

# Education Quality Management by Encouraging Wellbeing and Discouraging Inequality among Society

**Andhyka Tyaz Nugraha<sup>a\*</sup>, Rubina Jabeen<sup>b</sup>**, <sup>a</sup>School of Technology Management and Logistics, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Sintok, Malaysia, <sup>b</sup>Faculty of Business Administration, Iqra University, Karachi, Pakistan, Email: <sup>a\*</sup>[andhykasriwijaya@gmail.com](mailto:andhykasriwijaya@gmail.com)

The objective of the study is to promote sustainable development goals through education quality management. The role of well-being and inequality was also considered. To attain the objective of this study, a survey was preferred. Survey questionnaires were distributed among the universities of Thailand. A total number of 382 survey questionnaires were used in the survey. Partial Least Square (PLS) was preferred to analyse the collected data. Findings proved that education quality management has a positive role to play in promoting sustainable development goals in Thailand. In addition, it is found that education quality management plays a positive role in enhancing well-being and decreasing inequality among the society, which ultimately positively affects the promotion of sustainable development goals. An increase in well-being increases the sustainable development goals, however, an increase in inequality decreases the sustainable development goals. Therefore, the government of Thailand should focus on university education quality management to promote sustainable development goals by encouraging well-being and discouraging inequality among the society.

**Key words:** *Sustainable development goals, quality education, well-being, inequality.*

## Introduction

Higher quality management in education is most important to achieve (Stensaker, Hovdhaugen, & Maassen, 2019) because it plays a central role in community development. Particularly, quality education in higher educational institutions is playing a vital role to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) in various countries. Better quality

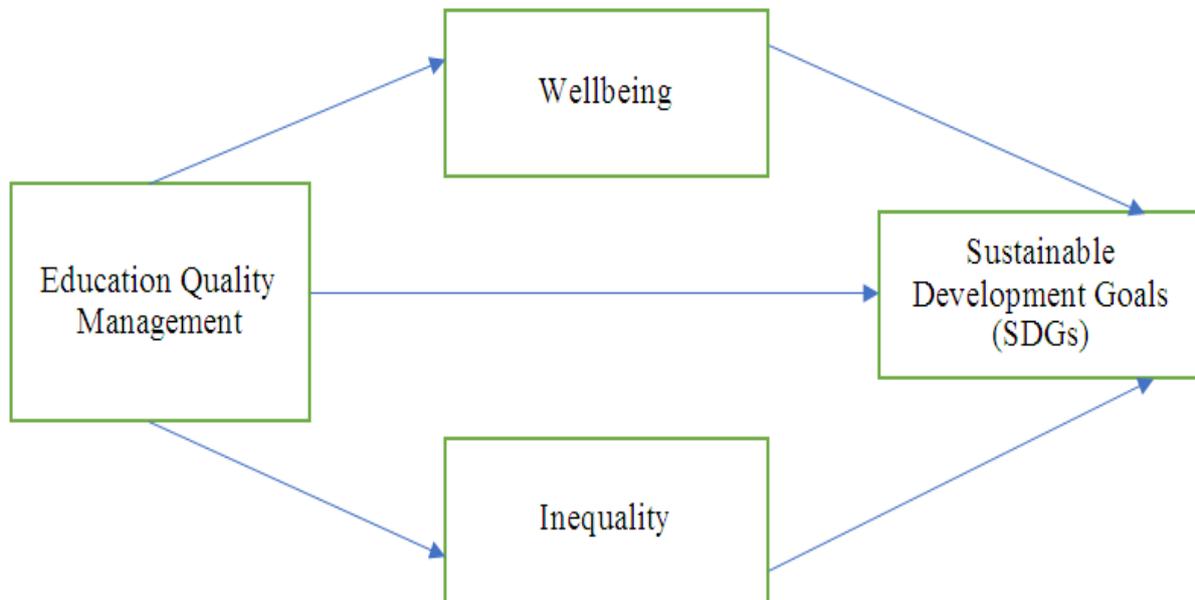
management initiatives at universities leads to well-being and reduces the inequality among societies, which has a significant contribution to make towards attaining the SDGs. It requires a certain level of quality in education to produce quality students who contribute to community development programs.

