

Relationship Between Knowledge Management and Ethical Leadership on Human Capital Management in Herbal City Community Enterprises: Study on the North of Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The productivity of an organization directly depends upon its human capital. Therefore, human capital management is a primary unit which is responsible for the generation of more productivity and the accomplishment of vying advantages by an organization. There are a number of factors that directly impact human capital management; however, according to the current study, knowledge management and ethical leadership have a direct effect on human capital management of organizations, particularly in the North of Thailand. Hence, in the current study, there is a positive influence of knowledge management on ethical leadership and human capital. While ethical leadership mediates between the relationship of knowledge management and human capital management. Moreover, a survey based on 690 employees working in various organizations in the North of Thailand was conducted to collect primary data. A statistical software named Partial Least Square (PLS) was used to analyze the collected primary data to produce the results of the current study. It was concluded that effective knowledge management and ethical leadership have a formative influence on human capital management, which plays a significant role in achieving competitive advantages for an organization. Hence the current study is a booster for the practitioners to bring advancement in human capital management.

Keywords: Knowledge management, ethical leadership, human capital management.

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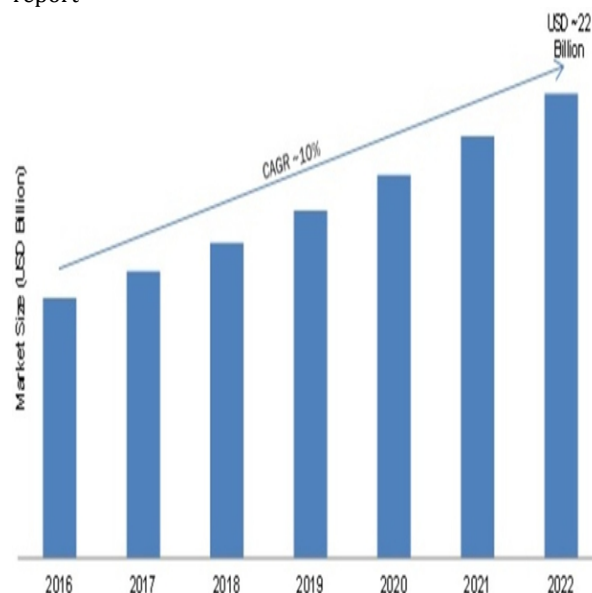
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INTRODUCTION

Human capital management plays a vital role in an organization by energizing its human capital, especially to complete competitive advantages. As human capital management directly impacts on workers and employees, which has a large impact on the productivity of an organization. Generally, human capital management deals systematically with the people (human capital) for the accomplishment of competitive advantages. Hence, effective or poor human capital management has a direct influence on overall organizational productivity (Widodo & Mawarto, 2020). This is why the organizations with a persuasive human capital management system often compete with their competitors for competitive advantages and have more productivity that increases their business performance.

Productivity and performance of organizations define the volume of a country's economy. However, organizations in many countries are struggling to produce meaningful business performance, particularly the organizations in Herbal community enterprises in the North of Thailand. Therefore, the ability to accomplish competitive advantages and productivity of numerous business performance is mandatory for the organization (Yeh, Tseng, & Lim, 2020). Human capital management is one of the most effective units in any organization that assists in the achievement of business performance and competitive advantages for the organization. Moreover, human capital management brings continuous growth in the market as well. Following Figure 1 shows the human capital management market research report.

Figure 1. Human capital management market research report



Source: Market Research Future

Particularly, organizations in the North of Thailand are facing some serious issues, especially regarding human capital management. Where there is a strong need for training and education to increase human capital, it is mandatory to address other effective forces that directly have impacts on the human capital management system for an organization. An orderly, organized, and methodical planning plays a vital role in the excellent use of an organization's human capital (Prodanova, Savina, Kevorkova, Korshunova, & Bochkareva, 2019). According

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to the current study, knowledge management and ethical leadership are the two major factors which directly impact human capital management.

