



From Classroom To Brand: How Organizational Culture And Affective Commitment Foster Employer Branding Through Employee Engagement In Buddhist Foundation Schools In Indonesia

Dari Ruang Kelas ke Merek: Bagaimana Budaya Organisasi dan Komitmen Afektif Mendorong Pencitraan Merek Perusahaan Melalui Keterlibatan Karyawan di Sekolah-Sekolah Yayasan Buddha di Indonesia

Kornelia Mawarni¹, Lianto²

¹⁻² Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Widya Dharma Pontianak, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: lianto@widyadharm.ac.id

Abstract

This study examines how organizational culture (OC) and affective commitment (AC) influence employer branding (EB) through the mediating role of employee engagement (EE) among teachers and administrative staff of a Buddhist-affiliated multi-level educational foundation in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. Employer branding research has concentrated almost exclusively on corporate settings and higher education institutions, leaving primary and secondary schools—particularly those operating within faith-based, non-metropolitan contexts—largely unstudied. Drawing on Job Demands–Resources theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Signaling Theory, this study proposes an indirect-only mediation model in which OC and AC shape EB exclusively through EE. A census survey of the entire organizational population (N = 52) was conducted and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via WarpPLS 8.0. All five hypotheses were supported. Organizational culture positively influenced employee engagement ($\beta = 0.267, p = 0.019$), while affective commitment emerged as the dominant engagement driver ($\beta = 0.600, p < 0.001$). Employee engagement, in turn, strongly predicted employer branding ($\beta = 0.717, p < 0.001$). Both indirect effects were significant: $OC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ ($\beta = 0.191, p = 0.021$) and $AC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ ($\beta = 0.430, p < 0.001$), confirming indirect-only mediation. The model explained 70.5% of the variance in employee engagement and 51.3% in employer branding. These findings extend employer branding theory into faith-based primary and secondary schools, identify employee engagement as the pivotal internal brand-building mechanism, and offer school leaders actionable guidance: cultivating a values-driven culture and deepening teachers' affective bonds are the most effective pathways to strengthening institutional reputation as an employer.

Keywords: *Organizational Culture; Affective Commitment; Employee Engagement; Employer branding; Buddhist-affiliated school; PLS-SEM*

Abstrak

Riset ini mengkaji bagaimana *organizational culture* (OC) dan *affective commitment* (AC) memengaruhi *employer branding* (EB) melalui peran mediasi *employee engagement* (EE) pada guru dan tenaga kependidikan sebuah yayasan pendidikan berlatar Buddhis yang mengelola jenjang Playgroup hingga Sekolah Menengah Atas di Singkawang, Kalimantan Barat, Indonesia.

Penelitian *employer branding* selama ini terpusat hampir sepenuhnya pada konteks korporat dan perguruan tinggi, sehingga sekolah dasar dan menengah, khususnya yang beroperasi dalam konteks yayasan berbasis nilai keagamaan di kota non-metropolitan, hampir tidak mendapat perhatian empiris. Berlandaskan *Job Demands–Resources theory*, *Social Exchange Theory*, dan *Signaling Theory*, studi ini mengajukan model *indirect-only mediation* di mana OC dan AC memengaruhi EB secara eksklusif melalui EE. Survei sensus terhadap seluruh populasi organisasi ($N = 52$) dilaksanakan dan dianalisis menggunakan *Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling* (PLS-SEM) melalui WarpPLS 8.0. Seluruh (lima) hipotesis didukung. *Organizational culture* berpengaruh positif terhadap *employee engagement* ($\beta = 0,267$, $p = 0,019$), sementara *affective commitment* muncul sebagai prediktor dominan *engagement* ($\beta = 0,600$, $p < 0,001$). *Employee engagement*, pada gilirannya, memprediksi *employer branding* secara kuat ($\beta = 0,717$, $p < 0,001$). Kedua efek tidak langsung signifikan: $OC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ ($\beta = 0,191$, $p = 0,021$) dan $AC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ ($\beta = 0,430$, $p < 0,001$), mengonfirmasi *indirect-only mediation*. Model menjelaskan 70,5% varians *employee engagement* dan 51,3% varians *employer branding*. Temuan ini memperluas teori *employer branding* ke sekolah dasar dan menengah berbasis keagamaan, mengidentifikasi *employee engagement* sebagai mekanisme pembentuk *employer brand* internal yang paling menentukan, dan memberikan panduan praktis bagi pemimpin sekolah: membangun budaya berbasis nilai dan memperdalam ikatan afektif guru terhadap institusi merupakan jalur paling efektif untuk memperkuat reputasi sekolah sebagai pemberi kerja.

