



## Mediating effects of sufficiency living wage between fair pay and work/life capabilities among workers in Thailand

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### Abstract

In a world where income inequalities continue to hamper sustainable development, provision of living wage could promote quality of life for both workers and their families. This research aimed to examine the role of sufficiency living wage (SLW) with the pay fairness reciprocity (PFR), and work/life capabilities among workers in Thailand. Developed through previous research, the emergent concept of SLW shows how Thai workers integrate their need for a living wage within the sufficiency economy philosophy framework. Furthermore, the three factors of SLW, living with self-immunity (LSI), perceived psychological utility (PPU), and moderate consumption (MC), show positive psycho-social significance. This research was designed to empirically test these implications. Questionnaires were used to collect data from a sample of 391 white- and blue-collar workers in Thailand. Positive significant correlations were found between the three factors of SLW and PFR, and with work/life capabilities for both white- and blue-collar workers. The 3 dimensions of SLW were tested for mediation by bootstrapping using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018). Results showed that LSI, PPU, and MC mediated the relationship between PFR and work capabilities, while only LSI and MC mediated the relationship between PFR and life capabilities. These results indicate the value of SLW in both economic terms and as a psycho-social mechanism that could enhance the wellbeing of workers through inner satisfaction. Implications of these findings are discussed from both theoretical and applied perspectives for enhancing work/life capabilities.

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## Introduction

The disruption in our world due to the global health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought into light the challenges that have been arising due to an excessive focus on economic growth as the only measure of development. The pandemic has exacerbated the problems of increasing inequalities, climate change impact, and demographic changes, and raised concerns for the wellbeing of people (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020; Walker et al., 2021). Thus, there is an urgent need to rethink the paradigms in economics, and shift from price economics to welfare economics. From the economic perspective, wage is a monetary value of exchange between demand and supply of human capability for work. Factors like perceived fairness of pay and wage justice, influence employee's work capability and life capability (Ellorencio et al., 2019). However, perceived inequalities in pay have affected worker attitudes and behaviours (Kay, 1999). Over the last few decades, economists and behavioural scientists have joined together with the policy makers to push for the agenda of *living wage* as an income that could enhance workers with capabilities to fulfil their needs and lead a better quality of life (Carr et al. 2017; Yao et al., 2017).

This research was developed in Thailand to explore *living wage* concept from a localised context, considering the influence of psycho-social factors, including that of the Buddhist religion that is predominantly practiced by Thai people. Several researchers have noted that the Buddhist teachings have a profound influence on the psychological, socio-cultural, and even economic dimensions of life among Thai people (Kuppako, 2018; Winzer & Gray, 2019). An important aspect of this research is its linkages to the *sufficiency economy philosophy* (SEP), which is rooted in the Buddhist teachings (Puntasen, 2017). Research shows the positive influence of SEP on the wellbeing of the Thai people (Barua & Tejativaddhana, 2019), and Puntasen (2017) noted that the SEP is like a “bridge” for understanding the application of Buddhist teachings to economics and sustainable development. A new concept of *sufficiency living wage* (SLW) was developed from the previous research works of the authors (Yoelao et al., 2019; 2021), which reflects how workers integrate their need for a living wage and adjust it within the framework of the SEP. In an attempt to explore the practical implications of the SLW, this research aims to empirically test the connections of SLW with pay fairness, work capability and life capability of Thai workers.

## Literature Review

The review of literature covers the theoretical underpinnings of this research by explaining living wage and sufficiency living wage (SLW), followed by pay fairness reciprocity, and work/life capability. Furthermore, the work context of blue- and white-collar workers is discussed, followed by the rationale to test the mediation effect of SLW. Finally, the research hypotheses and the conceptual framework are presented.

