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A Study of the Work Engagement of Sales Staff

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Abstract

Work engagement is an important indicator in human resource management. From a personal perspective, engagement is related to safety, job satisfaction, employee loyalty, work performance, and personal behavior in the organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010) ^[9]. This study aims to determine the contents of the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi. The research sample includes 195 real estate salespeople working at real estate

firms in Hanoi. Reliability analysis methods through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were used to interpret the data. The results show that all three contents belonging to the work engagement of real estate salespeople with 15 observed variables are significant. In addition, the study also offers some solutions that administrators can use to increase the work engagement of real estate salespeople.

Keywords: Work Engagement, Sales Staff, Real Estate Salespeople, Human Resources, Real Estate Firms

JEL Classifications: M12, M51, M54, E64, P46

1. Introduction

Work engagement is an important indicator in human resource management. From a personal perspective, engagement is related to safety, job satisfaction, employee loyalty, work performance, and personal behavior in the organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010) ^[9]. Engagement has a beneficial impact on organizational outcomes such as profitability, customer happiness, employee engagement, financial return, and business success.

Sales staff is the person who plays the role of a bridge between the business and its customers. They offer the most suitable and complete solutions according to the needs of the buyer, expressed in the form of goods and services that the business provides. That is, they introduce, advise, and convince customers to buy their products.

Engagement with work is the basis for resources for the sustainable development of enterprises. Human resources play an important role in the knowledge economy; they capture the knowledge and skills as well as the important relationships of the business, thus deciding the development strategy of the enterprise. Basic resources for leaders to develop development strategies. Managers must base development strategies on their financial and human resource availability while creating plans. They will be able to confidently lay out longer-term strategies and development targets because of the staff's dedication and presence during the implementation and adjustment process.

The real estate market is always considered a potential development market in Vietnam today. According to data from the General Statistics Office, in the first four months of 2021, the number of newly established enterprises increased by 17.5% over the same period last year. Real estate business is the field with the highest number of newly registered enterprises, with 2,727 enterprises (up 56.5%). However, the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the operations of real estate firms. In Hanoi, in the first half of 2021, the number of apartments offered for sale on the market was 17,840, equal to 85.1% over the same period in 2020. Of which, the number of apartments offered for sale in the second quarter of 2021 was only 3,728 products, equaling 31.1%; transaction volume was 670 products, equaling 31.8% compared to the second quarter of 2020. In that context, employees, especially sales staff in real estate businesses, are subject to more impacts, pressures, and risks in the working and business environment than in many other industries. When the real estate market grows hot, real estate sales staff have to work around the clock, work overtime, and work on weekends and holidays to meet customer requirements. On the contrary, when the real estate market deteriorated, many real estate firms had to downsize or dissolve, causing a large portion of sales staff to lose their jobs and incomes. The remaining activity in real estate firms also decreased, causing them to have to work part-time jobs or do side jobs to earn extra income to support their families. This shows that the work pressure on real estate sales staff is increasing. Some employees with a solid mentality, hope, adaptability, confidence, and optimism have formed a commitment to work that has brought valuable contracts to the business. The rest are not engaged with work.

Therefore, research on the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi is necessary and meaningful.

2. Literature Review

During the past two decades, there have been many definitions of work engagement based on practice or research approaches (Simpson, 2009) [18]. Albrecht *et al.* (2015) [1] commented that there is no consensus on the meaning and characteristics of the concepts of cohesion so far. May *et al.* (2004) [11] and Saks (2006) [14] argue that employee engagement is not only cognitive but also includes the flexible application of emotions and behaviors. Work engagement represents the majority of employees' behavior in their efforts to work. When employees are engaged in their work, they stay focused on their tasks and work hard to achieve their goals. They completely live their work, work hard, and are passionate about it (Kahn, 1992) [8].

According to Robinson *et al.* (2004) [13], having a positive attitude at work encourages people to feel good about the company and its core principles. An engaged employee is one that understands the business environment and is eager to collaborate with coworkers to increase productivity for the organization.

Employee engagement, according to Perrin (2003) [12], is the ability and willingness of employees to contribute to the success of the company by giving their work extra effort, such as extra time, brainpower, and energy.

The work commitment is proof that employees are willing to dedicate themselves with responsibility to strive for the development goals of the organization.

Ulrich (2007) argues that employee contribution becomes the deciding issue in business because when the firm tries to create more output without having to increase the number of employees, it has no choice. The other is to find ways to engage employees not only physically in the workplace but also mentally and spiritually.

