***
Total Effects				
	LC $\rightarrow$ OC	0.119	2.411	.016*
	WLB $\rightarrow$ OC	0.500	11.519	.000***

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed test)

The structural model results indicate that Leadership Competency (LC) had a direct negative and significant effect on Organizational Commitment (OC) ($\beta = -0.172, p < .001$). This finding indicates that, while the LC-OC relationship was statistically significant, its direction was opposite to the positive effect proposed in Hypothesis 1. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1 was not supported in the hypothesized direction. Work-Life Balance (WLB) had a direct positive and significant influence on OC ($\beta = 0.181, p = 0.002$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Job Satisfaction (JS) also demonstrated a strong positive and significant effect on OC ($\beta = 0.684, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 3. Furthermore, LC positively influenced JS ($\beta = 0.426, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 4, while WLB also had a significant positive effect on JS ($\beta = 0.466, p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis 5.

Regarding the mediation analysis, both LC ($\beta = 0.291, p < .001$) and WLB ($\beta = 0.319, p < .001$) exerted significant indirect effects on OC through JS, supporting Hypotheses 6 and 7. Based on the direction and significance of the direct and indirect effects, different mediation patterns were identified. The relationship between WLB and OC through JS represents complementary partial mediation, as both the direct effect ($\beta = 0.181, p = 0.002$) and the indirect effect ($\beta = 0.319, p < .001$) were significant and in the same positive direction. In contrast, the relationship between LC and OC through JS demonstrates competitive partial mediation, because the direct effect of LC on OC was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.172, p < .001$), whereas the indirect effect via JS was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.291, p < .001$).

The analysis of total effects further revealed that WLB had the strongest overall influence on OC ($\beta = 0.500, p < .001$). Meanwhile, the total effect of LC on OC was significant but relatively weak ($\beta = 0.119, p = 0.016$), reflecting the opposing directions of its direct and indirect effects. This finding suggests that although LC enhances OC indirectly through JS, its negative direct impact partially offsets this positive mediation effect.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research examined the effects of leadership competency and work-life balance on organizational commitment through the mediating role of job satisfaction among engineering employees in Thai low-cost airlines. The discussion of findings is presented according to the proposed hypotheses.

The findings for H1 revealed that leadership competency had a significant negative direct effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.172$). This finding differs from prior studies that generally reported positive relationships between leadership and commitment (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Colquitt et al., 2001). One possible explanation is that within highly regulated and performance-driven aviation environments, competent leaders may emphasize discipline, compliance, operational precision, and strict safety standards, which may unintentionally create psychological pressure among operational employees. This finding supports the view that

leadership competency may function as a double-edged resource in safety-critical settings, simultaneously generating support and strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Harms et al., 2017; Skakon et al., 2010).

Consistent with H2, work-life balance positively influenced organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.181$). This result suggests that employees who perceive better balance between professional and personal life tend to develop stronger emotional attachment to the organization. The finding is consistent with previous studies indicating that work-life balance reduces role conflict and emotional exhaustion while strengthening organizational commitment and employee well-being (Hasan et al., 2021; Sari & Seniati, 2020). In operational environments characterized by rotating shifts and demanding schedules, balanced work arrangements may therefore play a critical role in sustaining commitment (Mohamed & Zaki, 2017; Anggarini & Indrayanti, 2021).

Supporting H3, job satisfaction had a strong positive effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.684$), representing the strongest direct effect on the model. This finding confirms that positive work experiences significantly contribute to employees' emotional attachment and willingness to remain with the organization. The result supports Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which proposes that accumulated workplace experiences shape enduring work attitudes. The finding is also consistent with prior studies identifying job satisfaction as a key predictor of organizational commitment and retention intentions (Mustaqim et al., 2021; Niguse & Hirpesa, 2018).

In line with H4, leadership competency positively affected job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.426$). This finding suggests that competent leaders who provide guidance, communication, and support can improve employees' work experience and perceptions. The result aligns with previous studies demonstrating that transformational and authentic leadership enhances employee satisfaction through supportive and transparent work environments (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Avolio et al., 2004). Similarly, Harms and Credé (2010) found that emotionally intelligent leadership contributes positively to employee attitudes and team effectiveness. In technical aviation contexts, leadership competency may reduce work uncertainty and improve operational coordination, thereby increasing job satisfaction.