This is an exclusive study that explores the role of knowledge management and ethical leadership on human capital management for organizations in the North of Thailand. There are a number of studies exploring the role of knowledge management and ethical leadership in various organizations. However, the relationship of knowledge management with ethical leadership and human capital management is totally missing from the literature. Moreover, the studies have not considered organizations in the North of Thailand while discussing knowledge management, ethical leadership, and human capital management. Thus, the study is an essential contribution to the body of the literature.

It is clear from the previous literature that human capital management increases productivity and business performance of an organization by limiting unfair labor exercises, with effective and strong training, and initially hiring the right person for the job (Tjahjadi, Soewarno, Nadyaningrum, & Aminy, 2020). Moreover, it is also clear from the results of various studies that an ineffective human capital management system, where the cause for loss of resources and energies of the organization, also does not bring productivity and business performance for the organization. There are a number of factors which directly impacts on human capital management systems, such as knowledge management and ethical leadership. Hence, the major objective of the current study is to investigate the relationship between knowledge management and ethical leadership with human capital management.

The current study has numerous contributions to the body of literature by exploring the relationship between knowledge management, ethical leadership, and human capital management. Hence, the current study has theoretical as well as a practical contribution to the body of literature. Theoretically, the current study determines the relationship between knowledge management, ethical leadership, and human capital management. While practically, the current study provides boosts to the practitioners to increase organizational business performance and accomplishment of competitive advantages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Administration and coordination of tasks to accomplish a specified purpose is called management. Management is responsible for establishing the organization's plan of action, coordinating the work of staff to achieve these purposes by using the application of accessible resources. This is what management for any sector of an organization is compulsory (Laguecir, Kern, & Kharoubi, 2020). Hence, according to the current study, human capital management, which is a set of rules and procedures accompanying people resource management, is also very significant for any organization. Human capital management basically focused on an organizational need to generate particular competencies that are usually put into action into three types: workforce management, workforce acquisition, and workforce optimization. However, according to a prior study, human capital management is directly affected by multiple other management processes that go parallel in an organization to accomplish the tasks of the

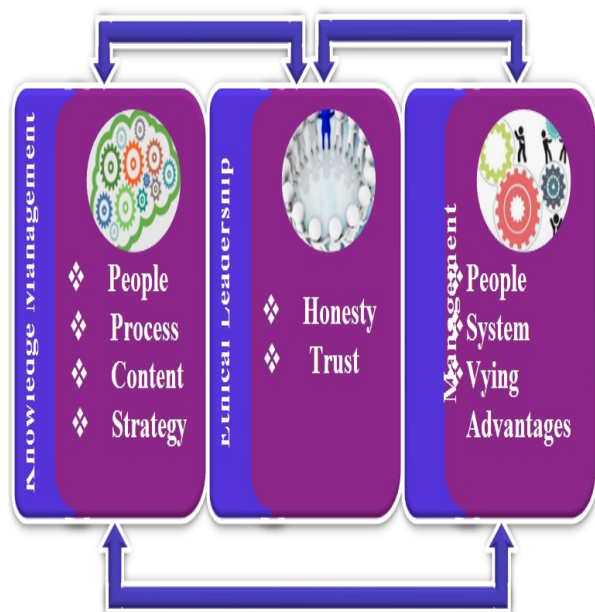
organization (Zhou, Fan, & Son, 2019). Conferring the current study, knowledge management and ethical leadership has a direct relationship with human capital management. Knowledge management is a vigilant process of retaining, defining, sharing, and structuring the experience and knowledge of employees inside an organization. Results of a previous study describe that knowledge management has significant importance for any organization and the basic purpose of knowledge management is to enhance the efficiency of an organization within the organizational boundary (Muñoz-Pascual, Galende, & Curado, 2020). Whereas ethical leadership is a set of capabilities such as the ability to communicate, be the example, and knows the importance of ethics excellently, has numerous impacts on human capital management.

