THAI CULTURE AND ITS EFFECTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN THAI PRIVATELY HELD COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand how Thai culture, in accordance with Hofstede's cultural dimension theory, affects job satisfaction and the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement. Qualitative method is used with in-depth interviewing technique consisting of open-ended questions for the data collection method. Results revealed that seniority role plays both positively and negatively and the sense of Kreng-Jai is a crucial factor. Results suggested that the cultural dimensions of Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Femininity were positively related to job satisfaction, whereas the dimension of Power Distance was negatively related to job satisfaction. The collectivistic culture of the Thai society results in the job satisfaction of the majority of the participants because of factors such as existence of teamwork, great relationship with coworkers, and abilities to adapt and fit within the workplace. Power distance and seniority had positive influence as having seniority allowing coworkers to work together as brothers and sisters. On the other hand, power distance may have a negative influence on job satisfaction. With uncertainty avoidance, respondents reported that tasks could be achieved with the clear goal and directions. The dimension of femininity of Thai culture noted the importance of a person's contributions and recognitions had a positive impact on job satisfaction. Findings also show that job satisfaction has no direct relationship with organizational engagement.

KEY WORDS: Thai Culture / Job Satisfaction / Organizational Engagement / Hofstede's Theory

1. INTRODUCTION

Various previous studies have examined on the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement. This paper aims to further study how the relationship between the two variables can be affected by the national culture; focusing on the national culture of Thailand. In Thailand, especially in Thai privately held companies, it can commonly be observed that recent graduates and newcomers tend to stay at a workplace for only a short term. As they become more related and settled with their job activities, the degree of commitment and willingness to perform drops. Additionally, experienced employees are on the look out to advancing their professional careers at other organizations. Due to low job satisfaction, which in turn affects the level of organizational engagement, employees in Thai privately held companies do not portray attitudes and or behavior of being emotionally engaged with the organization. Problems that these companies are experiencing as a result include the decline in performance, "human capital, or the retention of knowledge in

organizations" (Kwantes, 2009, p. 197) and the rise in absenteeism and turnover rate. Then comes in the influence of the national culture. Employees in Thai privately held companies in turn are experiencing challenges with the working process, decision making ability, social acceptance, and communication within the workplace. To explain and understand how job satisfaction is influenced by how the Thai society is shaped; thus relating to the strength of organizational engagement in Thai privately held companies in Thailand, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and Herzberg two-factor theory are chosen and applied.

The purpose of this study is to analyze and understand the following questions:

How does Thai culture play a major influence in a workplace?

How does Thai culture relate to job satisfaction, which leads to organizational engagement?

This study addresses the effect of Thai culture on job satisfaction, which significantly impacts the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement. Interviews of employees working in Thai privately held companies in Thailand will be carried out to analyze whether job satisfaction leads to higher organizational engagement. Interviews of 15 respondents from Company A are carried out for data collection to attain in-depth information for analysis regarding their work experiences. Company A, one of Thailand's biggest retailers, is chosen to represent Thai privately held companies. Both former and current employees are selected for one-to-one interview to understand the previously stated purpose of the study.

The objectives of this research are a) to explain how the role of Thai culture impacts Thai society. b) to observe how certain roles of Thai culture affect the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement in Thai privately held companies in Thailand. c) to study if those with higher job satisfaction are more engaged in Thai privately held companies in Thailand.

Once the role that Thai culture plays on the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement is understood, both the employees and the companies will benefit. By having high job satisfaction and high organizational engagement, companies will see a decline in absenteeism and turnover rate and a rise in performance and efficiency of the employees. The companies will also gain the benefits of having skilled and experienced employees who are committed to the organization. Engagement also influences how employees voice ideas, suggestions, and concerns, which also "result in improved individual performance and increased organizational profit and return on investment" (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015, p. 10) of the company. Moreover, this group of employees will have confidence in the organization that they helped build and trust that the organization will provide them with security and growth. With organizational trust, more positive work outcomes will result.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Culture

Culture "is the system of ideas, values, beliefs, knowledge and customs which are transferred from one generation to another in society" (Runglertkrengkrai & Engkaninan, 1987, p. 9), either "transmitted, learned, or shared" (Komin, 1990, p. 683). The national norms of Thailand focus on "the harmony of the group over the needs of the individual" (Andrews, 2001, p. 154), being "much more relationship-oriented than task oriented" (Runglertkrengkrai & Engkaninan, 1987, p. 9). For Thais, social recognition is the ultimate goal for life's success. With the addition of Thai people being respectful and obedient to

authority and status-orientated, the factors of face-saving and "kreng-jai" (being overly considerate of others) also come into play. To maintain harmony, Thais tend to avoid criticisms and confrontations. Thais are raised and taught at a young age to obey and respect authorities. To talk back and or correct those of higher power or seniority are seen as a major sign of disrespect and are most often considered as unacceptable. Thailand also has a high context culture, meaning that it requires the interpretations of body language and expressions. All of the aforementioned tie back to the aspect of being social-oriented and striving for a sense of belonging.

