


Synergistic effects of employee engagement and trust in supervisor on organisational performance

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Orientation: Employee engagement (EE) may determine how trust in supervisor (TIS) affects organisational performance (OP), but it also encourages motivation, cooperation and commitment. This study examines their combined impact on Thailand's local government sector.

Research purpose: The goal of the study is to determine whether EE moderates the relationship between TIS and OP and to test the direct effects of EE and TIS on OP.

Motivation for the study: While supervisory trust is associated with better results, little is known about how engagement affects this relationship, especially in public organisations.

Research approach/design and method: Validated TIS, EE and OP scales were used in a cross-sectional survey of 401 officials from 31 local government units in a southern province of Thailand. Validity, reliability and predicted effects were evaluated using partial least squares structural equation modelling or PLS-SEM.

Main findings: Employee engagement ($\beta = 0.316, p = 0.001$) and TIS ($\beta = 0.595, p < 0.001$) both markedly enhanced OP. The positive TIS–OP link was amplified by high EE, according to a simple slope analysis, and the interaction term (EE \times TIS) was significant ($\beta = 0.080, p = 0.010$).

Practical/managerial implications: To optimise performance gains, leaders should combine trust-building techniques with engagement programmes such as empowerment, acknowledgement and participatory decision-making.

Contribution/value-add: This study offers a framework for integrating leadership and human resource strategies to achieve long-term organisational success, along with empirical evidence of the synergistic role of supervisory trust and engagement in improving public-sector performance.

Keywords: employee engagement; trust in supervisor; organisational performance; local government; PLS-SEM.

Introduction

Trust in supervisors (TIS) plays a critical role in shaping organisational performance (OP) by fostering a supportive work environment that enhances employee motivation, cooperation and job commitment. Research has consistently shown that trust in leadership, particularly direct supervisors, influences employee behaviour, engagement and, ultimately, overall organisational outcomes (Khawaja & Soomro, 2021). Employees who trust their supervisors are more likely to exhibit discretionary efforts, innovative thinking and proactive problem-solving, all of which contribute to superior performance at both individual and organisational levels (Yusnita, 2025). However, while the direct impact of TIS on OP is well documented, the role of employee engagement (EE) as a potential moderator remains underexplored. Given the increasing emphasis on engagement as a key driver of organisational success, it is crucial to examine whether engagement strengthens or weakens the relationship between trust and performance. Previous research indicates that when employees trust their supervisors, they are more inclined to reciprocate with increased effort and dedication – an idea grounded in social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 2017). This framework asserts that perceived trustworthiness in supervisors creates a sense of obligation in employees, encouraging loyalty and enhanced performance. The job demands–resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) complements this view by framing engagement as a vital psychological asset that enables employees to convert trust into productive outcomes. In a similar vein, leader–member exchange (LMX) theory emphasises that strong supervisor–employee relationships foster trust, subsequently enhancing organisational citizenship behaviours and performance (Badru et al., 2024). Although these theories are often