According to a previous study, knowledge management significantly produces multiple dimensions in which it becomes easier to embellish the ethical leadership that produces encouraging and positive consequences for an organization (Bush, Welsh, Baer, & Waldman, 2020). Moreover, knowledge management and ethical leadership are essential for a progressive point of view for an organization. Hence, both ethical leadership and knowledge management go parallel while operating their tasks and duties. Therefore, it becomes more important to judge the relationship between both of these with human capital management. Furthermore, according to the current study, knowledge management that particularly depends upon people, process, content, and strategy is used to add values for honesty and trusty, which are demonstrating ethical leadership. Whereas honesty and trust have a strong bond with the people, competitive advantages, and the system.

Hence, any change in values of knowledge management and ethical leadership directly impacts on human capital management. According to the current study, knowledge management directly affects both the ethical leadership and human capital management. While there is also a relationship between ethical leadership and human capital management. Furthermore, ethical leadership mediates between the relationship of knowledge management and human capital management. The following Figure 2 shows the relationship of all the key variables of the current study.

Figure 2. Study Research Model

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Knowledge management and ethical leadership

Knowledge management is a composite and multi-dimensional concept which requires persuasive implementation and development in several prosperous pieces of literature (Phong & Son, 2020). The current study determines a review of knowledge management in relation to ethical leadership and human capital management with an eye approaching towards the identification of significant research areas. Some authors, notably in management science literature, define knowledge management by describing the process and strategy of an organization (Gürlek & Çemberci, 2020). The supposition seems to be yet demanding more exploration. Hence, the current study explores knowledge management by describing the role of people, process, content, and strategy. People are a fundamental part of any process; thus, the importance of people is quite natural and significant (Pellegrini, Ciampi, Marzi, & Orlando, 2020). It is stated in a previous study that the selection of the right people is compulsory before getting into the process. There are basically two kinds of people the senior leaders and cross-functional stakeholders. Senior people are capable of giving strategies using their insight and provide sponsorship (Lu, Zhu, & Wei, 2020). While cross-functional stakeholders are there to pilot implementation. Besides people, the process is an important part of knowledge management that affects ethical leadership. The process defines acquiring, creating, and utilizing the available knowledge. Such as events, training, and business needs knowledge-based processes. Besides people and process, the content has significant importance in the knowledge management process (Sahibzada, Jianfeng, Latif, Shafait, & Sahibzada, 2020). Content is something on which people, processes, and strategies work on. Authors are agreed upon without content; other resources such as people, and units like process and strategy, are useless, and they don't produce productive results. Instead, going without content is always a wastage of time and energy as well. Hence, it is mandatory for ethical leadership to have useful content that has adequate value (Ahmad, Donia, Khan, & Waris, 2019). Besides, people, process, and content strategy play a vital role in the knowledge management process.

Strategy defines a definite way to go by. The health of a strategy determines the chances of accomplishment of the task for which the specific strategy is declared (de la Fuente et al., 2020). Researchers find that most of the time, strategies fail; it is just because of poor strategy or termination from the defined strategy. In knowledge management, strategies are declared after a complete analysis of the whole system that makes the strategies clearer and result-oriented (Jaffar Abbas et al., 2020). Therefore, ethical leadership is more effective and familiarize if the strategy is present in its sound health. The role of knowledge management is obvious for ethical leadership after finding that knowledge management directly impacts ethical leadership (Bhatti, Akram, Bhatti, Rasool, & Su, 2020). Hence, it is purposed that;

H1: Knowledge management has a positive influence on ethical leadership.

Ethical leadership and human capital management

A form of leadership in which someone exposes manipulation for the common well-being that is appropriate and acceptable for all areas of his/her life. Ethical leadership is capable of communicating, lead with examples, and focused on the significance of ethics (Van der Wal & Demircioglu, 2020). Hence, ethical leadership has a central importance in human capital management. According to a prior study, ethical leadership plays a significant role in human capital management and human resources practices. However, it is explored that ethical leadership is extremely useful for the establishment of a positive environment that has productive relationships covering the following three stages.