However, in the case of Thailand, the quality management in higher educational institutions requires significant efforts to achieve a certain quality level. Universities lacking in performance is the indication of low quality education. The Thai government should launch a quality revolution and implement various quality management initiatives, such as the total quality management (TQM), ISO 9000 series, 5S, and Customer Charter as a means to promote quality. These initiatives will lead to the SDGs in Thailand by improving the well-being of people and decreasing inequality.

Various studies are available in the literature which carried out research on quality in higher education institutions (Ali, Shah, & Mangi, 2019; Pitiyanuwat, 2015; Songkram, Chootongchai, Khlaisang, & Koraneekij, 2019), however, these studies did not consider the role of education quality management to promote SDGs. Thus, a gap exists in the literature, which leads the author to carried out the current study. Therefore, the objective of the study is to promote sustainable development goals through education quality management. The role of well-being and inequality was also considered.

The theme of the study is based on the idea that education quality management has a positive role to play in increasing the wellbeing of society, which leads to the SDGs. As it is also clear from the literature that quality of education leads to well-being (Salami, 2010), because education has a positive role to increase the quality of life (Bauer et al., 2018). The other part of the study is based on the concept that education quality management decreases inequality among the society, which increases the probability to achieve SDGs. Stephens, Markus, and Fryberg (2012) also found that education reduces inequality. The relationship between education quality management, well-being, inequality and SDGs is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework of the study showing the relationship between education quality management, well-being, inequality and sustainable development goals.



## Literature Review

The current study is based on the quality of education at higher educational institutions like universities. A higher educational institution is defined one which offers courses that provide degrees, postgraduate as well as diploma programs. Institutions can be categorised into public and private (AROKIASAMY, ISMAIL, AHMAD, & OTHMAN, 2009). In this study, higher educational institutions corresponding to the public higher educational institutions (universities), which are fully funded by the government under the Ministry of Education, Thailand (formerly known as Ministry of Higher Education) were considered. In Thailand, most of the public universities are facing issues of education quality management. Therefore, the focus of this study is education quality management among universities.

Quality is a widely studied aspect of operations management and marketing research (Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2002). The concepts of quality can be defined into three sub-categories: quality, quality management and quality management practices. In short, quality is best defined as customer satisfaction as well as loyalty. In other words, quality is reaching customer desires and demands or their perceived on products or services that achieved an acceptable degree of excellency (Senior & Akehurst, 1991). A broader perspective definition is “conformance to requirements.” The best way to define quality is based on the representative who acts on behalf of other persons or organisations. It means that the word quality implies different things to different people, evaluation and setting (Sahney, Banwet, & Karunes, 2008). To sum up, quality is defined as “the degree to which a product or service



conforms to a set of predetermined standards related to the characteristics that determine its value in the marketplace and its performance of the function for which it was designed.” In general, quality management is all scenes of management function that sets and enforces the quality policy and procedures. Quality management is the management procedure that is central to actions of quality assurance. Therefore, the integrative view of quality assists the idea that quality is the concern of all organisational management , not only that based on quality .