Kata kunci: Budaya Organisasi; Komitmen Afektif; Keterlibatan Karyawan; Pencitraan Merek Perusahaan; Sekolah yang berafiliasi dengan Buddha; PLS-SEM

INTRODUCTION

Competition among schools in Indonesia has intensified considerably, not only in terms of academic performance and physical facilities but increasingly in the capacity to attract, develop, and retain qualified teachers and staff. In this landscape, *employer branding*—the process by which an organization cultivates a distinctive identity as a desirable place to work—has emerged as a strategic concern for educational institutions (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). Employer branding shapes how current and prospective employees perceive the organization, and increasingly determines whether talented teachers choose to join, stay, and invest in a school's mission. Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), organizational resources such as culture and psychological bonds with the institution energize employees and drive the kind of engaged, advocacy-oriented behavior that builds employer reputation from the inside out.

The imperative is especially acute in non-metropolitan Indonesia. Singkawang, West Kalimantan—a mid-sized, culturally pluralistic city with a limited local talent pool—exemplifies contexts where school reputation is built less through formal marketing campaigns and more through the lived experiences and everyday advocacy of teachers and staff. This study focuses on a Buddhist-affiliated multi-level educational foundation in Singkawang, operating from Playgroup through Senior High School and guided by institutionalized values of compassion (*karuna*), service (*dana*), and community well-being. This value-laden context makes the foundation a

particularly apt setting for examining how organizational culture shapes employee attitudes and, ultimately, the school's reputation as an employer.

Despite growing scholarly interest in employer branding, three significant gaps motivate this study. First, employer branding research in education has concentrated almost exclusively on higher education institutions, with primary and secondary schools receiving virtually no empirical attention (Theurer et al., 2018; Saini, 2023). More critically, antecedents of employer branding have been examined primarily at the individual level, while organizational-level mechanisms such as school culture and collective emotional commitment remain largely untested (Biswas & Suar, 2016). Second, no prior study has simultaneously tested organizational culture, affective commitment, and employee engagement as an integrated causal chain leading to employer branding in a school setting. Third, the small body of empirical work on employer branding in Indonesian education is confined to urban higher education institutions (Wijaya et al., 2023), and faith-based organizations have been largely overlooked in management research (Ariza-Montes et al., 2020).

This study addresses these gaps by examining how organizational culture and affective commitment influence employer branding among the entire teaching and administrative staff ($N = 52$, census) of the Buddhist foundation in Singkawang. Drawing on JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), and Signaling Theory (Connelly et al., 2011), we propose that employee engagement mediates both relationships. The five hypotheses are developed in full in the Literature Review below and tested using PLS-SEM via WarpPLS 8.0.

The novelty and contribution of this study operate on three levels. Theoretically, it is the first to integrate JD-R theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Signaling Theory within a school-level employer branding model, positioning employee engagement as the linking mechanism between organizational culture and affective commitment on the one hand, and employer branding on the other. Contextually, it extends employer branding scholarship into multi-level, faith-based primary and secondary schools in non-metropolitan Indonesia. Methodologically, the use of a complete population census eliminates between-organization variance and selection bias, yielding clean estimates of within-organization dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Theoretical Foundations

Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) holds that job resources—including organizational culture, value alignment, and social support—motivate employees by fulfilling basic psychological needs, promoting growth, and buffering demands. *Social Exchange Theory* (Blau, 1964; Eisenberger et al., 1986) explains the affective commitment–engagement link through reciprocity: employees who feel emotionally valued reciprocate through discretionary effort. *Signaling Theory* (Connelly et al., 2011; Spence, 1973) connects engagement to employer branding: engaged employees emit credible signals—enthusiasm, advocacy, pride—that prospective recruits and community stakeholders interpret as indicators of organizational quality.

Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement

Organizational culture encompasses the shared values, norms, beliefs, and practices that define how members interpret their environment and coordinate collective action (Schein, 2010). A supportive, mission-aligned culture enhances meaning and psychological safety—recognized

antecedents of engagement (Al Mehrzi & Singh, 2016; Nazir & Islam, 2017). In the Buddhist-affiliated school context, values of compassion (*karuna*), service (*dana*), and community well-being are institutionalized through daily practices and leadership modeling, creating value alignment that JD-R theory predicts will translate into vigor, dedication, and absorption. Hartnell et al. (2009) and Schneider et al. (2013) both demonstrate that service climates and collaborative norms are consistently associated with higher engagement.

H1: Organizational culture positively influences employee engagement.

