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PERCEIVED CAREER SUSTAINABILITY AS PREDICTORS OF  
RETENTION INTENTION AMONG FILIPINO TEACHERS IN  
THAILAND: A STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING APPROACH**

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# Work Engagement, Sociocultural Adaptation, and Perceived Career Sustainability as Predictors of Retention Intention Among Filipino Teachers in Thailand: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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**Abstract.** Teacher retention remains a persistent challenge in global education systems, particularly in contexts that rely on migrant educators to address workforce shortages. In Thailand, Filipino teachers constitute a significant segment of the foreign teaching workforce, yet empirical evidence explaining their retention intention remains limited. This study examined the predictive influence of work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability on retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. A cross-sectional survey design was employed, involving 516 Filipino teachers working in formal educational institutions across the country. Data were collected using validated instruments, and structural equation modeling was applied to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables. The results revealed that work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability did not exert significant direct effects on retention intention, and the overall structural model demonstrated minimal explanatory power. These findings suggest that individual-level psychological and adaptation-related factors may be insufficient in explaining retention intention in this context. Instead, retention appears to be more strongly shaped by broader structural and employment-related conditions. The study contributes to the literature by challenging prevailing assumptions about teacher retention and underscores the need to reexamine theoretical models and develop context-responsive strategies for supporting migrant teachers in cross-cultural educational settings.

**Keywords:** Career Sustainability; Retention Intention; Sociocultural Adaptation; Structural Equation Modeling; Work Engagement

## Introduction

Teacher retention remains a critical concern in education systems worldwide, particularly as institutions confront increasing workforce demands and persistent attrition. Globally, the shortage of qualified teachers continues to intensify, with an estimated need for 44 million additional primary and secondary educators by 2030 to achieve universal education targets (UNESCO, 2023). This challenge reflects not only the need for expanded access but also the difficulty of sustaining a stable teaching workforce, as high turnover disrupts instructional continuity, weakens institutional capacity, and compromises student learning outcomes (Qin, 2021; Ren et al., 2024). Consequently, understanding the factors that shape teachers' retention intention has become a central concern in educational research and policy.

From a theoretical perspective, retention intention can be understood as a function of both individual agency and structural conditions. Drawing on sustainable career theory, individuals' decisions to remain in a profession are shaped by the perceived viability, continuity, and meaningfulness of their career trajectories over time (Müller et al., 2022). At the same time, migration frameworks emphasize that migrant workers' career decisions are embedded within macro-, meso-, and micro-level conditions, including labor

market structures, institutional arrangements, and sociocultural integration processes. Within this integrated perspective, retention is not merely a psychological outcome but a situated decision emerging from the interaction between personal experiences and contextual constraints.

In migration-driven education systems, these dynamics become more pronounced. Teachers working abroad must navigate not only professional responsibilities but also the demands of adapting to unfamiliar sociocultural and institutional environments. In Thailand, this complexity is particularly evident. While local studies have identified factors such as low compensation, heavy workloads, and limited institutional support as contributors to teacher attrition (Promchart & Potipiroon, 2020; Saelee & Katenga, 2025; Sribayak et al., 2018), the country continues to rely on foreign educators to address workforce gaps and advance its internationalization agenda (Jampaklay et al., 2022; Pholphirul et al., 2023). Among these, Filipino teachers represent a substantial and visible group, numbering approximately 40,000 across educational levels (Ministry of Labour of Thailand, 2024). Despite their recognized contributions, empirical research examining the determinants of their retention intention remains limited (Methrujanont & Tonwimonrat, 2024).

Within this context, three interrelated constructs are theoretically relevant in explaining retention intention. First, work engagement, grounded in occupational well-being theory, reflects a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). High levels of engagement are expected to strengthen teachers' attachment to their professional roles and institutions, thereby increasing their likelihood of remaining. Second, sociocultural adaptation, informed by acculturation and cross-cultural adjustment frameworks, captures individuals' ability to effectively navigate the norms, practices, and expectations of a host environment (Mu et al., 2023). Successful adaptation reduces stress and facilitates functional integration, which may support continuity in employment. Third, perceived career sustainability, derived from sustainable career theory, reflects individuals' evaluation of their long-term career stability, growth, and alignment with personal goals (Müller et al., 2022). When teachers perceive their careers as sustainable, they are more likely to commit to staying in their current context.