1. The good of the individual: It is a responsibility and mandatory for an ethical leader to maintain an environment in which positive working continues, even safe for the affirmative willingness from outside the environment. Being exemplary is always fruitful not only for the system but also for an ethical leader as well (Al Halbusi, Williams, Ramayah, Aldieri, & Vinci, 2020). With the examples, it is more effective to impress and convey a message. Hence, an ethical leader in habits of creating examples influences others to do the same. There are a lot of ways and practices which are used to influence people; however, interactions that directly occur around them affect them more (Qing, Asif, Hussain, & Jameel, 2019). Thus, positive communication among workers causes significant productivity in attitude and job as well.
2. The potential of the team: An ethical leader is responsible for building and maintaining the potential of his/her team. Ethical leadership directly involves the management of collaboration and conduct within a team (Salas-Vallina, Moreno-Luzón, & Gil-Marqués, 2020). Moreover, ethical leadership allows people to get together, and as a result, the overall morale of the people becomes high. Working together as a team brings opportunities for people to develop relationships in the workplace, which ultimately increases the overall productivity and performance of the team as well as the concerned organization (Saha, Cerchione, Singh, & Dahiya, 2020). Generally, such kind of teams requires an ethical leader who left positively effective impacts on the human resource of an organization.
3. The health of the organization: overall health of the organization is a basic unit hence; it becomes mandatory to control and maintain a positive attitude, especially during work in the workplace, which has a significant impact on the overall health of an organization. Ethical

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leadership teaches people to respect each other, value others' opinion, to be honest and trustworthy, which ultimately help to create a progressive working environment (Alkipsy & Raju, 2020). Furthermore, ethical leadership is helpful for the creation of an environment where people build relations, show mutual respect, and contribute collectively to the accomplishment of a goal.

Hence, with the increased value of ethical leadership, human capital management becomes more productive. Thus, it is capsulated that;

H2: Ethical leadership has a positive influence on human capital management.

Knowledge management and human capital management

Knowledge management is an essential tool for an organization, particularly for the decision-making unit of the organization. It is mandatory for the decision-making unit to have sufficient knowledge, at least about the things being under consideration (Agrawal, 2020; Elsayah et al., 2020). However, information about all the assets of an organization is compulsory for the decision-making process. As, knowledge management plays a central role in the collection of information and analysis of the information (Latif, Afzal, Saqib, Sahibzada, & Alam, 2020). In this way, knowledge management provides a boost to the overall efficiency of an industry's decision-making capability. Moreover, knowledge management ensures that all the employees have an approach to the overall knowledge, abilities, and proficiencies, which an organization occupies. With the better utilization of knowledge management, a crafty workforce is erected that is capable of making informed and quick decisions that are beneficial for the organization (Shahzad, Qu, Zafar, Rehman, & Islam, 2020). Hence, in this way, knowledge management has meaningful effects on human capital management. As the primary objective of human capital management is to achieve capitative advantages hence, it is mandatory to focus on people, process, content, and strategy, which are the basic elements of knowledge management according to the current study. However, people are the common unit in both knowledge management as well as human capital management (Jawad Abbas, 2020). Moreover, people are the human capital resources of an organization who are responsible for meeting competitive advantages. However, knowledge management provides pre-assessment about the human capital of an organization; by using that assessment, it becomes easier to make a proper and optimal decision, particularly for the accomplishment of vying advantages (Miković, Petrović, Mihić, Obradović, & Todorović, 2020). According to a prior study, organizations without the proper practice of knowledge management face a number of struggles in various departments. However, the organizations with good practice of knowledge management, not only able to utilize their energies in the right direction, but they also have not to face difficulties in the management of human capital. Ultimately this kind of practice results in more productivity that causes the achievement of vying advantages for the organizations (Mkrttchian, 2020). Human capital management without a proper strategy and successful execution of that strategy is not possible and it is clear from the literature that an effective strategy without knowledge management is not possible. Therefore, the organizations particularly in the North of

Thailand having good practice of knowledge management and human capital management are more productive and they accomplish vying advantages more easily as compared with those organizations which don't practice effective and persuasive knowledge and human capital management system (Vaid & Honig, 2020). Hence, knowledge management has momentous influence on human capital management.

H3: Knowledge management has a positive influence on human capital management.

