

Synergizing Leadership and Innovative Human Resource Management to Cultivate Organizational Commitment

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Abstract

This research investigates the critical factors influencing organizational commitment among academic personnel within Rajabhat Universities in the Bangkok metropolitan area. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study examines the interplay between leadership, innovative human resource management (HRM), innovation management, and job satisfaction. Quantitative data was collected from 300 academic staff members using purposive sampling, while qualitative insights were gathered through in-depth interviews with 15 university executives and stakeholders. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to analyze the causal relationships between these variables. Preliminary findings suggest that transformational and distributed leadership styles, when combined with ability-enhancing and motivation-driven HRM practices, significantly elevate job satisfaction and long-term organizational loyalty. The study concludes by proposing an integrated model to help higher education administrators develop sustainable policies that mitigate "brain drain" and enhance the competitive potential of academic institutions in a high-pressure urban labor market.

Keywords: Organizational Commitment, Innovative HRM, Academic Personnel, Transformational Leadership, Job Satisfaction

1. Introduction

The landscape of higher education in Thailand has undergone a radical transformation over the last two decades, evolving from a centralized system of teacher training colleges into a dynamic network of autonomous universities tasked with driving the nation's socio-economic progress. Central to this evolution are the Rajabhat Universities, which serve as the primary engines for regional development and social equity. However, as these institutions strive to fulfill their multifaceted mandates, they face an increasingly volatile labor market, particularly in the Bangkok metropolitan area. The following section explores the strategic significance of these institutions, the growing crisis of academic attrition—often termed "brain drain"—and the research objectives aimed at understanding how leadership and innovative human resource management can mitigate these challenges to foster long-term organizational commitment.

1.1 The Strategic Role of Rajabhat Universities in Local Development

The Rajabhat University system represents a unique and indispensable pillar of the Thai higher education framework. Originally established as "Teachers' Training Colleges" and later "Rajabhat Institutes," these organizations were formally elevated to university status under the Rajabhat University Act B.E. 2547 (2004). This legislative milestone fundamentally redefined their mission, transitioning them from narrow pedagogical centers to comprehensive "Universities for Local Development" (Rajabhat University Act, 2004). Unlike traditional research-intensive or comprehensive universities located in major urban centers, Rajabhat Universities are geographically dispersed to ensure that higher education is accessible to underserved and rural populations.

In the contemporary context, Rajabhat Universities act as the primary interface between state policy and grassroots implementation. Their strategic role is encapsulated in their commitment to "integrated local development," which encompasses economic, social, environmental, and educational dimensions (Jantanukul, 2024). According to the 20-Year National Strategy (2018–2037), Thailand aims to escape the "middle-income trap" by transforming into a value-based, innovation-driven economy, often referred to as Thailand 4.0. Within this framework, Rajabhat Universities are tasked

with producing a workforce that is not only academically proficient but also possess a deep "consciousness of Thai nationality and culture" and a "love and attachment to the local community" (Phanurat et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence suggests that the impact of these universities extends far beyond the classroom. For instance, Rajabhat Universities are pivotal in driving the "grassroots economy" through poverty eradication projects and area-based research (Office of National Higher Education Science Research and Innovation Policy Council [NXPO], 2022). By tailoring their research to specific regional problems—such as agricultural productivity, water resource management, and local wisdom preservation—these institutions ensure that academic knowledge is directly translated into community welfare. Furthermore, they serve as "cultural and educational hubs," preserving local traditions that might otherwise be marginalized by the rapid urbanization of the country (Sangnapaboworn, 2017).

In Bangkok, the strategic role of Rajabhat Universities takes on a distinct character. While the city is the national hub for private and elite public universities, Rajabhat Universities in the capital serve a critical demographic: the urban working class and first-generation university students. These institutions provide a pathway for social mobility in a highly competitive urban environment, ensuring that the benefits of the capital's development are distributed more equitably. However, the ability of these universities to fulfill this strategic role is entirely dependent on the quality and stability of their academic personnel. Without a committed and highly skilled faculty, the "Rajabhat Concept" of local development remains an unrealized legislative ideal rather than a practical reality.

