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The Effect of Workshop Stress and Labor Emotion on Customers Orientation: Evidence from Tourism Services in Vung Tau City, Vietnam

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Abstract

The study aims to study the relationship between workplace stressors (including customer-related stress, work environment-related stress, and work-related stress). With labour emotions (including negative emotions and emotional exhaustion) and customer orientation. Based on theories and scales inherited from the research review, a theoretical research model is proposed on the relationship between workplace stressors and negative emotions, between negative and negative emotions, with emotional exhaustion and between emotional exhaustion and customer orientation. The research process is carried out by qualitative research and quantitative research. Accordingly, qualitative research is conducted by group discussion techniques with

experienced people in tourism management. The purpose is to adjust and supplement the scale of research concepts. Quantitative research includes preliminary quantitative research and formal quantitative research. Preliminary quantitative research conducted a direct survey with 70 preliminary survey questionnaires to assess the reliability of research scales. Formal quantitative research applying statistical data processing software SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 20.0 with analytical steps: Data coding, Descriptive statistics; Assessing the scale's reliability; exploratory factor analysis; Confirmatory factor analysis; Analysis of the linear structural model.

Keywords: Workplace Stress, Negative Emotions, Emotional Exhaustion, Customer Orientation, Hospitality

1. Introduction

The development of the tourism industry has been and will become a significant driving force contributing to the promotion of economic restructuring and local exports; In addition, it also preserves and promotes the value of cultural heritage and natural resources of the country. Thereby contributing to creating stable employment conditions and improving people's living standards, promoting the process of international integration, promote a beautiful and hospitable image of the country and people of Vietnam.

In Vietnam, Vung Tau is famous as a beautiful beach tourism destination, favoured by nature when it has a beautiful coastline, a long coastline with gentle sand, a clear blue sea, and warm weather—a year with highly diverse ecosystems and poetic monuments. About 120km from Ho Chi Minh City to the east, Vung Tau lies protruding from the mainland like a strip of land with a long history of culture and history; every year, Vung Tau attracts millions of tourists to visit and relax.

Along with the strong development of the accommodation system in Vung Tau, the receptionist and room attendant plays an essential role in providing products and improving quality. Service, customer satisfaction (Karatepe, 2009). Frontline employees in the hotel play an essential role in creating products, ensuring satisfaction because they are the department that provides the customer's experience and evaluation of the product. For this reason, the tourism staff is always an essential factor in the success of the service quality provided by the hotel.

There are many studies on the direct influence of work emotions on work results, such as labour productivity, job satisfaction and expected revenue in many fields. However, studies on the influence of work emotions on customer orientation have been largely unresearched. "customer orientation" is a tendency or inclination by which employees respond to customers' needs as they perform their jobs (Brown *et al.*, 2002) ^[15].

2. Theoretical Foundations and Research Models

2.1 Workplace Stress

According to Nguyen Thi Phuong Dung and Vo Hong Hue (2019) ^[5], workplace stress is "an individual's response to characteristics of the work environment that appear to be emotionally and physically threatening. This comes from the

overload at work, such as the stress from contact with customers, the pressure surrounding superiors, colleagues and even the time to complete the work. Meanwhile, Bashir (2010) [12] asserts: "wage, working environment and co-worker relationships in bad condition will also easily cause stress in employees". Once the demands placed on a worker exceed his or her resources, stress occurs, whether these resources are physical, economic, social or emotional or spiritual. Lambert and Lambert, (2008).

2.2 Negative Affectivity

Theoretically and experimentally, emotional tendencies include positive and negative emotions (Agho *et al.*, 1992) [7]. According to Watson and Clark (1984), negative emotion is "an aspect that reflects the tendency to see things negatively. Negative emotions are the tendency to experience negative states such as sadness, anxiety, and resistance, which may result from undesirable events. In the workplace, these unexpected events can include disagreement with colleagues, loss of control of the work environment and pressures encountered when interacting with colleagues and customers as well as superiors.

2.3 Emotional Exhaustion (EE)

Emotional exhaustion occurs when employees experience stress when expressing emotions different from their internals (Grandey, 2000; Hochschild, 1983). Once emotions are used in work, the source of emotions will be depleted until the employee falls into a state of emotionlessness and no longer has the motivation to continue working. This leads to the problem: of "severely negative outcomes, such as irresponsibility to work, deterioration of service quality, impact on organizational revenue" (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Grandey, 2003).