H4: Ethical leadership mediates between the relationship of knowledge management and human capital management.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Six hundred ninety employees working with different organizations were the respondents of the current study. It is a survey-based study, hence for primary data collection, respondents of the current study were contacted. However, before starting the survey, it was necessary to mark a research method, which is the best suited for this study. For this purpose, the three most illustrious research methods, qualitative research method, quantitative research method, and the mixed method, were studied initially to check their compatibility with the nature of the current study. It was determined that the quantitative research method is just according to the nature of the current study. Hence, the current study opted for a quantitative research method. Moreover, before selecting the respondents, the sample size of the current study was decided. According to the recommendation of a previous study, a sample size of 1000 is excellent sample size; hence, the current study opted 1000 sample size. Furthermore, the area cluster sampling approach was selected because the respondents of the current study are from the whole of the North of Thailand, which is a wide area, therefore for area cluster sampling approach was preferred, which is always best for a wide region.

After the selection of area cluster sampling, the next step was to prepared a questionnaire to survey the respondents. Before the preparation of the questionnaire, the structure and body of the questionnaire were decided. It was decided that the questionnaire will be divided into three parts; the first part will contain only questions regarding the personal information of the respondents. The second part will have questions related to key variables such as knowledge management, ethical leadership, and human capital of the current study. While the final part of the questionnaire will be based on a 5-point Likert-based question, which starts from 1 as "Strongly Agreed" to 5 as "Strongly Disagree."

With the successful finalization of the questionnaire, in the next step, copies of the questionnaire were distributed among the respondents via the Thai national postal service on the respondents' postal address, which was initially collected from head offices of various organizations with a personal visit. After 1.5 months of the postal sent to the respondents, there were 740 responses received from the respondents. It was found that 20 responses were partially filled while the other 30 responses contain ambiguity. Hence, the 20 partially filled, and the 30 responses with ambiguity were excluded from the total received responses. Thus, rest of 690 responses were considered as primary data for the current study. With the help of PLS, this primary data was

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analyzed to finalize the results of the current study. All the scales and measures were opted from the prior studies.

FINDINGS

The collected data of the current study don't have any missing value. Outliers in the data also not present. Hence, uniformity in the data is present. It is obvious from the previous studies that outlier and missing values present in the data have serious effects on the final results of data analysis.

As the analysis process gets deeper down, by using Partial Least Square (PLS), the validity and reliability of the data were checked. Furthermore, all the hypotheses were analyzed in this part of the data findings. The current study used structural equation modeling (SEM). Usually, PLS-SEM is based on two very significant steps in data analysis. 1) measurement model and 2) structural model (Chin et al., 2020). However, with the help of the measurement model, the data's reliability and validity are checked, as illustrated in Figure 3. Furthermore, the value for the factor loadings should be more than 0.4, the value for the composite reliability (CR) should be more than 0.6, and the value for the average variance extracted should be more than 0.7 (Ismail, Nopiah, Mohamad, & Pang, 2020). Table 1 shows the factor loading values of all the elements for their corresponding variable are more than the minimum threshold level for factor loading, which is 0.4. Results in Table 2 also clear that each variable's values for their composite reliability and average variance extracted are above the minimum threshold level. Discriminant validity is given in Table 3 with the help of cross-loadings.

