

A MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF MAYORS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF THAILAND

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Abstract

The local governance system in Thailand has undergone continuous development, including reforms of local administrative organization structures and adjustments to position acquisition processes, separating administrative executives from local councils. This research aims to: 1) analyze the components of leadership among mayors in the central region of Thailand. 2) Assess the leadership level among mayors in the central region of Thailand. 3) Develop a model for the leadership development of mayors in the central region of Thailand. A mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative research was employed. The quantitative study involved a sample of 400 mayors from municipalities across the central provinces of Thailand, including city municipalities, town municipalities, and subdistrict municipalities. The sample size was determined based on 20 times the number of observed variables and selected using a multistage random sampling method. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using structural equation modeling. The qualitative research involved in-depth interviews with 30 key informants, including mayors, academics specializing in local political leadership, and senior officials responsible for developing and promoting local governance. The results revealed that: 1) The leadership components of mayors in the central region of Thailand include competence, change leadership, internal community collaboration, external community engagement, and ethics. 2) Competence, change leadership, internal community collaboration, external community engagement, and ethics were rated high. Moreover, 3) A Model for Leadership Development of Mayors in the Central Region of Thailand. The LDM Model (Model of Leadership Development Mechanism for Mayors in the Central Region of Thailand) was developed by the researcher to emphasize the importance of mechanisms that encourage collaboration between mayors and citizens, partnerships with both public and private sectors, and the use of online platforms or applications to collect public feedback.

Keywords: Competence, Change Leadership, External Community Engagement, Ethics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a cornerstone of effective governance and societal development, particularly at the municipal level, where leaders directly interact with communities and address their unique needs. Municipal leaders are not only responsible for managing day-to-day administrative tasks but also play a pivotal role in shaping the long-term vision and development of their communities.

In Thailand, the role of mayors in the central region is pivotal in fostering sustainable growth, managing resources effectively, and addressing the dynamic challenges of urbanization and regional development. These responsibilities encompass diverse areas such as infrastructure

development, environmental conservation, public service delivery, and economic planning, making mayors the linchpins of progress in their municipalities (Northouse, 2021).

The central region of Thailand, including Bangkok, has long been recognized as the economic heart of the nation. With a population that represents a significant portion of the country's total population, and the concentration of many key industries and services, it is unsurprising that the region plays a central role in shaping national policy and development. The city of Bangkok, often referred to as the "City of Angels," stands as a global metropolis, a dynamic urban center that is not only the capital of Thailand but also a significant player in the global economy. The central region and Bangkok in particular are emblematic of Thailand's rapid modernization and urbanization over the past few decades, drawing attention to the intersection of tradition and progress, rural and urban life, and local governance and global economic forces. The Rise of Urbanization and Its Challenges One of the most striking features of the central region's development is the rapid pace of urbanization.

Over the last several decades, Thailand has experienced a dramatic shift from a primarily rural society to an urban one. Bangkok, with its ever-growing skyline and expanding suburban areas, has seen an influx of people from rural parts of Thailand, seeking better job prospects, improved living standards, and access to education and healthcare. However, this urban growth has not been without its challenges. The population growth has led to increased demand for housing, infrastructure, and services. This has placed immense pressure on city planners, local government officials, and mayors, who are tasked with managing this growth in a sustainable and equitable way. One of the most visible consequences of rapid urbanization in Bangkok is the chronic problem of traffic congestion. As more people move to the city, the roads become more crowded, and public transportation systems, while expanding, still face difficulties in serving the growing population effectively. This has led to longer commute times, increased air pollution, and higher levels of stress for residents.

The environmental impact of urbanization is another major concern. Rapid construction, deforestation, and industrialization have resulted in the degradation of natural resources, increased pollution, and reduced green spaces in and around Bangkok. This urban sprawl threatens biodiversity, contributes to air and water pollution, and exacerbates flooding during the rainy season, particularly in low-lying areas that are vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The central region, particularly Bangkok, also faces significant waste management challenges, with large amounts of waste generated by the growing urban population. Another critical issue is the rising economic inequality within the region. As the city grows, the divide between the affluent and the disadvantaged becomes more pronounced. While urban areas like Bangkok offer opportunities for education, employment, and business, rural areas and suburban districts are often left behind, facing high rates of poverty and lack of access to resources.