discussed individually, few studies have synthesised them into a cohesive framework. To address this gap, this study proposes an integrative model where SET (Blau, 2017) illustrates the motivational reciprocity initiated by trust, the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) highlights engagement as the energising mechanism, and LMX theory (Badru et al., 2024; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) explains how relational quality moderates these dynamics. Collectively, these perspectives form a psychologically and relationally integrated model linking trust, engagement and performance. Despite these theoretical underpinnings, the empirical evidence on the moderating role of EE remains limited. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of engagement in shaping workplace behaviours, showing that employees who feel engaged are more likely to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours and discretionary efforts, which contribute to enhanced performance (Olvera et al., 2024). However, other findings indicate that engagement alone may not be sufficient to drive performance unless combined with robust TIS (Suharnomo et al., 2024). This raises an important question: does EE amplify the positive effects of TIS on OP, or does it serve as a neutral or even dampening factor? To address this gap, this study aims to examine the direct relationship between TIS and OP while investigating the moderating role of EE. Specifically, it aims to investigate whether employees with high engagement levels are more responsive to their supervisors' trust, leading to improved performance. This inquiry is particularly relevant in contemporary workplaces, where organisations continuously seek ways to improve employee commitment and productivity. Understanding this dynamic offers valuable managerial insights into how organisations can leverage engagement strategies to maximise the benefits of trust in leadership. The need for empirical evidence on this topic is underscored by recent research, which emphasises that TIS does not automatically translate into performance gains. Instead, contextual factors – particularly levels of EE – determine the extent to which trust is transformed into meaningful work contributions (Nešić et al., 2020). For instance, a study examining the interplay between supervisor trust and employee outcomes found that while trust fosters organisational citizenship behaviours, its direct impact on job performance is not always statistically significant (Yusnita, 2025). This implies that additional mechanisms, such as engagement, may be necessary to realise the performance benefits of supervisory trust fully. Furthermore, research on high-performance work systems has indicated that feeling trusted by a supervisor significantly enhances engagement, which, in turn, promotes more positive work attitudes and behaviours (Suharnomo et al., 2024). However, the strength of this effect depends on employees' perceptions of their work environment as supportive and empowering. Thus, while supervisory trust provides a foundational condition for workforce productivity, engagement may serve as the key psychological mechanism that determines whether this trust yields tangible improvements in OP. The practical implications of this study are significant for organisational leaders and HR practitioners. By understanding the

conditions under which TIS leads to enhanced performance, organisations can develop targeted interventions to foster both trust and engagement. For instance, leadership training programmes that emphasise trust-building behaviours, coupled with initiatives to boost EE, may yield substantial performance improvements. Furthermore, organisations should consider designing work environments that encourage open communication, recognition and empowerment, as these factors are known to enhance both trust and engagement. In conclusion, while the direct association between supervisory trust and OP is well established, the contingent role of EE remains an underexplored yet critical dimension. This study addresses that gap by empirically examining how engagement moderates the trust–performance relationship. By integrating SET, the JD-R model and LMX theory, the research offers a theoretically grounded and empirically validated framework for understanding the synergistic effects of trust and engagement on performance. In doing so, it contributes not only to the academic discourse but also provides actionable insights for organisations aiming to optimise leadership strategies and develop high-performing, trust-driven work cultures.

Literature review

Trust in supervisor and organisational performance

From a SET perspective, TIS is a core antecedent of OP, as it shapes employees' willingness to reciprocate through enhanced effort and citizenship behaviour (Blau, 2017). Trust strengthens the quality of workplace interactions and fosters a climate conducive to collaboration, innovation and productivity. Recent empirical findings confirm that supervisory trust significantly enhances organisational citizenship behaviours, creative problem-solving and employee commitment, all of which positively influence performance outcomes (Ertosun & Aşçı, 2021). Moreover, trust not only promotes cooperation but also motivates employees to exceed formal job expectations, thereby reinforcing organisational effectiveness (Yusnita, 2025). Even in cases where trust does not directly translate into measurable performance gains, it often acts as a foundational mechanism that enables critical intermediate behaviours – such as extra-role efforts and discretionary work practices – that contribute to long-term performance success (Lay et al., 2020). A multilevel study by Salanova et al. (2021) further demonstrated that trust serves as a psychosocial resource, linking supportive organisational practices and team-level resources to improved performance, underscoring its influence across multiple organisational levels. Consistent with SET, these findings suggest that when employees perceive their supervisors as fair, competent and benevolent, they are more inclined to reciprocate with loyalty, psychological engagement and performance-enhancing behaviour. This evidence underscores the strategic value of building supervisory trust as a foundation for sustainable, high-performing organisational systems.

