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Factors Affecting Employee Engagement with the Organization: A Study at Selected Departments in Ho Chi Minh City

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Abstract

This study is grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), Alderfer's E.R.G. Theory (1969), and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) and previous research on employee engagement. Based on this theoretical foundation, a research model was proposed with six factors influencing public servants' engagement. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using a sample of 236 public servants from four departments in Ho Chi Minh City, including the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Culture and Sports, the Department of Health, and the

Department of Labor, War Invalids, and Social Affairs. The results of EFA and reliability testing indicated a revised model with four main factors: Work Environment, Training and Development Opportunities, Nature of work, and Relationship with Direct Supervisors. Regression analysis confirmed that all four factors have a positive impact on organizational engagement. Accordingly, the study proposes several managerial implications to enhance public servants' engagement in the public sector.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Amendment, Civil Service

1. Introduction

The 11th Congress of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee (2020–2025 tenure) adopted a strategic vision for the City's development toward a smart, rapid, and sustainable trajectory, solidifying its position as the key national economic engine. The Congress simultaneously emphasized the promotion of cultural development, social equity, enhancing social well-being, family prosperity, and consolidating the City's status as a leading center of economy, finance, trade, science and technology, and culture in Southeast Asia. To translate this vision into action, the Congress set forth 26 core development indicators, accompanied by three key breakthrough programs and one strategic flagship initiative, focusing on governance reforms and innovation, infrastructure development, human and cultural capital, and the stimulation of entrepreneurship and creative start-ups.

In the process of policy implementation, the civil service workforce serves as a fundamental pillar in advising, formulating, and executing public policies, as well as directly managing public administration and service provision. Recognizing this, Ho Chi Minh City has placed strategic priority on cultivating a high-quality public personnel—focusing on professional development, continuous competency building, and the recruitment and attraction of high-potential talent to the public sector. Nevertheless, beyond the efforts to enhance competencies and attract qualified personnel, the author argues that it is equally crucial for Ho Chi Minh City to adopt holistic retention strategies aimed at keeping high-performing civil servants who demonstrate both high professional standards and strong ethical and political integrity within its administrative system.

From 2016 to the first nine months of 2018, there have been 922 officials, civil servants, and public employees in Ho Chi Minh City who have resigned. Among them, 187 individuals held leadership or managerial positions, while 735 were non-managerial staff. Specifically, in 2016, 291 individuals resigned; in 2017, the number increased to 438; and in the first nine months of 2018, 193 resignations were recorded. Some of these cases involved individuals who participated in the City's master's and doctoral training programs and resigned after completing their required service period under the commitment, or even accepted to reimburse training expenses to resign before the end of the committed service period (as stated by Mr. Truong Van Lam, Director of the Department of Home Affairs, in an interview with *Sai Gon Giai Phong* newspaper, 2018).

There are many reasons for the resignation of officials, civil servants, and public employees; however, the main cause lies in the inadequacies of the current public-sector salary and bonus system, which remain unattractive and fail to retain personnel

within Ho Chi Minh City's political-administrative system, particularly high-quality human resources. Due to the specific characteristics of the public administration system and legal regulations, governmental agencies and units are unable to offer remuneration packages as competitive as those in the private sector. This situation has, to some extent, diminished the appeal of the public working environment, especially to young and well-qualified employees. Consequently, in the competition for highly skilled human resources, the public sector has limited advantages compared to the private sector in terms of compensation and rewards. Therefore, leadership at all levels should consider implementing non-salary policies to reduce the turnover rate.

Extensive research indicates that enhanced employee engagement helps reduce attrition, increase job performance and organizational efficiency, and improve positive employee behavioral outcomes. Accordingly, boosting civil servants' engagement to their respective agencies will enable them to improve retention and tenure, optimize labor efficiency, and cultivate enhanced motivation and effort toward achieving the organizational goals and strategic mandates. Therefore, it is critical to determine the non-pecuniary factors that influence civil servants' employee engagement so that multi-level leadership can make targeted policy interventions to retain their most valuable resource—their human capital. Based on these issues, the author selected the research topic: 'Factors Affecting Civil Servants' Employee Engagement: An Empirical Study of Selected Departments in Ho Chi Minh City.'

In this study, the author employed convenience sampling, a form of non-probability sampling, to collect primary data from four key specialized agencies operating within the social and cultural affairs sector of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee. These include the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Culture and Sports, the Department of Health, and the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. These agencies function as specialized policy advisors to the City People's Committee on socio-cultural governance; therefore, their operational characteristics are largely homogenous. Consequently, the factors influencing civil servants' employee engagement are thus hypothesized to be relatively consistent across these departments.

This study aims to identify, quantify, and empirically test non-monetary factors affecting employee engagement among civil servants working in departments of Ho Chi Minh City. In addition, it examines variations in employee engagement across demographic and professional characteristics such as gender, age, educational attainment, tenure, and job position. The results are expected to offer practical and managerial insights that assist departmental leaders in fostering greater employee engagement, retention, and development within the public-sector workforce.