All the behavior, views, and beliefs of a culture are difficult to change; and if changed, they will not be completely changed. Therefore, the study is not to change the behavior of the group of employees in Thai privately held organizations. This study, however, will focus on the relevant dimensions of Hofstede's theory and how they influence organizational engagement in Thailand.

2.2 Hofstede's Theory

According to Hofstede, national cultures play a vital role in shaping people's values and attitudes in a workplace. "Thai culture expresses relatively high needs to 'avoid uncertainty', a high level of 'social collectivism', and 'high power distance.'" (Andrews, 2001, p. 153) and ranks high on femininity.

2.2.1 Power Distance

The term can be understood as the power gap between a supervisor and his or her subordinates. It is the "degree of inequality of power between a person at a higher level and a person at a lower level" (Harvey, 1997, p. 133). A rigid hierarchical system will have greater power distance. Thailand has a class system and "a culture where the qualities of age and seniority - opposed to performance and knowledge - remained paramount" (Andrews, 2001, p. 164). With the dimensions of protecting face, respect, and obedience, and class difference and social ranks in Thailand, the degree of power distance in Thailand will be extremely difficult to change. This affects how employees show respect for authority. Feeling a lack of autonomy, the freedom, and responsibility over ideas, decisions, etc. due to power distance and face-saving, along with refusing to disagree and confront superiors, will have an impact on job satisfaction.

2.2.2 Collectivism

Thailand is a collectivistic society, where individuals are more relationship-oriented. Developing and nurturing relationships with co-workers are crucial, as well as blending in and feeling accepted within the workplace, and they greatly impact employees' job satisfaction. Since Thailand has a collectivistic culture, working as a team where employees can feel their contributions to the organization's success has a strong and positive relationship to job satisfaction. Previous study suggested that "organizations operating in more collectivistic cultures should use teams as a means of not only getting work done but of also increasing employees' sense of job satisfaction" (Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff & Rutigliano, 2014,67). Also, unlike social-oriented employees, "the task-achievement oriented subordinates do not please the boss, for they are often seen as hardheaded, disobedient, disrespectful, unhelpful, and inconsiderate" (Komin, 1990, p. 699), all of which are also on the contrary to the Thai culture of being respectful, considerate, and non-confrontational. When combined with rigid hierarchy, the result is an unfavorable career path for this group of task-oriented employees within the organization.

2.2.3 Femininity

Unlike masculine cultures that are "oriented toward competition, achievement, assertiveness, and material success" (Noypayak & Speece, 1998, p. 348), feminine cultures emphasize on feminine gender characteristics such as nurturing, caring, and patience. "Oriented toward cooperation, relationships, modesty, and quality of life [...] Thailand is strongly on the feminine side" (Noypayak & Speece, 1998, p. 348). Organizations operating in feministic cultures "place more importance on socioemotional career satisfiers, such as recognition [...] Feminine cultures place more emphasis on individual's contribution to society and value other's recognition of work well done. [...] more concerned with their relationships with managers in the organization, and would value recognition" (Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff & Rutigliano, 2014, p. 60). To achieve job satisfaction, it is crucial for employees to receive recognition that involves social interactions for it reflects back to the importance of being socially accepted and acknowledged by others.

2.2.4 Uncertainty Avoidance

Thailand has low uncertainty avoidance, where people are uncomfortable with ambiguity. Uncertainty avoidance is defined as "the extent to which members of a society feel threatened by uncertainty or unknown situations (Hofstede, 1980)" (Greece, p. 233). To minimize uncertainty, rules and regulations are implemented. By relying "more on procedures and rules to exert control" (Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff & Rutigliano, 2014, p. 59) this means the need of having a top-down system in place, which also "has been observed to be related to communication inflexibility in organization" (A p. 59) that also affects employees' job satisfaction.

2.3 Job Satisfaction

The level of job satisfaction is influenced by Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Job satisfaction is "viewed by different stakeholders as a core indicator of overall organizational functioning and performance" (Karanika-Murray, Duncan, Pontes & Griffiths, 2015, p. 1019). According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, job satisfaction is built on foundation; meaning that the basic needs, or the hygiene factors that "include company policy, supervision, relationship with supervisors, work conditions, relationship with peers, salary, personal life, relationship with subordinates, status, and job security" (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003, p. 334), must be met prior to advancing on to the motivational factors that "operate only to increase job satisfaction" (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003, p. 334), which include "achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and possibility of growth" (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003, p. 334).

The strongly hierarchical system of Thai privately owned organizations puts strict limitations to employees' "responsibility or freedom to make decisions" (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003, p. 334). Autonomy is required to make employees know and feel that they have ownership for their tasks. Employees want "to be given clearly defined tasks with identified outcomes and measures, and the freedom to pursue those goals how they so choose" (Blattner & Walter, 2015, p. 124). Through empowerment, employees feel encouraged to make decisions on their own with the existing resources that the company provides. To create trust and empowerment is even more difficult in Thai privately owned organizations where power distance is high.