Generally, quality management is defined as a set of processes and resources. This set functions harmoniously, and aims to achieve objectives that relate to customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is key to achieving performance (Nadeem, Alvi, & Iqbal, 2018). This study operationalised the term of education quality management with the given definition by Tricker (2012), that quality management is best determined as a system of interconnected processes, to establish a quality policy, quality objectives, and to achieve quality education. The systems perspective involves with the practices for understanding that product and service quality are the outcome of the interactions of numerous variables, including machines, labour, processes, planning as well as management. In education, quality is heavily based on quality education. Therefore, the systems perspective also concentrates on management to fix quality problems. In other words, quality management offers the model for continuous development to enhance organisational performance in increasing satisfaction amongst the students and other parties. It also renders self-confidence (organisation and customers) of their abilities to supply products/services that systematically satisfy the needs. Quality management can be considered as one of the most important research themes in the area of operations management (Nair, 2006). At the beginning, the area of operations management focused primarily on manufacturing production (Bayraktar, Jothishankar, Tatoglu, & Wu, 2007), and most of the past quality scholars have started and focused their early works in this setting (Salah, Carretero, & Rahim, 2010) and missed the service sectors like educational institutions. Furthermore, they classified product quality into various characteristics such as reliability, durability and performance. In higher educational institutions, the product is based on the education output. In short, these dimensions cover various operations, ranging from the inspection process on purchases parts and raw materials to the inspection of final output before delivering to customers. However, the conversion to service-driven institutions has made a key shift in manufacturing sectors (Lindsay & Evans, 2008). Consequently, the pressure of global competition on profitability, employment, and other resources causes the demand for higher quality in services. This competition has now been widely extended to other sectors including organisations in the service and public sectors. In brief, the field of operations management has expanded to service systems including all the functions and departments of the organisation, particularly the education sector.

Quality initiative is the responsibility of all employees in the organisation and is not limited to the manufacturing department alone (Mehra & Ranganathan, 2008). In fact, most of the previous scholars in service quality are from the marketing arena. According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), the marketing area shifted from a goods-dominant perspective (touchable) to services-dominant perspective (untouchable), and the associated consequences to the service organisation need to be fully understood. To sum up this section, in many companies, service has been an important and profitable part of the business for a long time, but until recently, research in quality management mainly focused on manufacturing organisations, especially on production and product development (Cronemyr & Witell, 2010) and ignored the education sector. Quality management was analysed in both sectors (manufacturing and service), but scantily researched in the service institutions (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2001). Thus, more studies are required to bridge this gap specifically for the higher education institutions.

Quality management in higher education is problematic to recognise. This is because the phenomenon of quality management in higher education is initiated from various business practices. In the quality movement, quality is totally based on the customer. For example, as a result of fund dedication from governments and the globalisation issue in education (Othman & Abdullah, 2007), higher educational institutions are diverted from the core purposes. Despite the fact that there is a tremendous number of publications on quality management subjects, the scholars always misrepresented or misunderstood the concept of quality. Obviously, a quality management definition in higher educational institutions constitutes several perspectives, such as excellence, fitness for purpose, money value, stakeholder views and achieving the objectives (Vroeijenstijn, 2003). Furthermore, most of the issues in defining quality management among higher educational institutions grow from the problem of recognising the customer. Many scholars in higher education ignore the central question of “Who is the customer?” when defining quality. For example, a definition of quality management is “fitness for purpose”. The “fitness for purpose” framework focuses on examining quality management in higher educational institutions at the organisational level. In other words, the greater quality of higher educational institutions is based on how they set their objectives and distinctly exceed these objectives, which is important to achieve SDGs.

Education quality management plays a crucial role in SDGs. The United Nations affiliate states have planned a set of SDGs which will succeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as reference goals for the international development community. To achieve these goals, quality of education has an important role to play. A good quality education at university level has a significant effect on community development programs. It creates awareness among the general public and leads to welfare. Education quality management helps to achieve SDGs by increasing the well-being and decreasing the inequality among societies.

There are various benefits of quality education among universities. One of the important benefits is that quality education plays a significant role in the well-being of the society. It is also evident from previous studies that quality of education leads to well-being (Salami, 2010), as education plays a positive role in increasing quality of life (Bauer et al., 2018). Increase in the quality of education increases the well-being, which leads to the SDGs. Particularly in Thailand, a significant effort is required to boost the quality of education to promote SDGs through the promotion of well-being. Previous studies proved that education and well-being has a significant association (Jayman, Ohl, & Fox, 2019; Partridge, Howse, Llewellyn, & Allman-Farinelli, 2018), which can promote SDGs. Therefore, well-being has an important role to play in achieving SDGs.