Following the introduction, the subsequent sections of this paper include: theoretical background and research model, research methodology, research findings, and conclusions with managerial implications.

2. Theoretical Foundation and Research Model

2.1 Key Concepts

2.1.1 Concept of Civil Servants

Under the Law on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Provisions of the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants and the

Law on Public Employees (2019), a civil servant is defined as a Vietnamese citizen who is recruited and appointed to a rank, position, or title corresponding to a designated job within agencies of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the State, or socio-political organizations at the central, provincial, or district levels. This definition also extends to personnel in agencies or units under the People's Army and the People's Public Security who are neither commissioned officers nor professional soldiers, and who are included in the official government payroll and remunerated from the state budget."

In terms of compensation, civil servants' salaries are governed by their assigned rank, with periodic salary increments typically occurring every two to three years, contingent upon their rank classification.

2.1.2 Concept and Role of Employee Engagement (EE)

The concept of *Employee Engagement (EE)* has been approached from various perspectives. In academic research, Kahn (1990) ^[19] conceptualized engagement as a state in which employees harness and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work. Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) ^[25] emphasized that engagement represents a "persistent, positive motivational state of fulfillment." The Institute for Employment Studies (IES, 2004) ^[38] defined employee engagement as a positive attitude held by employees toward their organization and its values.

In practice, organizations have also interpreted engagement in diverse ways. Johnson & Johnson describes engagement as employees' sense of satisfaction, feeling of being valued, and desire to stay and contribute (Cattell, 2007). Nokia Siemens Networks (2008) ^[33] highlights pride, alignment with organizational goals, and a willingness to exert extra effort beyond expectations. Similarly, both the University of York (2008) ^[43] and the UK Civil Service (2008) ^[7] assert that engagement goes beyond job satisfaction or motivation—it reflects employees' emotional attachment, dedication, and aspiration for the organization's success.

Luis Velasquez (2014) ^[23] emphasized the distinction between employee motivation, employee satisfaction, and employee engagement. Motivation arises from personal benefits such as financial rewards, privileges, incentives, or recognition. Employee satisfaction refers to a sense of happiness - whether employees are receiving what they desire, such as an expected salary or benefits. In contrast, engagement reflects employees' alignment with organizational goals and their willingness to exert efforts beyond expectations for the organization's success. Accordingly, motivation and satisfaction emphasize that employees remain with an organization because of the benefits they obtain from it, whereas engagement highlights the inspiration that the organization instills in employees - encouraging them to stay and dedicate their individual efforts toward the organization's collective success. This study adopts the perspective that employee engagement represents employees' positive attitude toward their work and organization.

The role of employee engagement in organizations has been widely demonstrated. It increases customer loyalty (Levinson, 2007; Pont, 2004) ^[21, 35], reduces employee turnover (Gallup, 2020) ^[16], enhances productivity and proactive behavior (Kahn, 1990 ^[19]; Sonnentag, 2003), and facilitates the successful implementation of organizational changes (Graen, 2008). Therefore, employee engagement is

considered a decisive factor in creating sustainable competitive advantage and ensuring the organization's long-term development.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943)

Maslow (1943) established a five-tier hierarchy of human needs, ranging sequentially from the most fundamental to the highest: physiological needs, safety needs, social needs (belongingness), esteem needs, and self-actualization needs. Maslow posited that, sequentially, needs at a lower level must be substantially satisfied before individuals are motivated by needs at the next higher level. These inherent needs activate and direct individual behavior, thereby serving as a foundational determinant of motivation and engagement. Consequently, Maslow's theory provides a robust framework for understanding employee satisfaction by mapping organizational provisions to the different tiers of human needs. "In the workplace context, the lower-level 'physiological' and 'safety' needs are reflected through remuneration, benefits, and the physical working environment. 'Social' and 'esteem' needs are met through peer and supervisory relationships (affiliation and recognition), while the highest-level 'self-actualization' needs are associated with opportunities for professional development and career progression.

2.2.2 Alderfer's E.R.G Theory (1969)

Alderfer (1969) stated that there are three basic categories of human needs that individuals seek to satisfy: (1) Existence – basic material needs for survival, such as safety and health; (2) Relatedness – the need to connect with others, social status, and recognition; and (3) Growth – the need for personal development, creativity, and meaningful work. Unlike Maslow's theory, the ERG theory suggests that people can attempt to satisfy several needs simultaneously, and when higher-level needs cannot be fulfilled, they tend to regress to lower-level needs, known as the "frustration–regression mechanism."