Additionally, possibility of growth means "the chance that a person can be promoted, [...] learn new skills or advance" (Ruthankoon & Ogunlana, 2003, p. 334) forward. Since Thai culture puts an emphasis on seniority and age rather than skills and talents, employees with potentials are left unrecognized regardless of their abilities. This becomes an

obstacle for this group of employees' opportunity for self-development and achieve career success; thus preventing them from "working hard since their promotion is based on years of work instead of the level of achievement" (Swierczeck & Onishi, 2003, p. 199).

Furthermore, "most significant impact on job satisfaction are accomplishment and recognition" (Andreassi, Lawter, Brockerhoff & Rutigliano, 2014, p. 67). Being a collectivistic culture, Thai employees especially want to feel valued by their supervisors for performing their job well, which will result in employees' job satisfaction.

Once the level of job satisfaction is increased, employees become more productive, more involved, less absent, more committed and more engaged. Since job satisfaction has a direct relationship with organizational engagement, the high level of employees' job satisfaction within a workplace also results in the high level of employees' organizational engagement.

2.4 Organizational Engagement

Job satisfaction is related to organizational engagement. Organizational engagement "is usually referred to as an emotional and intellectual commitment to an organisation" (Sirisunhirun & Dhirathiti, 2015, p. 73). With organizational engagement, research has also proven that it "is positively associated with increases in performance over time" (Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey & Saks, 2015, p. 21) for the employees in turn positively impact the organization's success. It is a crucial factor that determines whether or not employees would like to stay onboard with the organization for many years to come, "the desire to remain with the organization (loyalty)" (Yousef, 2000, p. 6). When employees become citizens of the organization, they become fully engaged with the organization and its goals and values. "Past research has indicated that [...] there is a positive relationship between organizational commitment and both job satisfaction and performance" (Yousef, 2000, p 11). Being engaged reflects the attitudes and the degree of employees' willingness to go above and beyond, putting in the extra effort for the company. Therefore, this develops employees' long-term loyalty to the organization; resulting in positive outcomes such as low absenteeism and turnover rate and high efficiency.

2.5 Framework

As illustrated in the chart below, the independent variables that affect organizational engagement include power distance, femininity, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance - dimensions from Hofstede's theory. With high power distance means more rigid hierarchical system, complicated work process, and low level of autonomy. Thai culture factors of face-saving and "kreng-jai" are also strengthened by greater power distance, which in turn, influence communication process within the workplace and negatively affect job satisfaction. Secondly, high level of femininity influences how employees in Thai privately held companies act and behave, for they are concerned about workplace harmony and being obedient and respectful. This leads to low level of job satisfaction for employees' opinions, feelings, wants, and needs are constrained. Thirdly, collectivism makes employees feel the need to be accepted and recognized by the society at work; leading to higher confrontational avoidance, lower desire to make decisions in fear of being disliked, and thus lower job satisfaction. Lastly, with low uncertainty avoidance, Thai employees are more comfortable when rules and regulations exist within the workplace; hence the reason for a hierarchical system. This impacts work process, organization structure, and employees' performance that are all associated with job satisfaction. With all factors influencing job satisfaction,

organizational engagement is also highly affected, for job satisfaction has a direct relationship with organizational engagement.
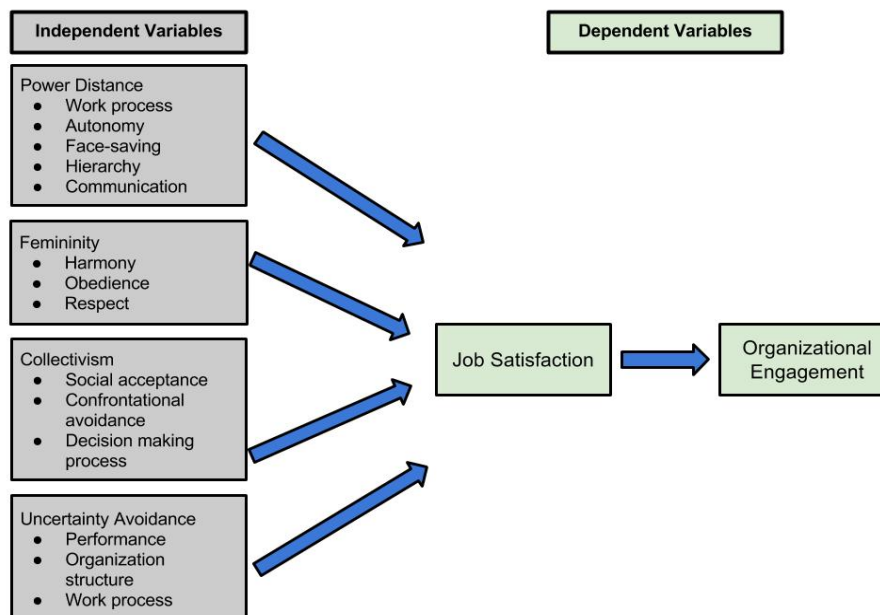

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model of Relationship between Thai Cultural Dimensions and Job Satisfaction and Organizational Engagement