Affective Commitment and Employee Engagement

Affective commitment (AC) refers to employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in their organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) frames AC as internalized reciprocity: emotional attachment is sustained by perceived organizational support and value congruence, reciprocated through higher engagement. AC predicts discretionary behaviors, persistence, and engagement more strongly than other commitment dimensions (Meyer et al., 2002; Caesens et al., 2014). Kaur et al. (2020) further demonstrated that affective commitment mediates the relationship between internal branding and employee engagement, providing direct evidence for this pathway in a non-Western organizational context.

H2: Affective commitment positively influences employee engagement.

Employee Engagement and Employer Branding

Employee engagement is conceptualized as a positive, fulfilling work-related psychological state comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Employer branding, in its internal dimension, reflects employees' perceptions of their organization as a desirable and distinctive place to work—encompassing pride in organizational membership, willingness to recommend the school to others, and identification with its values and mission (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018). Biswas and Suar (2016) demonstrated that organizational-level factors are significant antecedents of employer branding in corporate settings. Kaur et al. (2020) showed that engaged employees exhibit higher organizational citizenship behavior—behavioral manifestations of employer brand strength. Signaling Theory predicts that engaged teachers emit credible cues that prospective recruits and community stakeholders interpret as signals of institutional quality.

H3: Employee engagement positively influences employer branding.

The Mediating Role of Employee Engagement

The three theoretical frameworks converge on a common prediction: organizational culture and affective commitment shape employer branding primarily through the psychological and behavioral states they activate in employees. Culture provides motivational resources (JD-R logic); affective commitment drives reciprocal investment (Social Exchange logic); and engagement generates authentic signals (Signaling Theory logic) that constitute employer branding in practice. This indirect-only mediation model (Zhao et al., 2010) — in which culture and commitment shape branding exclusively through engagement, with no direct paths hypothesized—is consistent with

Theurer et al.'s (2018) review identifying internal employee attitudes as central drivers of the internal employer brand.

H4: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employer branding.

H5: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between affective commitment and employer branding.

Construct Summary and Research Framework

Table 1 summarizes the four constructs, their definitions, representative indicators, and key sources. Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized model.

Table 1 Constructs, Definitions, Sample Indicators, and Key Sources

| Construct | Definition | Sample Indicators | Key Sources |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|
| Organizational Culture (OC) | Shared values, norms, and practices guiding collective behavior and identity in a school setting, including compassion, service, and collaboration | Teamwork norms; innovation climate; goal orientation; service ethos | Schein (2010); Hartnell et al. (2009); Schneider et al. (2013) |
| Affective Commitment (AC) | Employees' emotional attachment, identification with, and sense of belonging to the organization | Sense of pride; emotional bond; desire to remain; identification with mission | Meyer & Allen (1991); Meyer et al. (2002) |
| Employee Engagement (EE) | Positive, fulfilling work-related psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption | Energy in work; dedication to teaching; concentration; absorption | Schaufeli et al. (2006); Bakker & Demerouti (2017) |
| Employer Branding (EB) | Employees' perceptions of the organization as an attractive place to work, reflected in pride, advocacy, and willingness to recommend | Organizational pride; willingness to recommend; perceived attractiveness as employer | Backhaus & Tikoo (2004); Theurer et al. (2018); Biswas & Suar (2016) |

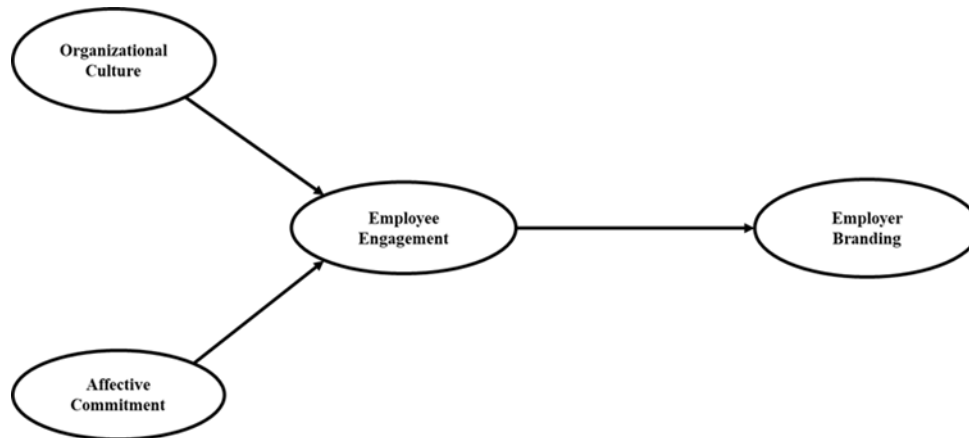


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Structural relationships were estimated using PLS-SEM implemented in WarpPLS 8.0. PLS-SEM is appropriate for four reasons: (1) the sample is small-to-moderate ($N = 52$) and PLS-SEM is robust in this range; (2) the model includes multiple mediating pathways; (3) WarpPLS accommodates non-normal data via robust resampling (Warp3 algorithm); and (4) the research is exploratory-predictive in orientation (Hair et al., 2022; Kock, 2025).