Economic inequality has created tensions within the central region, with marginalized communities struggling to keep pace with the rapid development taking place around them. Globalization and Technological Advancements as Thailand's central region has evolved, it has also become increasingly integrated into the global economy. Globalization has brought new opportunities for economic growth, as foreign investment flows into the region, and

international trade networks expand. Bangkok, in particular, has become a major hub for finance, commerce, and tourism, attracting multinational corporations and international investors. This integration into the global economy has driven economic growth but has also increased competition, leading to pressure on local industries and small businesses to adapt or face obsolescence. The challenges posed by globalization are multifaceted. Local government officials and leaders must balance the demands of international investors and global economic trends with the need to protect local industries, traditions, and communities. At the same time, globalization has increased the complexity of governance. With economic and social issues transcending national borders, local leaders must navigate international treaties, trade agreements, and diplomatic relations, all of which require a sophisticated understanding of global issues and trends.

Technological advancements, too, have added a new layer of complexity to governance in the central region. With the rapid adoption of digital technologies, there is a growing need for local leaders to embrace innovation in governance and administration. From smart city initiatives to the use of artificial intelligence and big data in decision-making, mayors and other leaders in the central region must stay ahead of the curve in integrating technology into the public sector. For example, the use of digital platforms for public services, such as online permits and applications, has streamlined many processes and made local governance more efficient. However, these technological advancements also require significant investment in infrastructure, cybersecurity, and staff training, all of which present new challenges for local governments. Moreover, the rise of social media and digital platforms has brought about changes in how citizens engage with their governments. Social media has become a tool for both communication and protest, with residents of Bangkok and other municipalities using platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to voice their concerns, share information, and organize movements. This has created new channels for engagement but also new challenges for local leaders who must manage public perception and respond to demands for accountability and transparency. The Need for Effective Leadership In the face of these multifaceted challenges, the need for strong, visionary leadership has never been greater. The mayors of Bangkok and the surrounding municipalities are at the forefront of addressing issues that impact millions of lives. Effective leadership in this context requires not only a deep understanding of local issues but also the ability to navigate the complexities of national and global forces that shape the region's development. Leaders in the central region must be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and strategies to tackle the issues posed by rapid urbanization, globalization, and technological change.

They must be adept at balancing the needs of different stakeholders, including residents, businesses, international investors, and environmental groups. Moreover, they must be able to make difficult decisions regarding resource allocation, infrastructure development, and social policies that address the needs of the disadvantaged while fostering growth and innovation. At the same time, these leaders must be capable of creating an inclusive and sustainable vision for the future of the central region. As urbanization and globalization continue to shape the region, it is critical that leaders prioritize social equity and environmental sustainability in their decision-making. This means addressing the needs of marginalized communities, reducing

inequality, and promoting policies that reduce the region's environmental footprint. Local leaders must work collaboratively with national government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to achieve these goals. The role of local leaders in the central region has become more challenging and more important than ever. As the region continues to evolve, the need for effective, forward-thinking leadership that can balance growth with sustainability, equity with opportunity, and tradition with progress will only increase. The future of the central region, and Thailand as a whole, will depend on the ability of these leaders to navigate the complexities of urbanization, globalization, and technological advancement while ensuring that the benefits of development are shared by all.

One of the key challenges facing mayors in the central region is balancing economic growth with sustainability. While urban expansion and industrial development have driven economic prosperity, they have also led to environmental concerns such as air and water pollution, deforestation, and the depletion of natural resources. Mayors must adopt leadership approaches that prioritize sustainable practices while ensuring that their municipalities remain competitive and attractive to investors. This requires a deep understanding of sustainable development principles, as well as the ability to engage stakeholders from various sectors to build consensus on critical issues (Friedman, 2022).