2.2.3 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959)

Herzberg (1959) proposed that two groups of factors influence employee motivation in the workplace: (1) Hygiene factors (such as company policies, working conditions, salary, job security, supervision, and interpersonal relationships), which are associated with job dissatisfaction. When these factors are inadequate or absent, employees tend to feel dissatisfied; (2) Motivator factors (such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, promotion, and personal growth), which contribute to job satisfaction and motivation. Herzberg argued that eliminating the causes of dissatisfaction does not necessarily lead to satisfaction, and increasing the presence of motivator factors does not automatically remove dissatisfaction. Therefore, managers should simultaneously ensure adequate hygiene factors while enhancing motivator factors to improve work performance.

2.3 Previous Studies

Both domestic and international studies have demonstrated that employee engagement is influenced by multiple factors. Kahn (1990) [19] laid the foundation for employee engagement research by identifying three core psychological conditions: meaningfulness, availability, and safety. Building upon this, Robinson *et al.* (2004) [38] emphasized the importance of employees feeling valued and involved.

Penna (2007) [34] further developed the *Hierarchy of Engagement Model*, in which finding meaning in work represents the highest level of engagement.

Subsequent studies, such as those by Eragjesvarie Pillay and Singh (2018) [15], expanded the framework by incorporating additional factors including job design, organizational culture, recognition, career development, individual role, and motivation.

In Vietnam, empirical studies have also confirmed that employee engagement is shaped by various determinants, notably the nature of work, compensation and benefits, working environment, organizational culture, collegial relationships, leadership style, training and development opportunities, and recognition (Nguyen Phan Thu Hang & Nguyen Thi Hong Van, 2020; Nguyen Thi Phuong Dung, Huynh Thi Cam Ly & Le Thi Thu Trang, 2014; Tran Van Dung, 2018; Ha Nam Khanh Giao & Nguyen Dang Huyen Tran, 2017) [30, 32, 42, 18].

2.4 Development of Research Hypotheses

2.4.1 Nature of Work

The "nature of work" factor has been widely examined in prior studies (Kahn, 1990; Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Eragjesvarie Pillay *et al.*, 2018; Nguyễn Phan Thu Hằng & Nguyễn Thị Hồng Vân, 2020; Trần Văn Dũng, 2018; Hà Nam Khánh Giao *et al.*, 2017) [19, 38, 15, 30, 42, 18]. According to Kahn (1990) [19], three primary elements contribute to employees' perceptions of meaningfulness at work: job characteristics, job position, and work interactions.

First, job characteristics that are challenging, diverse, creative, and autonomous enable employees to align their competencies with their tasks and foster self-development, thereby enhancing the sense of meaningfulness in their work. Hackman and Oldham (1980) further argued that jobs requiring multiple skills and a high degree of autonomy are key antecedents of psychological meaningfulness.

Second, job position involves unique qualities, specialized skills, symbolic meaning, and social influence, allowing employees to recognize their own value and significance within the organization. As Lasch (1984) emphasized, individuals have an inherent desire to be regarded as important and distinctive.

Third, work interactions bring psychological meaningfulness when employees establish positive connections with colleagues and clients. Such relationships fulfill the human need for belonging, recognition, respect, and mutual support (Alderfer, 1972; May *et al.*, 1958).

In the public sector, the nature of civil servants' work—associated with performing official duties, providing policy advice, and implementing government initiatives—has a significant social impact. This enables civil servants to perceive their personal value, achievements, and social connections, thereby reinforcing their sense of purpose and meaningfulness at work.

Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the nature of work and employee engagement among civil servants.

2.4.2 Relationship with Direct Supervisor

This factor has been addressed in several studies (Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Penna, 2007; Trần Văn Dũng, 2018; Hà Nam Khánh Giao *et al.*, 2017) [38, 34, 42, 18]. Many scholars have emphasized the crucial role of direct supervisors in fostering

employee engagement. According to Levinson (2007) ^[21], a collaborative leadership style enhances engagement, while Lloyd Morgan (2004) ^[22] identified effective communication as a key managerial competency. Macey and Schneider (2008) ^[24] further noted that leaders influence engagement indirectly by building trust within the organization.

Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2007) ^[6] indicated that opportunities for feedback from supervisors, transparent consultation and communication systems, fair management practices, and clear organizational commitment all promote employee involvement. Cleland *et al.* (2008) ^[8] found that employees are more engaged when they maintain positive relationships with their supervisors, are empowered to act autonomously, feel valued and confident in their roles, and take pride in their work. Similarly, a study by the Kenexa Research Institute (2008) identified four leadership-driven engagement drivers: inspiring a shared vision of the future, demonstrating respect and appreciation for employees, enabling meaningful work, and showing responsibility toward employees and the broader community.

According to the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) (Robinson, 2004), leaders and managers who show care, fairness, consistent communication, encouragement, developmental guidance, and training opportunities provide the foundation for employee engagement.

In public administrative organizations, direct supervisors play a decisive role in shaping the work climate and the superior-subordinate relationship. Trustworthy leaders who provide clear direction, inspire others, and show timely concern and support not only enhance employee motivation but also strengthen their organizational engagement.

Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between the relationship with direct supervisors and employee engagement among civil servants.

2.4.3 Working Environment

This factor has been addressed in numerous studies such as Robinson *et al.* (2004) ^[38], Erajessvarie Pillay *et al.* (2018) ^[15], Nguyễn Thị Phương Dung *et al.* (2014) ^[32], Trần Văn Dũng (2018) ^[42], and Nguyễn Phan Thu Hằng & Nguyễn Thị Hồng Vân (2020) ^[30]. Employees often assess the degree of fairness and the organization's concern for their well-being; this directly influences engagement (Meyer, 1997; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992) ^[28, 26]. Kahn (1990) ^[19] found that employees are more likely to engage in situations and activities that are meaningful. This perspective was reinforced by Lockwood (2007), who emphasized that organizations fostering a culture of meaningfulness are more likely to sustain employee engagement.

According to Kahn (1990) ^[19], a safe working environment—where employees can express and utilize their capabilities without fear of negative consequences to themselves or their careers—is a decisive factor in fostering engagement. Employees tend to be more committed when they work in a trustworthy, transparent, and predictable environment. Such a sense of security is reinforced through open, trusting, and supportive relationships among colleagues and between employees and managers.

In public administrative agencies, where salaries remain modest and may not fully ensure livelihood, the working environment becomes a crucial factor that helps civil servants feel secure in their duties. A friendly, healthy, and

cohesive environment that promotes mutual support fosters emotional attachment between civil servants and their organization, thereby motivating them to strive for task completion even under pressure and limited income conditions.

Based on the above arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a positive relationship between the working environment and employee engagement among civil servants.

2.4.4 Relationship with Colleagues

This factor has been affirmed in numerous studies (Kahn, 1990; Nguyễn Thị Phương Dung *et al.*, 2014; Trần Văn Dũng, 2018; Hà Nam Khánh Giao *et al.*, 2017) ^[19, 32, 42, 18]. Positive relationships with colleagues help employees perceive meaningfulness in their work (Penna, 2007) ^[34]; although not a decisive factor, it still plays an important role in maintaining engagement (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) ^[1]. Frequent and constructive interactions among employees—both within and beyond work activities—are essential conditions for fostering attachment.

In public administrative agencies, civil servants spend most of their day at the workplace, with more time interacting and communicating with colleagues than with people outside of work. Therefore, developing friendly and cohesive collegial relationships has a positive impact on the level of organizational engagement among civil servants.

Based on the above arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H4: There is a positive relationship between relationships with colleagues and employee engagement among civil servants.

2.4.5 Training and Development Opportunities

Numerous studies have confirmed that development opportunities are an important factor promoting employee engagement (Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Penna, 2007; Levinson, 2007; Erajessvarie Pillay *et al.*, 2018; Trần Văn Dũng, 2018) ^[38, 34, 21, 15, 42]. Levinson (2007) ^[21] emphasized that an organizational culture focused on employee development enhances engagement, while Robinson (2007) suggested that employees who have personal development plans and good access to these opportunities tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement. Studies by the Roffey Park Institute (2008), Melcrum (2007) ^[27], and Sinclair *et al.* (2008) ^[40] also indicated that career advancement, training, and development opportunities—together with effective leadership, management, communication, and people-centered culture—are key drivers of engagement. Research by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES, 2004) ^[38] further demonstrated that organizations emphasizing staff development, showing long-term vision regarding individual value, providing necessary training, and ensuring fair access to development opportunities significantly foster employee engagement (Robinson, 2004).

In practice, learning and professional training not only enhance civil servants' confidence and competence in fulfilling job requirements and rank standards but also open up opportunities for career advancement. When civil servants are encouraged, supported, and provided with conditions for career development, they are more likely to remain committed to the organization.

Based on the above arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: There is a positive relationship between training and development opportunities and employee engagement among civil servants.

2.4.6 Recognition

Studies by Kahn (1990) ^[19], Erazesvarie Pillay *et al.* (2018) ^[15], and Nguyễn Phan Thu Hằng and Nguyễn Thị Hồng Vân (2020) ^[30] have all affirmed the crucial role of recognition in fostering employee engagement. The Institute for Employment Studies (IES, 2009) ^[17] also identified timely rewards and acknowledgment as one of the seven key drivers of engagement, whereas salary mainly serves as a maintenance factor. Employees need to feel valued and have their roles and achievements recognized in order to perceive their work as meaningful (Kahn, 1990; Maslach *et al.*, 2001) ^[19, 25]. Conversely, a lack of recognition can lead to burnout and decreased engagement.

In the public sector, timely acknowledgment and commendation allow civil servants to perceive their personal value, thereby enhancing their commitment to the organization.