Research Context, Population, and Sample

The study was conducted among teachers and administrative staff of a Buddhist-affiliated educational foundation (*yayasan*) in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. The foundation operates five school levels—Playgroup, Kindergarten, Elementary School (SD), Junior High School (SMP), and Senior High School (SMA)—and is recognized regionally for integrating academic mission with values of compassion, humanitarian service, and community engagement.

Because the total organizational population is small ($N = 52$), a census approach was adopted. Census sampling eliminates sampling error, ensures complete population coverage, and maximizes statistical power within the available population (Kock, 2025). $N = 52$ satisfies PLS-SEM minimum requirements under both the "10-times rule" (Barclay et al., 1995) and power analysis for medium effect sizes ($f^2 \geq 0.15$, $\alpha = 0.05$, power ≥ 0.80 ; Hair et al., 2022).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire distributed in printed and digital (Google Forms) formats. Participation was entirely voluntary. To reduce common method bias (CMB), established procedural remedies were applied (Podsakoff et al., 2003): predictor and criterion sections were visually separated, respondents were assured there were no correct or incorrect answers, and filler items were interspersed.

Measurement of Constructs

All constructs were measured with previously validated multi-item scales adapted to the school and Indonesian context via back-translation (English \leftrightarrow Indonesian). A five-point Likert-type format was used (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). **Organizational Culture (OC)** was adapted from Hartnell et al. (2009) and Schneider et al. (2013); 5 items. **Affective Commitment (AC)** was adapted from Meyer and Allen's (1991) Affective Commitment Scale; 5

items. **Employee Engagement (EE)** was measured using a 6-item adaptation of the UWES-9 (Schaufeli et al., 2006), retaining two items per dimension (vigor, dedication, absorption). **Employer Branding (EB)** was adapted from Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and Theurer et al. (2018); 5 items.

Data Analysis

Stage 1 – Measurement Model. Internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability ($CR \geq 0.70$). Convergent validity: AVE (≥ 0.50) and outer loadings (≥ 0.60). Discriminant validity: Fornell–Larcker criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). CMB: full collinearity VIF across all constructs (threshold ≥ 3.3 indicates potential bias; Kock, 2015).

Stage 2 – Structural Model. Collinearity: VIF (< 3.3). Path coefficients (β) and significance: bootstrapping with 100 resamples (Stable3 method). Model fit: APC, ARS, AARS, AVIF. Effect sizes (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2). Mediation: indirect effects and their significance levels, following Zhao et al. (2010).

RESULTS

Model Fit

Table 2 presents the model fit indices. The Average Path Coefficient (APC = 0.528, $p < 0.001$) and Average R-Squared (ARS = 0.609, $p < 0.001$) both met the required significance threshold. The Average Adjusted R-Squared (AARS = 0.598, $p < 0.001$) confirmed that the explained variance is not an artifact of model complexity. The Tenenhaus GoF = 0.607 exceeds the large-effect benchmark of 0.36 (Kock, 2025), indicating strong overall model fit. All directional quality indices—SPR, RSCR, SSR, and NLBCDR—equaled 1.000, confirming the absence of Simpson's paradox, statistical suppression, and nonlinear causality violations.

The Average Full Collinearity VIF (AFVIF = 2.612) fell within the acceptable range (≤ 5.0) and below the ideal threshold (≤ 3.3), providing no evidence of CMB at the model level (Kock, 2015). The Average Block VIF (AVIF = 3.710) exceeded the ideal threshold of 3.3 while remaining within the acceptable range of ≤ 5.0 , suggesting moderate multicollinearity among constructs that does not invalidate estimates but warrants acknowledgment.