Similarly, the results for H5 indicated that work-life balance demonstrated a significant positive effect on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.466$). This finding indicates that employees who experience healthier balance between work and personal responsibilities tend to report more favorable job attitudes. The result is consistent with previous research showing that work-life balance reduces stress, burnout, and technology-induced strain while enhancing job satisfaction (Derks et al., 2014; Anggarini & Indrayanti, 2021). Prior studies also found that supportive work-life conditions improve employee satisfaction across various occupational settings (Azeem & Akhtar, 2014; Hasan et al., 2021; Sari & Seniati, 2020).

The mediation analysis for H6 demonstrated that job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between leadership competency and organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.291$), indicating competitive partial mediation. Although leadership competency negatively affected organizational commitment directly, its indirect effect through job satisfaction was positive. This finding suggests that leadership competency contributes to commitment when it enhances employees' satisfaction and positive workplace experiences. However, when leadership is perceived primarily through intensified monitoring, strict control, or heightened performance expectations, it may weaken employees' affective attachment despite improving operational performance. This finding reflects a high-standard leadership paradox in which leadership competency simultaneously functions as both a motivational resource and a potential source of strain (Skakon et al., 2010; Dirani et al., 2020; Nugraha & Dewi, 2022).

Finally, the findings for H7 confirmed that job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between work-life balance and organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.319$), indicating complementary partial mediation. This finding suggests that work-life balance strengthens organizational commitment both directly and indirectly through enhanced job satisfaction. The result is consistent with previous studies identifying job satisfaction as an important psychological mechanism linking supportive work environments to stronger organizational commitment (Monata & Yulihastri, 2024; Suseno & Dewi, 2024; Hasan et al., 2021). Collectively,

these findings reinforce the importance of balancing operational demands with employees' psychological well-being to sustain long-term organizational commitment.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to organizational behavior literature by extending understanding of how leadership competency and work-life balance influence organizational commitment through job satisfaction. The findings confirm the mediating role of job satisfaction as a critical psychological mechanism linking workplace experiences to employees' emotional attachment toward the organization. More importantly, the study demonstrates that the effect of leadership competency on organizational commitment is not always uniformly positive in high-pressure operational environments. In aviation engineering contexts characterized by strict safety regulations and performance demands, leadership competency may simultaneously function as both a motivational resource and a source of psychological strain. This finding extends the Job Demands-Resources Model (Schaufeli, 2017) by highlighting the paradoxical nature of leadership practices in safety-critical industries.

Practically, the findings suggest that airline organizations should strengthen job satisfaction through supportive supervision, recognition systems, and career development opportunities. Organizations should also prioritize work-life balance policies, including workload management, appropriate shift scheduling, and recovery support, to reduce stress and sustain employee commitment. In addition, leadership development programs should emphasize emotional intelligence, supportive communication, fairness, and relational leadership skills to ensure that operational effectiveness does not unintentionally create excessive psychological pressure among employees.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

This research has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causal relationships among the variables over time. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to examine how leadership practices, work-life balance, and job satisfaction influence organizational commitment across different operational periods. Second, the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may increase the risk of common method bias despite procedural controls applied during data collection (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Third, the sample was predominantly composed of operational-level and male engineering employees, which may primarily reflect the perspectives of frontline personnel working in highly regulated aviation environments. Consequently, the findings may not fully represent managerial employees or employees in other industries. Future research should therefore include more diverse occupational groups and organizational contexts to improve generalizability. Finally, future studies may examine additional variables such as burnout, perceived organizational support, or emotional intelligence as potential moderating or mediating factors influencing organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

This research examined the effects of Leadership Competency and Work-Life Balance on Organizational Commitment among engineering employees in Thai low-cost airlines, with Job Satisfaction serving as a mediating variable. The findings revealed that Job Satisfaction plays a critical psychological role in strengthening Organizational Commitment. While Leadership Competency positively influenced commitment indirectly through Job Satisfaction, its direct effect on Organizational Commitment was negative, suggesting that leadership in high-pressure aviation environments may simultaneously function as both a motivational resource and a source of psychological strain. In contrast, Work-Life Balance demonstrated both direct and indirect positive effects, highlighting its importance in sustaining employees' emotional attachment to the organization.

The research contributes theoretically by extending understanding of how organizational resources influence commitment through employees' psychological experiences in safety-critical contexts. Practically, the findings suggest that Thai low-cost airlines should strengthen supportive leadership, workload management, and Work-Life Balance policies to enhance Job Satisfaction and retain skilled engineering personnel in demanding operational environments.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest found in this research.

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