Along with well-being, inequality also plays a significant role in achieving SDGs. Increase in inequality among the societies generally discourages the SDGs. Therefore, significant efforts are required to overcome the issue of inequality. Quality education is one of the instruments which may lead to a decrease in inequality and increases the probability to achieve SDGs in Thailand. Generally, social inequality is one of the major threats. Social inequality is considered by the presence of unequal opportunities as well as rewards for diverse social positions within a society. There is a significant association between education and inequality (Marshall & Fukao, 2019). It is proved by the literature that inequality can be reduced with the help of education (Stephens et al., 2012). Education also has the ability to reduce income inequality (Abdullah, Doucouliagos, & Manning, 2015). Therefore, significant evidence is available which shows that education can reduce inequality, which may lead to SDGs.

Therefore, from the above discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1.** Education quality management has a positive effect on SDGs.
- H2.** Education quality management has a positive effect on well-being.
- H3.** Education quality management has a negative effect on inequality.
- H4.** Well-being has a positive effect on SDGs.
- H5.** Inequality has a negative effect on SDGs.

### **Research Methodology**

This study obtained the data from teachers at the universities that can represent the department (academic and non-academic). The selection of teachers from each department was grounded on their working experience with various quality initiatives as well as their service to the departments. Consequently, when top management (*i.e.* Premier Grade) gives quality management the highest priority, it conveys to employees in the organisation that

quality is critical. This mandate from top management passes to teachers, which helps to develop the awareness about the significance of quality education, and increase the employee's promise to attain higher performance levels through better education quality management. In short, they are most familiar with their department in terms of practices and organisational performance results. Therefore, teachers are the best respondents in the context of this study. Addressing surveys to suitable respondents is key because of the fact that the unsuitable respondents had been a foundation of imprecise responses in using the survey method.

In this regard, 382 questionnaires were distributed among the university teachers in Thailand. A total of 205 questionnaires were received with valid responses and used to get results. Area cluster sampling was used because it is suitable to cover larger populations (Altaf, Hameed, Nadeem, & Arfan, 2019). Partial Least Square (PLS) was used in this study for data analysis. Additionally, Likert scale was used to collect the data. All the measures of variables, namely: education quality management, well-being, inequality and SDGs were adapted from previous studies.

### Data Analysis and Findings

Data screening is highlighted in Table 1. It indicates missing value, outlier and normality of the data. The data has no outlier and missing value. Normality is shown through Kurtosis and Skewness. However, normality has no role while examining data by using PLS, because PLS is suitable to handle small sample and non-normal data (Hameed & Naveed, 2019; Ringle, Sarstedt, & Straub, 2012).