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Company A is chosen to represent Thai privately held organizations in Thailand. Company A is one of Thailand's biggest retailers. The majority of employees employed are of Thai citizen and a very low number represents expatriate workers. Respondents from Company A chosen for the interview are segmented into three different groups: former employees, newcomers, and employees of one year or longer. Respondents are also only selected from Company A's Head Office. All are also of Thai nationality and were born and raised in Thailand. This ensures that all respondents are exposed to and influenced by the national culture. The in-depth interviewing technique is adopted as the data collection approach because the method is best for surveying employees when it comes to sensitive topics as this, and the technique is best for understanding thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and motivations. Open-ended questions are used to study and analyze respondents' stories and experiences. This method is adapted from the previous studies of Noypayak & Speece(1998) and Swierczek & Onishi (2003). The sample size is 15 respondents from Company A's Head Office

Instruments

Interview questions on culture and job satisfaction are adapted from the previous studies of Swierczek (1998), Joiner (2001), Eskildsen, Kristensen & Antvor (2010), Komin (1990), Noypayak & Speece (1998), and Saratun & Rungruan (2013). Interview questions on job satisfaction and organizational engagement are adapted from the previous studies of Yousef (2001), Sirisunhirun & Dhirathiti (2015), and Rungruang & Tangchitnob (2010).

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Findings

The collected data from 15 participants are analyzed to study the relationship of job satisfaction and organizational engagement; whether or not participants with higher job satisfaction have higher organizational engagement. The interviews are conducted via video or audio call or face-to-face. The first part of the interview questions is asked to help examine factors including collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, femininity, and power distance; and how each dimension influences job satisfaction. Questions that pertain to job satisfaction are then asked to help study the level of job satisfaction of the participants. Lastly, the final part of the interview aims to help examine the level of organizational engagement.

4.1.1 Culture in Workplace

Upon the examination of the participants' attitude toward the Thai culture, most participants agree on the big role seniority plays, both positively and negatively. Responses also reveal that two participants show frustrations about a lack of professionalism, how

"everything is slow and not in rules,"

which impact employee's performance.

"I don't think it's professional. [...] Need to change if company wants to go far."

Eight participants see the sense of "kreng-jai" as a crucial factor -

"When you want to say to someone, to speak to someone, you can't stand up for that. [...] you know it's like the Thai culture of the "kreng-jai" we cannot say it out. I think it's the main obstacle for the working process."

Negative attitudes that associate with Thai culture thus include kreng-jai, the lack of professionalism, rules and regulations, and face-saving. On the other hand, for the Thai culture,

"they have a hierarchy. They have an age. They have like experience. [...] you should know manners, [...] and it's like we respect the older not like in the Europe or America."

Positive attitudes toward the Thai culture thus include manners, respect, family-oriented, and how Thais are courteous. Though most participants show stronger feelings and emotions toward the cons, only three participants do not feel fit in the Thai culture while the rest adapts to fit in. Being able to adapt and fit in relates to the Collectivistic aspect of the importance of being a part of the community.

4.1.2 Relationship of Collectivism and Job Satisfaction

The dimension of Collectivism proves to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction. The Collectivistic culture of the Thai society results in the job satisfaction of the majority of the participants because of factors such as existence of teamwork, great relationship with coworkers, and abilities to adapt and fit within the workplace. Regarding teamwork, 14 out of 15 participants prefer to work as a team. They all share the same view that working as

"a team contributes more than each individual put together" and that *"to achieve success, teamwork is very important."*

When asked why, one mentions

> *"maybe it's a culture, a Thai culture. We live in a society. We always do in a group."*

With teamwork, two participants also agree that it facilitates the working process and expedites the learning process of an individual through the sharing of ideas and experiences and communication within the team. However, one participant prefers

> *"working alone because more authority in making decisions and I learn more as well."*

Moreover, when problems arise in the team, the majority of the participants say they would choose to confront, four out of 15 participants would choose to avoid confrontations, and one participant says yes to confronting someone of the same level, but it would be impossible with people of higher position.

4.1.3 Relationship of Power Distance and Job Satisfaction

To continue focusing on power distance and seniority, the dimension of Power Distance shows to have a negative influence on job satisfaction. Two view seniority as a positive influence, seven see it as a negative influence, and three believe there are both pros and cons to it.

> *"You definitely find yourself thinking twice or more umm talking to people who are older than you, who are holding a more senior position than you."*

For the pros, having seniority allows coworkers to work together as brothers and sisters, so when someone makes a mistake, any wrongdoing is not taken too seriously and treated too harshly. It's also

> *"great to have someone to guide you; that's how you learn,"* and *"the senior people will take care of you sometimes."*

On the other hand, participants see that *"seniority made it very difficult"* and also causes a sense of "kreng-jai" that hinders work and how one decides to confront a problem or not. With seniority, one cannot be too opinionated and express his or her ideas to the fullest,

> *"We didn't have a say,"* for *"if they were there before me, most people would listen to them more than rather take in new ideas."* Also, *"how you talk, you can't just be so straight up [...] because they think you're being rude and aggressive when you're not."*

Besides the aforementioned, seniority also affects employee's recognition and advancement according to the participants. One who is older but shows no performance outshines a younger coworker and nothing can be done about that.