Another pressing challenge is the need for inclusivity in governance. The central region is home to a diverse population with varying socio-economic backgrounds, cultural traditions, and community needs. Effective leadership in this context demands the ability to foster social cohesion, promote equitable access to resources, and address the concerns of marginalized groups (Bass & Riggio, 2022). Mayors must be adept at communicating with constituents, mediating conflicts, and building trust among diverse stakeholders to create a sense of shared purpose and collective progress. In addition to these challenges, the central region's strategic importance as an economic hub necessitates a focus on innovation and adaptability. Mayors must stay ahead of emerging trends in technology, infrastructure, and public administration to ensure that their municipalities remain at the forefront of development. For instance, the adoption of smart city initiatives, which leverage digital technologies to improve urban management and service delivery, has become a priority for many municipalities in the region. Leaders must possess the vision and technical acumen to implement such initiatives effectively while addressing potential challenges related to cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital literacy (Yukl, 2021).

The central region of Thailand, characterized by its economic dynamism and cultural heritage, presents a unique backdrop for examining leadership development. As urban centers expand and rural areas face modernization pressures, mayors are increasingly called upon to demonstrate visionary leadership, strategic planning, and adaptive governance. Their ability to navigate these challenges directly influences the quality of life for residents and the overall progress of their municipalities (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2021). Yet, studies indicate a gap in systematic leadership training tailored to the specific needs of mayors in this region, highlighting the urgency for a structured developmental model (Kotter, 2021; Heifetz et al., 2021). The role of mayors in Thailand has evolved significantly over the past decades,

transitioning from administrative figureheads to proactive agents of change. This shift reflects broader global trends where local governance is increasingly recognized as a critical arena for implementing policies that resonate with grassroots realities (Friedman, 2022; Bass & Riggio, 2022). In the central region, this evolution is particularly pronounced due to its strategic importance as the economic and political hub of the country (Cohen, 2022).

Despite this evolution, there remains a lack of comprehensive leadership development programs specifically designed for mayors. Existing training initiatives often adopt generic approaches that fail to address the distinct challenges and opportunities of the central region. For instance, mayors must balance traditional practices with innovative solutions, navigate diverse stakeholder expectations, and foster collaboration across sectors (Senge, 2021). These multifaceted responsibilities underscore the need for a targeted leadership development model that equips mayors with the requisite skills, knowledge, and mindset to excel in their roles (Goleman, 2021). Furthermore, the central region's rapid urbanization and economic growth have amplified the complexity of municipal governance. Issues such as environmental sustainability, infrastructure development, and social equity demand not only technical expertise but also strategic foresight and ethical leadership (Friedman, 2022; Schwartz, 2021). Mayors, as the primary decision-makers, must therefore embody a leadership style that is both transformative and inclusive. A well-structured leadership development model can serve as a catalyst for nurturing such qualities, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of local governance and contributing to the region's holistic advancement (Brown, 2021).

The significance of this research lies in its potential to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks of leadership and the practical realities faced by mayors in the central region. By identifying key competencies, challenges, and best practices, this study aims to propose a model that is both contextually relevant and practically implementable (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2021). Such a model can not only guide the professional growth of current mayors but also serve as a benchmark for future leadership training programs across Thailand (Heifetz et al., 2021; Kotter, 2021). In conclusion, the development of a tailored leadership model for mayors in the central region of Thailand is both timely and imperative. It addresses a critical gap in existing governance frameworks and holds the promise of empowering mayors to lead their municipalities toward sustainable and inclusive development. This introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of the proposed model, its theoretical underpinnings, and its practical applications in subsequent sections.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research aims to:

- 1) Analyze the components of leadership among mayors in the central region of Thailand.
- 2) Assess the leadership level among mayors in the central region of Thailand.
- 3) Develop a model for the leadership development of mayors in the central region of Thailand.

3. METHODOLOGY

Population and Sample Scope

The population consists of mayors working in the central provinces of Thailand, as defined by the administrative divisions of the National Geographic Committee. This includes a total of 21 provinces: Kamphaeng Phet, Chai Nat, Nakhon Nayok, Nakhon Pathom, Nakhon Sawan, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Lopburi, Samut Prakan, Samut Songkhram, Samut Sakhon, Saraburi, Sing Buri, Sukhothai, Suphan Buri, Ang Thong, and Uthai Thani. Together, these provinces comprise 471 municipalities, town municipalities, and sub-district municipalities (Department of Local Administration, 2024), with a total of 471 mayors in the central region.

