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# The Effect of Critical Work Factors on Job Motivation and Satisfaction: An Empirical Study from Vietnam

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## Abstract

This paper aims to evaluate the effects of Critical work factors on Work Motivation and Job Satisfaction of young Vietnamese employees. The four most essential work aspects were consisting of the Work environment, Employee empowerment, Salary, and Promotion opportunities. To empirically evaluate the proposed research model, the authors assemble data through conducting questionnaire interviews with young employees working in Vietnamese firms. A sample of 216 respondents was constructed using the PLS-SEM program to highlight the testing of thirteen hypotheses. The testing results indicate that four Critical work factors positively impact the job motivation of young employees, especially two factors as Salary and Promotion opportunities. Surprisingly, the hypothesis regarding the positive direct relationship between Promotion opportunities and Job satisfaction is not supported. Meanwhile, the rest influence factors have a significant connection with the Vietnamese worker's job satisfaction. The mediation role of Work motivation was also tested by examining the indirect positive relationship between four Critical work factors and Job satisfaction. This paper is the first study that focuses on young employees; hence, these research findings provide Vietnamese human resource managers some suggestions for reference, which can be considered the dynamic factors on the young Vietnamese employees.

**Keywords:** Critical Work Factors, Vietnamese, Young Employees, Work Motivation, Job Satisfaction

**JEL Classification Code:** E24, O15, J21, J24, J28

## 1. Introduction

Firms are facing many challenges due to the ever-changing business environment in the era of globalization. Toward sustainability and to maintain stability, it requests corporates must enhance their competitiveness by improving various organizational issues' effectiveness

(Dhir et al., 2020). In a flat world where access to technology and finance is not a differential advantage across companies. Human resources become the most powerful competitive tool if ownership an efficient and skillful workforce, and it is the essential component of a successful organization (Moro et al., 2021). As an extraordinary asset, the workforce needs to be used appropriately and effectively to benefit the organization. An effective work factors system will directly affect an employee's motivation and job satisfaction (Al-Musadieq et al., 2018; Marta et al., 2021). A well-structured human resource management (HRM) system could improve organizations' performance and increase profitability and productivity (Laras et al., 2021). Besides, some studies have stressed a strong relationship between employees' performance and organizational performance consisting of personal productivity (Bakotić, 2016; Kessler et al., 2020), organizational commitment (Marta et al., 2021; Saridakis et al., 2020).

Discussing enhancing employee motivation and job satisfaction is giving significant attention in global practices (Nguyen et al., 2021). Besides, several scholars document

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that identifying essential work factors and classification of those factors depends on each country's context and industry characteristics (Febrina et al., 2021; Heimerl et al., 2020). Consequently, some related studies have pointed out that various work factors can affect employees' perspectives in recent years. The examples can be job design (Al-Musadieq et al., 2018); work environment (Aman-Ullah et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2016); training and development (Bakotić, 2016; Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018); rewards and promotions (Nguyen et al., 2021); enterprise culture (Febrina et al., 2021); income (Heimerl et al., 2020).

Vietnam is a transitional country with a youthful age structure, and most of the population lives in rural areas (Huang et al., 2019). The young workers' group (from fifteen to under thirty-five years old) account for 36.5 percent among a total of 55.1 million existing employees (World Bank, 2020). Thereby, young Vietnamese employees are the current primary workforce and would be the leading force for this economy in the future. Undoubtedly, promoting work motivation and improving job satisfaction for this labor age cluster are considered the most significant target for setting long-term strategies and attaining organizational sustainability. The concern of motivation and job satisfaction has been raised by many researchers worldwide, but there are no prior studies discussed at young Vietnamese workers. Hence, those research gaps have prompted the authors to consider the link between these factors in Vietnam. This paper aims to examine and discuss the critical work factors that affect job motivation and satisfaction for young Vietnamese workers. More specifically, the research contributions can fulfill the existing gaps in human resource management literature. Thus, this article seeks to address the following two main research objectives:

**RO1:** *Identifying critical work factors of young employees in Vietnam.*

**RO2:** *Evaluating the impact of these factors on work motivation and satisfaction.*

The structure of this paper is presented as follows. The following literature review section indicates the critical work factors of employees; this part will also report the proposed research model and research hypotheses. Explaining the research methodology will be presented in the third part. The next part focuses on data analysis and discussion of the results of hypotheses testing. Finally, some limitations and future research will be mentioned in this part.

## 2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Theoretical Background

Recent years have witnessed a rapidly increasing interest in research on employee motivation and satisfaction.

Employees' motivation at work was divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Mardanov, 2020). Meanwhile, some scholars have classified into specific clusters. For example, Vlacseková and Mura (2017) indicated the eleven specific factors influencing work motivation (Vlacseková & Mura, 2017). Lorincová et al. (2019) even explored seventeen different motivation factors by the survey in the Slovakia context (Lorincová et al., 2019). In the case of job satisfaction, Croatian workers will be satisfied by improving eleven work factors (Bakotić, 2016). Moreover, job satisfaction would enhance employee loyalty and job performance (Dhir et al., 2020; Rajput et al., 2016). It also leads to an increase in organizational productivity (Lorincová et al., 2019). Notably, some recent authors have believed the effects of some particular factors concerning work motivation and satisfaction depend on the research context (Aman-Ullah et al., 2021; Bajrami et al., 2021; Febrina et al., 2021). Overall, the authors emphasized a close relationship between work factors to job motivation and satisfaction. Therefore, an effective HRM system will positively impact job satisfaction, and it has a strong correlation with labor productivity and organizational performance (Laras et al., 2021).