Table 2 Model Fit and Quality Indices

| Index | Value | p | Threshold |
|---------------------------------------|-------|--------|--|
| Average Path Coefficient (APC) | 0.528 | <0.001 | $p < 0.05$ |
| Average R-Squared (ARS) | 0.609 | <0.001 | $p < 0.05$ |
| Average Adjusted R-Squared (AARS) | 0.598 | <0.001 | $p < 0.05$ |
| Average Block VIF (AVIF) | 3.710 | — | Acceptable ≤ 5.0 ; ideal ≤ 3.3 |
| Average Full Collinearity VIF (AFVIF) | 2.612 | — | Acceptable ≤ 5.0 ; ideal ≤ 3.3 |

| | | | |
|--|-------|---|---|
| Tenenhaus GoF | 0.607 | — | Small ≥ 0.1 ; medium ≥ 0.25 ; large ≥ 0.36 |
| Simpson's Paradox Ratio (SPR) | 1.000 | — | Acceptable ≥ 0.7 ; ideal = 1 |
| R-Squared Contribution Ratio (RSCR) | 1.000 | — | Acceptable ≥ 0.9 ; ideal = 1 |
| Statistical Suppression Ratio (SSR) | 1.000 | — | Acceptable ≥ 0.7 |
| Nonlinear Bivariate Causality Direction Ratio (NLBCDR) | 1.000 | — | Acceptable ≥ 0.7 |

Measurement Model

Table 3 presents the measurement model results. All constructs demonstrated adequate internal consistency, with CR values ranging from 0.874 (EE) to 0.906 (EB) and Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.826 (EE) to 0.869 (EB), all exceeding the 0.70 threshold. AVE values ranged from 0.541 (EE) to 0.659 (EB), meeting the 0.50 convergent validity criterion. Full collinearity VIF values for all constructs ranged from 2.016 to 3.298, all below the 3.3 CMB threshold, confirming the absence of common method bias at the construct level (Kock, 2015).

All outer loadings were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). The majority of loadings exceeded 0.70. Two items warranted specific attention: EE3 (dedication, $\lambda = 0.575$) and EE6 (absorption, $\lambda = 0.689$). Both remained above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2022), and the construct-level AVE of 0.541 still met the convergent validity criterion. The relatively modest loadings of these two items may reflect the culturally distinctive nature of the Buddhist school context: dedication in this setting may be expressed as quiet, service-oriented perseverance rather than the expressive enthusiasm captured in the original UWES item wording, while absorption may be moderated by the multirole demands characteristic of teachers in small multi-level schools who alternate between instructional and administrative responsibilities across grade levels. These contextual nuances are consistent with observed psychometric variation in UWES adaptations in non-Western settings (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

Predictive relevance was confirmed for both endogenous constructs: $Q^2 = 0.688$ for EE and $Q^2 = 0.513$ for EB, both well above zero.

Table 3 Measurement Model

| Construct / Item | Loading | CR | α | AVE | Full VIF | Q^2 | R^2 |
|------------------------------------|---------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-------|
| Organizational Culture (OC) | | | | | | | |
| OC1 | 0.766 | 0.887 | 0.841 | 0.612 | 2.016 | — | — |
| OC2 | 0.771 | | | | | | |
| OC3 | 0.709 | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| OC4 | 0.830 | | | | | | |
| OC5 | 0.830 | | | | | | |
| Affective Commitment (AC) | | | | | | | |
| AC1 | 0.749 | 0.884 | 0.836 | 0.605 | 3.298 | — | — |
| AC2 | 0.836 | | | | | | |
| AC3 | 0.753 | | | | | | |
| AC4 | 0.814 | | | | | | |
| AC5 | 0.733 | | | | | | |
| Employee Engagement (EE) | | | | | | | |
| EE1 (Vigor) | 0.784 | 0.874 | 0.826 | 0.541 | 2.478 | 0.688 | 0.705 |
| EE2 (Vigor) | 0.838 | | | | | | |
| EE3 (Dedication) ^a | 0.575 | | | | | | |
| EE4 (Dedication) | 0.783 | | | | | | |
| EE5 (Absorption) | 0.713 | | | | | | |
| EE6 (Absorption) ^a | 0.689 | | | | | | |
| Employer Branding (EB) | | | | | | | |
| EB1 | 0.788 | 0.906 | 0.869 | 0.659 | 2.654 | 0.513 | 0.513 |
| EB2 | 0.821 | | | | | | |
| EB3 | 0.760 | | | | | | |
| EB4 | 0.774 | | | | | | |
| EB5 | 0.906 | | | | | | |

Note. CR = composite reliability; α = Cronbach's alpha; AVE = average variance extracted; Full VIF = full collinearity variance inflation factor; Q^2 = Stone-Geisser predictive relevance; R^2 = coefficient of determination. ^aItem loading below 0.70 but above minimum threshold of 0.60; AVE still meets the ≥ 0.50 criterion.

