

THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT ON THE AFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT IN FIVE-STAR HOTELS IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM.

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ABSTRACT

Employee involvement is defined as a powerful extent by contribution of employees in the organisation. Although the study of employee involvement has reviewed many benefits within many global companies as well as hotel organisations, there has not been any study conducted in Vietnam to measure the impact of employee involvement on affective organisational commitment in hospitality industry. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to study the different dimensions of employee involvement includes employee communication, decision making, employee ownership, self-managed work team on affective commitment. The explanatory study was based on quantitative research with survey questionnaire to collect empirical data from 150 participants who directly work for Five-star hotel organisations in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam. This study brings valuable insights to hotel organisation, policy makers, industry players, other managerial contributors and employees themselves; as well as employees themselves and helps on resolve the human resource issues in hotel industry by giving a clear understanding on the value of employee involvement as a broad concept directs influence on staff commitment to the hotel establishment.

Keywords: *Employee involvement, affective organisational commitment, organisational behaviour, hospitality, Vietnam.*

INTRODUCTION

Employee involvement is recognised as a mixture of various ways to rise up employee contribution in managerial decision making includes employee organisational commitment, staff turnover and absenteeism as well as employee productivity and motivation (Edwinah & Augustine, 2011). There has been critical attention from many researchers that targeted on those particular aspects in which organisational framework and system affects employee attitudes and behaviours. Many organisations currently realise the significant importance of their employees to the company's development due to the involvement of the employee to

generate new ideas, create new concept and involve in decision making in working environment (Tiwari & Singh, 2014). Most of the research has been remarkable in many countries such as United States of America, India, and Pakistan (Sun et al., 2000; O'Brien, 1995; Albdour & Ikhlas, 2014; Edwinah & Augustine, 2011). However, they did not give us the same result on the level of employee involvement impacts on the hotel affective organisational commitment. Furthermore, so far there is no research that has been conducted on that aspect in Vietnam, especially Ho Chi Minh City. The city is a developing region in the South of Vietnam, currently plays as a largest economic hub with GDP growth rate of 8.2 percent, reaches nearly 380 trillion VND (17.8 billion USD) in the first half of year 2014 (VietnamPlus, 2014). Additionally, luxury hospitality in Ho Chi Minh City has speedily growth to international standard following by global brands such as Sheraton, Park Hyatt, Renaissance, and Continental (Asia Web Direct, 2014). Hence, this study will be considered as a route to understand the effect of employee involvement on affective commitment, targeted on employees who are working for Five-star hotels in the city. The study will benefit the organisation primarily, following by policy makers, industry players and other managerial contributors as well as employees themselves and help on resolve the human resource issues in hotel industry by giving a clear understanding on the value of employee involvement as a broad concept directs influence on staff commitment to the hotel establishment.

Research Background

In the concept of Human Resource Management (HRM), employee involvement is the idea that employees think and feel they have a certain level of control over their work, getting feedback about their performance and receive appropriate reward for the performance toward organisation (Lawler, Mohrman & Ledford, 1995). Direct employee involvement will ensure employee commitment and assist an organisation to fulfil and reach its goals and objectives by implement their concept, ability and attempt on the making decision and handling job duties (Guest & Hoque, 1994). The view of “highly involved” in organisation can be defined in how strong the company strengthen employee participation and create a sense of autonomy (Edwinah & Augustine, 2011). Komal, Samina & Aisha (2011) determined the effect of employee involvement on organisational commitment; the idea of employee involvement covers in various ways to assist in the those task-related, include training, skills needed on communication and solving problems, financial cooperation, to improve the connection among employee attempt and reward, underline job security and the promote-in-within as well as generate and arouse organisational commitment. Furthermore, Boxall & Macky (2009) discussed the firm’s investment on high-involved working practices on the concept of the interaction among employee involvement and company commitment, had improved on performance and productivity as well as reduced staff turnover.

