



Work Engagement Level in Social Entrepreneurships

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Abstract. This study analyzes the levels of work engagement of collaborators of socio-environmental companies of the Kunan Network in Peru, to contribute to the professionalization of human capital management in the ecosystem and the economy of resources to be used in such management. The study was positioned in the positivist paradigm, of quantitative descriptive type. The Utrech Work Engagement Scale (UWES) survey was applied to 80 collaborators. The mean and percentiles of the data were obtained to classify the results and thus determine the levels of the variable under study at the unidimensional and multidimensional levels and contrast it with the segmentation variables. The levels, both at the multidimensional and dimensional levels, are from average to very high, which is a positive finding for the ecosystem.

Keywords: Work environment, job satisfaction, communication, work commitment, correlation.

1 Introduction

Sustainability is an interdisciplinary concept that consists of the human capacity to satisfy, in the long term, the well-being of all lives, including those of future generations, with the intention of reducing inequalities and increasing distributive justice in society [1]. Concern for following sustainable business practices has become vital for companies to meet social needs and economic objectives [2]. Therefore, several companies have focused on improving the sustainability of their businesses, with corporate sustainability being an imperative need to be addressed [3]. Business sustainability is understood as the ability to satisfy the economic needs of a company taking into consideration human welfare [2]. In other words, companies should not be concerned with increasing shareholder wealth, but should consider the welfare of their employees and society as well as the quality of the working environment, the quality of work, care for the environment and its resources, economic development, among others [4–6].

Sustainability actions are usually easier to implement in small companies than in consolidated ones; however, small companies are the ones that struggle to manage and distribute their economic and human resources, since they are usually scarce or insufficient at this stage [4, 7]. This paradox has led to the fact that, in the private sector, new business ideas contemplate solving, totally or partially, social or environmental

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problems, in addition to offering a product or service [4]. In this sense, sustainability has positioned itself as a differential attribute of innovation and a generator of intangible value for a more responsible and conscious market. These initiatives are known as socio-environmental companies [7, 8]. In addition to being economically profitable, these companies are validating an unconventional business model that is in the growth phase, as it has tended to be more empirical and experimental, which means that predicting commercial behaviors is even more challenging [9]. These types of companies must make many efforts to achieve financial self-sustainability and efficient resource management [6, 7].

Social enterprises must create an efficient and effective business performance framework from all areas, especially human resources, because they are the ones who move and drive the company. Therefore, the creation and promotion of engagement of these internal stakeholders with the company is a key factor for the development of this asset [10]. Paradoxically, many companies do not pay attention to the strategy of this area or to the factors that shape it, such as internal communication and human capital management [9, 11]. Organizations are the performance of those who compose them, from their attitudes, abilities, skills, commitment, identification, cooperation, and satisfaction. This is vital for business development and for a socio-environmental company, this is no exception [7, 10].

More than a decade ago, work engagement was understood as the opposite of work fatigue or, as it is currently known, burnout, which can be conceived as constant and prolonged mental stress and exhaustion due to work [12]. It has been identified as a work-related phenomenon, but not as a collateral hazard of job performance [12, 13]. Satisfaction is a factor that impacts engagement as well as burnout management. Satisfaction is the feeling that an employee feels towards colleagues, supervisors, compensation, work environment, collaborative initiative and reciprocity, among others [14, 15]. Over the years, this feeling became less valid because it was understood that the absence of job burnout was equivalent to good job satisfaction; consequently, engagement could also be classified as good. Currently, it is understood that, although they are two related concepts, in practice, they function independently and should be managed as such [14, 16].

The analysis of the concept of work engagement was initially focused on more obvious indicators such as performance and work performance [17]. Over time, this concept evolved and included intangible indicators such as individuality, behaviors, and satisfaction not only of professionals in leadership positions but of the collaborator in general [6, 17]. Work engagement is a cognitive-affective, emotional, and behavioral state [18] that is composed of three dimensions: (a) *vigor*, which refers to the strength and potential of the employee in the performance of his/her work; (b) *dedication*, which consists of the personal and subjective motivation to perform it; and (c) *absorption*, which refers to the resistance with which the employee executes his/her functions [13, 19].