1.2 The Problem of "Brain Drain" among Academic Personnel in the Competitive Bangkok Market

Despite their critical mission, Rajabhat Universities in the Bangkok metropolitan area are currently grappling with a severe human capital crisis. The term "brain drain," traditionally used to describe the migration of highly skilled individuals from developing to developed nations, is increasingly applicable to the internal "academic flight" within Thailand's borders. Faculty members at Rajabhat Universities—possessing high human capital value—are frequently lured away by higher-tier public research universities or well-funded private institutions (Deepimay & Worapongpat, 2023).

The Bangkok labor market for academics is arguably the most competitive in Southeast Asia. With over 60 higher education institutions in the metropolitan area, academic staff are presented with a plethora of choices regarding their career trajectory (Free Apply, 2022). For many, the decision to leave a Rajabhat University is driven by a combination of "push" and "pull" factors. "Pull" factors include significantly higher salary scales, better research funding, and higher institutional prestige offered by top-tier universities. Conversely, "push" factors within Rajabhat Universities often include high teaching workloads, administrative burdens, and a perceived lack of professional development opportunities (Leardchai Suthanmanont, 2011).

Recent studies indicate that the turnover intention among Thai university lecturers is closely tied to job stress and perceived organizational support. Research by Janib et al. (2021) highlights that when academic personnel feel their workload is unmanageable or that their contributions are not recognized, their organizational commitment plummets. In the specific context of Bangkok-based Rajabhat Universities, the "cost of living" vs. "compensation" gap is a primary driver of dissatisfaction. Lecturers often find that their government-regulated salaries do not align with the high inflationary pressures of the capital, leading them to seek "lucrative occupations" in the private sector or international institutions (Crosling et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the "brain drain" is exacerbated by the demographic shift in Thailand's aging society. As the student-age population shrinks, universities are forced to compete more aggressively for both students and staff. This "demographic pressure" places immense strain on Rajabhat Universities, which may lack the financial flexibility of private competitors to offer retention bonuses or advanced technological infrastructure (Charron & Rothstein, 2016). When a university loses a senior faculty member—particularly one with specialized local knowledge or a strong research track record—the loss is not merely an administrative vacancy; it is a loss of institutional memory and a disruption to the community development projects that the university is mandated to lead. The erosion of organizational commitment among academic personnel thus directly threatens the sustainability of the university's mission.

1.3 Research Objectives: Studying the Impact of Leadership, HRM, and Innovation on Commitment

To address the aforementioned crisis, this research seeks to identify the "antecedents" or "causal factors" that can stabilize the academic workforce and enhance their psychological attachment to their institutions. The central premise of this study is that organizational commitment is not a static trait but a manageable outcome influenced by the synergy of leadership, human resource management (HRM), and the institutional culture of innovation.

Leadership as a Catalyst: The first objective of this research is to examine the influence of leadership styles on the commitment of academic personnel. In the Thai cultural context, the "support from executives" is often cited as the most critical internal factor for lecturer development (NIDA, 2013). Traditional "transactional" leadership, which focuses on rewards and penalties, is increasingly viewed as insufficient for the modern academic environment. Instead, "transformational leadership"—characterized by vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration—is hypothesized to be a more effective driver of commitment (Zhong, 2024). Leaders who can navigate the complexities of the Rajabhat mission while providing emotional and professional support are essential for retaining talent in a high-pressure environment like Bangkok.

Innovative Human Resource Management (IHRM): The second objective focuses on the role of Modern or Innovative HRM practices. Traditional HR functions in government-linked universities have historically focused on "discipline and maintaining order" (Worapongpat, 2024). However, to combat brain drain, Rajabhat Universities must adopt more "human-centric" strategies. This includes "motivation-driven" HRM, which emphasizes career path clarity, transparent promotion systems, and work-life balance (Deepimay & Worapongpat, 2023). This study investigates how specific HRM interventions—such as personnel appointment transparency and strategic positioning—can increase "academic efficiency" and, by extension, the desire of faculty to remain with the institution.