Discriminant Validity

Table 4 presents the Fornell-Larcker matrix. The square root of AVE for each construct (shown on the diagonal in parentheses) exceeded its correlations with all other constructs for OC ($\sqrt{AVE} = 0.783$), AC ($\sqrt{AVE} = 0.778$), and EB ($\sqrt{AVE} = 0.812$). For Employee Engagement, the

criterion was met vis-à-vis OC ($r = 0.538$) and EB ($r = 0.707$), but approached the boundary with AC ($\sqrt{AVE} = 0.735$; $r = 0.732$; difference = 0.003). This near-boundary result is transparent evidence of conceptual proximity between affective commitment and employee engagement—an expected finding given that highly committed teachers are theorized to be engaged teachers—but does not constitute a failure of discriminant validity. All inter-construct correlations were significant at $p < 0.001$.

Table 4 Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Matrix

| Construct | OC | AC | EE | EB |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| OC | (0.783) | 0.693 | 0.538 | 0.617 |
| AC | 0.693 | (0.778) | 0.732 | 0.739 |
| EE | 0.538 | 0.732* | (0.735) | 0.707 |
| EB | 0.617 | 0.739 | 0.707 | (0.812) |

Note. Square roots of AVE shown on diagonal in parentheses. Off-diagonal values are inter-construct correlations. All correlations significant at $p < 0.001$. *Near-boundary value: \sqrt{AVE} of EE (0.735) marginally exceeds its correlation with AC (0.732).

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Table 5 presents the structural model results. The model explained 70.5% of the variance in employee engagement ($R^2 = 0.705$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.693$) and 51.3% of the variance in employer branding ($R^2 = 0.513$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.504$), both indicating substantial predictive power. Figure 2 illustrates the final structural model with path coefficients.

H1 (OC → EE): Supported. Organizational culture positively and significantly influenced employee engagement ($\beta = 0.267$, $SE = 0.125$, $p = 0.019$, $f^2 = 0.208$). The medium effect size indicates that the Buddhist school's value-laden culture—centered on compassion and service—meaningfully activates teachers' psychological engagement beyond what is explained by affective commitment alone.

H2 (AC → EE): Supported. Affective commitment exerted a strong positive effect on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.600$, $SE = 0.111$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.497$). The large effect size confirms that teachers' emotional attachment to the school is the dominant driver of engagement in this organizational context, consistent with Social Exchange Theory predictions.

H3 (EE → EB): Supported. Employee engagement positively and strongly influenced employer branding ($\beta = 0.717$, $SE = 0.106$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.513$). The large effect size confirms that engaged teachers are the primary architects of the school's internal employer brand, functioning as credible brand ambassadors through their advocacy and organizational pride.

H4 (OC → EE → EB): Supported. The indirect effect of organizational culture on employer branding through employee engagement was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.191$, $SE = 0.091$, $p = 0.021$, $f^2 = 0.118$). This medium indirect effect confirms that the culture-branding link is fully mediated by engagement.

H5 (AC → EE → EB): Supported. The indirect effect of affective commitment on employer branding through employee engagement was large and highly significant ($\beta = 0.430$, $SE = 0.083$,

$p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.318$). This result confirms that affective commitment translates into employer branding outcomes primarily by energizing and sustaining teachers' engagement.

Table 5 Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

| H | Path | β | SE | p | f^2 | Decision |
|----|-------------------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|-----------|
| H1 | OC → EE | 0.267 | 0.125 | 0.019 | 0.208 | Supported |
| H2 | AC → EE | 0.600 | 0.111 | <0.001 | 0.497 | Supported |
| H3 | EE → EB | 0.717 | 0.106 | <0.001 | 0.513 | Supported |
| H4 | OC → EE → EB (indirect) | 0.191 | 0.091 | 0.021 | 0.118 | Supported |
| H5 | AC → EE → EB (indirect) | 0.430 | 0.083 | <0.001 | 0.318 | Supported |

Note. β = standardized path coefficient; SE = standard error; f^2 = effect size (small ≥ 0.02 , medium ≥ 0.15 , large ≥ 0.35 ; Cohen, 1988). All resamples: N = 100, Stable3 method.