For many years, studies have been conducted on the effects of employee involvement and organisational commitment in business and hotel industry. At first glance, it may seem like the process of employee involvement has become a natural process in almost every company or organisation (Edwinah & Augustine, 2011). However, not all companies allow their employees to get involved too much in the business due to the fear of losing control (Palazzo, 2007). On the other hand, employees also hesitate to get involved

out of the fear that they will take more responsibility; it create a barrier between employers and employees, which ultimately reduce affective commitment and increase turnover ratio (Daljeet, 2013). Although there have been extensive research on various countries with conclusive evidence of positive effect of employee involvement on affective organisational commitment, there were lack of significant studies on the same issue in Vietnamese hotel industry, especially in Ho Chi Minh City (O'Brien, 1995; Ang, 2002; Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011). The study will bring new insights into the industry and hopefully find a way to improve performance by increasing affective organisational commitment through employee involvement.

This study not only brings valuable insights to hotel organisation, policy makers, industry players and other managerial contributors but also to the employees themselves. If all the research hypotheses are proven true, hotels organisation and policy makers will have another tool to unlock the full potential of their workforce by addressing the factors that drive employees' commitment and ultimately increase firm's productivity. If it is false, decision makers will have to change their strategy in order to avoid wasting unnecessary resources.

Moreover, this study will contribute to the pool of on-going efforts to further improve financial performance by better managing human resources. The academic contribution of the study will go beyond its boundary and affects many other related industries. More than that, educators will have to consider interpreting employee involvement into the curriculum for related lectures. Future entrepreneurs in various service industries will have better insights to gain access to the untapped pool of competitive workforce. Last but not least, this study, like many others before, will lay the foundation for the hospitality business of the 21st century where all aspects of talent development are optimised.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement can be defined as the participation in making decision and how to implement it into the organisation (Edwinah & Augustine, 2011). It is quantified by the level of performance and responsibility employees have put toward their companies and the sense of ownership felt by employees. Employee involvement can be understood as the process of employees empowering. It encourages them to make decisions and solve problems according to their levels in the company (Pace, 1989). To effectively operate in a company, employees should be allowed to take more responsibility. This process requires certain decision making and administrative power is delegated and shared among employees at many levels. Without the power to make their own decisions, employee involvement in general and employees in particular, cannot do anything to improve the situation. They can only suggest the solution and hope for the best (Sun et al., 2000). Employee involvement in decision-making can guarantee the high levels of commitment whereby it will inspire employees to maximize their abilities to handle jobs, grow up their skills and self-managing them to improve performance (Eurofound, 2013).

According to Ackers et al., (2006) many employees commit themselves to the company common goals when they actively get involved in decision making process and formulating the solution to the problem. Therefore, it is assumed that employee involvement play a critical role in daily management. Moreover, employee involvement may generate better work motivation and contribute to staff performance and organisational commitment which related to the decrease of absence rates and staff turnover (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Low degree involvement of employees can affect various organisational aspects because it is strongly connected to both task commitment and organisational commitment. Thus, employee involvement has maintained its critical position in management planning and considered as a crucial element of HRM procedure (Pfeffer, 1998) and essential commitment management (Wood, 1999). The objectives of employee involvement indicate management agenda which focuses on enhancing understanding and commitment from staff member and ensuring a significant improvement in organisation.

Employee involvement in communication and decision making may results in significant improvement of organisation performance (Hynes, 2012). Information is sent and received at all levels in the organisation. It can be categorised as downward (from managers to employees), upward (from employees to managers), and horizontal (among employees) (Lunenburg, 2010). Internal communications is among the feasible solutions to increase employee commitment. It is best used to generate trust among peers in the organisation and build a foundation for committed behaviour (Allert & Chatterjee, 1997; Bolognini, 2003; Kottila & Ronni, 2008; Webster & Wong, 2008). In normal situation, when managers understand each individual under their control, managers can gain employees trust, motivate them, and greatly improve their performance. People who strongly identify themselves with the organisation tend to have positive attitude toward the company, stay longer with the job and contribute more than usual (Burkeen et al., 2011). Moreover, the process of participation among employees will reduce the need for managers, reducing overall cost and enhances people's sense of power and dignity (Tonnessen, 2005). Participation usually brings many people together to work around one goal; thus, the much needed focus and motivational technique brings a huge boost to overall performance (Summers & Hyman, 2005). According to Komal, Samina & Aisha (2011), direct participation in some organisation will lead to the willingness and ability to work harder toward corporate goal and ultimately enhance their affective organisational commitment. Elele & Fields (2010) suggested that participation in decision-making was closely related to organisational commitment.