Employee engagement as a driver of performance

Drawing on the JD-R model, EE acts as a psychological resource that transforms organisational support into sustained energy, productivity and commitment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). It serves as a motivational driver, helping employees to cope with high job demands and use available resources – such as supervisory trust, autonomy and recognition – to optimise their performance. Engagement is widely recognised as a strategic asset that influences both attitudinal and behavioural outcomes in the workplace. Recent empirical evidence indicates that engaged employees exhibit greater commitment, enhanced productivity and a greater willingness to contribute beyond formal job expectations, thereby reinforcing organisational success (Wahyutomo et al., 2025). For instance, a study on public universities in Ethiopia revealed that vigour, dedication and absorption significantly improved OP, confirming the positive role of engagement in high-demand contexts (Gede & Huluka, 2024). Similarly, research within industrial organisations found that engagement directly enhanced job performance and mediated the influence of job satisfaction and communication satisfaction (Rizky et al., 2023). Engagement has also been linked to greater organisational citizenship behaviour, which contributes to long-term sustainability and service quality in public-sector organisations (Hazarika, 2024). In the corporate sector, case analyses such as Alibaba Group demonstrate how engagement initiatives drive innovation, customer satisfaction and competitive advantage (Ouhammou & Manar, 2024). Moreover, human resource strategies that prioritise participative decision-making, recognition and training have been shown to significantly strengthen the engagement–performance link (Arshad & Ming, 2024; Chatterjee, 2022). Taken together, these findings reinforce the JD-R model's proposition that EE is a pivotal mechanism through which both structural and relational workplace resources are channelled into sustainable performance outcomes.

The moderating role of employee engagement

According to LMX theory, the quality of the supervisor–employee relationship determines how effectively trust is transformed into performance-enhancing behaviours (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This theory emphasises relational differentiation, suggesting that employees in high-quality exchanges experience more mutual trust, support and respect, which makes them more responsive to organisational cues – such as engagement opportunities and performance expectations. In this context, EE serves as a critical moderator, shaping the strength and direction of the trust–performance relationship.

Nabilla et al. (2023) demonstrated that while trust fosters organisational citizenship behaviours, its effect on job performance was significantly more substantial when employees exhibited high engagement. Similarly, Yusnita (2025) found that engagement amplified the influence of

supervisory trust on performance by reinforcing motivation and perceptions of organisational support. Studies further highlight that engaged employees are more likely to transform supervisory trust into proactive behaviours and sustained contributions to organisational success (Alam et al., 2024). Moreover, Honnamane et al. (2024) emphasised that work engagement moderates the impact of tenure on both organisational citizenship behaviour and task performance, underscoring its contextual role in enhancing supervisor–employee dynamics. Relatedly, Darmawan and Alawiyah (2024) showed that flexible work arrangements and perceived supervisor support improved employee performance through engagement, suggesting that engagement acts as a critical mediator and moderator in trust-based workplace outcomes. Hossain et al. (2024) further argued that supervisor support strengthens the association between person–organisation fit and engagement, which ultimately boosts performance. These findings collectively reinforce the LMX perspective by illustrating how the depth of the supervisor–subordinate relationship influences the extent to which engagement can magnify the performance outcomes of trust. High engagement thus functions not only as a motivational resource but also as a relational amplifier within trust-driven performance dynamics. Based on the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1:** Trust in supervisor (TIS) has a positive effect on organisational performance (OP).
- H2:** Employee engagement (EE) has a positive effect on organisational performance (OP).
- H3:** Employee engagement (EE) moderates the relationship between trust in supervisor (TIS) and organisational performance (OP).

Research methods and design

Participants

The study sample comprised 401 officials drawn through simple random sampling from 31 local government units in a southern province of Thailand, including a provincial administrative organisation, two city municipalities, five town municipalities and 23 sub-district administrative organisations. To ensure effective participation, a team of 10 trained research assistants facilitated data collection by explaining the research objectives, emphasising confidentiality and voluntary participation, and guiding respondents through the survey process. Data were collected over 3 months (July–September 2023). The sample demonstrated diverse demographic characteristics, with 34.66% identifying as male, 43.89% as female and 21.45% as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other. In terms of marital status, 52.37% were single, 30.92% were married, 7.98% were divorced, 7.73% were separated, and 1% were categorised as other. Educationally, the majority held a bachelor's degree (55.86%), followed by 33.92% with higher qualifications and 1% with a lower qualification. The participants' mean age was 33.63 years (standard deviation [SD] = 6.97), with an average tenure of

6.62 years (SD = 5.27) and a mean monthly income of 22541.06 Thai Baht (approximately United States Dollar [USD] 623.16, SD = 8557.64). This demographic distribution provides a comprehensive foundation for interpreting the study's findings within the diverse local government context.