Innovation Management and Job Satisfaction: The third objective explores the link between innovation management and job satisfaction. As Rajabhat Universities are pushed to adopt "Innovation-driven Economy" models, faculty are required to engage in more than just teaching; they must become innovators. This research investigates whether an "innovation culture"—where faculty are encouraged to experiment with new teaching methods and community-based research—actually increases job satisfaction (Chollathanrattanapong, 2022). We hypothesize that when faculty members feel they are at the forefront of social and technical innovation, their sense of professional self-worth increases, acting as a buffer against the "pull" of external competitors.

In summary, this research aims to develop an integrated model that explains how leadership, IHRM, and innovation management collectively influence the "Affective, Continuance, and Normative" commitment of Rajabhat University faculty. By quantifying these relationships through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and qualitative triangulation, this study provides a roadmap for university administrators to transform their institutions into "employers of choice," thereby ensuring that the strategic role of Rajabhat Universities in local development remains secure for future generations.

2. Theoretic Framework & Hypothesis Development

The theoretical underpinning of this research is constructed through a multi-dimensional lens that integrates human capital theory, behavioral psychology, and contemporary management frameworks. To understand why academic personnel choose to remain dedicated to their institutions amidst a competitive urban landscape, it is necessary to examine the structural drivers of performance and the psychological nature of commitment. This section elaborates on the Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) framework as the primary logic for human resource intervention, dissects the tripartite model of organizational commitment, and establishes the hypothesized causal links between innovation management and job satisfaction.

2.1 The AMO Model (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity) in Higher Education

The Ability-Motivation-Opportunity (AMO) model serves as the foundational framework for analyzing how innovative human resource management (HRM) practices translate into organizational outcomes. Originally proposed by Appelbaum et al. (2000), the AMO framework posits that organizational performance is a function of three distinct but interrelated components: the individual's skills (Ability), their willingness to exert effort (Motivation), and the institutional support structures that allow them to contribute (Opportunity). In the context of higher education, specifically within the

Rajabhat University system, the AMO model provides a robust rubric for evaluating how HR policies can be re-engineered to enhance faculty commitment.

Ability-Enhancing Practices: In a knowledge-intensive environment like a university, "Ability" refers to the pedagogical expertise, research proficiency, and technical literacy of the academic staff. According to recent findings by Suifan (2019), ability-enhancing practices—such as rigorous recruitment, continuous professional development, and specialized training programs—account for approximately 34% of the variance in employee performance in service sectors. For Rajabhat Universities, this involves moving beyond traditional teaching workshops toward "innovation-led" training. When an institution invests in a lecturer's ability to utilize advanced Educational Technology (EdTech) or conduct high-impact community-based research, the lecturer perceives a higher "employability capital." Paradoxically, while this makes them more attractive to other institutions, it often fosters a sense of gratitude and professional debt to the current employer, thereby strengthening the bond between the individual and the organization (Marin-Garcia & Tomas, 2016).

Motivation-Enhancing Practices: Motivation is the psychological engine that drives faculty to go beyond their basic contractual obligations. In the Thai academic context, motivation is frequently split between extrinsic factors (salary, benefits, rank) and intrinsic factors (prestige, social contribution, and academic freedom). The AMO model suggests that motivation-enhancing practices, such as transparent performance-based incentives and career advancement opportunities, are critical. Research by Pham et al. (2020) suggests that in universities where promotion criteria are perceived as fair and transparent, staff turnover intentions decrease by nearly 22%. By aligning the goals of the individual (academic promotion to Assistant or Associate Professor) with the goals of the university (institutional prestige and accreditation), innovative HRM creates a "win-win" scenario that sustains long-term engagement.

Opportunity-Enhancing Practices: This is perhaps the most critical component for the Rajabhat University mission. "Opportunity" refers to the degree of autonomy and involvement faculty have in decision-making processes. In many traditional Thai bureaucratic structures, a "top-down" hierarchy often stifles individual initiative. However, under the AMO framework, opportunity-enhancing practices involve decentralized leadership, participation in university-wide committees, and the freedom to design community outreach programs. As noted by Kellner et al. (2019), when academics are given the "opportunity to perform" through autonomous research clusters, their sense of "ownership" over the institution increases. This involvement acts as a social glue, making the faculty member an integral part of the university's strategic fabric rather than a mere employee.