On the other hand, employee involvement may carry different ideas and perspective from outside of the company (Pendleton, 2001). It can create chaos and carry employee away from original goal set by the top executive. Once established the initiatives for employees to participate in the company, it's difficult to revoke it. The worst scenario is when employees unite and vote against their superiors; however, this is highly unlikely to happen (Pendleton, 2001). Albdour & Ikhlas (2014) conducted an investigation on the relationship of two aspects: employee involvement and organisational commitment, suggests that the higher the job involvement, the higher affective commitment they will have. A plausible explanation for this phenomenon is when employees have high satisfaction with their job are likely to have more positive attitude toward the organisation (Susanty & Miradipta, 2013). Employee involvement that enables workers to cast their voices in

managerial decision making process will result in a much more responsive service in which complaint and dissatisfactions are dealt quickly and effectively resulting in a greater customer satisfaction (Conrad, 1995). Some hotel managements are afraid that too much employee involvement in managerial decision will result in the loss of control. However, such event will not be an issue if employee involvement can be executed with certain level of control (Palazzo, 2007). Moreover, if the level of affective commitment is high enough, employee involvement will aim toward the benefits of the organisation and have to worry about them joining force and rioting against the company (Eurofound, 2013). Many hotels do not see such benefits and apply traditional performance rating system which directly control and allow very little room for individual potentials (Conrad, 1995).

Teamwork in business is highly valued and the concept of self-managed work team seems to have major impact to affective organisational commitment and greatly increase performance in the long run. According to Greenberg, Sikora, Grunberg & Moore (2012), business rely on employees who are willing to step up and go beyond their normal duties. Those employees who took part in the company as a self-directed team tend to stay with the company longer and encourage the rest of the team members to work harder. This will prevent employees from psychologically withdraw from the business (Greenberg, Sikora, Grunberg & Moore, 2012). The effect of self-managed team is also strengthened by the enhanced communication and the employee involvement in decision-making process. In study conducted by Elloy, (2008), businesses that encourage employees to take part in decision making or have a well-developed communication system all have the tendency of moving toward self-management.

Employee ownership has also been known to improve performance, encourage innovation and have a positive effect on how business operates in the long run (Lampel, Bhalla & Jha 2012). In fact the numbers from the research shows that there is an increase of 2.4% on annual sales for company that favours employee ownership (Solnik, 2012). That increase in total sales is a direct result from the growth in sales per employee. It can be concluded that ownership and participation in company management will give substantial gain in profits. However, not all companies want to relinquish control over its assets especially when the company is capital sensitive. Employee ownership works best when the company relies on their human capital to generate income such as hotel industry and other services sector (Solnik, 2012).

In other research, Lampel, Bhalla & Jha (2012) suggested that employee-owned companies are more open and aim at long term profits while non-employee-owned companies tend to be conservative and want high short-term profit. The increase in employee ownership by more than 30% will have higher impact on the performance. If the level of employee ownership exceeds 60%, it gives no additional benefits (Lampel, Bhalla & Jha, 2012). Pierce, Reubenfeld & Morgan (1991) concludes that the application of the Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) leads to the motivation and positive behaviours is direct results of psychological ownership, organisational commitment and the structure of the organisation.

In a more recent study, Buchko (1992) found that the sense of ownership is more important to employees than other motivation. They desire to have more influence to their work and also on the organisation. Empirical studies show that the level of employee

commitment is influenced by the level of exercisable ownership rights, whereby employee, who thinks the manager gives them more right and responsibility in making their own decision tend to be more committed, more satisfied, and getting even more involved with their job (Buchko, 1992; Tucker et al., 1989).