> *"การตอบแทนต่างๆมันไม่เท่ากันเพราะ seniority อันเนี๊ยแหล่ะเขามองว่าเขาอยู่มานานกว่าเขาก็ควรจะได้*
>
> *มากกว่าซึ่งในมุมมองของเรา...เราก็อยากทำงานให้มันดีมันก็รู้สึกไม่ okay"*

translates into how the outcome and recognition is not equal due to the seniority system. Participants feel discouraged to perform at work because a person who simply has been at the workplace for longer years will get higher level of recognition and benefits.

4.1.4 Relationship of Uncertainty Avoidance and Job Satisfaction

There exists a positive relationship between Uncertainty Avoidance and job satisfaction. In response to the set of questions that applies to uncertainty avoidance, 12 out of 15 participants feel nervous, confused, lost, and worried about ambiguity. One mentions about not wanting to take any risks and others say,

"you can't work and do your job," "I need to see the goal to see something in the end. It affects your efficiency at work and job satisfaction because you're confused."

However, according to 13 out of 15 participants, tasks are assigned by the supervisors with a direction and goals to be achieved. Therefore, the level of job satisfaction is not negatively affected in this case for tasks are assigned to avoid ambiguity within the organization.

4.1.5 Relationship of Femininity and Job Satisfaction

The dimension of Femininity of Thai culture that notes the importance of a person's contributions and recognitions has a positive impact on job satisfaction when recognitions are given. In regards to recognition, eight participants highly value their contributions and recognitions. They say that recognition is important because it offers feedbacks and judges how much is needed for self development and improvement. By not being recognized, thoughts range from

"it kills your motivation" to *"if you do everything and no one sees you do it, it kind of suck."*

Three participants do not value recognition, with two out of the three saying that the recognition belongs to the team and not himself or herself alone; and the rest do not care or sometimes value recognition.

Furthermore, a job well done is rewarded with nothing according to three participants, with private verbal compliments according to seven participants, or with more tasks, money, or a promotion according to three participants. The other two participants say that a job well done is rewarded publicly via written e-mail. With the e-mail that acknowledges an employee's success across the company, it created jealousy and attracted too much attention from other coworkers. Those who feel worried give comments such as

"But how about her other subordinates?!" and it *"will create a little conflict behind the back."*

4.1.6 The Level of Job Satisfaction

In examining job satisfaction, 13 out of 15 participants are satisfied with their jobs and two are not. Regarding the responsibility that comes with the job, four participants have no responsibility and ownership, for

"most of the work would come, would not be our idea. It would come from our manager or higher up"

and how being just a specialist does not give one much responsibilities and having someone

"older than me, so I can't do fully responsibility on the job."

One mentions low ownership because *"they don't trust your work."* However, seven participants say they have lots of responsibilities and 100% ownership of their tasks.

Results show that the majority of participants consider the work environment a good, family environment to be in, with good friends, colleagues, and bosses.

"The work environment is quite ok. It's normal for a big company." where

"people are humble and friendly and busy."

Three participants, on the other hand, say,

"The place could be better than this" and that *"people were very negative"*

and the loud environment quickly turns quiet when the boss arrives. One mentions how the environment varies depending on the team and the direct bosses.

Upon the examination of the relationship with coworkers, 14 out of 15 participants reveal that they either *"get along well enough to work with them"* or develop strong bonds outside the workplace with coworkers. Some examples include:

> *"I spend a lot of time with them especially when we finish the work and go to dinner and activities together," "we go together everywhere," and "we would always get together outside of work as well. Yea, I'd say it's quite good."*

All but one participant feel that they have a good relationship with their managers and that concerns, ideas, and feelings that are work-related can be fully communicated to a certain extent.

> *"It's a good working relationship, but I wouldn't call it a close personal relationship,"* where the *"relationship is more like boss and subordinate."*

Two participants feel uncomfortable to talk about personal issues or make jokes due to the age difference and the sense of "kreng-jai" and how the positions

> *"have a long distance especially I'm a specialist and hers is like AVP."*

However, two out of the 14 participants, with good relationship with the boss, mention that their communication can be carried out on an equal level.

For one to get ahead on this job, responses include experience, performance, ability, confidence, talent, heart, passion, success, attitude, initiation, responsibility, seniority, length of work, willingness, dedication, trust, and connections as the main factors that determine an employee's advancement. Willingness, dedication, and seniority are the most-mentioned factors, followed performance.

Upon the examination of how much can one fully express oneself at work in regards to the suggestions of new ideas or initiation of new projects, six participants say it cannot be done fully, other six participants say it can be done fully, and four participants agree on how one

> *"was able to freely express [one's] ideas, but umm..not all those ideas were put into action,"* how one *"can suggest ideas, but accept or not is another thing."*

Furthermore, four out of 15 participants see none or not much growth and development for him or her because it does not only involve just work and

> *"I can't see a long-term kind of thing in terms of promotion because I got [undisclosed name] who is older than me."*

However, the rest of the participants do see lots of potentials for growth and development.