Despite the theoretical relevance of these constructs, existing research often examines them in isolation and rarely adopts integrative analytical approaches that capture their combined influence on retention intention. This gap is particularly significant in cross-cultural teaching contexts, where retention decisions are shaped by the interplay of engagement, adaptation, and career-related considerations within broader structural conditions. As such, a more comprehensive analytical approach is needed to clarify how these variables function together in influencing retention intention among migrant teachers.

In response, the present study examines the predictive influence of work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability on retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand using structural equation modeling. By situating these variables within an integrated theoretical framework, the study aims to clarify their relative contributions and generate empirical insights that can inform context-responsive policies and leadership practices for improving teacher retention in cross-cultural educational settings.

## Research Questions

This study examined the predictive relationships among work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability, and retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. Specifically, it addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent does work engagement significantly predict retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand?
2. To what extent does sociocultural adaptation significantly predict retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand?
3. To what extent does perceived career sustainability significantly predict retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand?

## Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the predictive relationships among work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability, and retention intention among Filipino teachers in the Thai education system using a quantitative, cross-sectional design and structural equation modeling. The participants consisted of 516 Filipino teachers currently employed in formal educational institutions across Thailand, including public, private, and international schools, who had at least one year of teaching experience in the country. A non-probability sampling approach combining purposive and snowball techniques was employed; thus, the sample was not proportionally distributed across demographic and professional categories, and the findings should be interpreted as context-specific rather than representative of all Filipino teachers in Thailand. The study was delimited to four constructs (work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability, and retention intention) measured through self-report survey instruments, which may be subject to response bias. In addition, the study focused on retention intention rather than actual retention behavior, as longitudinal tracking was beyond its scope. Given its cross-sectional nature, the study captured responses at a single point in time and did not account for potential changes in the variables over time. While

structural equation modeling was used to examine predictive relationships, the design does not permit causal inferences. Finally, the findings are specific to the Thai educational context and may not be directly generalizable to other countries or migrant teacher populations.

## Literature Review

### Work Engagement and Retention Intention

Work engagement has been widely associated with positive professional outcomes, including retention intention. Conceptualized as a state of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003), it is generally linked to higher organizational commitment and lower turnover intention (Perera et al., 2018; Pourtousi & Ghanizadeh, 2020). Empirical studies consistently show that disengagement contributes to burnout and attrition (Shibiti, 2020), whereas strong engagement supports persistence in teaching roles (Avola et al., 2025). However, this relationship is not always stable across contexts. Evidence suggests that even highly engaged teachers may still intend to leave when structural conditions, such as low compensation or excessive workload, are unfavorable. This indicates that while work engagement strengthens professional attachment, its predictive power for retention intention may be constrained by external and contextual factors.

### Sociocultural Adaptation and Retention Intention

Sociocultural adaptation plays a crucial role in shaping teachers' experiences in cross-cultural environments. Defined as the ability to adjust to new cultural norms and institutional practices (Mu et al., 2023), it enables foreign teachers to function effectively both socially and professionally. Studies have shown that challenges related to language barriers, social integration, and institutional unfamiliarity increase turnover risks (O'Rourke, 2020; Yi et al., 2020), while successful adaptation supports stability in the host context. However, the influence of adaptation on retention intention is not consistently direct. Teachers who achieve functional adaptation may still choose to leave due to limited long-term opportunities or structural constraints. This suggests that sociocultural adaptation facilitates adjustment but does not necessarily guarantee long-term commitment.

### Perceived Career Sustainability and Retention Intention

Perceived career sustainability provides a future-oriented lens for understanding retention decisions. It refers to individuals' evaluation of their ability to sustain a meaningful, stable, and growth-oriented career over time (Müller et al., 2022). Research indicates that limited opportunities for career advancement and instability in employment conditions are associated with higher turnover intention (Abu-Tineh et al., 2023). In migration contexts, this construct is further shaped by economic motivations and transnational mobility (Cahilog et al., 2023; Magonsik & Ngag, 2025). Compared with work engagement and sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability captures a more strategic dimension of retention. Nevertheless, its influence may still be moderated by broader institutional and policy conditions, suggesting that perceived sustainability alone may not fully determine retention intention.