The sample group includes 300 mayors from cities, town municipalities, and sub-district municipalities in the central region of Thailand. The sample was selected using multistage random sampling.

Key Informants

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with experts relevant to the research topic: the development of a leadership model for mayors in the central region of Thailand. The aim is to propose a model for achieving success in leadership development tailored to this group.

The experts were categorized into three groups: Mayors with recognized skills, knowledge, and leadership capabilities, as evidenced by awards or achievements reflecting outstanding leadership, totaling 10 individuals. Academics specializing in local political leadership, with experience in conducting at least five research studies on the topic and holding a doctorate degree, totaling 10 individuals. Senior executives from agencies responsible for overseeing, developing, and promoting local government, totaling 10 individuals.

This resulted in a total of 30 experts, selected using intensity sampling based on specific criteria and purposive sampling methods.

Scope of Variables

Latent Variable: Mayor Leadership

Latent Variable: Workplace Competencies, consisting of:

Understanding of Governmental Administrative Regulations

Community Development Skills

Proactive Management Skills (Proactiveness Administration Skills)

Latent Variable: Creation of Changes, consisting of:

Time Scope

This research is scheduled from May 2024 to October 2024.

Spatial Scope

Data collection was conducted in municipalities, towns, and sub-district municipalities located within the central provinces of Thailand, as defined by the National Geographic Committee. These 21 provinces are Kamphaeng Phet, Chai Nat, Nakhon Nayok, Nakhon Pathom, Nakhon Sawan, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Lopburi, Samut Prakan, Samut Songkhram, Samut Sakhon, Saraburi, Sing Buri, Sukhothai, Suphan Buri, Ang Thong, and Uthai Thani, covering a total of 471 locations (Department of Local Administration Promotion, 2024).

4. RESULT

Symbols and Their Meanings

Symbol	Meaning
Mean	Mean (Average)
SD	Standard Deviation
r	Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient
R ²	Squared Multiple Correlation
χ^2	Chi-Square Statistic
df	Degrees of Freedom
χ^2 / df	Chi-Square Ratio to Degrees of Freedom (Should be less than or equal to 5.00 to indicate a good fit)
P-value	Statistical Significance Level
λ	Factor Loading expressed as Standardized Scores
Beta	Regression Coefficient in Standardized Scores
S.E.	Standard Error of Factor Loading
e	Standard Error of Indicator
t	t-Ratio for testing the statistical significance of the regression coefficient
F	F-Ratio for testing the statistical significance of the joint relationship in prediction
SS	Sum of Squares
MSE	Mean Square Error
CFI	Comparative Fit Index (Should be greater than or equal to 0.90 to indicate a good fit)
GFI	Goodness of Fit Index (Should be greater than or equal to 0.90 to indicate a good fit)
AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (Should be greater than or equal to 0.90 to indicate a good fit)
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (Should be less than or equal to 0.08 to indicate a good fit)

Latent Variables (Laten Variable)	Observed Variables (Observation Variable)
Work Capability (WKCPT)	- Understanding Government Administration Procedures (UGAR)
	- Community Development Skills (CDSK)
	- Proactive Management Skills (PRAS)
Creating Change (CRCHG)	- Vision (VISI)
	- Inspiring Others (ISRM)
	- Leading by Example (RLMD)
Building Community Collaboration (BCWCM)	- Building Strong Relationships within the Community (SRLC)
	- Stimulating Community Learning (CMLRN)

	- Encouraging Community Innovation (CMINN)
Building External Relationships (BREXC)	- Humility (HUMLY)
	- Seeking Partners for the Organization (ALLOG)
	- Communication Skills (CMMCS)
Virtue and Ethics (VTET)	- Considering the Community's Best Interests (BEFTK)
	- Honesty and Integrity (HONTY)
	- Empathy for Colleagues (EMPAT)

Demographic Information

Variable	Number (People)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	201	67.00
Female	99	33.00
Total	300	100.00
Age		
35 - 50 years	105	35.00
51 years or older	195	65.00
Total	300	100.00
Education Level		
Bachelor's Degree	219	73.00
Master's Degree or Higher	81	27.00
Total	300	100.00

Explanation of the Data

Gender Distribution: The majority of the sample are male, with 201 males representing 67.00% of the total sample. There are 99 females, accounting for 33.00% of the sample.