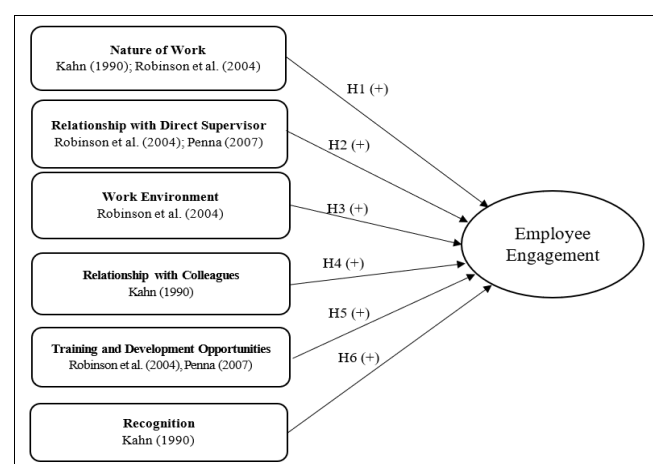
Based on the above arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H6: There is a positive relationship between recognition and employee engagement among civil servants.

Both domestic and international studies have consistently affirmed that salary and bonuses are fundamental factors influencing employee engagement (Penna, 2007 ^[34]; Herzberg, 1959). However, the current salary policy in the public sector still exhibits several limitations: the salary structure is not linked to job positions, remains largely uniform across roles, fails to ensure adequate living standards, does not sufficiently attract or retain talented individuals, and lacks motivational incentives to improve public service performance.

The 7th Plenum of the 12th Central Committee (2018) set forth the objectives for salary reform during the period 2021–2025, with a vision toward 2030, aiming to establish a transparent and scientific system tied to work performance, thereby contributing to enhancing the quality of human resources and preventing corruption and wastefulness.

Although salary reform is underway, in the short term, compensation remains difficult to adjust and continues to follow existing regulations. Therefore, this study excludes the salary factor from the research model and focuses on examining six non-salary factors that influence civil servants' organizational engagement:



Source: Proposed by the Author

Fig 1: Research Model Proposed by the Author

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Process

This study employs a quantitative research approach combined with qualitative methods, specifically as follows:

Qualitative Research: Drawing on well-recognized models of employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Robinson *et al.*, 2004; Penna, 2007) ^[19, 38, 34], the author developed a preliminary measurement scale by selecting and adapting observed variables to align with the working context of government departments in Ho Chi Minh City. Following independent interviews with experts, the scale was revised and finalized to serve as the basis for the quantitative phase of the study.

Quantitative Research: In this study, the author employed SPSS software to conduct an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) model. First, the reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the internal consistency among items (Cronbach's Alpha ≥ 0.6 and item-total correlation > 0.3). Subsequently, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was performed to identify a new set of measurement scales consistent with the empirical data, meeting the following conditions: factor loadings (FL) ≥ 0.55 , KMO value ranging from 0.5 to 1, statistically significant Bartlett's test (Sig. ≤ 0.05), total variance explained $\geq 50\%$, and Eigenvalue > 1 . Next, multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between independent variables (influencing factors) and the dependent variable (employee engagement of civil servants). The regression model was evaluated through significance tests of regression coefficients, model explanatory power (Adjusted R^2), overall model fit via analysis of variance (ANOVA), multicollinearity diagnostics (VIF < 10), autocorrelation test (Durbin-Watson, $1 < d < 3$), and homoscedasticity of residuals. Finally, the study tested differences across qualitative variables using T-tests and ANOVA. For dichotomous variables, the Independent Samples T-Test was applied; for variables with three or more categories, ANOVA or Welch's test was used in cases where the homogeneity of variance assumption was violated. These tests helped determine whether there were statistically significant differences in employee engagement levels among civil servant groups with different demographic characteristics.

3.2 Measurement Scales

Based on established theories of employee engagement and by synthesizing observed variables from the original scales in the research models of Kahn (1990) ^[19], Robinson *et al.* (2004) ^[38], and Penna (2007) ^[34], the author developed a measurement framework. The observed variables were selected, refined, and rephrased through expert interviews to ensure contextual relevance and clarity. Specifically: The Nature of work scale was measured using 6 observed variables; The Relationship with Direct Supervisor scale was measured using 7 observed variables; The Working Environment scale was measured using 6 observed variables; The Relationship with Colleagues scale was measured using 3 observed variables; The Training and Development Opportunities scale was measured using 5 observed variables; The Recognition scale was measured using 5 observed variables; The Employee Engagement scale was measured using 4 observed variables. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 – Strongly Disagree to 5 – Strongly Agree.