### Retention Intention in Cross-Cultural Teaching Contexts

Retention intention is understood as a deliberate decision shaped by the evaluation of professional experiences, career prospects, and contextual conditions. In Thailand, teacher retention is influenced by both local and cross-cultural factors. Studies have identified low compensation, heavy workloads, safety concerns, and limited institutional support as key contributors to attrition (Promchart & Potipiroon, 2020; Saelee & Katenga, 2025; Sribayak et al., 2018). At the same time, the country increasingly depends on foreign teachers to meet workforce demands and support internationalization efforts (Jampaklay et al., 2022; Pholphirul et al., 2023). Foreign teachers encounter additional challenges related to cultural adjustment, language barriers, and differing pedagogical expectations (Altaai & Gokgoz-Kurt, 2023; Schartner & Snodin, 2022; Yi, 2020). Despite the significant presence of Filipino teachers, empirical studies focusing specifically on their retention intention remain limited (Methrujanont & Tonwimonrat, 2024).

### Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature indicates that work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability represent distinct yet interconnected dimensions of teachers' experiences: engagement reflects present-oriented psychological investment, sociocultural adaptation captures functional and relational adjustment, and career sustainability addresses future-oriented evaluation. However, existing studies largely examine these variables in isolation, resulting in fragmented explanations of retention intention. This limits the ability to understand whether these factors operate independently, interact with one another, or are outweighed by structural conditions in migration-driven contexts. More critically, the absence of integrative empirical models constrains theoretical advancement and practical application. Without simultaneously examining these variables, it remains unclear which factors exert stronger influence or whether their effects are diminished when considered together. This gap is particularly significant in cross-cultural settings such

as Thailand, where retention decisions are shaped by the intersection of individual experiences and structural constraints. In response, the present study employs structural equation modeling to examine the combined and relative influence of work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability on retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. By adopting an integrative analytical approach, the study aims to provide a more comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of teacher retention in migration-driven educational systems.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the predictive relationships among work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability, and retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. The design enabled the systematic analysis of relationships among variables at a single point in time. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used as the primary analytical approach to test the hypothesized direct effects of the independent variables on retention intention. This study forms part of a larger explanatory sequential mixed-methods dissertation conducted for the Doctor of Education in Educational Management and Leadership at Sultan Kudarat State University. However, the present article reports only the quantitative component and focuses specifically on the structural relationships among the variables.

### Research Locale

Thailand served as the general locale of the study. The country is recognized as a major hub for foreign educators due to its expanding demand for English language instruction and its ongoing efforts toward internationalization. Filipino teachers constitute a significant portion of the foreign teaching workforce, distributed across multiple educational levels and institutional types. Given this geographic dispersion, the study adopted a nationwide scope. For analytical purposes, respondents were grouped into four regions: Northern, Northeastern (Isan), Central, and Southern Thailand. This grouping allowed the study to capture variations in institutional and sociocultural contexts across the country.