Affective Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment model proposed in 1991 and further discussed in 1996 was a corner stone in organisational commitment research and became the foundation of many subsequent studies (Meyer & Allen 1991, 1996). In the research, organisational commitment is divided into 3 components: Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment, and Normative Commitment (Meyer & Allen 1991, 1996). Affective commitment is the primary feelings and attitudes of a person toward the company; therefore, employees with affective commitment have a tendency to stay with the organisation for a long time. Continuance commitment refers to the opportunity cost of leaving the company. If the cost to leave is too high, employees will stick with the company. Normative commitment relates to the moral feelings to continue to work for an organisation even if the employee doesn't really want to. For many reasons, the employees with normative commitment think that they ought to stay with the company. Out of the 3 components, affective commitment plays a key role in our research since it strongly links toward the positive feelings and work related of the organisation.

Affective commitment has been seen as an emotional association which determines dedication and loyalty to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). Many studies have proved the connection between affective commitment and employee absenteeism, performance and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday et al., 1982). An employee who is affectively committed to the organisation actively recognises with the organisational goals and wishes to consider himself as a part of the organisation and tends to stay longer with the company (Thompson & Prottas, 2005; Gaan, 2008). Affective commitment raises up when the employee becomes involved in the value of his or her identify from the association with the organisation (Allen & Meyer, 2000; Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997). For instance, employees are likely to be affectively committed when they feel that the company treats them fairly and respect them in proper manner.

Thus, since affective commitment bases heavily on emotional link to the organisation, employees with high affective attachment seem to be motivated to make greater contributions to the organisation compared to the weak affective binding (Allen & Meyer, 1996, 2000; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). In addition, to the organisation identification, personal involvement and value shared tend to prove employees' affective commitment. If the employees think their job motivating and meaningful, they are more possibly to grow personally involved in the organisation, attracted by the organisational values and match them with their personal goals (Lam & Liu, 2014).

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This paper is to identify and analyse the different dimensions of employee involvement and the effect of each dimension on affective organisational commitment in five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study also examines the extent of correlation among the different dimensions of employee involvement on affective organisational commitment in five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The hypothesis for the study as following:

- H1: There is an impact of employee communication on the affective commitment.
- H2: There is an impact of employee decision making on the affective commitment.
- H3: There is an impact of employee ownership on the affective commitment.
- H4: There is an impact of employee self-managed work team on the affective commitment.

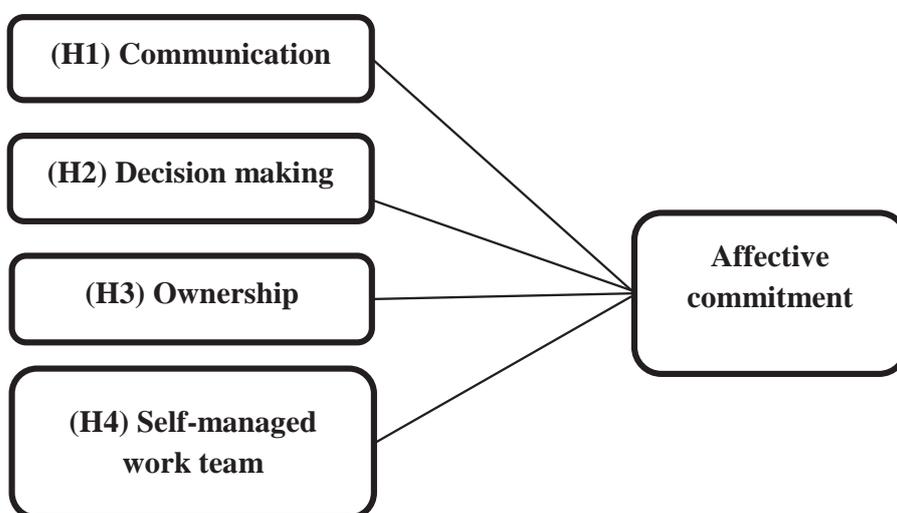


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of Employee Involvement on Affective Commitment

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research was used in this study to develop a database that can be analysed statistically (Creswell, 2009). The targeted population was the employees who work in Five-star hotel in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. 200 survey questionnaires was distributed to random employees in 7 Five-star hotels with the purpose of gathering accurate information to answer questions of how their involvement directly influences affective commitment on daily job accomplishment. 35 survey questions in total covered both employee general information and specific concerns on 4 variables included employee communication (Q7-Q12), decision making (Q13-Q16), ownership (Q17-Q22) and self-managed work teams (Q23-Q27). Q28 until Q34 were based on affective organisational commitments. To make it easy for Vietnamese employees to interpret in this task of data collection, all questions were translated into Vietnamese and laid under the English sentences. The dual language questionnaire was then validated by *Mr. Hoai Vu Nguyen* (English lecturer of Vietnam

National University-HCMC-International Education Institute) and *Ms. Thao Uyen Bui* (English lecturer of Youth Foreign Language School, HCM City) to ensure the consistency of the meaning.