Table 1: Summary of Measurement Scales in the Research Model

Measurement Scale	Code	Number of Items	Source of Scale
Nature of work	BC	6	Penna (2007) ^[34] ; Kahn (1990) ^[19]
Relationship with Direct Supervisor	QL	7	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004) ^[38] ; Penna (2007) ^[34] ; Macey & Schneider (2008) ^[24] ; Kenexa Research Institute (2008)
Working Environment	MT	6	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004) ^[38] ; Saks (2006) ^[39] ; Kahn (1990) ^[19]
Relationship with Colleagues	DN	3	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004) ^[38]
Training and Development Opportunities	PT	5	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004) ^[38]
Recognition	CN	5	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004) ^[38]
Employee Engagement	GK	4	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2004) ^[38]

3.3 Official Research Sample

Sampling criteria: The author selected four specialized departments under the socio-cultural sector of the Ho Chi Minh City People's Committee, including the Department of Education and Training, the Department of Culture and Sports, the Department of Health, and the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. These departments advise the municipal government on cultural and social affairs; therefore, their job characteristics share certain similarities. Consequently, the factors influencing civil servants' organizational engagement are expected to be comparable across these departments.

Sampling method: The study employed a non-probability sampling approach, combining quota sampling with convenience sampling to ensure the required number of observations. The sample size was evenly distributed among the four departments. The author contacted the personnel divisions of these departments to distribute and collect the questionnaires upon completion. The survey was conducted in September 2020.

Official research sample: A total of 240 questionnaires were distributed (60 for each department), of which 236 were valid responses. Therefore, 236 observations were used as the official sample for this study.

4. Research Findings

4.1 Characteristics of the Research Sample

The official research sample comprises 236 civil servants from four specialized departments in Ho Chi Minh City, namely the Department of Education and Training, the

Department of Culture and Sports, the Department of Health, and the Department of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

The sample includes 54.7% female and 45.3% male respondents, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. Most participants are aged between 30 and 40 years (52.1%), followed by those over 40 (30.1%) and under 30 (17.8%). In terms of education, 58.5% hold a bachelor's degree and 40.7% a postgraduate qualification, while only 0.8% have a college or vocational degree.

Regarding years of service, 44.9% of respondents have worked for 10–20 years, 39% for less than 10 years, and 16.1% for more than 20 years. The majority of respondents (80.1%) do not hold managerial positions, while 19.9% serve in leadership roles. These results suggest that the sample primarily consists of mid-career civil servants aged 30–40 years, with 10–20 years of experience, and a balanced gender ratio.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the research sample

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	107	45.3
	Female	129	54.7
Age	Under 30	42	17.8
	30–40	123	52.1
	Over 40	71	30.1
Educational qualification	College/Vocational	2	0.8
	Bachelor's degree	138	58.5
	Postgraduate	96	40.7
Years of service	<10	92	39.0
	10–20	106	44.9
	>20	38	16.1
Job position	Non-managerial	189	80.1
	Managerial	47	19.9
Total		236	100.0

4.2 Evaluation of Measurement Scales

4.2.1 Reliability Analysis

The reliability of the measurement scales was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The results show that all scales have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.6, and all observed items have corrected item-total correlations exceeding 0.3. Most scales demonstrate high internal consistency, with Alpha coefficients above 0.9, indicating strong reliability.

After this reliability assessment, the model comprising six independent variables and one dependent variable—with a total of 36 observed items—meets the quality criteria for further analysis.

Table 3: Summary of measurement scales and eliminated items

Scale	Code	Number of Observed Items	Eliminated Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Evaluation	Lowest Corrected Item-Total Correlation
Nature of Work	BC	6	0	0.916	Good quality	0.724
Relationship with Direct Supervisor	QL	7	0	0.934	Good quality	0.716
Work Environment	MT	6	0	0.928	Good quality	0.756
Relationship with Colleagues	DN	3	0	0.912	Good quality	0.756
Training and Development Opportunities	PT	5	0	0.933	Good quality	0.780
Recognition	CN	5	0	0.900	Good quality	0.667
Employee Engagement	GK	4	0	0.914	Good quality	0.785

Source: Author's data processing and synthesis results

4.2.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Evaluation

All scales and observed variables representing the independent constructs that satisfied the Cronbach's Alpha reliability conditions were included in the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The results of the KMO and Bartlett's tests are as follows:

KMO and sampling adequacy: The KMO coefficient is 0.952, satisfying the requirement $0.5 \leq \text{KMO} \leq 1$. This indicates that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: The test result is Sig. = 0.000 ≤ 0.05 , demonstrating that there are significant linear correlations among the observed variables within each

factor. Therefore, the data are appropriate for factor analysis.

Total Variance Explained: The total variance explained is 72.060%, and the Eigenvalue of the fourth factor is $1.003 > 1$. This means the model retains four factors, which collectively explain 72.060% of the total variance in the dataset (Gerbing & Anderson, 1988).

The new model comprises four extracted factors, as summarized in Table 4. After conducting the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the observed variables converged into four new factors (scales) with a total of 29 observed variables. The variables CN1, CN2, and CN3 were eliminated during the analysis.