### Research Participants

The respondents consisted of 516 Filipino teachers currently employed in formal educational institutions across Thailand. Participants were teaching in both basic and higher education and were affiliated with public and private institutions. Eligibility criteria required that respondents were Filipino teachers currently employed as classroom teachers and had at least one year of teaching experience in Thailand. This ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to the sociocultural and professional environment necessary to evaluate the study variables. Individuals who did not meet these criteria were excluded. A non-probability sampling approach combining purposive and snowball techniques was employed. Purposive sampling ensured that only eligible participants were included, while snowball sampling facilitated access to a geographically dispersed population through professional networks. This approach is appropriate for studies involving migrant or hard-to-reach groups where no comprehensive sampling frame is available. The respondents represented a diverse demographic and professional profile. In terms of age, the largest proportion belonged to the 30 to 39 years age group (43.4%), followed by those aged 40 years and above (30.6%) and those aged 18 to 29 years (26.0%). With respect to gender, 52.3% identified as female, 29.1% as male, and 18.6% as LGBTQIA+, indicating representation across gender identities. Regarding civil status, the majority of respondents were single or never married (56.6%), while 43.4% were married or living with a partner. A substantial proportion, 64.5%, reported that their families remained in the Philippines, highlighting the transnational nature of their employment situation. In terms of educational attainment, most respondents held a bachelor's degree (75.4%), followed by those with master's degrees (21.9%) and doctoral degrees (2.7%). With regard to salary, 52.1% reported earning less than 30,000 THB per month, while 43.6% opted not to disclose their income, suggesting sensitivity in reporting financial information. Professionally, the respondents were generally experienced teachers, with 60.1% having seven or more years of total teaching experience. However, in the Thai context specifically, 47.5% had only one to three years of teaching experience, indicating relatively recent entry into the local education system. The majority were employed in private institutions (68.2%) and were primarily assigned to basic education (92.6%). Geographically, respondents were distributed across all regions of Thailand, with the highest representation from the Southern region (32.0%), followed by the Central region (28.1%), Northeastern region (22.3%), and Northern region (17.6%). In terms of language proficiency, most respondents reported beginner-level Thai proficiency (79.3%), reflecting ongoing adaptation challenges. Finally, the most commonly reported motivations for working in Thailand were economic reasons (35.1%) and professional development (29.1%), underscoring both financial and career-related drivers of migration.

## Research Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire composed of standardized and previously validated instruments. Work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2003). Sociocultural adaptation was measured using the Sociocultural Adaptation Scale–Revised (SCAS-R) developed by Wilson (2013). Perceived career sustainability was measured using the multidimensional scale developed by Kim et al. (2024). Retention intention was measured using the scale developed by Goodwin et al. (2019). Minor contextual adaptations were made to align item wording with the experiences of Filipino teachers in Thailand. These modifications did not alter the conceptual structure of the instruments. The questionnaire underwent expert validation and pilot testing prior to full administration. A pilot test involving 30 Filipino teachers confirmed the clarity and appropriateness of the instrument. Reliability analysis yielded Cronbach’s alpha values of .84 for work engagement, .89 for sociocultural adaptation, .80 for perceived career sustainability, and .73 for retention intention, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

## Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection was conducted through a structured, multi-stage process designed to ensure systematic coverage of Filipino teachers across Thailand while maintaining consistency and data quality. The procedure combined region-based distribution and network-mediated recruitment to address the geographic dispersion of the target population. A total of approximately 800 survey questionnaires were prepared and distributed across the four major regions of Thailand, namely Northern, Northeastern (Isan), Central, and Southern Thailand. To facilitate organized implementation, eight research assistants were designated, with two assigned to each region. These research assistants were oriented on the objectives of the study, inclusion criteria, and ethical procedures prior to deployment. They were responsible for distributing the questionnaires through institutional affiliations, school contacts, and established Filipino teacher networks within their respective regions. This approach ensured structured and regionally balanced dissemination of the survey. In addition to assistant-mediated distribution, the researcher conducted direct recruitment efforts to further expand participation. This involved outreach through professional engagements, personal networks, and informal community connections, particularly in areas where access could be more effectively facilitated. The integration of structured distribution and direct recruitment enhanced the breadth of coverage and increased the likelihood of reaching participants across diverse institutional and geographic contexts. Prior to participation, respondents were provided with a participant information sheet that clearly outlined the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and assurances regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed that their responses would be used solely for research purposes and that they could withdraw at any point without consequence. Informed consent was obtained before respondents proceeded with the questionnaire. The survey instrument was administered in English, given the professional proficiency of the respondents. However, provisions were made to clarify items when necessary to ensure accurate interpretation and minimize response bias. Upon retrieval, all completed questionnaires underwent systematic screening procedures. Responses were checked for completeness, adherence to inclusion criteria, and consistency. Questionnaires with substantial missing data or those from respondents who did not meet the eligibility requirements were excluded from the dataset. A total of 516 completed and valid responses were retained for analysis, yielding an approximate response rate of 64.5 percent based on the number of distributed questionnaires. This sample size was deemed sufficient for structural equation modeling and provided adequate representation across the four regions of Thailand.