4.1.7 Level of Organizational Engagement

Last but not least, the next set of questions is to examine organizational engagement. From a rating of 1 - 6, 1 being not proud at all and 6 being extremely proud, the average number of participants rate their pride in their jobs as 5 or 6. One participant rates his pride in his job as 3, six as 4, five as 5, and three as 6. Also, when asked to evaluate their performance compared to their coworkers, five participants say that they perform better than some of their coworkers; five participants say that their performance is average or equal compared to others; one say that she performs lower in comparison to her coworkers; two participants say that they try harder and put more effort; and two participants say that they cannot compare their performance to their coworkers due to different job roles they are responsible for.

All participants are willing to do the extra effort beyond what the job requires. Two participants agree on how they are willing to put in the effort for

"if I really like it, I'll go more and above."

One is willing because it makes herself happier, and one is willing to go the extra mile for the success of herself saying, *"I'm committed to my result"* and to drive the efficiency of *"myself."* Regarding the rest of the participants, they are willing because they want to facilitate the working process or have passion for what they do. However, organizational engagement does not exist because participants are not emotionally engaged in the company. Extra efforts are made to benefit the participants themselves and the participants do have the desire to remain the company in the long run.

Three participants talk negatively about the organization to others whereas eight participants talk positively. Four participants are neutral, stating both the pros and cons of the organization to others. Also, all participants except for the one that also talks negatively about the organization to others do not feel regret or are glad about joining the organization. Current employees still work here because they see their job as a promising career path, they have no other job offer, they believe they can fix the problem, they have a good team, and they desire to learn; while former employees' reasons for leaving the organization are the lack of career path and new job offers. To the participants, the company is either a learning place, a place to acquire connections, a big step in life, life's valuable experience, simply a workplace, or

"can't separate company from my life and DNA."

Table 4.1 below summarizes what participants think how their dedication to the company benefits them and the company in return. Some participants name more than one benefit. Each ● represents the number of time each benefit is mentioned. With ● ● ●, knowledge, and how to deal with grownups and culture are the highest mentioned by participants for how the company benefits them. Secondly with ● ●, participants mention that money, acknowledgement, value and long-term goals, and project implementation as the benefits to self and company. Lastly with ●, participants mentioned only once about pride, experience, feedback, sales, part to drive company, customer satisfaction, reputation & image, staying up to trend as benefits to themselves and to the company.

Table 4.1Benefits to Self and Company Due to Emploee's Commitment

Self		Company	
Pride	●	Sales	●
How to deal with grownups & culture	● ● ●	Nothing	● ●
Knowledge	● ● ●	Value & long-term goals	● ●
Money	● ●	A part that drives the company	●
None	● ●	Project implementation	● ●
Acknowledgement	● ●	Customer Satisfaction	●
Experience	●	Reputation & image	●
Feedback	●	Staying up to trend	●

4.1.8 Relationship between Job Satisfaction and Organizational Engagement

Lastly, 13 out of 15 participants are satisfied with their jobs. However, only eight out of 15 participants rate 5 or 6 for the level of pride in job. Among the group of eight participants,two participants are no longer working for the organization, one participant does not see Company A as her organization, and one participant is at the organization to acquire experience and self development while only two participants see the gap and the opportunity for the company to grow and desire to push the company toward greater success, and one sees the company as *"one big step"* where a substantial amount of knowledge can be learned. This shows that having job satisfaction does not lead to organizational engagement.

4.2 Discussion

From the aforementioned findings, it is obvious that Thai culture plays an important role in Thai society. It can be seen that each of Hofstede's cultural dimension either positively or negatively affects job satisfaction within the workplace. Also, results show that high job satisfaction does not lead to high organizational engagement within Company A.

4.2.1 Relationship of Collectivism and Job Satisfaction

There exists a positive relationship between Collectivism and job satisfaction. For Collectivism, results are consistent with previous studies that state that "Thai subordinates are more team oriented" (Swierczek & Onishi, 2003, p. 207), and that "social relations are of utmost importance" (Komin, 1990, p. 696) to Thais. Even when faced with ambiguity, though most are nervous about taking risk and are uncomfortable with uncertainty, they still remain positive toward the situation for*"[they] still have a team."* This shows how having a good supporting system and relationship with the team, along with teamwork, are positively related to job satisfaction. Additionally, because Thai culture is a collectivistic culture, though the majority of the participants disagrees with or has negative feelings toward Thai culture, they still accept and try to adapt to the social norms in order to be accepted within the workplace.

Also, because Thai culture is a Collectivistic culture, Komin (1990) and Noypayak & Speece (1998) mention how "Thai people have a strong avoidance to conflict" in order to maintain harmony and good relationship with others. However, surprisingly, findings argue with previous studies and show that the majority of the participants choose to make confrontation rather than avoiding confrontation to resolve an issue. The majority of the participants prefer to face and discuss problems within the team, which greatly contradicts previous studies of Thai culture of maintaining harmony, face-saving, and being social-oriented.