### *Living Wage*

Living wage is conceptualized as an income that could be adequate for supporting the needs of a worker and his/her family, and thus help in promoting a better quality of life (Carr et al., 2016a). Searle and McWha-Hermann (2020) examined the development of living wage research over a 20-year period (2000–2020) and reported that there are trends from “dominant economic cost-benefit wage perspective to a broader, more person-centric focus”. Notably, living wage research has shown significant association with the development of human capabilities by the “dual focus on human well-being and productive development” (Carr et al. 2017; Yao et al., 2017). This is the perspective adopted for the current research, which aimed to examine living wage by interlinking it with the contextual meaning in Thailand from the perspective of the sufficiency economy philosophy and evaluate its impact on the work and life capabilities.

### *Sufficiency Living Wage*

From the previous research of the authors (Yoelao et al., 2019), the concept of *sufficiency living wage* (SLW) was constructed from how workers integrated the *living wage* concept within the framework of the sufficiency economy philosophy (SEP), which is grounded in socio-cultural and religious roots in Thailand. The SEP has been the cornerstone of Thailand’s development since 1997, when the late King Rama IX of Thailand presented its philosophical guidelines for the Thai people to emerge from the financial crisis (Mongsawad & Thongpakde, 2016; Piboolsravut, 2004). There are three interlocking elements or principles: moderation (avoiding extremes and overindulgence), reasonableness (making rational decisions and being able to understand the causal connection between actions and consequences),

and self-immunity (ability to cope with the likely impacts arising from future changes) (Barua & Tejativaddhana, 2019). These principles are “interconnected and interdependent” as noted by Mongsawad (2012). Along with these there are two other conditions necessary: knowledge and morality. Over the last several decades, the SEP has been adopted at national policy levels, and at individual and community levels for providing a framework of balanced and sustainable living in Thailand (Mongsawad et al., 2016; Wibulswasdi et al., 2012). A systematic review of research by Barua and Tejativaddhana (2019) has noted that the SEP has “significant impact” on the wellbeing of the people at multi-levels.

Seeking to explore the meaning of LW integrated within the framework of SEP, the authors designed mixed methods research to first qualitatively construct the concept of sufficiency living wage (SLW) (Yoelao et al., 2019). Next, quantitative research was conducted to develop an instrument to measure it. The exploratory factor analysis of the SLW scale indicated it had three factors, that were termed as “living with self-immunity” (LSI), “perceived psychological utility” (PPU), and “moderate consumption” (MC) (Yoelao et al., 2021). The PPU emerged from the perception of utility (Kahneman & Thaler, 1991), and positive psychological connotation in terms of cognition and affect from how the wages could be utilized. While the factor of MC is grounded in the pillar of “moderation” of the sufficiency economy philosophy, the factor of LSI shows linkages to “self-immunity”. The SLW scale had good psychometric properties; and showed linkages to the “positive inner/subjective outcomes such as pride, self-esteem, contentment, and happiness” (Yoelao et al., 2021, p. 34). Since this emerging concept has perceived salience for the workers in terms of how this wage would enhance their capability to satisfy their own needs, and to support their families (see Yoelao et al., 2021), it is necessary to further explore the empirical value of SLW with measures at work such as pay fairness reciprocity and impact on human capabilities.

### Perceived Fairness of Pay

Studies have noted the importance of employee perceptions of “fair pay” on the work-related attitudes, behaviours, outcomes, and wellbeing (Haar et al., 2018; Kao et al., 2018; Kim et al. (2019). Researchers have found that fair pay has the potential to improve both the quality of work life, and life-in-general, including life satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014). Yao et al. (2017) found

strong linkages between fair pay (measured in terms of wage justice and pay fairness reciprocity), living wage, and human capabilities. Connections of pay fairness with occupational health and worker wellbeing were found by Carr et al. (2017). As SLW is an emerging concept, it is meaningful to examine the relationship of the 3 dimensions of SLW with pay fairness reciprocity among the workers in the Thai context.

### Work and Life Capabilities

The research is based on the ground-breaking work on living wage by recent researchers (Carr et al., 2016a; Carr et al., 2017; Yao et al., 2017), who have shown significant linkages between the increase in wage and the development of human capabilities at work and in life.