## Results and Discussions

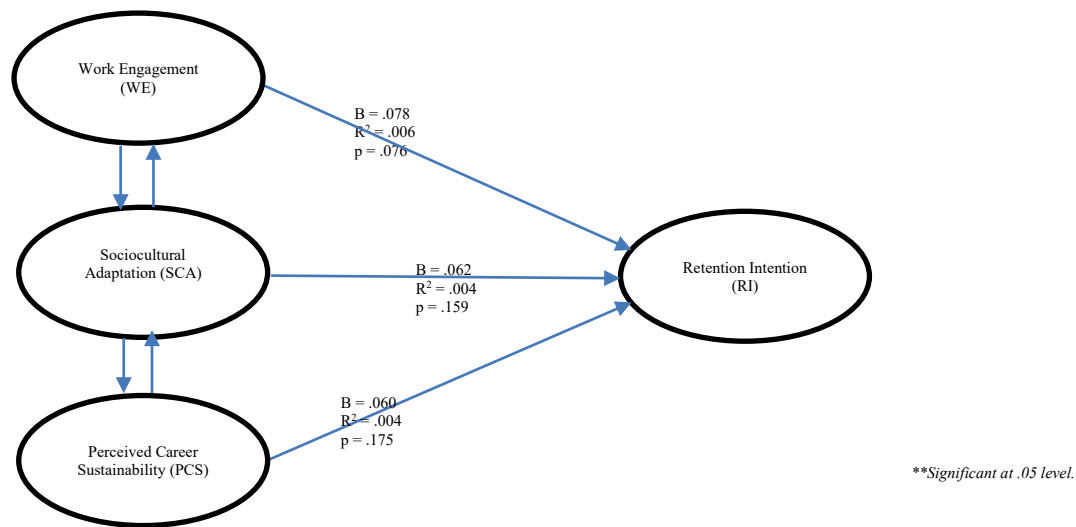
### Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Prior to conducting the structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis, it is necessary to present the descriptive statistics of the study variables to provide an initial overview of the respondents’ perceptions. Descriptive statistics offer a baseline understanding of the central tendencies and variability of work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability, and retention intention. Establishing this preliminary profile allows for a clearer contextualization of the subsequent structural analysis, ensuring that the interpretation of predictive relationships is grounded in the overall distribution of the data. Accordingly, the descriptive results are presented first, followed by the SEM analysis to examine the direct effects among the variables.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of the Main Study Variables**

Variable	Mean	SD	Description
Work Engagement (WE)	3.69	1.09	High
Sociocultural Adaptation (SCA)	3.26	1.15	Moderate
Perceived Career Sustainability (PCS)	3.47	1.13	High
Retention Intention (RI)	3.37	1.20	Moderate

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the main study variables. Work engagement and perceived career sustainability were rated high, while sociocultural adaptation and retention intention were at moderate levels. These descriptive results provide an initial overview of respondents' perceptions prior to the examination of structural relationships.



**Figure 1: Structural Model of Work Engagement, Career Sustainability & Adaptation as Predictors of Retention Intention among Filipino Teachers in the Thai Education System**

Figure 1 presents the structural equation model illustrating the direct predictive relationships among work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, perceived career sustainability, and retention intention among Filipino teachers in the Thai education system. In this model, retention intention is specified as the primary endogenous construct, while work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability are treated as exogenous predictors. All structural pathways were estimated simultaneously within a single integrated framework, allowing for the assessment of the unique and combined predictive contributions of each antecedent variable to retention intention. The model provides a comprehensive representation of the hypothesized relationships and serves as the basis for evaluating the extent to which each predictor influences teachers' intention to remain in the Thai education system.

**Problem 1: To what extent does work engagement significantly predict retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand?**

Structural equation modeling was conducted to examine the extent to which work engagement predicts retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. As presented in Figure 1, work engagement was specified as an exogenous predictor of retention intention within a model that simultaneously estimated the effects of sociocultural adaptation and perceived career sustainability.