2.4 Customer Orientation (CO)

Brown *et al.* (2002) [15] define the term "customer orientation" from a personal point of view as: "a tendency or inclination by which employees respond to customer needs as they perform their work". Because of the intangible and interactive nature of services, customers often rely on the behaviour of service staff when evaluating service quality. Therefore, Hennig-Thurau (2004) states that: "the level of customer orientation of employees is considered an important lever for increasing the profitability of service companies. Previous studies also confirm that if the company has an excellent customer-oriented strategy, it will have an advantage over its competitors and bring about higher customer satisfaction (Hoffman & Ingram, 1991; Kim & Suh, 2005; Julian, 2008; Kim & Kwon, 2010).

2.5 Proposed Research Model and Hypotheses

Based on a review of factors affecting customer orientation, the author commented that the study of Lee *et al.* (2012) has the most significant practical significance. The reason is pointed out because this study has found that workplace stressors correlate with customer orientation through the mediation of factors of work emotion that specifically here are negative emotions and emotional exhaustion. In addition, the project was also conducted in the hotel industry, a topic that is attracting attention today when the Covid-19 pandemic heavily impacts it and currently has a strong recovery in Vietnam in general. And in Vung Tau city in particular. Research by Lee *et al.* (2012) has

theoretical and practical value. Therefore, In addition, the author only focuses on service staff (specifically, receptionists and room attendants) in hotels in Vung Tau city instead of higher levels because, according to Fisher. Moreover, to Gitelson (1983), and Hamner and Tosi (1974), workplace stressors seem to cause difficulties for lower-level employees because they have less power and conditions to manage stress. Straighter; Resources to resolve their conflicts with customers are also limited compared to senior managers and leaders.

Customer-related stress includes customer requests that are out of capacity, verbal aggression, and negative attitudes or behaviours toward service providers (Dormann *et al.* Zapf, 2004) [23]. These aggressive behaviours and attitudes are severe problems in the workplace. Frontline workers in service industries "are frequently exposed to negative feedback and words from customers, which can leave them vulnerable to negative influences and ultimately lead to emotional exhaustion" (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) [21].

Based on the above exchange, the author put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis H1a: Customer-related stress positively affects employees' negative emotions.

Hypothesis H1b: Work environment-related stress positively affects employees' negative emotions.

Hypothesis H1c: Work-related stress positively affects employees' negative emotions.

Negative emotions are frequently cited in studies of employee stress and are associated with emotional exhaustion (Houkes *et al.*, 2001; Judge *et al.*, 2009). Specifically, Iverson *et al.* (1998) proposed a model of emotional outcomes, organizational stress, and burnout. The study emphasized that negative emotions lead to exhaustion, lack of high will and low personal achievement. For the hotel sector, Karatepe and Aleshinloye (2009) assert that negative emotions are positively correlated with emotional exhaustion for employees. Thus, in this study, hotel employees with high negative emotions are said to be prone to emotional exhaustion. With the above points and based on previous experimental research results, the author proposes hypothesis H2 as follows:

Hypothesis H2: Negative emotions have a positive effect on employee emotional exhaustion.

Although the empirical evidence is quite limited, it has also been shown that: "customer orientation directly impacts the job performance of frontline service workers and also curbs emotional exhaustion" (Babakus *et al.*, 2009) [10]. The correlation between emotional exhaustion and customer orientation is based on the fact that emotional exhaustion will significantly affect employees when they interact and work with customers. This can be the reason for making workplace mistakes, indifference to customers, alienation from work, reluctance to participate in group activities, and lack of alignment with other colleagues. Julian, (2008). These responses will eventually lead to reduced customer-oriented behaviour (Julian, 2008). Recently, Kim and Kwon (2010) practically tested the structural equation model between employee discord, emotional exhaustion and customer orientation in Korean hotels, and the research results indicated that the Emotional exhaustion of employees

reduces their customer orientation. When frontline workers are emotionally drained, customer-oriented attitudes and behaviours tend to decrease. In summary, the emotional exhaustion of frontline service personnel when dealing with customers harms customer orientation.

Therefore, the author makes the following hypothesis H3:

Hypothesis H3: Emotional exhaustion harms the customer orientation of employees.

3. Research Methods

According to Nguyen Dinh Tho (2011), to use EFA exploratory factor analysis, it is necessary to have a large enough sample size. Hair *et al.* (2006) suggest that to use EFA exploratory factor analysis, the minimum observation ratio of the number of observations to the number of measurable variables is 5:1; that is, 01 measure is needed—a minimum of 5 observations. The scale in this study has 25 observed variables, so according to the rule of Hair *et al.* (2006) above, the minimum number of samples here will be $5 \times 25 = 125$. Therefore, the author collects 265 samples > 125 samples for formal research is appropriate.

The official survey subjects are frontline workers (in the reception and housekeeping departments). The survey locations are hotels in Vung Tau City. The survey data collection period is from January to February 2021. The person selected for the survey needed about 5-10 minutes to complete the responses. The study sample was collected by a convenient random sampling method.