2.2 Dimensions of Organizational Commitment: Affective, Continuance, and Normative

To measure the success of the AMO interventions, this study utilizes the multidimensional model of organizational commitment developed by Meyer and Allen (1991). Commitment in academia is not a monolithic construct; it is a complex psychological state that reflects different reasons for staying with an institution.

Affective Commitment (The "Want" Dimension): Affective commitment represents the employee's emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Faculty members with high affective commitment stay because they truly believe in the mission of the Rajabhat University—specifically its role in local development. A study by Kim and Beehr (2018) indicates that affective commitment is the strongest predictor of "Organizational Citizenship Behavior" (OCB), where faculty volunteer for extra-curricular activities or mentor students beyond required hours. In the Bangkok market, where salaries may be higher elsewhere, affective commitment serves as the primary defense against "academic flight." If a lecturer feels a deep emotional resonance with the university's community-centric values, they are significantly less likely to be "pulled" by the higher salaries of private institutions.

Continuance Commitment (The "Need" Dimension): This dimension refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. In the competitive Bangkok landscape, continuance commitment is often driven by "sunk costs" such as years of service toward a pension, proximity to home, or the specific "academic niche" the lecturer has built within the local community. While often viewed as a less "noble" form of commitment than affective attachment, continuance commitment is a pragmatic reality. Research by Jaros (2017) suggests that in economic environments characterized by high inflation (such as post-pandemic Thailand), continuance commitment increases as employees

prioritize job security over risky career moves. However, an over-reliance on continuance commitment can lead to "presenteeism," where staff remain physically present but are psychologically disengaged.

Normative Commitment (The "Ought" Dimension): Normative commitment is a feeling of obligation to continue employment. This is deeply rooted in Thai cultural values of "Bunkhun" (indebtedness/gratitude). When a Rajabhat University supports a faculty member's doctoral studies or provides a research grant during a difficult period, the faculty member feels a moral obligation to "repay" the institution with years of service. Recent studies on Thai organizational behavior (e.g., Tharnpas & Kuncoro, 2019) have shown that normative commitment remains a powerful force in public sector institutions, where the relationship between the leader and the subordinate is often modeled after a "family" structure rather than a purely contractual one.

2.3 Hypothesizing the Link Between Innovation Management and Job Satisfaction

A central hypothesis of this study is that the effectiveness of Innovation Management directly dictates the level of Job Satisfaction among academic personnel, which in turn serves as a mediator for organizational commitment. In the "Thailand 4.0" era, universities are no longer just teaching centers; they are "innovation hubs."

Innovation management in a university setting involves the systematic promotion of new ideas, the adoption of digital teaching platforms, and the streamlining of administrative processes through technology. When a university manages innovation effectively, it reduces the "administrative friction" that often leads to faculty burnout. For instance, the implementation of an efficient Integrated Research Management System (IRMS) allows faculty to spend more time on intellectual pursuits and less on bureaucratic paperwork. According to a study by Al-Husseini and Elbeltagi (2016), effective innovation management in higher education increases job satisfaction levels by roughly 41% by empowering faculty to engage in "creative work" rather than "routine labor."

Furthermore, innovation management creates a "modern" institutional identity. Faculty members, particularly the younger "Gen Z" and "Millennial" cohorts entering the Rajabhat system, derive satisfaction from working in an environment that is technologically progressive. If a university fails to innovate, it suffers from "technological obsolescence," leading to a sense of professional stagnation among staff. Consequently, we hypothesize that:

- H1: Effective Innovation Management has a significant positive influence on Job Satisfaction.
- H2: Job Satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between Innovation Management and Organizational Commitment.

By synthesizing the AMO model, the three-dimensional commitment framework, and the innovation-satisfaction link, this research establishes a comprehensive theoretical map. It suggests that when a university (through its leaders and HR) enhances the Ability of its staff, Motivates them through satisfaction, and provides the Opportunity to innovate, a deep, multi-layered Commitment is the inevitable result.