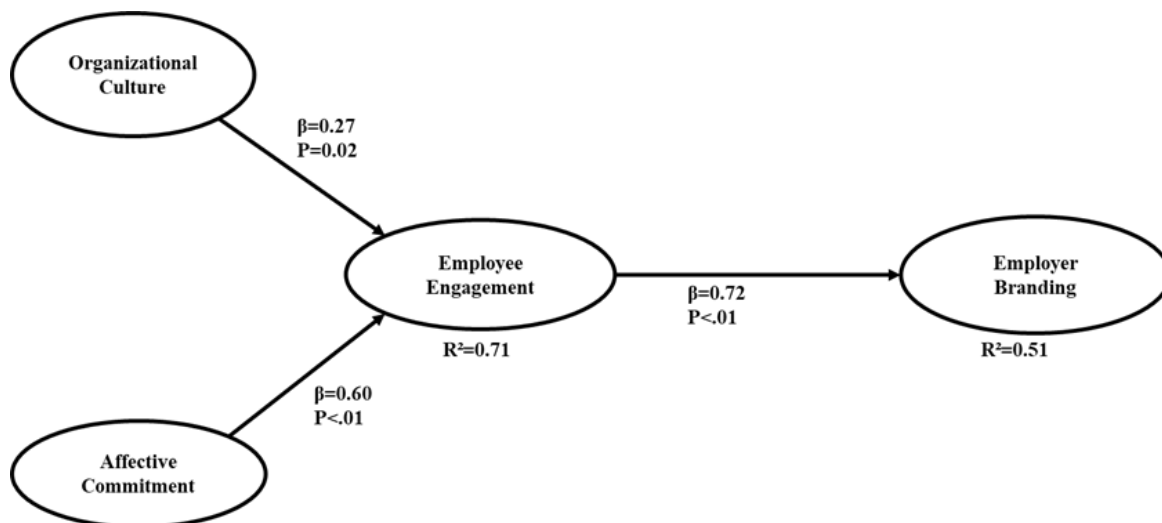


Figure 2 Structural Model Results

DISCUSSION

Overview

This study examined how organizational culture and affective commitment influence employer branding through the mediating role of employee engagement among teachers and administrative staff of a Buddhist-affiliated multi-level educational foundation in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. All five hypotheses were supported, and the model demonstrated strong explanatory power. The results advance our understanding of employer branding in a context that has received virtually no prior empirical attention—primary and secondary schools operating within a faith-based, non-metropolitan organizational setting.

Organizational Culture as an Engagement Driver (H1)

The significant positive effect of organizational culture on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.267$, $f^2 = 0.208$) confirms that the shared values, norms, and practices of the Buddhist foundation operate as motivational resources in the JD-R sense. A culture anchored in compassion (*karuna*) and service (*dana*) provides teachers with a sense of meaning and mission clarity that energizes their psychological engagement. This finding extends Hartnell et al. (2009) and Schneider et al. (2013), both of whom demonstrated the engagement-promoting effects of service climates, into a faith-based educational setting where such a service orientation is not merely a managerial strategy but a spiritual conviction.

That organizational culture's effect, while significant, is comparatively modest relative to affective commitment ($\beta = 0.267$ vs. 0.600) is substantively informative. It suggests that in this context, culture functions as an enabling condition—a shared framework within which teachers can find meaning—but it is the emotional bond with the organization that converts this meaning into active engagement. This finding is consistent with JD-R theory's distinction between resources that buffer demands and resources that actively fuel motivation: culture primarily buffers and orients, while affective commitment fuels.

Affective Commitment as the Dominant Engagement Driver (H2)

Affective commitment emerged as the strongest predictor of employee engagement ($\beta = 0.600$, $f^2 = 0.497$), consistent with the Social Exchange Theory prediction that emotional attachment generates reciprocal discretionary effort. Teachers who feel a genuine emotional bond with the school—who identify with its Buddhist mission and feel a sense of belonging to its community—invest substantially higher psychological energy in their work. This finding replicates and extends Meyer et al. (2002) and Caesens et al. (2014) in a novel organizational context, and aligns with Kaur et al.'s (2020) finding that affective commitment is a significant mediator between internal branding and engagement in non-Western settings.

The dominance of affective commitment in this model may reflect a distinctive feature of faith-based schools: in organizations where the institutional mission carries spiritual weight, the quality of the emotional relationship between teacher and institution is especially determinative of work behavior. Teachers in Buddhist schools do not merely execute a job—they participate in a moral and spiritual community. When that participation is felt as genuine belonging (high AC), engagement follows naturally. When it is felt as mere employment, even a strong culture may not be sufficient to sustain it.

Employee Engagement as the Brand-Building Mechanism (H3)

Employee engagement strongly predicted employer branding ($\beta = 0.717$, $f^2 = 0.513$), confirming Signaling Theory's prediction that engaged employees function as credible internal brand ambassadors. With the largest effect size in the model, this path underscores that employer branding in small, community-embedded schools is not constructed through formal communication campaigns but through the authentic, observable enthusiasm and advocacy of engaged teachers. Parents, prospective teachers, and community stakeholders read the quality of a school's staff engagement as a signal of institutional quality—a dynamic that Biswas and Suar (2016) identified in corporate settings and that this study confirms in the school context.

This finding has a practical implication that is more actionable than generic HR prescriptions: school leaders who wish to strengthen their employer brand need not invest in

expensive branding initiatives. They need, first and foremost, to cultivate engaged teachers. Engagement, not marketing, is the primary employer branding mechanism in this organizational type.