Measures

Trust in supervisor was measured using the organisational trust instrument developed by Mayer and Davis (1999), which was selected for its strong validity in assessing TIS. The instrument evaluates three key dimensions – ability, benevolence and integrity – through 17 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'). Example items include: 'My supervisor acts justly', 'My supervisor reliably keeps their commitments', 'My supervisor has the necessary expertise and abilities for their responsibilities' and 'My supervisor considers and recognises my welfare needs'. The instrument demonstrated excellent internal consistency in this study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95. Employee engagement was assessed using the ISA engagement scale developed by Soane et al. (2012), which captures engagement across three dimensions: intellectual, social and affective. The instrument comprises nine items, each rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'). Illustrative items include: 'I am invested in performing my tasks diligently', 'My career goals resonate with those of my colleagues' and 'I feel a positive sentiment toward my profession'. This scale also showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. Organisational performance was measured using a researcher-developed instrument comprising seven items, designed to capture perceptions of organisational effectiveness and efficiency. Participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'). Example items include: 'My organisation fully utilises my knowledge and skills to enhance work efficiency', 'My organisation strives to reduce administrative and operational costs' and 'Over the past two years, my organisation has performed well'. This instrument demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4, suitable for testing complex models with moderation effects. Reliability and validity were confirmed through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE), while discriminant validity was assessed via cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Model fit was evaluated using standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), normed fit index (NFI), d_{ULS} and d_G . These procedures align with recent structural equation modelling (SEM) practices, including applications in digital health and behavioural research (Alduosari et al., 2025). Hypotheses, including the moderating effect of EE, were tested through bootstrapping (5000 resamples) to obtain path coefficients, t -statistics and

p -values, consistent with recent SEM research (Alam et al., 2024; Amrina et al., 2024; Ghani et al., 2023).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University Ethics Committee (No. COA.2-042/2023).

Results

Measurement model assessment

Before testing structural relationships, the measurement model was evaluated for reliability and validity using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the HTMT ratio, ensuring the constructs were suitable for SEM.

The results in Table 1 show that the constructs of EE, OP and TIS exhibit strong reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha values (0.771 for EE, 0.924 for OP and 0.906 for TIS) exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate to excellent internal consistency (Kilic, 2016). Both composite reliability coefficients (ρ_a and ρ_c) exceed 0.77, aligning with recommendations that values above 0.70 indicate measurement reliability (Peterson & Kim, 2013). The AVE values – 0.536 for EE, 0.601 for OP and 0.763 for TIS – are all above the 0.50 threshold, signifying good convergent validity, meaning that each construct explains more variance than error (Ulbeigi, 2019). Overall, the findings demonstrate that the measurement instruments used for these constructs are psychometrically sound and suitable for further SEM (Coffie et al., 2023).

The cross-loadings in Table 2 provide evidence of discriminant validity by showing how strongly each indicator relates to its intended construct relative to other indicators. Items AE, IE and SE load more strongly on EE (0.800, 0.581, 0.794) than on OP or TIS, confirming their alignment with EE. Similarly, OP1–OP9 demonstrate higher loadings on OP (ranging from 0.740 to 0.842) than on other constructs, supporting construct validity. Trust in supervisor items ABL, BEN and INT display very high loadings (0.885, 0.865, 0.871) on TIS, surpassing cross-loadings with EE and OP, indicating strong construct specificity. Notably, the interaction term (EE \times TIS) loads exclusively on its designated construct (1.000) and shows negative correlations with the others, consistent with interaction modelling. This pattern demonstrates adequate discriminant validity, meaning the constructs – EE, OP and TIS – are empirically distinct, which is crucial for valid SEM.

TABLE 1: Construct reliability and validity.

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (ρ_a)	Composite reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
EE	0.771	0.790	0.773	0.536
OP	0.924	0.924	0.923	0.601
TIS	0.906	0.906	0.906	0.763

EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor; AVE, average variance extracted.