Table 4: Summary of the Newly Formed Scales

No.	Original Scale	Observed Variables	Newly Formed Scale
1	MT	MT2, MT1, MT6, DN2, MT5, DN3, MT4, DN1, MT3, CN5	Working Environment
2	BC	BC1, BC2, BC3, BC4, BC5, BC6	Nature of Work
3	QL	QL1, QL2, QL3, QL4, QL5, QL6, QL7	Relationship with Direct Supervisor
4	PT	PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5, CN4	Training and Development Opportunities
Total	4	29	

Source: Author's data processing and synthesis results.

Revised Research Model (Adjusted): Based on the results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) summarized in Table 4, the research model was adjusted to include four extracted factors, corresponding to four hypotheses to be tested:

H1: There is a positive relationship between nature of work and employee engagement among civil servants.

H2: There is a positive relationship between relationship with direct supervisor and employee engagement among civil servants.

H3: There is a positive relationship between working environment and employee engagement among civil servants.

H4: There is a positive relationship between training and development opportunities and employee engagement among civil servants.

Thus, the initial research model consisting of six scales was reduced to four scales after the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The two scales, "Relationship with colleagues" and

"Recognition", were no longer retained as independent constructs. However, this does not imply that these factors have no influence on employee engagement. Specifically, all observed variables of the "Relationship with colleagues" scale converged into the "Work environment" scale, while two out of three variables of the "Recognition" scale were integrated into the "Work environment" and "Training and development opportunities" scales.

The research model was adjusted from six to four scales, in which "Relationship with colleagues" and "Recognition" were no longer retained as separate constructs. However, the observed variables of these two scales were not completely eliminated but rather converged into the "Work environment" and "Training and development opportunities" scales.

4.2.3 Correlation and Regression Analysis

Table 5: Summary of Regression Analysis Results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig.	Multicollinearity Statistics	
	B	Beta	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.007	.196	-.038	.969		
	MT	.321	.087	3.679	.000	.214	4.666
	BC	.199	.065	3.074	.002	.408	2.449
	QL	.150	.068	2.213	.028	.388	2.578
	PT	.323	.075	4.332	.000	.298	3.355
Adjusted R ² :		0,668					
ANOVA Sig.		0,000					
Durbin-Watson 1 < d < 3		1,815					

Source: Author's data analysis and synthesis results.

- **Testing the significance of regression coefficients:** Based on the regression results, the significance levels of all independent variables are ≤ 0.05 . Therefore, it can be concluded that the independent variables (MT, BC, QL, PT) are statistically significantly correlated with the dependent variable (GK) at a confidence level of 95% or higher.
- **Model Explanatory Power:** The regression results show an adjusted R² of 0.668, indicating that 66.8% of the

variation in employee engagement (GK) is explained by the independent variables, while the remaining 33.2% is attributable to other factors not included in the model.

- **Model fit:** The regression model shows an ANOVA significance level of $0.000 \leq 0.05$, indicating that, overall, the independent variables have a linear relationship with the dependent variable. Therefore, the linear regression model is appropriate and fits the empirical data.

- **Multicollinearity test:** All independent variables have Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values less than 10. Therefore, the model does not exhibit multicollinearity.
- **Autocorrelation test:** The Durbin–Watson (d) statistic is 1.815, satisfying the condition $1 < d < 3$. Therefore, there is no evidence of autocorrelation in the residuals.
- **Test for homoscedasticity:** The results of the residual frequency histogram indicate that the assumption of normal distribution of residuals is not violated. The Normal P–P Plot of standardized residuals also confirms that the residuals are normally distributed. Furthermore, the Scatter Plot demonstrates that the assumption of linear relationships within the model holds true.

Thus, all diagnostic tests - including model fit, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity - confirm that the regression model does not exhibit any assumption violations.

4.2.4 Test of Differences

- **By gender:** The results of the Independent Samples T-Test comparing employee engagement levels by gender indicate no statistically significant difference in engagement between male and female public employees.
- **By age:** The results of the One-way ANOVA comparing engagement levels across age groups show that employees over 40 years old have higher engagement levels than those under 30 and those aged 30–40.
- **By educational qualification:** The Independent Samples T-Test comparing engagement levels by educational attainment indicates no statistically significant difference in engagement among employees with different educational levels.
- **By years of service:** The One-way ANOVA results show that employees with over 20 years of service demonstrate higher engagement levels compared to those with less than 10 years or between 10 and 20 years of service.
- **By job position:** The results of the Independent Samples T-Test reveal that employees holding managerial positions (from department level and above) exhibit higher engagement levels than those without managerial roles.