Work engagement is a business ally, as it is considered an indicator within the management of internal communication to improve human and internal talent management [17]. In the same way that the formation and transmission of corporate culture, internal communication is essential to manage and improve the levels of work engagement in

companies [20]. Internal communication together with a set of variables make up a successful human management that is aligned to the fulfillment of the objectives in social enterprises [20]. Work engagement is a state of personal motivation and positive perception, where people are enthusiastic about their performance, feel that their work is relevant, and can spend time absorbed in their tasks; which is evidenced by greater and longer commitment and conviction for their work [17, 21]. Likewise, behaviors that generate pressure or stress have an impact on work engagement [22]. Also, supervision and stress have another perspective that is not necessarily negative, because there are hindering and challenging stressors. Impairment stressors cause employees to begin to believe that, despite their efforts, they will not be able to overcome the work requirements demanded; for example, when they have goals with very short deadlines [23, 24]. Challenge stressors motivate and drive the employee to find solutions and to take advantage of his or her abilities to face the challenge, since he or she is confident that they will be able to achieve it, creating positive emotions in the employee [23, 24]. Work engagement is positive and beneficial in itself since engagement and affective commitment are variables that are directly and strongly related to human capital management and internal communication [25, 26]. Work engagement management has as a key factor the emotional state of employees that can be measured through predictors such as collaboration among colleagues, supervision, feedback, rank, type of profession, age, gender, etc. [6]. Its management impacts on business effectiveness, employee autonomy, and reduced turnover and absenteeism, ensuring higher productivity and more consistent and coherent work performance [6, 27].

As mentioned above, this study analyzes the levels of work engagement of workers in the social enterprises of the Kunan Network in Peru, since there are no precedents in the field of internal communication and human capital management. The Kunan network incorporates and catalyzes the ecosystem of socio-environmental enterprises; however, the strategic development of these enterprises is still in process [28]. Therefore, the aim is to provide an objective overview of work engagement management in Peruvian socio-environmental companies, providing them with a professional approach to internal communication management as a tool to make their performance efficient.

2 Methodology

The positivist paradigm characterizes this study [29] because it aims to determine the degree of work engagement of workers in social enterprises in Peru. Due to the nature of the study, the data analysis and findings are of the correlational type [30]. The data collection technique was the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES)* developed by Schaufeli and Bakker [31] to determine the level of worker engagement. The survey consists of 17 items divided into three dimensions, with a Likert scale from 0 to 6, where 0=Never and 6=Always. Laureano et al. [32] translated the survey into Spanish and validated it in the Peruvian context. The study population consisted of all workers working in any socio-environmental company in the Kunan Network. The sample was non-probabilistic, by convenience and snowball [33], given that the database mapped and registered 307 companies, but not the number of workers.

Due to the pandemic, the application of these surveys was virtual, managing to collect 80 surveys in 60 days. The data were decoded and pre-analyzed according to each variable in Excel, where the variables “age” and “position held” were regrouped and decoded. The variable “age” was grouped according to the segmentation performed by the National Institute of Statistics and Informatics for the Economically Active Population [34]. For the variable “position held”, the segmentation of positions by decision-making level within a company was considered [35].

To ensure the reliability of the survey, Cronbach's Alpha was performed at both unidimensional and multidimensional levels. Then, the means were estimated, weighting the results for each variable according to Schaufeli and Bakker [31]. A number was assigned to each response to obtain the normative scores according to percentiles and to reach a grade [31]. The correlation between the segmentation variables and the level of work engagement was determined. Likewise, the Mann-Whitney U coefficient was used for the variables “gender” and “full-time work” [13] to define the existence of differences between the segmented results by sample type [36]. Therefore, the classification of both variables was determined based on the indications of Schaufeli & Bakker [31]: The 5th, 25th, 75th, and 95th percentiles were determined in SPSS, to define the ranges of scores that were attributed to each of the 5 levels, from very low to very high. Each respondent received an information sheet informing them of the objective of the study, the risks, benefits, their rights, as well as the confidentiality of the data collected. When the survey was administered, the consent of the collaborators was obtained.

3 Results and Discussion

Since this study has covered the work engagement variable, which functions both unidimensionally and multidimensionally, it was necessary to ensure the reliability, validity, and internal consistency of the survey. The reliability analysis was carried out and it was found that the UWES has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.947, a result greater than 0.7, thus demonstrating the internal consistency of the instrument used here. The tool applied in a unidimensional manner, as well as the application of the multi-dimensions independently have validity for the analysis of each component, since each dimension of each instrument crossed the 0.7 threshold. These results show that the application of the survey acts unidimensionally and multi-dimensionally, as well as its dimensions also function independently to measure the work engagement they analyze. Schaufeli and Bakker [31] emphasized that obtaining the averages of the data collected is the most appropriate way to process the data and to have more accurate results concerning the aim's research.

Table 1. Results of work engagement at unidimensional and multidimensional level.

Variable	Dimensions	Media	Standard Deviation	Qualification
Work Engagement		4.7	0.96	High
	Vigor	4.78	0.99	Average
	Dedication	5.10	1.03	High

Absorption	4.20	1.12	Average
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It is evident that the levels of work engagement of the employees of the social enterprises under study are average to high, which means that the factors that make up internal communication, such as the levels of communication, internal channels and their quality affect the level of work engagement. This variable is built with the feeling of active listening at work and with the employee's motivation, areas that respond to and are improved through strategic internal communication [37, 38]. Therefore, proper communication management becomes a key ally for human capital management.