Age Distribution: A large portion of the sample, 195 individuals (65.00%), are aged 51 years or older. The remaining 105 individuals (35.00%) are aged between 35 to 50 years.

Education Level: The majority of respondents hold a Bachelor's Degree, with 219 individuals (73.00%), 81 individuals (27.00%) have a Master's Degree or higher. This demographic.

Hypothesis Model Test

The model fit of the Hypothesis Model with empirical data was examined using the LISREL software program by considering the fit indices. It was found that the Hypothesis Model did not fit well with the empirical data, as indicated by the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 204.37$, $df = 85$, $p\text{-value} = .00000$, $\chi^2 / df = 2.40$, $RMSEA = .069$, $RMR = .019$, $SRMR = .038$, $CFI = .99$, $GFI = .92$, $AGFI = .88$, $CN = 162.04$.

Upon examination, it was found that $\chi^2 = 204.37$, $df = 85$, $p\text{-value} = .00000$ did not meet the criterion because it still had statistical significance. $\chi^2 / df = 2.40$ did not meet the criterion because it was greater than 2.00. $RMSEA = .069$ did not meet the criterion because it was greater than .05. $RMR = .019$ met the criterion because it was less than .05. $SRMR = .038$ met the criterion because it was less than .05. $CFI = .99$ met the criterion because it was greater than .90. $GFI = .92$ met the criterion because it was greater than .90.

AGFI = .88 did not meet the criterion because it was less than .90, and CN = 162.04 did not meet the criterion because it was less than 200.00. These results show that the Hypothesis Model does not fit well with the empirical data, as several fit indices, including χ^2 , χ^2 / df , RMSEA, AGFI, and CN, did not meet the specified criteria (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996: 121-122). The researcher is, therefore, not confident in the parameter estimates derived from the Hypothesis Model.

The researcher needs to modify the model (Modification Model) to better align with the empirical data by allowing the error variances (θ) of some empirical variables to correlate, taking into account the appropriateness and feasibility in terms of concepts, theory, related research, and the potential for discussion of the research results after modifying the model. Once the modified model (Adjusted Model) achieves a better fit with the empirical data, the researcher will then consider the relationship paths in the model in more detail.

The analysis results of the Hypothesis Model are as follows:

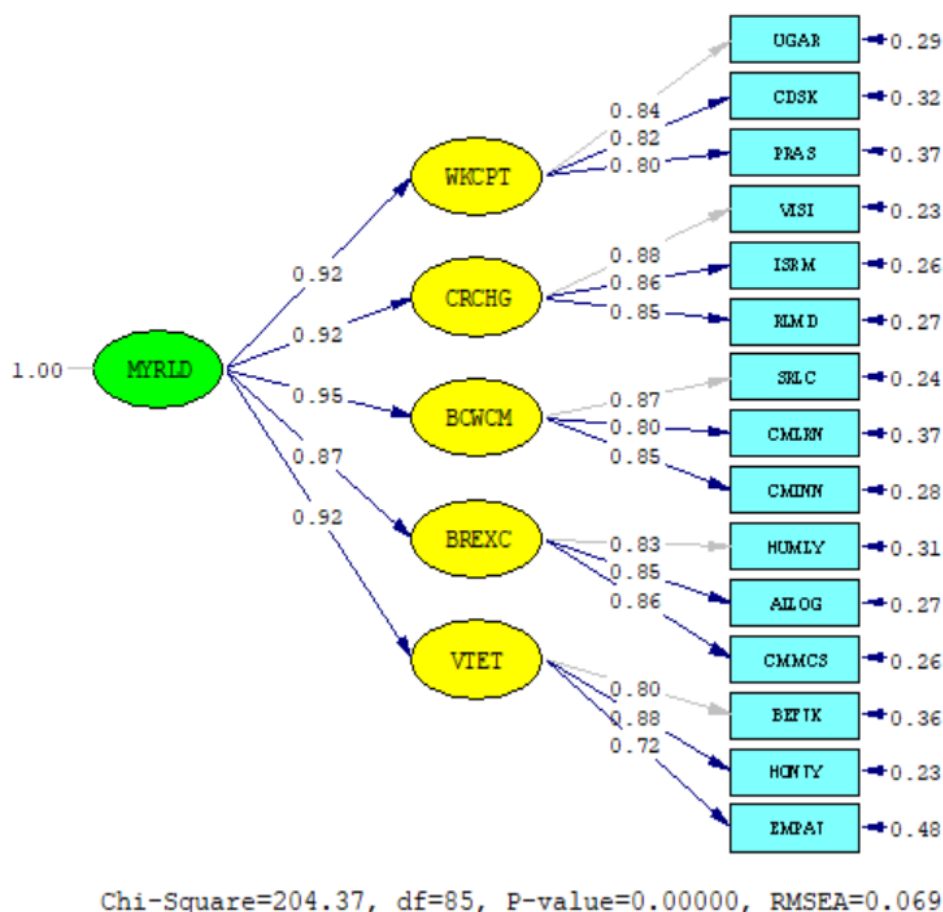


Figure 1: Model based on research hypothesis (n=300)

Results of the Analysis of the Modified Structural Equation Model (Adjust Model) and Equation Values

The researcher modified the model according to the hypotheses to ensure its consistency with the empirical data by allowing the variance of the measurement error (θ) of 6 pairs of observed variables to correlate (df before modification = 85 and df after modification = 79). The results showed that the modified model (Adjust Model) fits the empirical data, as indicated by the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 116.68$, df = 79, p-value = 0.00377, $\chi^2 / df = 1.47$, RMSEA = .040, RMR = .013, SRMR = .026, CFI = 1.00, GFI = .95, AGFI = .92, CN = 278.82.

The analysis of the goodness of fit revealed that $\chi^2 = 116.68$, df = 79, p-value = 0.00377 did not meet the criterion because the p-value was statistically significant (P-Value < .05) (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). However, since the χ^2 statistic is sensitive to sample size, the researcher also considered the χ^2 / df value, which was 1.47, meeting the required threshold of being less than 2.00 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). RMSEA = .040, which is within the required threshold of being less than .05 (MacCallum et al., 1996). RMR = .013, which is within the required threshold of being less than .05 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). SRMR = .026, which is within the required threshold of being less than .05 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). CFI = 1.00, which exceeds the required threshold of .90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). GFI = .95, which exceeds the required threshold of .90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). AGFI = .92, which meets the required threshold of being at least .90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). CN = 278.82, which exceeds the required threshold of 200.00 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996). Based on these fit indices, it can be concluded that the modified structural equation model fits the empirical data well, and the parameter estimates in the model are therefore acceptable.

Additionally, the analysis results, including the equation values, are presented in the model. In terms of reporting the equation results, the measurement model is reported, showing the factor loadings of the observed variables (Observation Variables) with the latent variables. The interpretation of the equation values in both the measurement and structural models considers the following three key test statistics:

1. **R²**: Represents the proportion of variance in the observed variable that is explained by the latent variable, which is an indicator/component of the latent variable.
2. **Standardized Factor Loadings (λ)**: Represents the estimated parameters for the relationships between the observed variables and the latent variables.
3. **Standard Error (SE)**: Represents the variability of the measurement error for the observed variables.
4. **t-test statistic**: Used to analyze the statistical significance of the measurement. If the t-value exceeds 1.96, it indicates statistical significance at the .05 level. If the t-value falls between -1.96 and 1.96, it indicates no statistical significance.

The analysis results are as follows:

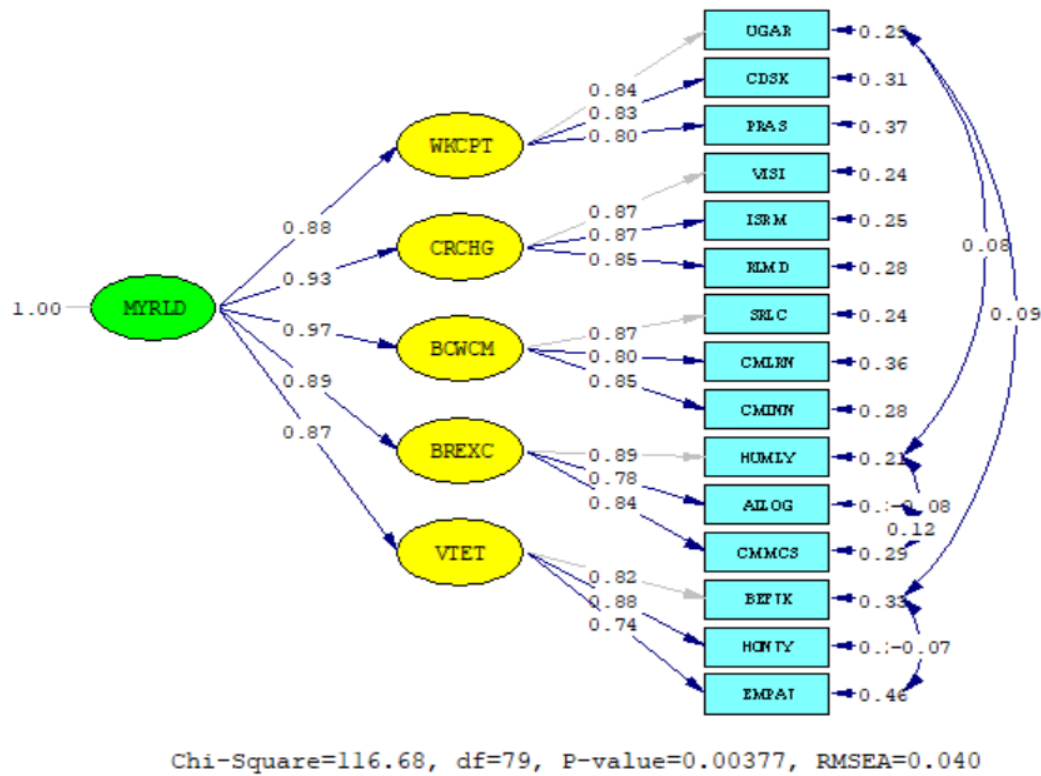


Figure 2: Adjusted Model (n=300)

Comparison of calculated statistical values with criteria to check the consistency with empirical data of the Adjusted Structural Equation Model.

Criteria Set (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996: 121-122)	Model Statistics	Evaluation
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square Statistic (χ^2)	P-value ≥ 0.05 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1996)	$\chi^2 = 116.68$ df = 79 p-value = 0.00377
Relative χ^2 (χ^2/df)	≤ 2.00 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007)	1.47
Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	≤ 0.05 (MacCallum et al., 1996)	0.040
Root Mean Squared Residuals (RMR)	≤ 0.05 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000)	0.013
Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR)	≤ 0.05 (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000)	0.026
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.90 (Fan et al., 1999)	1.00
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	≥ 0.90 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007)	0.95

The table shows that the goodness-of-fit indices of the modified structural equation model are consistent with the empirical data. This is based on the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 116.68$, $df = 79$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00377$, $\chi^2 / df = 1.47$, $RMSEA = .040$, $RMR = .013$, $SRMR = .026$, $CFI = 1.00$, $GFI = .95$, $AGFI = .92$, and $CN = 278.82$. Based on these fit indices, it can be concluded that the modified structural equation model fits the empirical data well, and the parameter estimates in the model are therefore.

Results of the development of a leadership development model for mayors in the district

Development of a Leadership Development Model for Mayors in the Central Region of Thailand. The development of the leadership model for mayors in the central region of Thailand was carried out after analyzing quantitative data, which showed the following findings: Results of Factor Model Analysis of Leadership Components When the model was tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the findings indicated a good fit with the empirical data. The indices of the model fit were as follows: $\chi^2 = 116.68$, $df = 79$, $p\text{-value} = 0.00377$, $\chi^2/df = 1.47$, $RMSEA = 0.040$, $RMR = 0.013$, $SRMR = 0.026$, $CFI = 1.00$, $GFI = 0.95$, $AGFI = 0.92$, $CN = 278.82$. The model revealed five key components of leadership for mayors in the central region of Thailand: (1) Workplace Competencies, with a standard factor loading of 0.88 (2) Creation of Changes, with a standard factor loading of 0.93 (3) Building Cooperation Within the Community, with a standard factor loading of 0.97 (4) Building Relationships with External Communities, with a standard factor loading of 0.89 (5) Virtue and Ethics, with a standard factor loading of 0.87. Leadership Level of Mayors Overall, the leadership level of mayors in the central region of Thailand was rated as high, with an average score of 4.4.