According to Robeyns et al. (2020) “*the capabilities approach*” (CA) was first founded by the development economist Amartya Sen (1993) and further developed by theorists like Nussbaum (2011) and offers solutions to address various problems such as “poverty or inequality assessment, quality of life measurement, or as a necessary (but not sufficient) element of a theory of justice”. It was also noted that capabilities are the doings and beings that people can achieve if they so choose (Sen, 1993 as cited in Robeyns, 2005). In his later work Sen (1993) discussed the importance of CA to human wellbeing. For the current research, the meaning of work and life capabilities is linked to the living wage research (Carr et al., 2016a; Carr et al., 2017). The concept of life capabilities included four variables, life satisfaction, physical well-being, mental stress, and community; all of which have been noted in research to denote the capability of a person to live well, and were thus, collectively indicative of “non-work-related happiness” (Carr et al., 2016a; Carr et al., 2017). Work capability was explained in terms of three variables, job satisfaction, empowerment at work and occupational pride; all of which have been noted to reflect positive experiences at work, thus enhance capabilities at work and also have a positive spill over effect to life in general (Carr et al., 2016a; Carr et al., 2017). Various researchers examined the capability approach in the work context. While Hobson et al. (2011) developed a conceptual framework with capabilities for analysing work-life balance (WLB), others like Abma et al. (2016) developed a 7 dimensions model to measure work related capabilities. Recently Hu and Carr (2020) found evidence that a living wage could be of significance for the individual workers and the work-related outcomes

like wage justice, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction. Based on the growing evidence about the impact of living wage, this research also aimed to examine the impact of the emerging concept of SLW on the capabilities at work and life in general among the workers in Thailand and explore if the linkages were any different if the nature of work was different such as in blue- vs. white collar workers.

### Blue- vs. White Collar Workers

The experiences of blue vs. white-collar employees at work differ significantly due to the difference in their job characteristics, nature of work, and the salary. The classification of each has been adapted from the research by Lips-Wiersma et al. (2016), who explained that as per convention, white collar workers are those having supervisor/manager roles, professional or semi-professional roles, and business owners, while laborers and those with skilled trade roles are classified as blue-collar workers. Centers and Bugental (1966) noted that the factors motivating of blue- collar workers are likely to be more extrinsic job aspects such as: the job security, and rewards, while for white collar workers these may be intrinsic aspects of their jobs like autonomy and task significance. Evidence from China showed blue-collar workers are less satisfied with work duration, work-life balance and fair and equitable treatment at work (Chen et al., 2017). Moreover, living wage researchers have noted that living wage could enhance the capabilities of blue-collar workers (Carr et al., 2017). Keeping in view these perspectives, this research aimed to examine the differences in blue vs. white-collar workers in the three dimensions of SLW.

### The Rationale for Hypothesising SLW as a Mediator

There are three main reasons for hypothesising the role of SLW as a mediator variable. The first is that this research was based in the context of Thailand, where most people practice Buddhist religion, and researchers have found empirical evidence to support that these practices contribute towards happiness and wellbeing (Dejpitak, 2019; Elliott, 2014; Krongbun & Tienkachart, 2019; Pragotsayam, 2019; Winzer et al., 2018; Winzer & Gray, 2019). The SEP is also rooted in the Buddhist doctrines that provide valuable “middle path” of living in an era of globalization, where the focus is primarily on economic development (Barua & Tejativaddhana, 2019; Wibulsawadi et al., 2012). Furthermore, the connection between Buddhism and happiness for sustainable

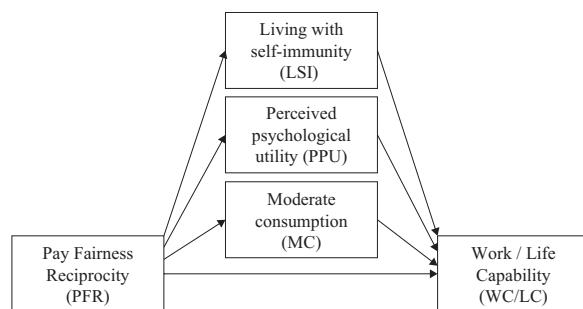
development have been reported in several other research works (Bamrungphak et al., 2020; Kittiprapas, 2015; Kunavaro, 2013; Kiccajaro & Paccantaseso, 2019; Jantapho et al., 2019). Since the SLW is grounded in the concept of SEP and in the Thai context, it is hypothesised that SLW would act as an internal mechanism on enhancing wellbeing and happiness through work/life capabilities.