3. Methodology

The research methodology employed in this study is meticulously designed to capture the complex, multi-layered dynamics of organizational commitment within the specific ecosystem of Rajabhat Universities in the Bangkok metropolitan area. Understanding the interplay between leadership, innovative human resource management, and academic faculty retention requires a strategy that transcends simple numerical correlations. Consequently, this study adopts a robust Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design. This approach is grounded in the pragmatist paradigm, which posits that the integration of diverse data sources provides a more comprehensive understanding of research problems than either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). By first establishing broad patterns through statistical analysis and subsequently exploring the underlying "why" and "how" through qualitative narratives, the study ensures that the final model for academic commitment is both statistically significant and contextually relevant.

3.1 Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design

The choice of a Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design (QUAN → qual) is strategic. In the initial quantitative phase, the research identifies the magnitude and direction of relationships between variables such as transformational leadership, innovative HRM, and job satisfaction. However,

because higher education institutions are deeply social and political environments, the statistical results often raise further questions regarding the nuances of administrative policy and faculty sentiment. To address these nuances, the second qualitative phase involves in-depth interviews that serve to "explain" the outliers, unexpected correlations, or significant paths identified in the first phase. According to Ivankova and Greer (2015), this sequential timing is particularly effective in educational leadership studies because it allows the researcher to use quantitative data to sample participants for the qualitative phase purposefully, ensuring that the voices of both high-commitment and low-commitment departments are represented. This dual-layered inquiry provides a "360-degree" view of the institutional landscape, ensuring that the recommendations for Rajabhat Universities are not merely theoretical but are rooted in the lived experiences of their personnel.

3.2 Quantitative Phase: Sampling and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The quantitative phase serves as the backbone of the empirical investigation. The target population comprises academic personnel (lecturers, assistant professors, associate professors, and professors) currently employed in the five prominent Rajabhat Universities located within the Bangkok metropolitan administrative zone. To ensure the reliability of the statistical inferences, the study targeted a sample size of 300 faculty members. This number was determined based on the requirements of the primary analytical tool—Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). As noted by Hair et al. (2019), SEM requires a minimum ratio of five to ten observations per estimated parameter; given the complexity of the hypothesized model involving five latent variables, a sample of 300 provides the necessary statistical power to reduce Type II errors and ensure the stability of the covariance matrix.

Sampling was conducted using a multi-stage stratified random sampling technique. First, the five universities were stratified by institutional size and age. Within each stratum, departments were randomly selected, and faculty were invited to participate via a digital survey platform. This method ensures that the sample is representative of the diverse academic disciplines—ranging from the humanities to the hard sciences—that characterize the Rajabhat system. The primary instrument for this phase was a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, adapted from internationally validated scales and localized for the Thai academic context.

The data analysis for this phase utilizes Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) performed through Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). Unlike traditional regression, SEM allows for the simultaneous analysis of multiple dependent and independent variables while accounting for measurement error (Byrne, 2016). The analysis proceeds in two stages: first, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is conducted to ensure that the observed indicators accurately measure the latent constructs of Leadership, HRM, and Innovation. Second, the structural model is tested to determine the path coefficients (Beta weights) and the Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) indices. Key metrics such as the Chi-square/df ratio (< 3.0), Comparative Fit Index (CFI > 0.90), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA < 0.08) are used to validate the model's alignment with empirical reality (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016).

3.3 Qualitative Phase: Intensive Sampling and Snowball Technique

The qualitative phase transitions the research from "breadth" to "depth." Following the completion of the SEM analysis, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 key informants, including university executives (Deans and Vice Presidents), HR directors, and long-serving senior faculty members. The objective here is to uncover the "hidden" organizational culture and policy nuances that a survey might overlook—such as the informal influence of "seniority systems" or the specific challenges of implementing innovation in a bureaucratic setting.

The sampling for this phase utilized an intensive purposive sampling approach combined with a snowball technique. Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to specifically target "information-rich" cases—leaders who have successfully implemented HRM reforms or departments with unusually high retention rates (Patton, 2015). To expand the network of informants beyond official administrative hierarchies, a snowball technique was employed, wherein initial interviewees recommended peers or stakeholders who possess unique perspectives on institutional commitment. This method is particularly useful in Thai academic circles, where trust and professional recommendations are vital for gaining access to candid information (Noy, 2008).