4.3 Estimation Results and Discussion

Based on the regression results, the unstandardized regression equation is expressed as follows:

$$EE = -0.007 + 0.321MT + 0.199BC + 0.150QL + 0.323PT$$

The regression analysis indicates that the factors “Work Environment” (MT), “Nature of Work” (BC), “Relationship with Direct Supervisor” (QL), and “Training and Development Opportunities” (PT) all have positive effects on employee engagement. Specifically, the unstandardized regression coefficients are 0.321 (MT), 0.199 (BC), 0.150 (QL), and 0.323 (PT). This means that when each of these factors increases by one unit, the level of employee engagement increases correspondingly by 0.321 units (MT), 0.199 units (BC), 0.150 units (QL), and 0.323 units (PT).

Based on the standardized regression coefficients (Beta), the magnitude of influence of the factors is ranked as follows:

Work Environment (33%), Training and Development Opportunities (33%), Nature of Work (20%), and Relationship with Direct Supervisor (14%). Accordingly, Work Environment (MT) and Training and Development Opportunities (PT) are identified as the two most influential factors affecting employee engagement.

The hypothesis testing results confirm that all proposed hypotheses (H1, H2, H3, and H4) are accepted, thereby reinforcing the evidence of a positive relationship between these four factors and the employee engagement of civil servants in the socio-cultural departments of Ho Chi Minh City.

In addition, the descriptive statistics indicate that the average level of employee engagement among civil servants is 4.0752, reflecting a generally high degree of engagement. Among the factors, Nature of Work has the highest mean score (4.1709), followed by Relationship with Direct Supervisor (4.1241), Work Environment (4.0873), and Training and Development Opportunities (4.0840).

Thus, the quantitative analysis included several steps: sample description, scale reliability testing, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and linear regression analysis. The EFA results adjusted the model from six independent constructs with 32 observed variables to four constructs with 29 observed variables, while three variables (CN1, CN2, CN3) were eliminated due to low loadings. The final constructs consist of Work Environment, Nature of Work, Relationship with Direct Supervisor, and Training and Development Opportunities.

The regression analysis revealed that all four factors are statistically significant and have a positive impact on employee engagement, consistent with previous studies. Overall, the findings confirm that the proposed research model aligns with and reinforces earlier empirical evidence.

5. Conclusion, Managerial Implications, and Research Limitations

The quantitative research results indicate that the final model comprises four key factors: Work Environment, Nature of Work, Relationship with Direct Supervisor, and Training and Development Opportunities. All measurement scales demonstrate reliability, validity, and a positive impact on civil servants' engagement.

The regression analysis confirms the influence levels of these factors in the following order: Work Environment and Training and Development Opportunities (both 33%), Nature of Work (20%), and Relationship with Direct Supervisor (14%). All research hypotheses are accepted, consistent with prior studies, reaffirming the critical role of these four factors in enhancing employee engagement among civil servants.

Based on the research findings, several managerial implications are proposed as follows:

Working environment: The analysis results indicate that the *working environment* has the strongest influence on employee engagement. Among the observed variables, CN5 (*being promptly recognized and praised*) and MT5 (*organizing collective activities outside of work*) recorded the lowest mean scores. Therefore, it is recommended that the Departments place greater emphasis on diversifying timely recognition and reward practices, enhancing team-building and collective activities, and maintaining a healthy and fair organizational culture in order to strengthen public employees' sense of engagement and commitment.

Opportunities for training and development: Opportunities for training and development are among the two strongest factors influencing employee engagement. Among the observed variables, CN4 (fair performance evaluation), PT5 (equal access to promotion opportunities), and PT1 (encouragement to develop new skills) have the lowest mean scores. Therefore, organizations should establish a transparent and fair evaluation system, ensure openness in staff planning and appointments, encourage the development of new skills, and promote equal access to training and professional development opportunities to enhance public employees' engagement.

Nature of work: The nature of work is the third most influential factor affecting employee engagement, as it enables public employees to recognize their roles and contributions to society. Although this factor is inherently difficult to alter, organizations should enhance the level of challenge in assigned tasks (as BC2 has the lowest mean score), foster employees' awareness of the significance of public service, and establish clear work processes to support officials in performing their duties effectively.

Relationship with direct supervisors: Although this factor has the weakest statistical impact on employee engagement, it represents the most immediate and personal connection with public employees. The results indicate that QL6 (inspiring subordinates), QL5 (trustworthiness), and QL7 (goal orientation) have the lowest mean scores. Therefore, leaders should enhance their professional competence and inspirational leadership skills, cultivate personal integrity and credibility, and provide timely recognition and encouragement to strengthen employees' trust and commitment to the organization.

Limitations of the study: The primary objective of this research was to identify non-monetary factors influencing public employees' engagement and to propose managerial solutions to enhance their commitment. However, with an adjusted R^2 of 66.8%, the model explains only 66.8% of the variance in employee engagement, indicating that other influencing factors were not included in the analysis. Therefore, future studies should expand the survey scope to include departments in other sectors to improve generalizability, and incorporate additional variables into the model to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of public employees' engagement.

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