The second reason is the role of mediator variables in research. As noted by several researchers (MacKinnon, 2011; MacKinnon et al., 2012) when interventions are designed to affect behaviour, they could be based on both action and conceptual theory for how the intervention is expected to change mediating variable. Since SLW is a new concept, its meaning emerged from the LW and SEP, its dimensions comprised cognitive and affective meaning of wage. In this study it was proposed to examine its role as a mediator so that further interventions could be designed to apply this mechanism.

The last reason is that wage levels have been explored as moderators of relationship between fair pay and work outcomes (Haar et al., 2018). However, there was no research that we could find that examined the role/ psychological functioning of living wage as a mechanism that could change the relationship between fair pay and human capabilities. Thus, the gap in research that emerges is to examine the mediating role of SLW on the relationship between pay fairness reciprocity and with work/life capabilities among the workers in the Thai context.

### The Proposed Conceptual Framework and the Research Hypotheses

Based on the review of literature and the concept of *sufficiency living wage* (SLW), this study proposed three hypotheses, which are conceptualized in [Figure 1](#).



**Figure 1** The hypothesized relationships between study variables

1. There would be differences among the white collar vs. blue-collar workers on all the study variables of SLW, PFR, and work/life capability.

2. The 3 dimensions of the variable of SLW would have positive relationships with PFR, and work/life capability.

3. The *sufficiency living wage* (SLW) and its three dimensions of *perceived psychological utility* (PPU), *moderate consumption* (MC) and *living with self-immunity* (LSI) would mediate the relationships between PFR and work/life capability.

## Methodology

### Procedure

A quantitative design of research using survey techniques was used in this research. Data were collected from workers in central Thailand who worked in the capital city Bangkok, and from other Thai provinces such as Nakorn Pathom, Nakorn Nayok, Samutsakorn, Chonburi, and Ayutthaya. Participation in the research was voluntary, informed consent was taken from the participants, and all ethical practices of research were followed. The data were collected during 2018–19 and analyzed using correlation and regression analyses. The research team secured ethics clearance from the university for the research project (ref: SWUEC 030/60E, dated 13 June 2017).

### Participants

Initially data were collected from 428 workers in Thailand, but due to missing values in datasets in some variables, only 391 sample were used in the analysis. Among them were 160 white-collar workers and 231 blue-collar workers from the business sector, who worked in eleven private organizations from two kinds of industries, tourism and production. Most participants were blue-collar workers (58.9%), females (62.4%), aged between 20–30 years old (33.4%), permanent workers (75.7%), with the length of work duration for the current job from 4–6 years (29.9%), a total work experience of over 10 years (26.2%) and holding a bachelor's degree (31.1%).

### Measures

The scales used in this research were translated into Thai language and tested for validity by experts and reliability in the Thai work context.

The SLW scale developed by the authors (Yoelao et al., 2019; 2021) has three factors that showed high internal reliability: “perceived psychological utility” (PPU) ( $\alpha = .87$ ); “moderate consumption” (MC) ( $\alpha = .78$ ); and “living with self-immunity” (LSI) ( $\alpha = .76$ ) (Yoelao et al., 2021). It has 22 items that are measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The subscale of *perceived psychological utility* includes 7 items such as “*The wages I receive make my family and I happy*”. The subscale of *moderate consumption* has 9 items like- “*I spend only as much as I have; I will not spend more than what I have*”. The subscale of *living with self-immunity* has 6 items like “*I believe that I have enough money for future spending on necessary goods*.”