The Fornell–Larcker criterion in Table 3 evaluates discriminant validity by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct (on the diagonal) with its correlations (off-diagonal). The diagonal values – 0.732 for EE, 0.775 for OP and 0.874 for TIS – are all higher than their corresponding interconstruct correlations, such as EE–OP (0.640) and OP–TIS (0.748). This indicates that each construct accounts for more variance in its measures than in those of other constructs, supporting discriminant validity. Such findings suggest that EE, OP and TIS are empirically distinct, which is critical in ensuring reliable SEM results (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Tensay, 2018).

The HTMT ratio results in Table 4 assess discriminant validity by comparing correlations across constructs. All reported HTMT values fall below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (e.g. EE–OP = 0.636, EE–TIS = 0.662, OP–TIS = 0.747), suggesting adequate discriminant validity, because the constructs are more strongly related to their indicators than to others. The interaction term (EE × TIS) also shows moderate HTMT values with other constructs (0.263–0.483), reinforcing construct distinctiveness. These findings indicate that EE, OP and TIS are empirically distinguishable, supporting the robustness of the measurement model in SEM (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Dirgiatmo, 2023).

Structural model assessment

Following confirmation of the measurement model's reliability and validity, the structural model was assessed to test the hypothesised relationships among EE, TIS and OP. Model fit was evaluated using SRMR, NFI and discrepancy measures (d_ULS and d_G). Path coefficients were analysed with

TABLE 2: Cross loadings.

Constructs	EE	OP	TIS	EE × TIS
AE	0.800	0.512	0.549	-0.438
IE	0.581	0.372	0.389	-0.215
SE	0.794	0.508	0.507	-0.401
OP1	0.538	0.842	0.630	-0.195
OP2	0.520	0.794	0.589	-0.165
OP3	0.482	0.763	0.573	-0.187
OP4	0.489	0.755	0.563	-0.196
OP5	0.525	0.797	0.591	-0.259
OP6	0.475	0.744	0.557	-0.217
OP7	0.488	0.763	0.571	-0.214
OP9	0.448	0.740	0.564	-0.201
ABI	0.641	0.662	0.885	-0.335
BEN	0.524	0.647	0.865	-0.328
INT	0.574	0.652	0.871	-0.366
EE × TIS	-0.494	-0.263	-0.392	1.000

Note: Bold values indicate each item's highest loading on its intended construct, confirming discriminant validity.

EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor; AE, affective engagement; IE, intellectual engagement; SE, social engagement; ABI, ability; BEN, benevolence; INT, integrity.

TABLE 3: Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Constructs	EE	OP	TIS
EE	0.732	-	-
OP	0.640	0.775	-
TIS	0.664	0.748	0.874

Note: Bold values are the square roots of AVE for each construct.

EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor.

bootstrapping (5000 resamples) to assess the significance of direct and moderating effects. A simple slope analysis further clarified the moderating role of EE on the TIS–OP relationship.

Table 5 presents the model fit indices for both the saturated and estimated models in an SEM framework. The SRMR values (0.045 and 0.047) are below the recommended cutoff of 0.08, indicating a good fit between the hypothesised model and observed data (Shi & Maydeu-Olivares, 2020). The d_ULS and d_G values (0.211–0.235 and 0.164–0.166, respectively) reflect discrepancies between empirical and model-implied correlations, with lower values indicating greater model adequacy (Kono & Sato, 2022). The Chi-square statistics (366.530 for saturated; 378.558 for estimated) are significant, which is common in SEM with larger samples, but emphasis is placed on approximate fit indices rather than Chi-square alone (Sathyanarayana & Mohanasundaram, 2024). Finally, the NFI values (0.903 and 0.900) exceed the 0.90 threshold, confirming acceptable model fit. Overall, the indices indicate that the estimated model has a strong fit, validating its structural adequacy.