4.2.2 Relationship of Uncertainty Avoidance and Job Satisfaction

Results also are consistent with Uncertainty Avoidance of previous studies that state how "Thai subordinates expect more opportunities and direction" (Swierczek & Onishi, 2003, p 204). Though participants prefer to have clear goals and directions regarding their tasks, the existence of ambiguity does not negatively influence participant's job satisfaction because of the strong support system from the team within the workplace. Participants feel that belonging to a team with great teamwork triumphs the negative aspects of job uncertainty. Thus, Uncertainty Avoidance is positively related to job satisfaction because of the influence of the high Collectivistic culture of the Thai society.

4.2.3 Relationship of Power Distance and Job Satisfaction

Findings for the dimension of Power Distance show that seniority system associated with Thai culture plays the most influential role in and has a negative impact on job satisfaction. The growth factor within the organization is negatively affected by seniority. Results agree with previous studies that say "seniority system discourages employees,

especially the younger generation, from working hard since their promotion is based on years of work instead of the level of achievement" (Swierczek & Onishi, 2003, p. 199)and how "the qualities of age and seniority - opposed to performance and knowledge - remain paramount" (Andrews, 2001, p. 164) in the Thai culture. Participants share the same attitudes of how

"*เด็กไฟแรงโคนบัง*" or "qualified younger generations of newcomers are discriminated and overlooked,"

how seniority leads to "kreng-jai," and amongst various other growth obstacles due to seniority. Though as a whole, participants are satisfied with their jobs, there is a negative impact on job satisfaction when solely the factor of seniority is focused,

"*Okay happy, but just not happy when I compare with other especially with those of higher seniority*" and how"*they will have more opportunity and all that.*"

However, the seniority system also has a positive influence. A finding also proves to be consistent with Komin, 1990, that states that Thai culture with strong hierarchical systems can result in Thai employees being motivated to work devotedly for manager whom they respect as one participant mentions how she would decide to leave Company A should there be a change in her team and boss.

Moreover, results show that there is very little power distance between managers and subordinates within the organization communication wise. All but one participant can freely communicate and share ideas and concerns with supervisors. The findings thus argue with a study that says "normally, Thais will not express their own feelings if they contradict the boss, especially in a large organization like SCG. If the boss does not want to hear about it, they keep quiet even though they may not feel satisfied" (Noypayak & Speece, 1998, p. 355). However, even though there is little Power Distance within the workplace, seniority still leads to "kreng-jai" and

"*sometime you have to keep your mouth shut*"

which makes communication within the workplace more difficult. Within the organization,

"*it's like everything, every process, everywhere you go. The way I talk to each team [...] the way each team cooperates with others.*"

4.2.4 Relationship of Femininity and Job Satisfaction

Furthermore, regarding the dimension of Femininity, results agree that "Thai consider prestige and social recognition as goals for success in life" (Komin, 1990, p. 697) and that "they prefer recognition from their superiors" (Swierczek & Onishi, 2003, p. 208). With the majority of participants highly value their contributions and recognitions, recognitions from managers and the company mean support and care. It can therefore be said that Femininity is positively related to job satisfaction.

4.2.5 Relationship of Job Satisfaction and Organizational Engagement

Regarding job satisfaction, 13 out of 15 participants say they are satisfied with their jobs due to the positive effects of the dimensions of Femininity, Collectivism, and Uncertainty Avoidance. The negative variables such as the seniority system from the dimension of Power Distance that impacts growth potential within the organization are also mentioned, but job satisfaction is still resulted. This is consistent with Ruthankonn & Ogunlana (2003) study that mentions how relationship with supervisors and coworkers and work conditions are crucial to achieve job satisfaction; however, results are also inconsistent with the study in how advancement, possibility of growth, and salary are crucial to achieve job satisfaction.

However, the possibility of growth and career advancement comes into play when it relates to organizational engagement. Participants who do not see much potential in career advancement do not feel attached to or choose to leave the company, even with high job satisfaction. This makes growth an important factor that affects employee's decisions to stay with the organization the most. Therefore, the overall high job satisfaction does not have a direct influence over organizational engagement. With growth and development as the main influence, organization engagement is difficult to achieve in Thai culture as well because growth is highly affected by seniority system. Moreover, results disagree with Rungruang & Tangchitnob (2010) study, for most participants are willing to do more than their job required, but they do not show strong emotional attachment to the organization. The willingness to perform is self-oriented or self-success-oriented. Extra efforts are made not for the benefit or the success of the organization, but for the participants themselves. Therefore, having high willingness to do more than the job role requires does not mean high organizational engagement. Thus, this is inconsistent with Yousef (1999) and proves that organizational engagement is not achieved even when high job satisfaction exists amongst the participants.

Also, knowledge and experience gained from being engaged in an organization are most admitted and valued by the participants,

> *"if you want to challenge yourself and try to get opportunity and face*
> *challenge you can find it here in this company."*

Quite surprisingly, none of the participants see the importance of low absenteeism and turnover rate when it comes to the benefits of organizational engagement.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to understand how Thai culture influences job satisfaction within Thai privately held companies, and whether or not high job satisfaction results in high organizational engagement within Thai privately held companies. To explain how Thai culture affects job satisfaction, Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is applied. In-depth interviewing method is used and data is collected from 15 participants from Company A that was chosen to represent Thai privately held companies in Thailand.