Work capability was based on the work of Carr et al. (2016b; 2017) and was assessed by three items each measuring the 3 variables of job satisfaction, empowerment at work and occupational pride.

The variable of life capability was also based on the work of Carr et al. (2016b; 2017) and was assessed by four items, each measuring the 4 variables of life satisfaction, physical well-being, mental stress, and community.

The variable of pay fairness reciprocity was based on the work of Carr et al. (2016b; 2017) and was assessed by four items, each measuring how the workers think about their wage as a ‘fair rate’ for the job; compared to their effort; compared to their qualifications; and compared to similar jobs elsewhere.

## Results

### Comparison of White Collar vs. Blue-Collar Workers

To test the first hypotheses, differences among the white-collar ( $n = 160$ ) and blue-collar workers ( $n = 231$ ) were examined by using t-tests comparison of the means of all study variables as shown in Table 1. There were statistically significant differences in pay fairness reciprocity ( $p < .01$ ) among the groups, with white-collar workers reporting higher mean scores. There were no significant differences on the mean scores of work capability and life capability among the workers. Among the three SLW subdimensions, living with self-immunity ( $p < .01$ ) and perceived psychological utility of wage ( $p < .05$ ) were significantly different, with the white-collar workers reporting higher mean scores. Thus, the results showed only partial differences among the white- and blue-collar workers.

**Table 1** Means and standard deviation of the research variables compared by type of work

Variables	White-Collar Worker n = 160		Blue-Collar worker n = 231		t-test
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Pay fairness reciprocity (PFR)	10.30	2.27	9.48	2.58	3.34*
2. Living with self-immunity (LSI)	22.01	3.36	21.18	4.28	2.14*
3. Perceived psychological utility (PPU)	28.33	3.69	27.33	4.70	2.35*
4. Moderate consumption (MC)	35.28	4.91	36.00	4.64	1.46
5. Work capability (WC)	11.91	1.86	12.04	1.89	0.68
6. Life capability (LC)	15.18	2.50	15.41	2.46	0.86

Note: n = 391. \*p < .05.

### Correlation Analyses

To test the second hypotheses, Pearson product moment correlation analysis was conducted. As shown in **Table 2**, correlation coefficients ranged from .13 to .61 in the white-collar group and from .19 to .69 in the blue-collar group. The correlation between life capability and work capability were the highest in both groups. All coefficients were positive and statistically significant.

### Mediation Analysis

The regression analysis results for the study variables are shown in **Table 3**. Results show significant direct effects of PFR on all 3 dimensions of SLW, LSI, PPU, and MC. The direct effects of PFR on WC and LC were also significant. When comparing the regression models of WC and LC, the predictors explained the total variance of WC better than LC.

**Table 2** Correlation coefficients among study variables for blue-collar workers and white-collar workers

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Pay fairness reciprocity		0.52**	0.44**	0.19**	0.43**	0.38*
2. Living with self-immunity	0.56**		0.62**	0.47**	0.57**	0.57**
3. Perceived psychological utility	0.24**	0.45**		0.43**	0.55**	0.52**
4. Moderate consumption	0.13	0.36**	0.31**		0.41**	0.38**
5. Work-capability	0.39**	0.51**	0.43**	0.43**		0.69**
6. Life- capability	0.37**	0.50**	0.44**	0.44*	0.61*	

Note: The correlation coefficients of the blue-collar workers (n = 160) are shown above the diagonal and for white-collar workers (n = 231) are shown below the diagonal.