According to Andreassen *et al.* (2007) [2], work engagement

is distinguished from work addiction by enjoyment of the work, as opposed to exertion at the job. According to Schaufeli & Bakker (2010) [16] and Schaufeli *et al.* (2002) [17], job engagement is classified as a happy, contented mental state that is tied to one's work and is characterized by qualities like excitement, dedication, and passion. Work engagement includes mental states expressed about employees' thoughts, words, and actions with work, that is, paying attention to work, dedicating themselves to work, and working with passion. and enthusiasm, dedication to work, effort, and energy to work. Attachment is mentioned here to refer to a state of impact that is cognitive and continuous, not instantaneous, and not focused on any object, individual, event, or behavior.

Through the events of their lives, engaged employees feel energised and confident (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009) [3]. These workers succeed and are appreciated for their high levels of activity and positive attitudes. Even though they are worn out after a long day at work, this sort of person views their tiredness as a pleasant, well-deserved state when it is connected to the success they experience. They also enjoy other activities outside of work. Unlike workaholics, employees who are engaged in work do not work hard because of an irresistible urge but because, to them, work is fun (Gorgievski *et al.*, 2010) [5].

Work engagement is the level of energy a person uses to be productive and productive (Maslach *et al.*, 2001) [10]. However, according to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) [15], work engagement is seen as a state of fluctuation within an individual. In this case, Sonnentag (2003) [19] explain that an engaged employee may have days off but not the same job engagement status for all days. Organizations need employees who are truly psychologically connected at work, who are willing and able to dedicate themselves fully to their roles, and who are motivated and oriented towards work standards of high quality. They need employees who are truly engaged in their work (Bakker & Leiter, 2010) [4].

Table 1: Scale of the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi

Code	Scale	Sources
FE	Ardent at work	
FE1	I always want to start working as soon as I get up in the morning.	Schaufedi <i>et al.</i> (2002) [17]
FE2	I always feel energized at work.	
FE3	I keep going when things don't go my way at work.	
FE4	I have high spirits and take responsibility for my work.	
FE5	I'm incredibly energised and enthusiastic about my work.	
DE	Dedication for work	
DE1	The work I'm doing is incredibly difficult.	Schaufedi <i>et al.</i> (2002) [17]
DE2	My current employment motivates me.	
DE3	I take pride in what I do.	
DE4	I take great delight in my work.	
DE5	I think my work is really meaningful and serves a very important purpose.	
AB	Passion for work	
AB1	When I'm working, I don't pay attention to other things around me.	Schaufedi <i>et al.</i> (2002) [17]
AB2	I feel like time passes swiftly when I'm working.	
AB3	It was quite challenging to keep me from thinking about the task I was doing.	
AB4	I'm deeply involved in my work.	
AB5	When I am enthusiastic about my work, I am happy.	

3. Methodology

The study was carried out through two qualitative and quantitative steps with two different groups of survey subjects. Survey subjects for qualitative research are experts (managers) in charge of human resources and business-

related functions of real estate firms. Survey subjects for quantitative research are sales staff working at real estate firms in Hanoi's capital.

On the basis of the synthesized theory, the observed variables were built on a 5-point Likert scale (1 being

completely disagree and 5 being strongly agree), reflecting the three main contents of the research. Qualitative research through in-depth interviews with five experts (managers) of real estate firms in order to supplement and adjust the above observed variables so that they are easy to understand and suitable to the Vietnamese context. The qualitative research results help form a quantitative questionnaire consisting of 15 observed variables that reflect the dependent variable.

Quantitative research was conducted with an expected sample size of 200 real estate salespeople working in real estate firms in Hanoi City. The sample was selected according to the convenience method. Methods to reach the audience in two ways: (i) send the survey designed on Google Doc to the email address of the real estate salesperson through the human resources or sales department of the enterprise; and (ii) send surveys directly to real estate sales staff at real estate firms. Out of the 198 ballots that were returned, three were found to be invalid after the answer papers were screened. The 195 valid surveys used for data processing and interpretation were the last ones.

The analysis was performed to test the KMO statistical coefficients, extract representative factors, and analyze the reliability of the scale through Cronbach's alpha coefficient.

4. Research Results

4.1 Cronbach' Alpha

Ardent at work has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.822; observed variables FE1 to FE5 have a total correlation coefficient of 0.4 or higher. Therefore, all observed variables of ardentness at work were used for the next steps (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) [6, 7].

Dedication for work has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.811; observed variables DE1 to DE5 have a total correlation coefficient of 0.4 or higher. Therefore, these observed variables are all used in the next steps (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) [6, 7].

Passion for work has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.798; observable variables AB1 to AB5 have high total correlation coefficients, all greater than 0.4. Thus, the observed variables of passion for work are used in the next steps (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) [6, 7].

Thus, after analyzing Cronbach's alpha coefficient and removing variables that do not ensure reliability, the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi is measured by 15 observed variables.