The results indicate that work engagement does not have a statistically significant direct effect on retention intention ( $\beta = 0.078$ ,  $p = .076$ ). Although the relationship is positive, it does not meet the .05 level of significance, and its explanatory contribution is minimal ( $R^2 = .006$ ). This suggests that variations in teachers' levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption are not associated with meaningful differences in their intention to remain in the Thai education system. Consequently, the null hypothesis is retained. This finding challenges the widely held assumption that higher levels of work engagement necessarily lead to stronger retention outcomes. While prior studies have reported significant negative relationships between work engagement and turnover intention or positive associations with organizational commitment (Perera et al., 2018; Pourtousi & Ghanizadeh, 2020), the present result indicates that such relationships are not stable across contexts. In particular, it aligns with emerging evidence that the predictive role of work engagement weakens in environments where structural and contextual constraints are pronounced (Memon et al., 2021; Park & Johnson, 2019).

The negligible explanatory power of work engagement further supports the interpretation that engagement reflects current professional functioning rather than long-term career decision-making. In cross-cultural and migration-driven contexts, individuals may remain highly engaged in their roles while simultaneously maintaining conditional or time-bound intentions regarding their stay. This suggests that engagement does not necessarily translate into attachment to the host-country system. From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted through sustainable career theory, which posits that long-term career decisions depend on the alignment between individual resources and contextual opportunities (De Vos

et al., 2020; Müller et al., 2022). In this case, high engagement may indicate strong personal investment, but it does not guarantee retention unless supported by favorable external conditions such as job security, career progression pathways, and institutional support.

At the same time, insights from migration scholarship suggest that retention intention among internationally mobile professionals is shaped by broader transnational and life-course considerations (de Haas, 2021). Filipino teachers in Thailand may view their employment as part of a strategic trajectory rather than a permanent destination, with decisions influenced by financial goals, family responsibilities, and opportunities for onward mobility. While these structural and contextual factors are not directly measured in the present model, the limited predictive effect of work engagement indicates that individual-level psychological variables alone are insufficient to explain retention intention in this context.

## **Problem 2: To what extent does sociocultural adaptation significantly predict retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand?**

Structural equation modeling was conducted to examine the extent to which sociocultural adaptation predicts retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. As shown in Figure 1, sociocultural adaptation was specified as an exogenous predictor of retention intention within a model that simultaneously estimated the effects of work engagement and perceived career sustainability, thereby isolating its unique contribution to the outcome variable. The results indicate that sociocultural adaptation does not exert a statistically significant direct effect on retention intention ( $\beta = 0.062$ ,  $p = .159$ ). Although the relationship is positive in direction, it does not meet the conventional threshold for statistical significance. Moreover, its explanatory contribution is negligible, with an  $R^2$  value of .004, indicating that sociocultural adaptation accounts for only 0.4 percent of the variance in retention intention. This suggests that differences in teachers' ability to navigate cultural norms, institutional expectations, and social interactions in Thailand do not translate into meaningful differences in their intention to remain in the host-country educational system. Accordingly, the null hypothesis is retained.

This finding challenges a dominant assumption in cross-cultural and international education literature that successful sociocultural adaptation necessarily promotes stability and persistence in host-country employment. Sociocultural adaptation is typically conceptualized as a critical mechanism enabling individuals to function effectively within a new cultural environment by facilitating interpersonal competence, role performance, and psychological adjustment (Mu et al., 2023). Prior studies have often linked higher levels of adaptation with reduced adjustment difficulties and increased likelihood of remaining in the host context (O'Rourke, 2020; Yi et al., 2020). However, the present findings indicate that such relationships are not universal and may be contingent on broader contextual conditions.

A more nuanced interpretation is that sociocultural adaptation operates as a threshold or enabling condition rather than a linear predictor of retention intention. That is, once a functional level of adaptation is achieved, additional gains in adaptation may no longer exert a meaningful influence on retention decisions. Filipino teachers in Thailand may develop sufficient competence to navigate daily professional and social demands, yet this competence does not necessarily translate into a stronger commitment to remain. In this sense, adaptation supports operational stability but does not anchor long-term career commitment.