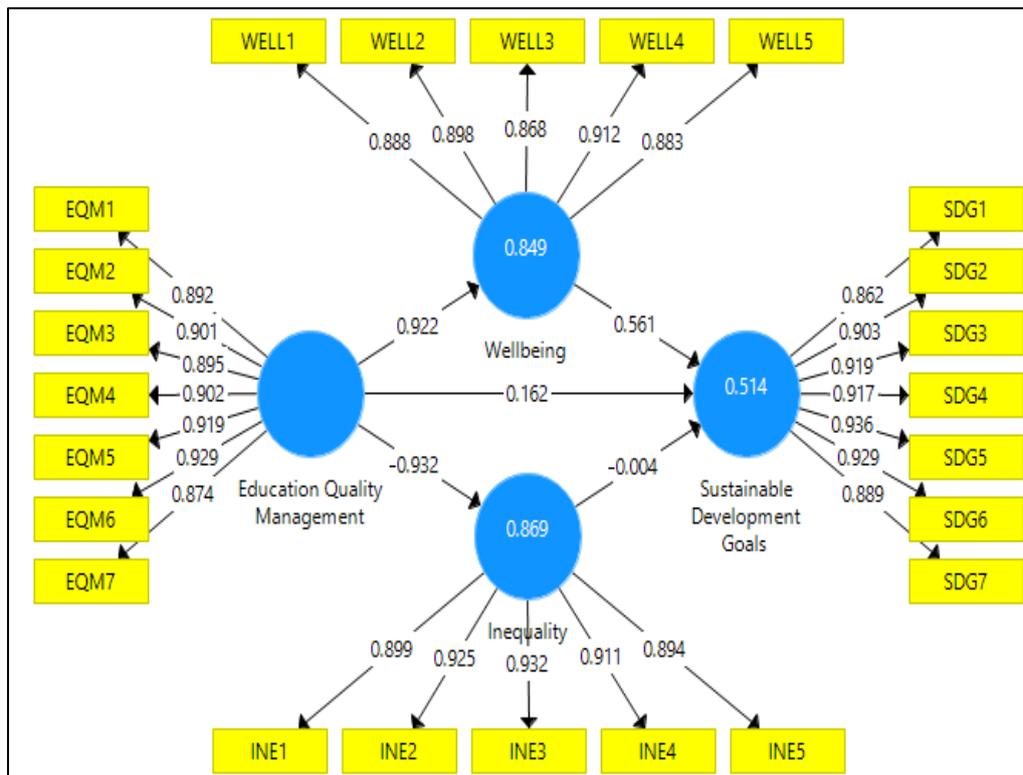
**Table 1:** Data Screening

	Missing	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
EQM1	0	3.208	3	1	7	1.503	0.466	0.877
EQM2	0	3.25	3	1	7	1.447	0.782	0.931
EQM3	0	3.176	3	1	7	1.465	0.417	0.76
EQM4	0	3.144	3	1	7	1.382	0.581	0.704
EQM5	0	3.227	3	1	7	1.515	0.278	0.704
EQM6	0	3.148	3	1	7	1.48	0.457	0.821
EQM7	0	3.042	3	1	7	1.425	-0.21	0.438
WELL1	0	3.218	3	1	7	1.355	0.51	0.689
WELL2	0	3.125	3	1	7	1.449	0.168	0.644
WELL3	0	3.097	3	1	7	1.508	0.146	0.674
WELL4	0	3.236	3	1	7	1.409	-0.137	0.534
WELL5	0	3.171	3	1	7	1.372	0.223	0.565
INE1	0	3.042	3	1	7	1.352	-0.188	0.547

INE2	0	3.167	3	1	7	1.305	0.36	0.618
INE3	0	3.148	3	1	7	1.429	-0.061	0.695
INE4	0	3.194	3	1	7	1.427	0.145	0.683
INE5	0	3.222	3	1	7	1.332	0.3	0.698
SDG1	0	3.259	4	1	7	1.612	-0.69	0.2
SDG2	0	3.208	3	1	7	1.724	-0.746	0.341
SDG3	0	3.306	3	1	7	1.903	-0.826	0.408
SDG4	0	3.301	3	1	7	2.034	-1.071	0.444
SDG5	0	3.162	3	1	7	2.059	-0.928	0.544
SDG6	0	3.204	3	1	7	1.976	-0.872	0.534
SDG7	0	3.306	3	1	7	1.699	-0.602	0.443

The first step of PLS-SEM is highlighted in Figure 2. It is based on confirmatory factor analysis. Factor loadings of all the items were examined. It is found that all the items have factor loadings above 0.7 which supported internal consistency. Factor loadings of all items is shown in Figure 2 and Table 2.