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

**Table 3** Unstandardized regression coefficients, Standard errors, and Model summary for the Hypothesized Model (**Figure 1**)

Predictor Variable	Outcome Variable				
	LSI	PPU	MC	WC	LC
Pay Fairness Reciprocity (PFR)	0.85 (.07)	0.67 (.08)	0.29 (.10)	0.12 (.04)	0.11 (.05)
Living with self-immunity (LSI)				0.11 (.03)	0.206 (.04)
Perceived psychological utility (PPU)				0.09 (.02)	0.06 (.03)
Moderate consumption (MC)				0.09 (.02)	0.12 (.02)
	$R^2 = 0.29$ $F(1, 39) = 155.68$ ***	$R^2 = 0.15$ $F(1, 39) = 67.8$ ***	$R^2 = 0.02$ $F(1, 39) = 8.86$ ***	$R^2 = 0.38$ $F(4, 39) = 59.79$ ***	$R^2 = 0.35$ $F(4, 39) = 51.55$ ***

Note: (1) Pay Fairness Reciprocity = PFR; Living with self-immunity = LSI; Perceived psychological utility = PPU; Moderate consumption = MC; Work capability = WC; Life capability = LC;

(2) Significance levels shown in brackets: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001.

Next, mediation analysis was conducted to test the third hypotheses. The first step was to test if LSI, PPU, and MC mediated the relationship between PFR and WC. The second step was to test if LSI, PPU, and MC mediated the relationship between PFR and LC. To test the mediation hypotheses, the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018) was used to compute the indirect effects, using 10,000 percentile bootstrap samples, estimated with 95 percent bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrap confidence intervals BCa CI. The results are shown in Table 4.

The estimates of indirect effect (IE) of PFR on WC through LSI (IE = 0.097; 95% BCa CI [0.046–0.0153]), PPU (IE = 0.059; 95% BCa CI [0.024–0.991]), MC (IE = 0.025; 95% BCa CI [0.007–0.046]), were significant at 95 percent confidence level (Hayes, 2018). When testing whether the 3 indirect effects were significantly different from zero, the result showed that they were significant (Sobel, 1982). Thus, all 3 dimensions of SLW mediated the relationship between PFR and WC.

The estimates of indirect effect (IE) of PFR on LC through LSI (IE = 0.175; 95% BCa CI [0.105–0.258]), PPU (IE = 0.037; 95% BCa CI [-0.009–0.088]), MC (IE = 0.033; 95% BCa CI [0.009–0.060]), were significant at 95 percent confidence level (Hayes, 2018). When testing whether the 3 indirect effects were significantly different from zero, the results showed that these were significant for LSI ( $Z = 5.195$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and MC ( $Z = 2.489$ ;  $p < .05$ ) (Sobel, 1982). Thus, only 2 of the sub-dimensions (LSI and MC) of SLW mediated the relationship between PFR and WC; PPU was not found to be a mediator.

## Discussion

The main results of the study showed that all three dimensions of the sufficiency living wage (SLW),

perceived psychological utility (PPU), moderate consumption (MC), and living with self-immunity (LSI) mediated the relationships between pay fair reciprocity (PFR) and work/ life capabilities. These findings are significant when examining wellbeing of workers from the lens of socio-religious-cultural factors, specifically about the deep-rooted influences of Buddhist religion and the *sufficiency economy philosophy* (SEP) among the Thai workers.

Happiness from the *Buddhist* way means a lack of suffering; suffering of a physical kind, or of a mental nature (Puntasen, 2007; The Thai Public Broadcasting Service [TPBS], 2021). Human suffering comes from unlimited wants or desires; the desire for pleasurable experience (both physical and mental) comply with the desire for things that feed the sense of self. Interestingly, a desire for inner wellbeing is the fundamental development of human potential (Phra Brahmagunabhorn (Payutto), 2016). Path to cessation of suffering comes through an understanding of the Buddhist doctrines of the *Four Noble truths* and the *Noble Eightfold path to guide practices* (Aich, 2013). Among the eightfold path, the right livelihood means “one earns one’s living by right form of livelihood, giving up wrong livelihood” (Ng, 2020). From the Buddhist perspective on economics, the principles of motivation emerge from the middle path, four noble truths, noble eightfold path, and aim for overall wellbeing, driven by individual choices, collaboration, and co-operation (Ng, 2020).