The extremely low explanatory power of sociocultural adaptation reinforces this interpretation. Rather than functioning as a determinant of retention, adaptation appears to facilitate coping, adjustment, and professional effectiveness within the host environment while leaving broader career decisions relatively unaffected. This aligns with perspectives that distinguish between functional integration and affective or long-term attachment, suggesting that individuals can be well-adjusted in practice without being fully committed to permanence in the host system.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings are more convincingly explained by structural and transnational perspectives on migration, which emphasize that retention decisions are embedded within broader socio-economic and institutional conditions rather than determined solely by individual-level adjustment. Migration scholarship highlights that internationally mobile professionals often make career decisions within dynamic life-course trajectories shaped by financial objectives, family considerations, and opportunities for upward mobility (de Haas, 2021; Heponiemi et al., 2019; Koveshnikov et al., 2022). Within this framework, sociocultural adaptation becomes only one component of a larger decision-making process.

For Filipino teachers in Thailand, successful adaptation may coexist with ongoing evaluations of salary adequacy, contractual stability, visa policies, workload conditions, and opportunities for advancement either within Thailand or in other countries. Although these structural and contextual factors were not directly measured in the present model, the negligible predictive effect of sociocultural adaptation indicates that retention intention is likely shaped more strongly by these external conditions than by cultural adjustment alone. This finding contributes to the literature by refining the role of sociocultural adaptation in retention models. Rather than conceptualizing adaptation as a direct predictor of retention intention, the results suggest that its role is more accurately understood as facilitative but not determinative. This challenges adaptation-centric explanations of retention and calls for more integrative frameworks that incorporate structural, institutional, and career-related variables.

### ***Problem 3: To what extent does perceived career sustainability significantly predict retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand?***

Structural equation modeling was conducted to examine the extent to which perceived career sustainability predicts retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand. As presented in Figure 1, perceived career sustainability was specified as an exogenous predictor of retention intention within a model that simultaneously estimated the effects of work engagement and sociocultural adaptation.

The results indicate that perceived career sustainability does not have a statistically significant direct effect on retention intention ( $\beta = 0.060$ ,  $p = .175$ ). Although the relationship is positive in direction, it does not meet the .05 level of significance, and its explanatory contribution is minimal ( $R^2 = .004$ ). This indicates that teachers' perceptions of maintaining a meaningful, stable, and growth-oriented career are not associated with meaningful differences in their intention to remain in the Thai education system. The null hypothesis is therefore retained. This finding challenges the expectation, grounded in sustainable career theory, that perceptions of career continuity and development are central determinants of long-term retention (Müller et al., 2022). While prior research has shown that limited career growth and perceived instability increase turnover intentions (Abu-Tineh et al., 2023), the present result suggests that such relationships are not stable in migration-driven contexts. In this case, perceived career sustainability does not function as a binding force that anchors individuals to a specific institutional or national setting.

A more plausible interpretation is that perceived career sustainability operates as a mobility-enabling resource rather than a retention mechanism. Teachers who perceive their careers as sustainable may be developing transferable skills, professional networks, and competencies that enhance their capacity to pursue opportunities beyond their current employment context. In this sense, sustainability does not necessarily imply permanence; rather, it may facilitate strategic mobility. The negligible explanatory power of perceived career sustainability reinforces this interpretation. Instead of predicting retention, career sustainability appears to reflect the quality of teachers' ongoing professional development without determining where that development will be realized. Filipino teachers in Thailand may perceive their careers as meaningful and growth-oriented while simultaneously evaluating alternative opportunities in other countries or sectors.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings suggest a need to reconsider how sustainable career theory is applied in migrant labor contexts. The theory emphasizes the alignment between individual resources and contextual opportunities over time (De Vos et al., 2020; Müller et al., 2022). However, in environments characterized by temporary contracts, visa constraints, and limited advancement pathways, such alignment is often unstable. As a result, individuals may sustain their careers through continuous development while remaining non-committal to a single location or institution.

This interpretation is further supported by migration and mobility frameworks, which highlight that internationally mobile professionals often view employment as part of a broader life-course strategy rather than a fixed career trajectory (de Haas, 2021). For Filipino teachers in Thailand, perceived career sustainability may be internally robust but externally constrained. Decisions regarding retention are therefore shaped less by perceptions of career viability and more by structural conditions such as compensation, contractual security, and opportunities for upward mobility. Although these structural factors were not directly measured in the present study, the negligible effect of perceived career sustainability indicates their likely influence. This finding contributes to the literature by reframing the role of career sustainability in retention models. Rather than serving as a direct predictor of retention intention, perceived career sustainability appears to support career continuity without guaranteeing organizational or geographic stability. This distinction is particularly important in cross-cultural and migration-driven contexts, where career development and retention do not necessarily coincide.