Valid questionnaires will be used for coding, data entry and cleaning through SPSS 26.0 software and further processing through AMOS 20.0 software.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Study Sample

The study was surveyed by the convenient sampling method of front desk and room service staff at hotels in Vung Tau city. The total number of questionnaires distributed was 293. The number of collected questionnaires was 274, the number of invalid votes was 09, the number of valid tables was 265, and this number of samples was put into data analysis. The results of the descriptive statistics of the study sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Statistics of research samples

	Sample characteristics	Frequency (person)	Ratio (%)
Gender	Female	188	70.9
	Male	77	29.1
Age	Under 30 years old	126	47.5
	20 - 39 years old	74	27.9
	40 - 49 years old	41	15.5
	Over 50 years old	24	9.1
Academic level	Intermediate and below	83	31.3
	College	156	58.9
	Graduate	26	9.8
Average monthly income	Under 5 million	55	20.8
	From 5 to 10 million VND	97	36.6
	From 10 to 20 million VND	75	28.3
	Over 20 million	38	14.3
Hotel classification	1 star	49	18.5
	2 stars	97	36.6
	3 stars	72	27.2
	4 stars	33	12.5
	5 stars	14	5.3
Room size	Less than 20 rooms	63	23.8
	From 20 to less than 30 rooms	90	34.0
	From 30 to less than 40 rooms	76	28.7
	Over 40 rooms	36	13.6
Contact with customers	Frequent contact	197	74.3
	There is contact but not often	68	25.7
Total		265	100

Source: Survey data analysis results

4.2 Rating Scale

Before being included in exploratory factor analysis, the scale's reliability was evaluated through Cronbach's Alpha

coefficient calculated from data analysis using SPSS software version 26.0.

Table 2: Results of the assessment of scale reliability

Observed variables	Scale average if variable type	Scale variance if variable type	Total variable correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if variable type
The scale "Customer-related stress": Cronbach's Alpha = 0.864				
KH1	6.95	2,959	0.742	0.810
KH2	6.95	3.043	0.753	0.798
KH3	7.05	3.297	0.733	0.818
The scale "Stress related to work environment": Cronbach's Alpha = 0.869				
MT1	10.63	6,129	0.757	0.819
MT2	10.71	6,458	0.751	0.824

MT3	10.65	5,865	0.736	0.828
MT4	10.68	6.356	0.653	0.861
The scale "Work-related stress": Cronbach's Alpha = 0.864				
CV1	17.92	13.823	0.680	0.837
CV2	17.81	13,601	0.668	0.839
CV3	17.78	13,162	0.687	0.836
CV4	17.62	13.728	0.686	0.836
CV5	18.02	14,087	0.642	0.844
CV6	17.73	14,449	0.587	0.853
The scale "Negative emotions": Cronbach's Alpha = 0.902				
TC1	7.16	2.475	0.884	0.793
TC2	7.25	2.529	0.779	0.885
TC3	7.17	2.732	0.760	0.898
The scale "Emotional exhaustion": Cronbach's Alpha = 0.834				
CK1	10.89	4,901	0.627	0.807
CK2	10.88	4,640	0.712	0.768
CK3	10.89	5.143	0.670	0.791
CK4	10.96	4.544	0.658	0.795
The scale "Customer Orientation": Cronbach's Alpha = 0.872				
DH1	15.50	4.887	0.710	0.842
DH2	15.44	4.717	0.699	0.846
DH3	15.55	4.809	0.709	0.842
DH4	15.55	4.718	0.743	0.833
DH5	15.57	5.557	0.652	0.859

Source: Survey data analysis results

5. Results

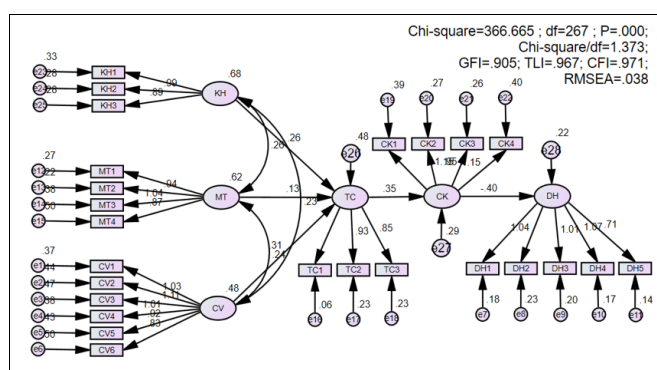


Fig 1: SEM results

The unnormalized and normalized estimation results of the regression coefficients are presented in Table 4.8. There are 04/05 relationships with statistical significance (p-value < 0.05), especially the relationship between the stress factor related to the working environment (symbol: MT) and Negative emotions (Sign: TC) has no statistical significance (P value = 0.086 > 0.05). As follows:

- The KH variable positively affects the TC variable with statistical significance ($\beta = 0.265 > 0, p = 0.000 < 0.05$).
- The MT variable does not affect the TC variable ($p = 0.086 > 0.05$).
- Variable CV positively affects variable TC with statistical significance ($\beta = 0.263 > 0, p = 0.000 < 0.05$).
- The TC variable positively affects the CK variable with statistical significance ($\beta = 0.468 > 0, p = 0.000 < 0.05$).
- The CK variable has a negative effect on the DH variable with statistical significance ($\beta = -0.466 > 0, p = 0.000 < 0.05$).