When broken down by component: Workplace Competencies (WKCPT) = 4.36 Creation of Changes (CRCHG) = 4.46 Building Cooperation Within the Community (BCWCM) = 4.41 Building Relationships with External Communities (BREXC) = 4.40 Virtue and Ethics (VTET) = 4.39. Following the quantitative analysis, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 30 experts selected from three groups: 10 mayors 10 academics specializing in local political leadership 10 senior executives These experts were selected based on their relevant expertise and qualifications, ensuring credibility and a deep understanding of the subject matter. The main objective of these interviews was to: Seek opinions regarding the five leadership components identified in the quantitative analysis: Workplace Competencies, Creation of Changes, Building Cooperation Within the Community, Building Relationships with External Communities, and Virtue and Ethics. Gather critical insights for developing the leadership development model for mayors in the central region of Thailand. The data obtained from these interviews were integrated with literature reviews and the quantitative findings to synthesize a comprehensive model for leadership development.

Key Insights from the In-depth Interviews on Leadership Components: 1.1 Workplace Competencies This component was found to be a key element in the leadership of mayors in the central region of Thailand, with a standard factor loading of 0.88, confirming the research hypothesis. The conclusions drawn from the qualitative analysis suggest that mayors play a pivotal role in addressing public issues, including infrastructure, electricity, water supply, public safety, and social services. These responsibilities require mayors to possess strong

workplace competencies, including an understanding of governmental procedures, community development skills, proactive leadership abilities, and effective problem-solving approaches. The role of a mayor directly impacts public trust and confidence, and effective leadership can strengthen the community's faith in local governance. According to one expert: "...The success of a city depends on our ability to work with all sectors effectively and to plan sustainably for the benefit of the people in the long term. Workplace competency is a key factor that enables us to manage resources efficiently and develop our city for prosperity and livability." Another expert mentioned: "...The mayor's competency plays a critical role in community development, as it drives the effective use of resources and addresses community needs. This is key to achieving sustainable development, whether in infrastructure or community economy." The expert interview data concluded that Workplace Competencies is a fundamental component of mayoral leadership.

5. CONCLUSION

The study focused on developing a leadership model for mayors in the central region of Thailand. Quantitative analysis, including Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), indicated that the model fit well with the empirical data. The leadership model identified five key components: Workplace Competencies, Creation of Changes, Building Cooperation Within the Community, Building Relationships with External Communities, and Virtue and Ethics. The leadership level of the mayors was rated highly, with an average score of 4.4 across all components. To further enhance the model, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 experts, including mayors, academics, and senior executives, to gather insights on the five leadership components. The interviews confirmed the importance of Workplace Competencies, emphasizing that mayors need strong skills in managing public issues, including infrastructure, community development, and problem-solving.

These competencies were seen as essential for effective governance, resource management, and sustainable community development. Experts agreed that workplace competencies are key to strengthening public trust and ensuring the long-term prosperity of cities. The central region of Thailand, with Bangkok at its heart, is experiencing unprecedented levels of urbanization, economic growth, and globalization. While these changes present many opportunities, they also bring about significant challenges, from traffic congestion and environmental degradation to economic inequality and the complexities of global governance. In this context, effective leadership has become crucial in guiding the region through these transformations. Mayors and local leaders must be equipped to tackle these issues head-on, leveraging both traditional knowledge and modern tools to manage growth in a sustainable and equitable way. They must balance the demands of urban development with the need for social equity and environmental protection, ensuring that all residents benefit from the region's growth. As the central region continues to evolve, the leadership in this area will be a key factor in determining the region's success and its ability to meet the challenges of the future. By embracing innovative solutions, prioritizing inclusivity, and fostering collaboration between all sectors of society, leaders in the central region can ensure that Thailand's economic heart continues to thrive while remaining a place that is livable, sustainable, and resilient to the challenges of the modern world.

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