Judgement sampling as a type of nonprobability sample was used collect data within targeted group and survey questionnaire for quantitative research (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). The items were then tested for descriptive analysis and correlation of the variables according to the conceptual framework. Normality test was primarily applied to ensure the sample data had been selected from a normally distributed population (Groebner et al., 2011). Thereafter, regression coefficients test were implemented in order to prove hypotheses (Rutherford, 2001).

RESULTS

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed out of which 159 copies were returned, out of which 150 were usable, making an overall response rate of 75 percent. As per Table 1, among them 47 respondents has been attached to the hotel for more than 6 years, 32 were in between 4 to 6 years, 57 served for 1 to 3 years and 14 respondents just joined the hotel for less than a year. With respect to the years of servicing, the majority of respondents were experienced (above the age of 31).

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents

		WORKING DURATION (Years)				Total
		< 1	1 – 3	4 – 6	> 6	
Sample size		N = 14	N = 57	N = 32	N = 47	150
Gender	Female	50%	46%	56%	57%	78
	Male	50%	54%	44%	43%	72
Age	20 - 30 years old	100%	70%	31%	13%	70
	31 - 40 years old	0%	30%	50%	47%	55
	> 40 years old	0%	0%	19%	40%	25

Referring to Table 2, the items of the questionnaire were tested for normality whereby all items were within the range of skewness and kurtosis values. Hence, the data were assumed as normal (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 2: Normality Test

n = 150	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Kurtosis	Skewness
COMMUNICATION	2.31	2.33	2.33	0.48	1.83	0.88
DECISION MAKING	2.21	2.00	2.00	0.74	0.05	0.60
OWNERSHIP	2.92	3.00	3.00	0.69	-0.16	-0.23
SELF-MANAGED WORK TEAM	2.21	2.20	2.00	0.75	0.48	0.79
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	2.22	2.14	2.00	0.76	0.03	0.50

Table 3: Correlations for Independent and Dependent Variables

		COMMUNICATION	DECISION MAKING	OWNERSHIP	SELF-MANAGED WORK TEAM	AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT
COMMUNICATION	Pearson Correlation	1	.614**	.304**	.534**	.637**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
DECISION MAKING	Pearson Correlation	.614**	1	.491**	.667**	.666**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
OWNERSHIP	Pearson Correlation	.304**	.491**	1	.539**	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
SELF-MANAGED WORK TEAM	Pearson Correlation	.534**	.667**	.539**	1	.612**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	150	150	150	150	150
AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT	Pearson Correlation	.637**	.666**	.555**	.612**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	150	150	150	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows the Pearson Correlations analysis which consists of significant level at 0.01 (Confident interval is 95%). Thus, significant value (2-tailed) or p-value was less than 0.01, which confirmed the correlations between the four independent variables – (H₁) Communication, (H₂) Decision making, (H₃) Ownership and (H₄) Self-managed work team, and the dependent variable – Affective commitment. The Pearson correlation values on Affective commitment according to four independent variables – Communication, Decision making, Ownership and Self-managed work team were followed by (.637**), (.666**), (.555**) and (.612**).

Table 4: Regression Coefficients for Independent Variables

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t	Sig.
Intercept	-0.755	0.234	3.227	0.002
COMMUNICATION	0.572	0.108	5.304	0.000
DECISION MAKING	0.238	0.080	2.969	0.003
OWNERSHIP	0.287	0.069	4.143	0.000
SELF-MANAGED WORK TEAM	0.131	0.077	1.705	0.090

Dependent Variable: Affective Commitment

Based on Table 4, a significant relationship exists between communication and affective commitment where communication has the highest impact towards employee's affective commitment with the $\beta_1 = 0.572$ and Sig. < 0.05; followed by employee ownership that had $\beta_3 = 0.287$, Sig. < 0.05, then decision making with $\beta_2 = 0.238$, Sig. < 0.03. However, a significantly no relationship was observed between self-managed work team and affective commitment whereby the $\beta_4 = 0.131$, Sig. < 0.09.