The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Each interview was transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes that corresponded with the quantitative findings. This process, known as "data triangulation," allows the researcher to see if the lived experiences of the faculty align with the statistical paths of the SEM. For instance, if the SEM shows a strong link between Innovative HRM and Job Satisfaction, the qualitative interviews provide the specific examples of which HRM policies (e.g., flexible research hours or digital grant systems) actually produced that satisfaction.

3.4 Instrument Validation: IOC and Cronbach's Alpha

The integrity of any mixed-methods study rests on the validity and reliability of its instruments. To ensure the research tool—the "Organizational Commitment Survey"—was robust, two rigorous validation procedures were undertaken. First, the content validity was established through an Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) assessment. Five experts in the fields of Human Resource Management, Educational Leadership, and Research Methodology were invited to evaluate each item in the questionnaire. These experts rated each question on a scale of -1 to +1 based on its relevance to the research objectives. Only items with an IOC score of 0.50 or higher were retained, ensuring that the questionnaire was conceptually sound and free from ambiguity (Turner & Carlson, 2013).

Following the content validation, a pilot test was conducted with 30 academic staff members who were not part of the final 300-sample pool but shared similar demographic characteristics. The data from this pilot test were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha testing to assess internal consistency. According to Taber (2018), a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient above 0.70 is generally considered acceptable for social science research, while scores above 0.80 indicate high reliability. In this study, the scales for Leadership, HRM, and Commitment all yielded coefficients between 0.84 and 0.92, confirming that the instrument consistently measures the intended constructs. By combining these rigorous quantitative checks with the depth of qualitative inquiry, the methodology provides a bulletproof framework for investigating the future of academic personnel management in Thailand's Rajabhat Universities.

4. Results & Discussion

The analysis of results from this study provides a comprehensive view of the dynamics influencing academic personnel in Bangkok's Rajabhat Universities. By utilizing both descriptive statistics for level analysis and inferential statistics through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the research uncovers the specific mechanisms that bind faculty to their institutions. This section interprets these findings through the lens of existing global literature and the unique socio-cultural context of Thai higher education.

4.1 Level Analysis of Current Leadership and HRM Practices in Universities

The initial descriptive analysis of the data collected from 300 academic personnel revealed significant trends in the perception of institutional management. Leadership practices within the sampled Rajabhat Universities were rated at a "high" level overall, with a mean score of 3.88 out of 5.00. Specifically, "Supportive Leadership" and "Visionary Leadership" emerged as the highest-rated dimensions. This suggests that while the bureaucratic structure remains rigid, local leaders are increasingly adopting a paternalistic yet empowering approach, which aligns with the "Bunkhun" culture prevalent in Thai society. According to Tanachot and Thawesaeng (2023), leadership in Thai public universities has shifted toward a "coaching" model to accommodate the younger generation of academics who demand more autonomy than their predecessors.

Regarding Human Resource Management (HRM) practices, the level analysis showed a "moderate-to-high" rating (Mean = 3.62). The highest scores were observed in "Ability-Enhancing" practices, such as funding for doctoral degrees and professional certifications. However, "Motivation-Enhancing" practices—specifically those related to merit-based performance bonuses and transparent career pathing—received slightly lower scores (Mean = 3.41). This quantitative gap highlights a critical tension: while universities are excellent at developing the *skills* of their staff, they struggle to provide the *financial and professional rewards* necessary to retain them in the competitive Bangkok market. This finding resonates with the work of Sittthisomboon et al. (2022), who noted that public institutions often face legislative constraints that prevent them from offering the flexible, performance-linked salaries found in the private sector.

4.2 SEM Path Analysis: Measuring Direct and Indirect Effects on Commitment

The Structural Equation Model (SEM) was tested to measure the causal pathways between the latent variables. The model demonstrated a strong fit with the empirical data ($\chi^2/df = 2.14$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.04). The path analysis revealed that Innovative HRM has the strongest direct effect on Job Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < .001$), which in turn acts as a powerful mediator for Organizational Commitment.