Indirect-only Mediation through Employee Engagement (H4 and H5)

The confirmation of both mediation hypotheses— $OC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ ($\beta = 0.191$, $p = 0.021$) and $AC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ ($\beta = 0.430$, $p < 0.001$)—validates the indirect-only mediation model proposed in this study (Zhao et al., 2010). Because no direct paths from OC or AC to EB were hypothesized or estimated—consistent with the theoretical argument that engagement is the exclusive mechanism—these results indicate that employee engagement fully accounts for the culture–branding and commitment–branding relationships within this model. This finding aligns with Theurer et al.'s (2018) framework identifying internal employee attitudes as the proximal drivers of employer brand strength and extends it by specifying engagement as the precise psychological mechanism.

The contrast between the two indirect effects is theoretically meaningful: the $AC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ indirect effect is more than twice the magnitude of the $OC \rightarrow EE \rightarrow EB$ indirect effect (0.430 vs. 0.191). This asymmetry suggests that in faith-based schools, it is the personal emotional bond—not the organizational culture per se—that is the dominant route through which employer branding is built. Culture creates the conditions; commitment activates the mechanism; engagement produces the outcome.

Measurement Observations

Two items in the Employee Engagement scale (EE3, dedication, $\lambda = 0.575$; EE6, absorption, $\lambda = 0.689$) loaded below the conventional 0.70 threshold while remaining above the minimum acceptable level of 0.60. Rather than dismissing these as measurement anomalies, they offer substantively interpretable signals. The dedication item's modest loading may reflect that dedication in a Buddhist school context is expressed as quiet, service-oriented perseverance—a disposition closer to the contemplative ideal of *sīla* (ethical conduct) than the expressive enthusiasm that UWES dedication items were designed to capture. The absorption item's modest loading may reflect the multirole structure of teachers in small multi-level institutions, where alternation between instructional, administrative, and communal responsibilities across grade levels structurally limits sustained absorption. These observations suggest an opportunity for future research to develop culturally adapted engagement instruments for faith-based educational settings in Southeast Asia.

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that organizational culture and affective commitment positively influence employer branding through the indirect-only mediation of employee engagement among teachers and staff of a Buddhist-affiliated multi-level school foundation in Singkawang, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. All five hypotheses were supported, and the model explained 70.5% and 51.3% of the variance in employee engagement and employer branding, respectively. The findings contribute to three interconnected areas: they extend employer branding theory into primary and secondary school settings; they confirm the indirect-only mediation role of engagement in translating organizational resources and psychological bonds into brand strength; and they provide

the first empirical evidence of these dynamics within a faith-based, non-metropolitan Indonesian educational organization.

For school leaders, the practical message is clear: employer branding in this context is not a communication function but a people function. Strengthening the school's reputation as an employer requires, first, cultivating a culture that provides meaning and mission alignment; second, deepening teachers' emotional commitment to the institution; and third, allowing the engagement that follows to generate authentic brand advocacy. Investing in these three levers is more effective—and more sustainable—than any outward-facing branding campaign.

Limitations

Several limitations bound the interpretation of these findings. **First**, the small sample size ($N = 52$) limits statistical power for detecting small effects and confidence interval precision, as reflected in the relatively wide standard errors for some paths (e.g., $OC \rightarrow EE$: $SE = 0.125$). Although a census design eliminates sampling error and resampling-based inference is appropriate for PLS-SEM with small N , findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution. **Second**, the cross-sectional single-wave design precludes causal inference. All relationships are associational. **Third**, despite procedural CMB controls, the single-source design retains residual CMB risk; AFVIF results mitigate but do not eliminate this concern. **Fourth**, near-boundary discriminant validity between AC and EE ($r = 0.732$ vs. $\sqrt{AVE} = 0.735$) indicates conceptual proximity that future research should address using HTMT analysis and more refined operationalizations. **Fifth**, findings are bounded to a single Buddhist-affiliated organization in one city; generalizability to other faith traditions, regions, or school sizes requires replication.

Future Research

Future studies should pursue several directions. Comparative research across faith traditions—Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic foundations—would illuminate how specific value systems shape the culture–engagement–branding chain differently. Longitudinal designs would allow causal inference and examination of how engagement and employer branding evolve over school years. Larger multi-school samples would permit multi-group analysis by school level (primary vs. secondary) and organizational age. Finally, the development of culturally adapted engagement instruments for Southeast Asian faith-based educational contexts, prompted by the modest item loadings observed in this study, represents a meaningful measurement research opportunity.

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