To determine the correlation with the segmentation variables, percentiles, and normative scores were defined to translate the numerical means of work engagement into a classification in levels and, in this way, then study the Spearman coefficient with these segmentation variables: age, sex, type of position, seniority and full-time. To understand the interactions between the segmentation variables and work engagement, the following analysis was performed.

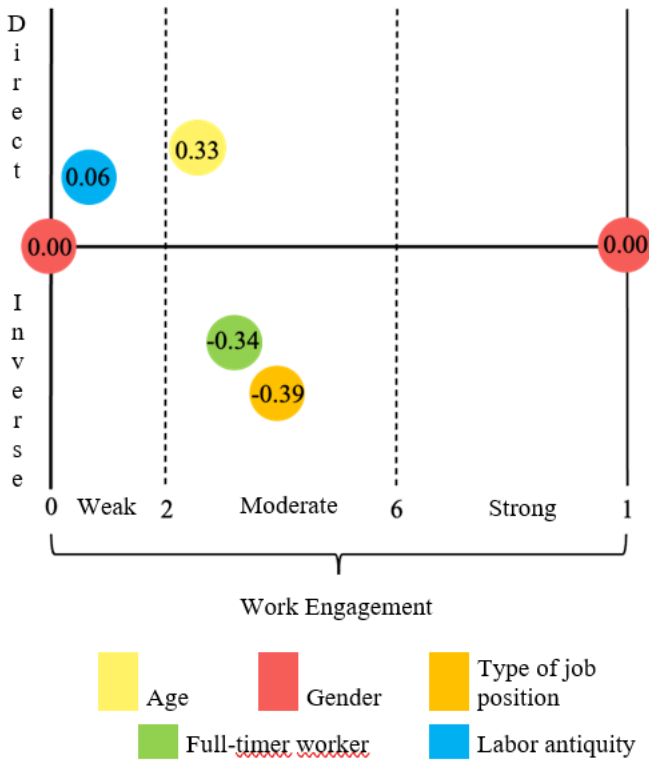


Fig. 1. Relationship coefficient with segmentation variables

A non-parametric test was run to corroborate or deny the existence of differences between the samples when interacting with the segmentation variables: sex and full-time work since this test is only applied to variables whose responses are divided into two: female or male for the former and full-time or part-time for the latter.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U test to estimate the existence of differences between samples by applicable segmentation variables

Correlation with Segmentation Variables		U-Mann Whitney	Differences
Level of <i>work engagement</i> ^y	Sex	0.98	No
	Working full time	0.00	Yes

It was confirmed that the level of work engagement is moderately affected by age range, type of position, and whether the employee works full time, although the relationship is inverse and of moderate magnitude. It was found that the type of position is the variable with the highest correlation coefficient, corroborating that whether the employee works in a strategic, tactical, or operational position will have an impact on his or her levels of work engagement. This confirms that the type and feeling of relevance that the employee perceives of his or her functions will define his or her work engagement levels, creating value judgments regarding job satisfaction [39–41]. Gender was found to be a factor affecting the assessment of work engagement [42]. The results segmented by gender did not show differences or confirm the relationship since the U-Mann Whitney test showed a very high and different factor from the confidence level used (0.05); therefore, there is no differential relationship between the samples. This shows that this segmentation variable is not important to be considered in the management of internal communication when trying to improve the level of work engagement.

The full-time work variable, which shows a relationship, was confirmed by the U-Mann Whitney test, since it obtained a value of less than 0.05, demonstrating that there are significant differences between the segments of the sample and that this variable does affect the level of work engagement. This could be attributed to the fact that the less time they spend within the organization, the less exposed they will be to the internal management actions implemented and to the communication efforts, having less access to information, having fewer resources for the execution of their functions and fewer opportunities for involvement and integration in the company [20, 43].

4 Conclusions

The statistical analysis supports that the levels of work engagement of the employees of the social enterprises of the Kunan Network are average to very high. About the segmentation variables, it is deduced that neither “gender” nor “time in position” has a significant influence on the levels of work engagement. On the other hand, “type of position” is the only variable that has an impact on both, although it does so in a “moderate” way. The variables “age” and “working full time” have a “moderate” impact on the level of work engagement.

This study had certain limitations. First, the measure used to collect the data was non-probabilistic, since no database lists all the socio-environmental enterprises in the country. Secondly, due to pandemic factors, it was not possible to physically collect data from all the members of the socio-environmental enterprises, which would have enriched the research. Finally, there is the impact of multiculturalism on the definition of the concepts developed here, since their valuations could be subjective. The variables not covered here should be taken into consideration for future probabilistic studies, to define more precisely how communication can be an ally in the management and improvement of work engagement levels and, consequently, improve the company's performance. In this line, it is suggested that the following studies consider, from different perspectives, the management of human resources in this type of companies and thus make more relevant and effective the improvement actions that arise from these findings.

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