6. Discussion

The results of the study show that there is both consistency and difference compared to previous research results. Stressors in the workplace, including customer-related stress and work-related stress, have a direct effect on the negative

emotional factor of employees in the hospitality sector. Negative emotional factors have a direct effect on employee emotional exhaustion. Moreover, ultimately, emotional exhaustion harms employees' customer orientation. The results support the study of Lee *et al.* (2012).

Of the two workplace stressors that have been shown to have a positive effect on employees' negative emotions, the customer-related stress factor is the one that has a more substantial influence on negative emotions. Employee poles compared to work-related factors. Dealing with customer complaints and responding to complex customer requests is sometimes considered too demanding, increasing employees' negative emotions when interacting with customers. This led to emotional exhaustion and reduced customer orientation. The second is work-related stress. Serving many customers, especially during peak occasions such as New Year's holidays, is okay. However, there are times when employees have to participate in training programs and activities that they feel need to be revised. Personal time is affected by the change of work schedule (leading to a disturbed personal plan), sometimes having to support new inexperienced colleagues. The overwhelming workload causes stress and fatigue because the frontline hotel staff's work increases, creating many negative emotions, feelings and attitudes.

In this topic, the author also explores the influence of negative emotions on employees' emotional exhaustion. The results show that negative emotions (have a significant impact on the emotional exhaustion of frontline service staff at hotels $\beta = 0.468$). Thus, in the context of Vietnam in general and Vung Tau city in particular, if employees have high negative emotions, it will lead to emotional exhaustion when interacting with customers. The results support the study of Lee *et al.* (2012).

The experimental results show a negative relationship between emotional exhaustion and customer orientation of employees ($\beta = -0.466$). This result means that when frontline hotel staff are emotionally exhausted, they often have attitudes and behaviours that detract from customer orientation. Accordingly, absolute attention to customer

needs, willingness to provide information, and efforts to support and solve customer problems are also reduced. The results support the study of Lee *et al.* (2012).

7. Some Managerial Implications and Future Research Directions

7.1 Management Implications

The following management implications are intended to help hotel managers have policies to manage employees' emotions more effectively because employees' emotions are the foundation for service quality. The hotel's service and front-line staff are the most essential elements of a marketing strategy.

First, they strengthened the construction and supplemented the training program to improve the necessary skills for regulating labour emotions and avoiding individualism in service delivery. Hotel managers can contact schools and skill centers specializing in personnel training to coordinate with the hotel human resources department to implement these programs for employees. Train and guide employees right from the start. In addition, training programs should also encourage organizations to empower and instruct employees to use their vested rights effectively; empowerment can help employees deal with their problems. Customer complaints proactively with a confident attitude, so there is less emotional impact and burnout, increasing customer satisfaction.

Secondly, in terms of teamwork or solidarity, good coordination between team members will help handle situations with customers well, responding to customer needs quickly and effectively. Helping each other at work can improve employee morale and service quality. Building a sense of teamwork not only aids in service delivery but also fosters positive relationships among members. To increase team spirit or unity among people, hotel managers need to inspire employees.

Thirdly, regarding allowances or benefits, although labour emotions are essential in determining customer satisfaction and affect business performance, the emotional contributions of the staff should be given more attention. When service personnel perform well to deliver quality service, they need incentives and rewards. Increase income; benefits reduce employee stress with policies such as life insurance, meal allowances, additional rooms for rest, entertainment, sports, and picnic activities. Policies must be clearly and consistently documented.

7.2 Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The study brings specific results and contributions in theory and practice; however, due to time and budget constraints, the study still has some limitations as follows:

First, this study only collects samples in the Vung Tau locality within the city hotels of Ba Ria - Vung Tau province. This limits the generalizability of the measurement scales and research models, making it impossible. Affirmation will be used and applied widely throughout the country. The following research direction of the topic can be extended to the whole province, neighbouring provinces or, more broadly, the whole country, increasing the value of the research.

Monday, The research sample was selected according to the conventional method, so the collected data may have low reliability regarding representativeness. In the future, other sampling methods can be used to improve the sample's

representativeness, such as stratified or probabilistic sampling.

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