Figure 3. Measurement Model

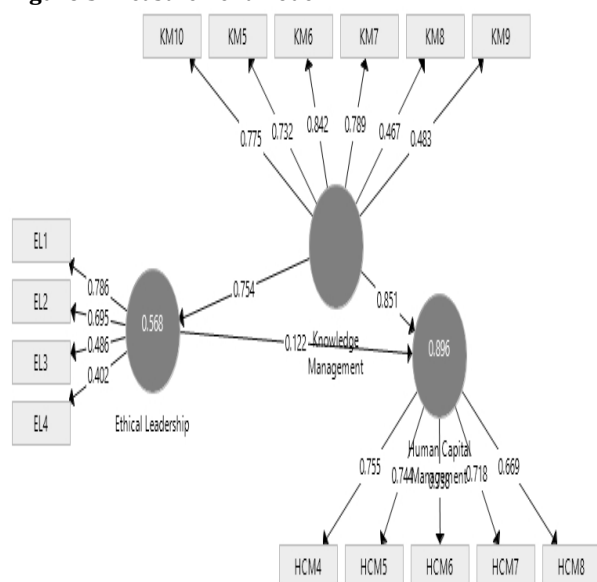


Table 1: Factor Loadings

	Ethical Leadership	Human Capital Management	Knowledge Management
EL1	0.786		
EL2	0.695		
EL3	0.486		
EL4	0.402		
HCM4		0.755	
HCM5		0.744	
HCM6		0.738	
HCM7		0.718	
HCM8		0.669	
KM10			0.775
KM5			0.732
KM6			0.842
KM7			0.789
KM8			0.467
KM9			0.483

Table 2: Reliability and Convergent Validity

	Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE
Ethical Leadership	0.583	0.513	0.692	0.575
Human Capital Management	0.774	0.777	0.847	0.526
Knowledge Management	0.776	0.824	0.844	0.586

Table 3: Cross-Loadings

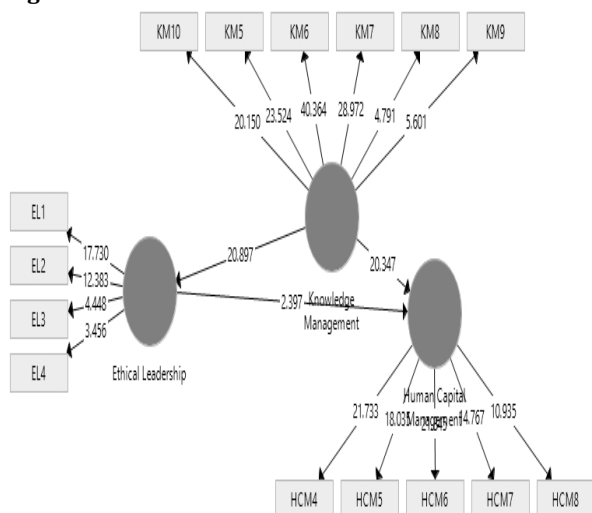
	Ethical Leadership	Human Capital Management	Knowledge Management
EL1	0.786	0.675	0.599
EL2	0.695	0.542	0.576
EL3	0.486	0.261	0.296
EL4	0.402	0.199	0.242
HCM4	0.549	0.755	0.678
HCM5	0.519	0.744	0.705
HCM6	0.509	0.739	0.738
HCM7	0.473	0.718	0.717
HCM8	0.65	0.669	0.568
KM10	0.54	0.782	0.775
KM5	0.593	0.764	0.832
KM6	0.675	0.802	0.842
KM7	0.569	0.757	0.789
KM8	0.269	0.336	0.467
KM9	0.397	0.387	0.483

Note: EL = Ethical Leadership, HCM = Human Capital Management, KM = Knowledge Management

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Hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) were analyzed using the structural model illustrated in Figure 4. Thus, all four hypotheses of the current study were tested with the help of a structural model. Three hypotheses were based on the direct impact of ethical leadership on human capital management, knowledge management on ethical leadership, and knowledge management on human capital management. All three hypotheses are accepted, as shown in Table 4. The structural model of the hypotheses from Figure 4 shows all the corresponding results in Table 4.

Figure 4. Structural Model



All four hypotheses (**H1**, **H2**, **H3**, and **H4**) are based on the t-value. Hence, the hypotheses acquiring t-value = 1.96 were supported. Because all the hypotheses have a t-value above 1.96, hence, all the hypotheses (**H1**, **H2**, **H3**, and **H4**) are supported. According to the results of Table 4, the direct effect of the relationship between ethical leadership and human capital management is significant with the t-value = 2.397 and $\beta = 0.122$, the relationship between knowledge management and ethical leadership is very significant with the t-value = 20.897 and $\beta = 0.754$, the relationship between the knowledge management and human capital management is also very persuasive with the t-value = 20.347 and $\beta = 0.851$.