**Figure 2.** Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)



**Table 2:** Factor Loadings

	<b>Education Quality Management</b>	<b>Inequality</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>	<b>Well-being</b>
EQM1	0.892			
EQM2	0.901			
EQM3	0.895			
EQM4	0.902			
EQM5	0.919			
EQM6	0.929			
EQM7	0.874			
INE1		0.899		
INE2		0.925		
INE3		0.932		
INE4		0.911		
INE5		0.894		
SDG1			0.862	
SDG2			0.903	
SDG3			0.919	
SDG4			0.917	
SDG5			0.936	
SDG6			0.929	
SDG7			0.889	
WELL1				0.888
WELL2				0.898
WELL3				0.868
WELL4				0.912
WELL5				0.883

Construct reliability and convergent validity is presented in Table 3. It is clear that all the variables have composite reliability (CR) above 0.7, average variance extracted (AVE) is also above 0.5 which confirms the convergent validity (Hair, Hollingsworth, Randolph, & Chong, 2017). Furthermore, discriminant validity is highlight by presenting cross-loadings in Table 4.

**Table 3:** Reliability and Validity

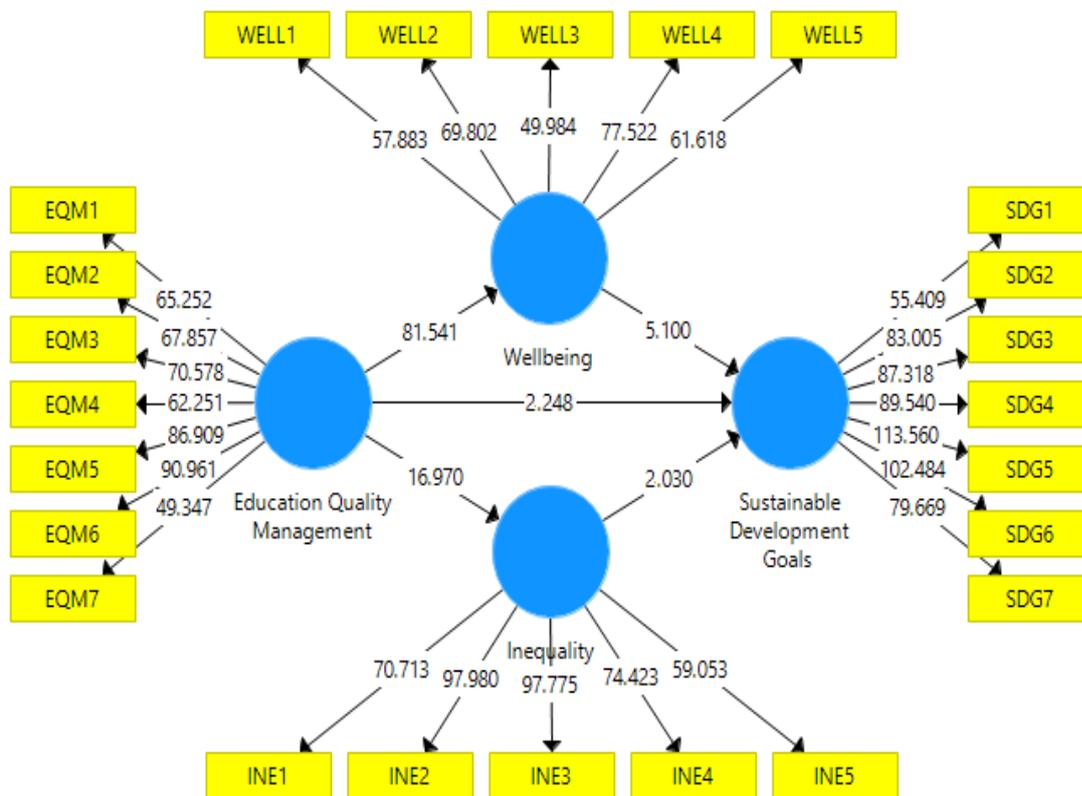
	<b>Alpha</b>	<b>rho_A</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>
Education Quality Management	0.962	0.962	0.968	0.814
Inequality	0.95	0.95	0.961	0.833
Sustainable Development Goals	0.965	0.965	0.971	0.825
Well-being	0.934	0.934	0.95	0.792