Another interesting result from the study were the comparisons between white- and blue-collar workers; significant t-test results showed that the white-collar workers reported higher mean scores on pay fairness reciprocity and two dimensions of SLW, living with self-immunity and perceived psychological utility of wage. These can be understood from the perspective that as white-collar workers get higher wages/salaries,

**Table 4** Indirect effects and total effects of PFR on WC and LC

Mediator	IE	Boot SE	WC			LC			Normal theory test	
			95% CI		Normal theory test	95% CI		Normal theory test		
			LL	UL		LL	UL			
LSI	0.097	0.027	0.047	0.153	4.05***	0.175	0.039	0.105	0.258	5.195***
PPU	0.059	0.019	0.024	0.991	3.59***	0.037	0.243	-0.009	0.088	1.840(NS)
MC	0.025	0.010	0.007	0.046	2.51*	0.033	0.123	0.009	0.060	2.489*
Total	0.181	0.290	0.125	0.238		0.245	0.040	0.170	0.328	

*Note:* (1) Pay Fairness Reciprocity = PFR; Living with self-immunity = LSI; Perceived psychological utility = PPU; Moderate consumption = MC; Work capability = WC; Life capability = LC;

(2) Significance levels: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . NS = non-significant.

they perceive these as fairer, and could also provide them with money to save (LSI) and utilize it to help others in their family (PPU). These build the case for providing living wage to enhance the capability of workers as highlighted by previous empirical research (Carr et al., 2016a; Carr et al. 2017; Yao et al., 2017).

This research focused on understanding human capability in two dimensions of work capability and life; both could represent authentic happiness or sustainable happiness. Workers attain these capabilities through their wages. The research findings confirmed that perceived pay fairness reciprocity predicted higher work/life capability. Moreover, the SLW, comprising of LSI, MC and PPU, accounted for how people achieve more fulfillment in terms of both their work and life capability, thus predicting happiness under any economic circumstances. This could be understood from Sen's capability approach (1999), that SLW could provide workers with "agency" to change their capabilities and thus, predicting happiness/ wellbeing.

Thai researchers highlight the essence of SEP rooted in the Buddhist doctrines that propagates the "middle path" and shapes the *Buddhist economics* (Barua & Tejatativaddhana, 2019; Mong sawad & Thongpakde, 2016). Puntasen (2017) noted that Buddhist economics does not stop at the dimension of economic well-being, but points towards a deeper meaning of well-being in a spiritual sense. The implications of SLW as a mechanism for mindful consumption are critical particularly in today's era of globalization that has failed to address the environmental impacts and other important aspects such as reducing poverty and income inequalities (OECD, 2020; Walker et al., 2021).

The results from our research show that though pay fairness reciprocity directly effects work and life capability, however if any person practices *sufficiency living wage*, that is built from their Buddhist practices, it enhances the power of pay fairness reciprocity on both work/ life capabilities. Thus, this study explains the mechanism that links pay fairness reciprocity to human work and life capabilities, which is beyond simple direct relationships. The SEP could be adopted as an essential pillar of business policy and workers could be encouraged to practice LSI, MC and PPU as way of life and in the workplace (Yoelao et al., 2019). Through this, workers could achieve happiness in their lives from jobs and wages even in a market driven economy, in which cash is the main compensation for workers, under any variation or risky periods such as the ongoing pandemic situation.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The findings from this study have implications for further research in understanding the utilization of SLW in diverse work contexts of Thailand and other countries, especially when the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted wellbeing at work and life for most workers. The practical implications from the study are that organizations could re-think paradigms to support sustainable work life through implementing living wage and encouraging workers to practice SLW in their work and lives. These empirical results are indicative of the significance of SLW for both organizations and workers. As noted by Sen (1999, as cited in Carr et al, 2017, p. 231), Sen (1999) "enhanced capabilities in leading a [working] life would tend, typically, to expand a person's ability to be more productive."

In conclusion, this research found that SLW could be a bridge between balancing one's daily life and quest for true happiness, that could enable workers to fulfil their financial needs with mindful consumption, utilizing the wages for supporting the people they care for, and saving for their future needs.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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