All hypothesized direct effects were not statistically significant at the .05 level. Specifically, the effect of work engagement on retention intention was non-significant ( $\beta = .078$ ,  $p = .076$ ), leading to the failure to reject  $H_{01}$ . Similarly, sociocultural adaptation did not significantly predict retention intention ( $\beta = .062$ ,  $p = .159$ ), resulting in the failure to reject  $H_{02}$ . Likewise, perceived career sustainability showed no significant effect on retention intention ( $\beta = .060$ ,  $p = .175$ ), leading to the failure to reject  $H_{03}$ .

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the study to ensure the protection, rights, and well-being of all participants. This research, conducted as part of a Doctor of Education dissertation at Sultan Kudarat State University, obtained prior ethical clearance from the Walailak University Ethics Committee in Human Research (WUEC-26-106-01). Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was secured after participants were provided with clear information regarding the study's purpose, procedures, and nature. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, with no personally identifiable information collected. The survey process was conducted without coercion, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. All data gathered were used strictly for academic and research purposes and were managed in accordance with established data protection protocols. Digital data were stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher, while any physical documents were kept in a secure, locked location. Data will be retained only for a limited period following institutional guidelines and will be permanently deleted or destroyed thereafter. Furthermore, the

reporting of findings was carried out responsibly to ensure accuracy and to prevent misrepresentation or identification of participants. These measures ensured adherence to ethical principles such as respect for persons, beneficence, and integrity in educational research.

## Conclusion

This study examined the predictive influence of work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability on retention intention among Filipino teachers in Thailand using structural equation modeling. The study concludes that none of the three variables significantly predicted retention intention, and the model demonstrated minimal explanatory power. These results suggest that the examined individual-level factors do not meaningfully account for teachers' intention to remain in the Thai education system. The study contributes to the literature by challenging the assumption that psychological engagement, cultural adaptation, and career-related perceptions are reliable predictors of retention in cross-cultural teaching contexts. Instead, the findings indicate that retention intention may not be sufficiently explained by individual-level variables alone. While the study did not directly examine structural factors, the limited predictive effects observed suggest that broader contextual conditions may play a more salient role in shaping retention decisions among migrant teachers. As such, future research should incorporate structural and institutional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of retention in international education settings. Overall, the findings highlight the need for a more context-sensitive approach to teacher retention, particularly in migration-driven systems, where decisions to remain are likely influenced by factors beyond individual engagement, adaptation, and career perceptions.

## Recommendations

The findings indicate that work engagement, sociocultural adaptation, and perceived career sustainability do not significantly predict retention intention, suggesting that educational institutions in Thailand should shift their focus toward structural and institutional interventions. Schools are encouraged to improve salary competitiveness, provide longer or renewable contracts, regulate teaching loads, and establish formal support systems such as administrative assistance and grievance mechanisms. While sociocultural adaptation was not a significant predictor, it remains important for teachers' daily functioning; thus, institutions should still implement structured onboarding programs, peer mentoring, and basic Thai language support. However, these initiatives should be integrated into broader retention strategies rather than treated as standalone efforts. Additionally, the lack of influence of perceived career sustainability highlights the need for clearer career pathways, including defined promotion tracks, access to funded professional development, and opportunities for leadership roles to better align career growth with long-term commitment. At the policy level, efforts should focus on addressing systemic constraints that may affect retention, such as improving visa and work permit processes, supporting longer-term employment arrangements, and ensuring equitable working conditions between local and foreign teachers. Given that the variables examined in this study explain only a small portion of retention intention, future research should explore other structural and organizational factors, including compensation, job security, workload, and organizational support. Longitudinal studies are recommended to capture changes in retention over time, while mixed-methods approaches can provide deeper insights into teachers' decision-making processes. Expanding similar studies to other national contexts will also help determine whether these findings are unique to Thailand or reflect broader trends in migrant teacher retention.

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