Table 6 and Figure 1 present the path coefficients explaining the structural relationships among EE, TIS, their interaction (EE × TIS) and OP. The results indicate that EE has a significant positive effect on OP ($\beta = 0.316, p = 0.001$), suggesting that higher EE is associated with better OP. Trust in supervisor demonstrates an even more substantial positive effect on OP ($\beta = 0.595, p < 0.001$), highlighting that employees' trust in their supervisors is a key driver of organisational success. Additionally, the interaction term (EE × TIS) is significant ($\beta = 0.080, p = 0.010$), showing that TIS enhances the positive impact of engagement on performance. Together, these findings suggest that both EE and supervisory trust, individually and jointly, play crucial roles in improving organisational outcomes.

TABLE 4: Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio.

Constructs	EE	OP	TIS	EE × TIS
EE	-	-	-	-
OP	0.636	-	-	-
TIS	0.662	0.747	-	-
EE × TIS	0.483	0.263	0.392	-

EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor.

TABLE 5: Model fit.

Fit indices	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.045	0.047
d_ULS	0.211	0.235
d_G	0.166	0.164
Chi-square	366.530	378.558
NFI	0.903	0.900

SRMR, standardised root mean square residual; NFI, normed fit index; d_ULS, Unweighted Least Squares Discrepancy; d_G, Geodesic discrepancy.

TABLE 6: Path coefficients.

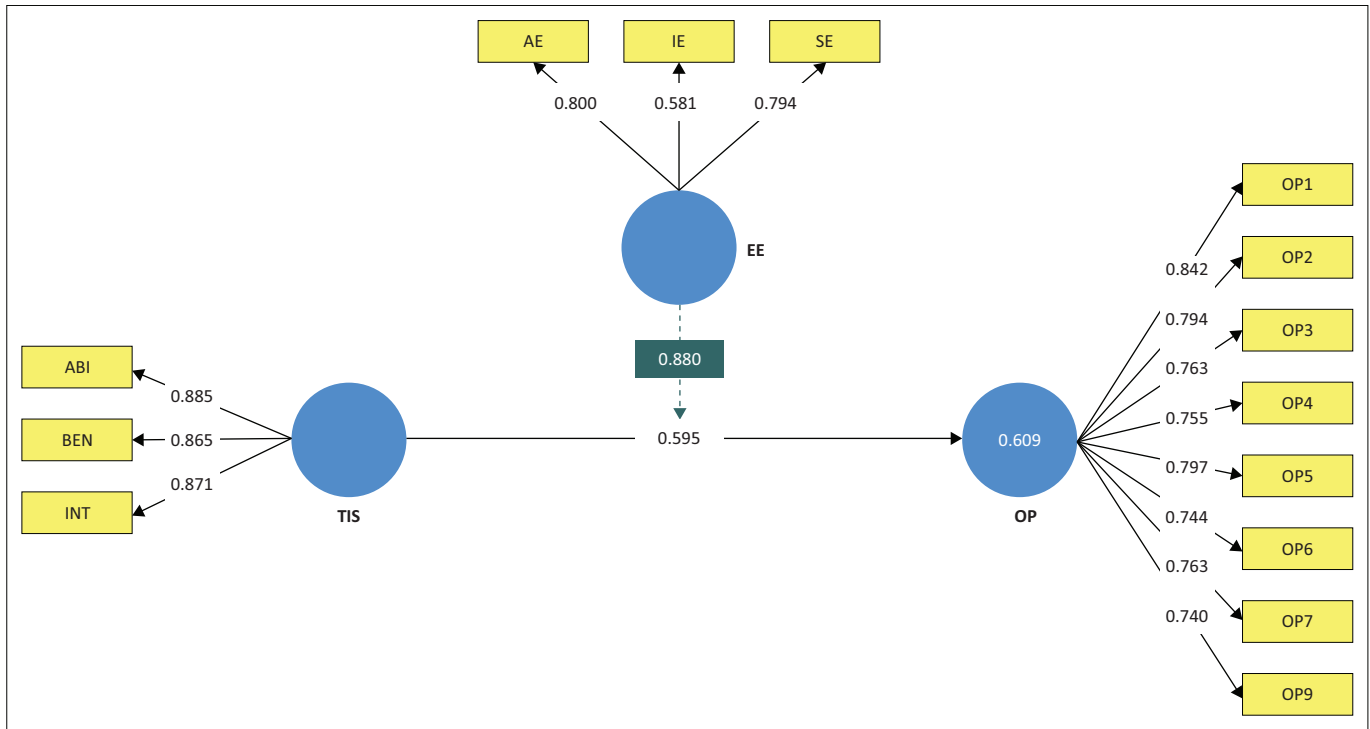
Relationships	O	M	SD	T statistics (O/SD)	p-values
EE → OP	0.316	0.325	0.094	3.354	0.001
EE × TIS → OP	0.080	0.080	0.031	2.568	0.010
TIS → OP	0.595	0.586	0.085	7.014	0.000

EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor; SD, standard deviation; O, original sample; M, sample mean.

Simple slope analysis

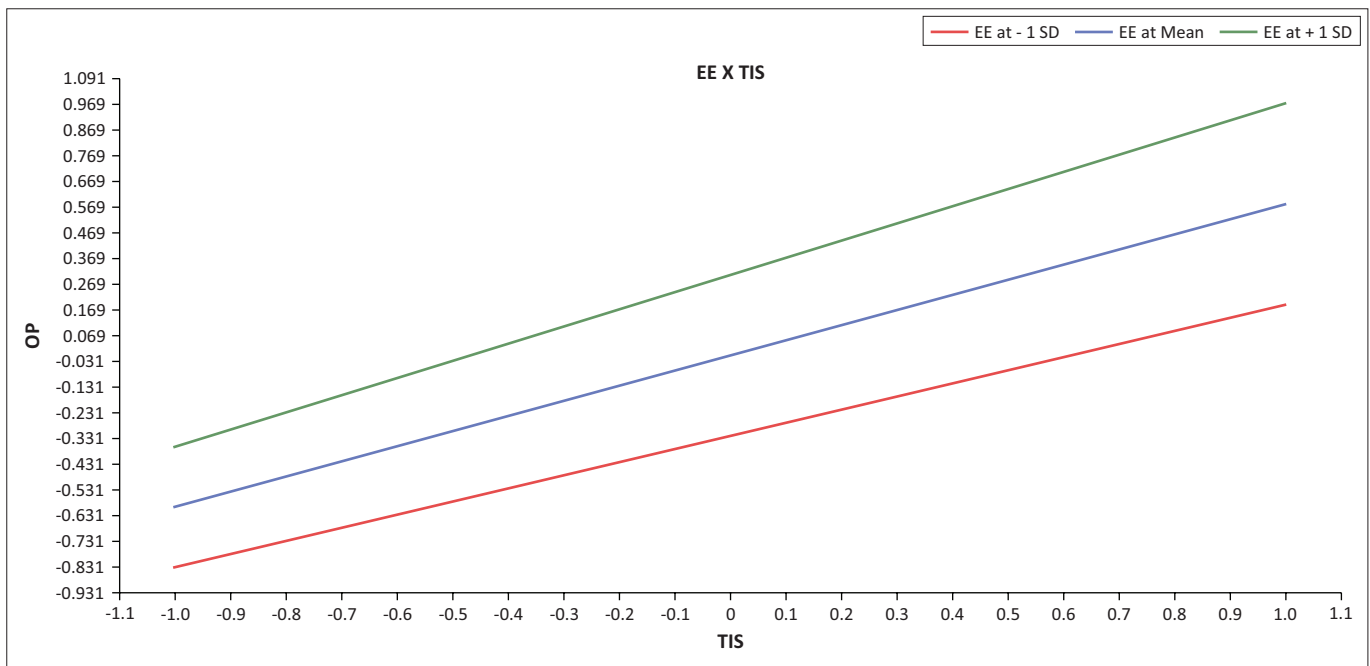
The simple slope analysis provides evidence for the moderating role of EE in the relationship between TIS and OP. As depicted in Figure 2, the positive association between TIS and OP varies with EE level. When EE is low (-1 SD; red line), the slope is positive but relatively shallow, suggesting that while trust in a supervisor contributes to better performance, its effect is limited in low-

engagement conditions. At average levels of EE (blue line), the slope becomes steeper, indicating a more substantial influence of TIS on OP when employees exhibit moderate engagement. Importantly, at high levels of EE (+1 SD; green line), the slope is steepest, demonstrating that the impact of TIS on OP is substantially amplified when employees are highly engaged. This interaction pattern supports the hypothesised moderation, showing that EE enhances the



EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor; AE, affective engagement; IE, intellectual engagement; SE, social engagement; ABI, ability; BEN, benevolence; INT, integrity.