**Table 4:** Cross-Loadings

	<b>Education Quality Management</b>	<b>Inequality</b>	<b>Sustainable Development Goals</b>	<b>Well-being</b>
EQM1	0.892	0.846	0.583	0.827
EQM2	0.901	0.86	0.586	0.833
EQM3	0.895	0.85	0.617	0.862
EQM4	0.902	0.834	0.648	0.806
EQM5	0.919	0.842	0.638	0.861
EQM6	0.929	0.871	0.633	0.842
EQM7	0.874	0.782	0.603	0.785
INE1	0.839	0.899	0.581	0.821
INE2	0.846	0.925	0.565	0.808
INE3	0.855	0.932	0.592	0.847
INE4	0.858	0.911	0.64	0.845
INE5	0.854	0.894	0.656	0.837
SDG1	0.669	0.628	0.862	0.684
SDG2	0.61	0.605	0.903	0.655
SDG3	0.626	0.625	0.919	0.645
SDG4	0.559	0.556	0.917	0.579
SDG5	0.624	0.605	0.936	0.651
SDG6	0.589	0.582	0.929	0.632
SDG7	0.648	0.623	0.889	0.675
WELL1	0.819	0.797	0.663	0.888
WELL2	0.799	0.789	0.629	0.898
WELL3	0.827	0.827	0.636	0.868
WELL4	0.832	0.842	0.636	0.912
WELL5	0.823	0.801	0.609	0.883

A structural model in Figure 3 highlighted the hypotheses testing. In this process, t-value and beta value was analysed to examine the relationship among variables. The hypotheses having t-value below 1.96 was considered as not supported. However, the hypotheses having t-value 1.96 or above are considered as supported. It is found that all the hypotheses have a t-value higher than 1.96, thus, all the hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, H4, H5) are supported. Results are shown in Table 5.

**Figure 3.** Structural Model



**Table 5.** Hypotheses Results

	$\beta$	M	SD	T Statistics	P Values
Education Quality Management -> Inequality	-0.932	-0.932	0.055	16.97	0
Education Quality Management -> Sustainable Development Goals	0.162	0.161	0.073	2.248	0.035
Education Quality Management -> Well-being	0.922	0.921	0.011	81.541	0
Inequality -> Sustainable Development Goals	-0.004	-0.008	0.002	2.03	0.043
Well-being -> Sustainable Development Goals	0.561	0.559	0.11	5.1	0



Education quality management shows a positive effect on well-being and SDGs. However, it has a negative effect on inequality which indicates that education quality management decreases inequality. Inequality has a negative relationship with SDGs. Moreover, well-being has a significant positive effect on SDGs. Additionally, r-square ( $R^2$ ) is 0.514 which is moderate as per the recommendations of Chin (1998).

## **Conclusion**

The objective of the study was to promote sustainable development goals through education quality management. After conducting a survey among universities in Thailand, the findings of the study proved that education quality management plays a positive role in promoting sustainable development goals in Thailand. Better quality education is vital to promote sustainable development goals. Moreover, the study showed that education quality management has a positive role to play in enhancing well-being and decreasing inequality among society, which ultimately has a positive effect on promoting sustainable development goals. Quality education positively affects people's well-being by reducing the level of inequality within societies. An increase in well-being and decrease in inequality is the sign of awareness among the people, which leads to community development. Increase in well-being increases the sustainable development goals, however, increase in inequality decreases sustainable development goals. Therefore, the government of Thailand should focus on university education quality management to promote sustainable development goals, by encouraging well-being and discouraging inequality among the society. Additionally, universities should focus on providing quality education, which will lead to the achievement of sustainable development goals.



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