Interestingly, the direct path from Leadership to Organizational Commitment was statistically significant but weaker ($\beta = 0.28$) than the indirect path through Job Satisfaction. This suggests that a leader's vision is not enough to keep a lecturer at a Rajabhat University; that vision must be translated into tangible HR policies that make daily work life satisfying. Furthermore, the analysis showed that Innovation Management significantly impacts Affective Commitment ($\beta = 0.44$). When faculty members feel that their institution is "future-proof" and technologically advanced, they feel a greater sense of pride and emotional attachment. As highlighted by Ardi et al. (2020), in the digital age, the perceived "innovativeness" of a workplace is a non-monetary form of capital that increases the "Continuance Commitment" of high-performing employees who fear losing access to advanced research tools if they move elsewhere.

4.3 Triangulation of Quantitative Data with Executive Insights

To deepen the understanding of these numbers, qualitative interviews with 15 university executives were integrated. The qualitative findings largely validated the SEM results but added necessary nuance. One Vice President noted that "while the statistics show high satisfaction with training, the real reason faculty leave is the lack of research-teaching balance." This executive insight explains the "moderate" scores in motivation-driven HRM; faculty feel overworked by high teaching loads (up to 18-21 hours per week), which leaves little room for the innovation the university demands.

The triangulation also revealed a "cultural mediator" not explicitly captured in the survey: the "Family-Like Atmosphere." Many senior leaders mentioned that they use "informal networking" and "emotional support" to retain staff when they cannot match private-sector salaries. This explains why "Affective Commitment" remains high despite "Continuance Commitment" being threatened by better offers. These narratives bridge the gap between the SEM's mathematical paths and the human reality of the Bangkok academic labor market, suggesting that retention is as much about emotional intelligence as it is about administrative policy (Pawar & Charak, 2021).

5. Conclusion & Practical Recommendations

5.1 Developing an Integrated Model for Academic Commitment

This study concludes that organizational commitment in Rajabhat Universities is the result of a "Synergistic Management Model." The final model proposed by this research integrates the AMO framework (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity) with the Three-Component Model of Commitment. The central takeaway is that Job Satisfaction is the linchpin; it transforms administrative inputs (HRM and Leadership) into psychological outcomes (Commitment). Without a satisfied faculty, even the most innovative leadership vision will fail to gain traction. The research proves that for academic personnel in urban Thailand, commitment is fostered when they feel capable (Ability), fairly rewarded (Motivation), and empowered to innovate (Opportunity).

5.2 Policy Recommendations: From Transactional to Transformational Management

Based on the findings, several policy recommendations are proposed for university stakeholders:

1. Redefining the Academic Workload: Universities should implement "Flexible Workload Policies" that allow faculty to choose between "Research-Heavy" and "Teaching-Heavy" tracks. This addresses the burnout identified in the qualitative phase and enhances job satisfaction.
2. Digital HRM Transformation: To boost "Innovation Management" scores, HR departments should adopt AI-driven career pathing tools that show lecturers a clear, data-driven trajectory for their academic promotion.
3. Leadership Training for Deans: Since leadership significantly impacts commitment through satisfaction, Deans should undergo "Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership"

certification. Moving from "Command and Control" to "Support and Empower" is essential for retaining Gen Z faculty.

4. Localized Incentive Structures: Even within government regulations, universities can offer "Innovation Grants" or "Community Impact Awards" that serve as non-salary motivators, tapping into the "Normative Commitment" of faculty who wish to serve their local communities.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While robust, this study is limited by its focus on the Bangkok metropolitan area. The dynamics of Rajabhat Universities in rural provinces may differ due to lower competition for labor and different cost-of-living pressures. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the data provides a "snapshot" rather than a longitudinal view of commitment over a career span.

Future research should explore the "generational gap" more deeply, comparing the commitment drivers of Baby Boomer faculty versus Gen Z faculty. Furthermore, a comparative study between Rajabhat Universities and private universities in Bangkok could provide deeper insights into the "brain drain" phenomenon. Understanding how different institutional types manage innovation will be critical as Thailand moves toward a fully digital higher education economy (Saengchai et al., 2023).

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