FIGURE 1: Structural model results.



EE, employee engagement; OP, organisational performance; TIS, trust in supervisor; SD, standard deviation.

FIGURE 2: Simple slope analysis results.

extent to which TIS translates into OP. Conceptually, this implies that TIS relationships provides the foundation for improved performance. However, the magnitude of its effect depends on the degree of EE, with the most favourable outcomes achieved when both trust and engagement are high.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide robust empirical support for the theoretical proposition that both TIS and EE exert significant and positive influences on OP. Moreover, the moderation analysis affirms that EE strengthens the positive association between TIS and OP, indicating a synergistic interplay between relational trust and psychological engagement in shaping performance outcomes. The significant direct effect of TIS on OP aligns with extant literature, which demonstrates that supervisory trust catalyses discretionary behaviours, fosters cooperation and stimulates innovative contributions that collectively enhance organisational effectiveness (Ertosun & Aşçı, 2021). This is theoretically grounded in SET (Blau, 2017), which holds that perceptions of supervisor fairness, reliability and competence generate a normative obligation among employees to reciprocate through increased loyalty and performance. Consistent with the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), the positive association between EE and OP further illustrates that engagement functions as a critical psychological resource that sustains motivation and resilience in demanding work environments (Hazarika, 2024; Wahyutomo et al., 2025). Crucially, the significant interaction effect and simple-slope analyses demonstrate that the benefits of supervisory trust for performance are most pronounced under conditions of high EE. This observation aligns with prior studies that emphasise that engagement not only amplifies motivational processes but also serves as a contextual enabler of trust-based relational mechanisms (Alam et al., 2024; Darmawan & Alawiyah, 2024; Yusnita, 2025). Thus, the current findings advance theoretical discourse by empirically substantiating the proposition that EE serves as both a direct predictor and a moderator in the trust–performance linkage. Notwithstanding these contributions, the study is subject to several methodological and contextual limitations that warrant cautious interpretation. Firstly, the use of a cross-sectional survey design precludes any causal inferences among the studied constructs, limiting the inference of temporal or dynamic relationships. Future research employing longitudinal or experimental designs is recommended to validate causal mechanisms. Secondly, data were collected via self-administered questionnaires, which may introduce common method variance and response bias, despite efforts to minimise these risks through instrument validation and participant anonymity. Incorporating multisource or objective performance metrics in future studies could enhance measurement robustness. Thirdly, the research context – local government organisations in southern Thailand – presents cultural, institutional and sectoral characteristics that may not be generalisable to private-sector firms or to organisations in non-Asian or Western cultural settings. Trust norms, hierarchical structures and engagement

expectations may vary substantially across contexts, necessitating cross-cultural and multisectoral replication to evaluate the external validity and boundary conditions of the proposed model. From a practical perspective, the results underscore the imperative for organisational leaders to jointly cultivate environments of trust and engagement, particularly through leadership development initiatives, participatory decision-making and employee recognition systems. These dual pathways appear essential for translating relational trust into sustained OP.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that both TIS and EE play significant roles in enhancing OP, with EE further strengthening the positive effect of TIS on OP. The findings confirm that trust fosters a supportive and effective work environment, while engagement acts as a catalyst that amplifies the benefits of supervisory trust. The moderation effect identified through simple slope analysis indicates that organisations achieve the most remarkable performance outcomes when both confidence and engagement are high. These results underscore the importance of public-sector organisations implementing leadership practices that build trust alongside strategies that actively promote EE, thereby ensuring sustained organisational effectiveness and success.

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Competing interests

The author declares that no financial or personal relationships inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

CRedit authorship contribution

Waiphot Kulachai: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualisation, Writing-original draft, Writing-review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication, and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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