Table 4: Direct Effect Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Ethical Leadership -> Human Capital Management	0.122	0.121	0.051	2.397	0.017
Knowledge Management -> Ethical Leadership	0.754	0.758	0.036	20.897	0
Knowledge Management -> Human Capital Management	0.851	0.853	0.042	20.347	0

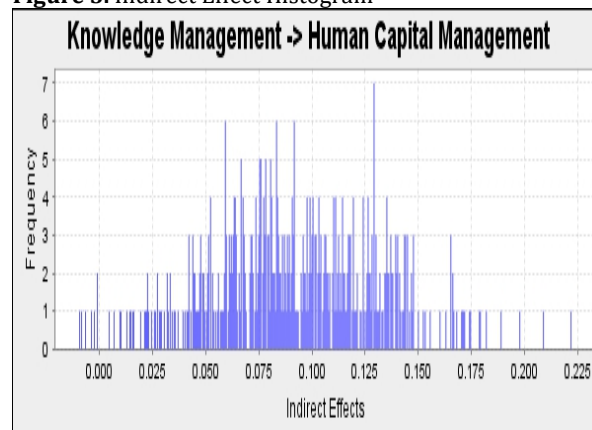
Furthermore, the last hypothesis (**H4**) of the current study was examined to check the indirect effect of ethical leadership. Results in Table 5 shows that this hypothesis (**H4**) is also supported. The mediation effect of ethical leadership between the relationship of knowledge management and human capital management is impressive, with the t-value = 2.359 and β -value = 0.092.

Furthermore, the indirect effect of histogram is illustrated in Figure 5.

Table 5: Indirect Effect Results

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Knowledge Management -> Ethical Leadership -> Human Capital Management	0.092	0.091	0.039	2.359	0.019

Figure 5. Indirect Effect Histogram



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to the current study, herbal city community enterprises are unable to perfume more precisely because of the serious effects of knowledge management and ethical leadership on human capital management. It is concluded that knowledge management is the utmost necessary for any enterprise. Knowledge management enables an enterprise to understand past policies, which helps in decision making while making new decisions during the process of making new policies and rules for business activities. Herbal city community enterprises need to focus specifically on knowledge management because knowledge management directly affects ethical leadership. Most enterprises are facing ethical leadership-related issues, especially in the North of Thailand. Therefore, it is necessary for the herbal city community enterprises to take steps to bring more efficiency, adaptability, and energy for knowledge management. Because knowledge management has vital role for ethical leadership. Moreover, according to the results of the current study, ethical leadership without knowledge management becomes weak. As poor is knowledge management as poor will be ethical leadership. Hence, to increase the value of ethical leadership, it is compulsory to enhance knowledge management. It is noticed that with the improvement in knowledge management, ethical leadership also grows. Hence, a better understanding of knowledge management will definitely cause effective ethical leadership.

According to the current study results, it is also explored that there is a direct relationship between knowledge management and human capital management. Human capital management has significant importance for a community enterprise. Impressive knowledge management always has positive effects on human capital management. According to a prior study, both knowledge management and human capital go together. It is

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concluded that with proper and effective knowledge management, human capital management brings positively remarkable results, particularly for the herbal city community in the North of Thailand.

Besides having a mediation role between the relationship of knowledge management and human capital management, ethical leadership also directly affects human capital management. The current study results show that ethical leadership persuasively affects human capital management, particularly in herbal city community enterprises in the North of Thailand. To obtain desired results for human capital management becomes easier if it became successful in producing ethical leadership qualities in any organization's human resources. Moreover, human capital management has a basic role in controlling business activities. To perfume business activities, there is always a need for ethical leadership qualities. Conferring with the current study, knowledge management and ethical leadership directly affects human capital management, while ethical leadership also has a mediating role between the relationship of knowledge management and human capital management in herbal city community enterprises in the North of Thailand. Hence, this is a particularized study that helps entrepreneurs, organizations, enterprise communities, and practitioners grow their business with a better understanding of human capital management.

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