DISCUSSION

The existence of significant relationship between various variables of overall affective commitment aids in making an inference that the employee involvement factors are positively associated with affective commitment in Five-star Hotels in Vietnam and made a significant contribution in achieving overall employee commitment.

The results are in-line with Carrie`re & Bourque (2009) which indicated the positive relationship among the internal communication and affective commitment, with the roof of communication satisfaction between employees within the organisation. Superiors could increase employees' trust, motivated them and rose up their work performance by understanding each individual under his control (Burkeen et al., 2011). Thus, hotel organisations should implement internal communication effectively in order to gain the employee commitment, generate trust among peers in the organisation, build a foundation for committed behaviour, increase job performance and retain the employees longer with the organisation (Burkeen et al., 2011, Carrie`re & Bourque, 2009, Allert & Chatterjee, 1997; Bolognini, 2003; Kottila & Ronni, 2008; Webster & Wong, 2008).

Through this study, the respondents admitted that decision making enhanced their affective commitment to the organisation. According to Komal, Samina and Aisha (2011) direct participation in decision making led to the willingness and ability to work harder toward organisation's goal and push up their affective organisational commitment. Hence, hotel management should consider delegating more responsibilities to the employees, despite of having rigid control mechanism in the hospitality business.

From the 150 respondents only 15% of the respondents confirmed that the company did offer them to purchase the company stock at a discounted price. However,

58% positively relates employee ownership to motivation and work for the growth of the hotel. 60% agreed and strongly agreed that employee share ownership plan could increase their trust on the company as well as motivate them to stay longer with the organisation in case they own company stock. Perhaps the hotels may consider of offering Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) to the employees to further enhance their commitment (Pierce, Reubenfeld & Morgan, 1991).

Lastly, self-managed team had shown a no significant relationship to affective commitment towards the hotel. The respondents do not think self-managed work team as one of the priorities that affect their affective commitment to the hotel organisation. The results shown that the employees who are working in Five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh City does not concern much about the influence of team work and willingness to go further than normal duties as well as its relationship with organisational commitment. Managers should take into consideration of this result because the lack of team commitment at work can be a serious matter in the service-oriented industry like in hospitality.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to determine the impact of employee involvement on the affective organisational commitment in Five-star hotels in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. By analysing different dimensions of employee involvement and the effect of each dimension on affective organisational commitment, communication was the variable which had the highest impact on employee's organisational affective commitment followed by employee ownership and decision making. These are the factors that laid on the top list of consideration of the employees to either stay with the company or to search for other employment opportunities. However, self-managed work team failed to show any significant effect on employee affective commitment.

Limitations and Further Research

Firstly, the research was a cross-sectional research which measures the variables at a single point of time. Thus, any differences in the variables including employee involvement and affective commitment over time were not examined in this study. Due to time constraint, convenience sampling was used as a nonprobability method. Hence, the results should not be simply generalised for interpretation. In addition, there were difficulties to distribute questionnaires to the hotels in Ho Chi Minh City due to lack of participation, restriction on company policy, and hotel peak season. Therefore, the sample might not fully represent the whole population. Lastly, this study only focused on employees who were working at Five-star hotel in Ho Chi Minh City. Hence, it restricted the generalizability of the study.

Future research should develop an analysis of different types of hotels and to expand the scope to other regions in Vietnam to achieve a broader understanding of the topic. Qualitative method of collecting data such as in-depth interview or focus group might be more effective in assessing the behavioural aspect of employee involvement and affective commitment. The impact of employee involvement on affective commitment in various

levels such as managerial and non-managerial positions may be distinct and would be recommended for further research. Furthermore, future research could consider the longitudinal design of study which determines the sustainable relationship between the employee involvement and affective commitment in a longer period of time.

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