Table 2: Results of Cronbach's Alpha

Code	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Ardent at work (FE) ($\alpha = .822$)				
FE1	12.36	5.286	.625	.766
FE2	12.33	5.981	.524	.724
FE3	12.47	5.265	.677	.701
FE4	12.19	5.211	.519	.653
FE5	12.43	5.454	.588	.639
Dedication for work (DE) ($\alpha = .811$)				
DE1	11.42	4.176	.487	.766
DE2	11.87	4.273	.562	.724
DE3	11.56	4.557	.555	.711
DE4	11.82	4.898	.519	.672
DE5	11.39	4.922	.524	.623
Passion for work (AB) ($\alpha = .798$)				
AB1	13.16	3.263	.539	.756

AB2	13.28	3.152	.520	.729
AB3	13.01	3.188	.537	.713
AB4	13.06	3.251	.544	.634
AB5	13.28	3.448	.502	.628

4.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

We carry out the EFA exploratory factor integration using Varimax rotation, and the results are as follows:

The results of factor analysis in Table 3 shows that $0.5 < KMO = 0.821 < 1$. Bartlett's testimony shows sig. = $0.000 < 0.05$, which means variables in the whole are interrelated (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) [6, 7].

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.821
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi- Square
	Df
	Sig.
	152.487
	67
	0.000

Through EFA analysis using the principal component extraction method and Varimax rotation, the results show that a factor "the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi" has an Eigenvalue equal to 4.165 and the extracted variance is 67.739% (>50%), so the analysis results are satisfactory. Moreover, the factor loading of the observed variables is quite high, so all the observed variables are accepted (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) [6, 7] (see Table 4).

Table 4: Result of factor analysis

Description	Code	Factor loading	N
The work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi (EN)	FE	.817	3
	DE	.846	
	AB	.859	
Eigenvalues			4.165
Percentage of Variance Explained (%)			67.739

4.3 Test the Difference According to the Respondents to the Survey

To test the difference in the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi according to the characteristics of the survey subjects, the authors conducted a one-way ANOVA analysis through SPSS software. The ANOVA analysis of variance method is used when studying the effect of qualitative causal variables on quantitative outcome variables; this method compares the mean of many groups.

Table 5: Anova

Control variables	Sig. Levene	Sig. Anova
Genders	0.146	0.012
Ages	0.108	0.015
Working experience	0.122	0.024

Table 5 shows that the sig Levene of the control variables is greater than 0.05, and with 95% confidence, the results of the Anova analysis are used.

Genders: sig. = 0.012 is less than 0.05; thus, it can be affirmed that there is a difference in the perception of employees of different genders about the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in Hanoi. Or, with different genders, the perception of sales employees about their commitment to work is also different. In other words, there is a difference in the work engagement of sales staff at real estate firms in terms of job engagement between men and

women (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) ^[6, 7].

Ages: sig. = 0.015 is less than 0.05; thus, there is a difference in the work engagement according to the age of the employees. With the above results, it can be confirmed that there is a difference in the work engagement of sales staff by age. This result has been proven by many previous researchers, and practice also shows that this is completely true. This result shows that the different ages affect the work engagement of different sales staff (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) ^[6, 7]. Here, the author group is divided into different age groups: under 18 years, from 18 years old to under 25 years, from 25 to under 30 years old, and from 30 years old or older.

Working experience has a sig. = 0.024, which is less than 0.05, so it can be confirmed that there is a difference in the work engagement of sales staff according to work experience. This result shows that the work experience and work engagement of different sales staff are different (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Hoang & Chu, 2008) ^[6, 7]. In the case of the study, the authors are divided into 4 groups of working experiences: less than 1 year, from 1 year to less than 3 years, from 3 years to less than 5 years, and from 5 years or older.

5. Discussion and Implications

Real estate transaction office staff, building management, legal, sales staff, brokers, management and training of sales staff, assistant project manager, real estate transaction office management, after-sales service management, customer care, business planning and development specialist, real estate investor, according to statistics from the recruitment news website Timviec365.com

Studies show that the quality of human resources in the real estate industry in Vietnam has not kept pace with the development of the market. In the market economy, in order to meet the requirements of the specificity of real estate business activities, real estate human resources must have multi-disciplinary knowledge: economic, technical, legal, socio-psychological, and technological.

Real estate firms should invest in building an information system that helps employees easily determine where their job responsibilities are and also helps them arrange work in a reasonable way to avoid feeling uncomfortable, tired, and always busy with work. In addition, in order to reduce the work pressure of employees, enterprises should organize training sessions, picnics, and collective activities to help employees relieve stress and, at the same time, increase the connection between employees so that they can easily connect and help each other in their work.

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