Findings show that the dimensions of Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Femininity have positive impacts on job satisfaction, while the dimension of Power Distance consisting of factors such as the seniority system has a negative impact on job satisfaction. As a collectivistic culture, Thais highly value the importance of social relationship. Having good relationships with coworkers and teamwork within the workplace proves to have a positive impact on job satisfaction. However, though Thai culture is a collectivistic culture that favors to maintain harmony and avoid conflict; surprisingly, confrontation is preferred by participants in order to resolve an issue. Moreover, Thai subordinates are uncomfortable with ambiguity and prefer directions regarding their tasks. However, the existence of uncertainty does not negatively impact job satisfaction because participants feel that having a supportive team with great teamwork overthrows the negative aspects of job uncertainty. Thus, the dimension of Uncertainty Avoidance is positively related to job satisfaction through the influence of Collectivism. Also, regarding Femininity, recognitions are important in the Thai society. Being recognized for their contributions from superiors translates into support from the organization. Therefore, this dimension is positively related to job satisfaction.

Unlike the aforementioned cultural dimensions, the dimension of Power Distance is negatively related to job satisfaction. Though participants feel that there is very little distance between subordinates and managers, there is still a sense of "kreng-jai" within the

workplace due to seniority. The seniority system also discourages employees to perform at their optimal, for advancement is based on years of work or age rather than skills and achievements. However, even with the negative influence of Power Distance, 13 out of 15 participants agree to have high job satisfaction because of the work conditions and social relationship.

Furthermore, job satisfaction that exists amongst participants from Company A does not develop into organizational engagement due to the lack of growth and career advancement, which is affected by the seniority system. Participants with high job satisfaction choose to leave the organization because of their career paths. Also, all participants are willing to do more than their role requires, but none shows strong emotional attachment to the organization. It can thus be concluded that high job satisfaction does not have a direct relationship with high organizational engagement.

Organizational engagement is important and beneficial, if achieved, to both the employees and the organization. Being engaged, employees acquire priceless experience and knowledge and pride in their jobs. In return, the organization benefits from project implementations from experienced employees as the employees are the factor that drives the company. Moreover, by retaining skilled employees, the company's reputation is heightened and brand image strengthened; resulting in being able to deliver to customers' great satisfaction and company's long-term achievement.

From the study, it can be said that the role of Thai culture has no effect on the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational engagement in Thai privately held companies in Thailand, for job satisfaction also does not lead to organizational engagement. However, the Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Femininity dimensions of Thai culture are positively related to job satisfaction whereas Power Distance consisting of rigid hierarchical system is negatively related to organizational engagement.

5.1 Recommendations

In order to achieve organizational engagement within the workplace, the seniority system of Thai culture should play less significant role. In order for an employee to be promoted, the employee should be judged on his or her performance and abilities rather than age or the length of period within the organization. The advancement of each employee should be backed up by KPI performance. Managers should evaluate each employee's KPI performance on a yearly basis and use fair judgment; giving credits to subordinates who show great accomplishments and have potential for growth. As the seniority system becomes less significant, this will lead to a positive change that affects employee's decision to stay and grow with the organization. In addition to yearly KPI, encouraging new roles and responsibilities to promote growth and advancement will help retain employees as well.

Additionally, to maintain the level of job satisfaction, managers should continue to delegate responsibilities to subordinates, publicly give rewards and recognitions, and promote teamwork throughout the workplace.Having a strong support system and a sense of teamwork within a workplace are the most crucial factors of sustaining employee's job satisfaction in a Collectivistic and Feminine culture like the Thai culture.

Furthermore, each employee should create a clear career path plan and keep track of his or her progress. In order to reach their career goals, it is important for employees to see the steps that are required to be taken within a certain timeframe. When shared with the organization, this will help the organization retain employees by being able to understand their wants and needs and to be able to best provide opportunities that match each employee.

6. Limitation

This study has a limitation in the size of the sample because the qualitative method is used. Findings from the limited number of participants from Company A may not be used to generalize the larger population. In applying the qualitative method with in-depth interviewing technique, findings are based on what participants say at face value and may contain biases. Participants' responses during the interviews are dependent on their current mood and their abilities to recall certain scenarios at the workplace. Therefore, based on participants' abilities to remember experiences from the past, memories can fade and become less accurate. Moreover, because this research topic is sensitive, participants may give answers that do not reveal their honest feelings and opinions. Because Thai culture is highly Collectivistic, participants may respond in such a way that makes them fit in with and be accepted by the people at the workplace.

Future research could extend to larger sample size and/or those who works in different companies but similar types of organizations. There may be unique characteristic of type of organizations (private and public) or (manufacturing and service) or (Thai owned or multinational company).

One of the most surprising discoveries from this study is how Thai employees prefer confrontation even when Thai is a Collectivistic culture that favors harmony. Future studies should focus on how the new generation is starting to detach from Thai social values. Is the detachment influenced by Western culture? Possible influencing factors include the increasing number of international schools in Thailand and of people going abroad to receive higher education, and the effects of Western media. Does it play a role in minimizing the seniority system? How does it positively or negatively affect job satisfaction and organizational engagement within Thai privately held companies in Thailand?

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