This study has identified four critical work factors, including Work environment, Employee empowerment, Salary, and Promotion opportunities.

#### **Work environment (ENV):**

This factor is a key to growing a high-performing workforce. It can be defined as any factors around employees and can affect the performance of assigned tasks (Choi et al., 2021). It consists of working conditions, employee safety, physical workload, relations with co-workers (Bajrami et al., 2021). In addition, a comfortable working environment positively influences workers' psychology, thereby arousing enthusiasm at work (Heimerl et al., 2020; Koçman & Weber, 2018).

#### **Employee empowerment (EE):**

This factor is a fabulous tool for managers, encompassing various activities that give employees decision-making power, allowing and encouraging their greater participation in organization activities (Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018; Pelit et al., 2011). In addition, empowerment creates a positive relationship between employees and tasks, demonstrated through work motivation, job satisfaction, and employee performance (Hanaysha & Hussain, 2018; Norbu & Wetprasit, 2021).

#### **Salary (SA):**

Labor remuneration includes the wages and rewards the organization pays employees for their contributions (Heimerl et al., 2020). Therefore, salary is the fundamental

factor that comes to mind when the employee applies for a job (Hsiao et al., 2017; Pang & Lu, 2018). In addition, a reasonable compensation system will stimulate employees to perform tasks with a proactive, positive attitude and achieve high performance (Pang & Lu, 2018; Vlacsekova & Mura, 2017).

### **Promotion opportunities (PO):**

Workers face limits on compensation and advancement opportunities because of their age and years of experience (Nguyen et al., 2021). They expect the organization to provide them with career advancement opportunities. Besides, promoting opportunities offers encourages and challenges for workers to carry out, thus connecting with their work motivation and satisfaction (Addis et al., 2018; Pang & Lu, 2018; Vlacsekova & Mura, 2017).

## **2.2. Hypotheses Development**

Current research, which synthesizes the theoretical framework based on existing studies, emphasizes that critical work factors (ENV, EE, SA, PO) determine employee work motivation (MOV) and affect employee job satisfaction (JSA). Thus, Figure 1 illustrates the proposed research model by the case of young Vietnamese workers in this regard.

Several previous empirical studies have clarified the relationship between critical work factors and employee motivation and satisfaction in many contexts. The examples can be, Pang and Lu (2018) highlighted essential aspects of motivation for workers in Taiwanese shipping companies (Pang & Lu, 2018); Vlacsekova & Mura (2017) considered in the Slovakian SMEs (Vlacsekova & Mura, 2017). Ideally, some scholars have been concerned with this topic in emerging economies like Indonesia, Vietnam, Pakistan (Marta et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2016). Overall, the authors emphasized a close and positive relationship between these factors to work motivation and job satisfaction. Hence, based on the finding of other scholars, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

**H1:** Critical work factors are directly and positively related to employee work motivation.

**H2:** Critical work factors are directly and positively related to employee satisfaction.

Several recent studies have also measured the direct correlation between work motivation and job satisfaction. For example, Sabbagha et al. (2018) have revealed that in the banking sector in South Africa, workers are better satisfied when they have motivation in their work (Sabbagha et al., 2018). In line with this report by the findings from the study of the Bhutan hotel industry (Norbu & Wetprasit, 2021). Therefore, this research proposes the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Employee work motivation directly and positively impacts employee satisfaction.

The existing HRM literature experienced a lack of discussion about the mediating role of work motivation, particularly in the relationship between critical work factors and other final variables. However, work motivation has been supported as the bridge between CWFs to organizational commitment and human resource performance (Al-Musadieq et al., 2018; Marta et al., 2021). Thus, this study will extend the scope to determine the mediating role of work motivation demonstrated by the following hypothesis.

**H4:** Critical work factors indirectly impact employee job satisfaction through the mediation role of the employee work motivation.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **Data collection:**

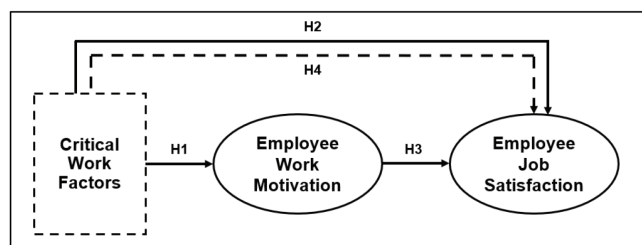
The study data were collected through interviews with young workers randomly selected from organizations located in Vietnam. A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, and 216 valid questionnaires were collected and employed for formal analysis due to lack of data or incompleteness. Thus, the sample comprised 216 young workers through the various gender, working departments, and work sectors in Vietnam (see Table 1).

### **Measurement scales:**

The authors have used a five-point Likert scale as a measurement scale of all the items is conducted in this survey. Respondents were asked to rate all items from strongly disagree (indicated by 1) and strongly agree (indicated by 5). This Likert scale has been extensively used in quantitative studies, and it showed effectiveness in testing and evaluating hypotheses (Dhir et al., 2020; Do et al., 2021).

### **Data analysis technique:**

The authors employed the PLS-SEM v3.3 tool to solve the research questions and evaluate those constructs. This



**Figure 1:** The Proposed Research Model

**Table 1:** Summary of Demographic Details

Group	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	119	55.1%
	Female	97	44.9%
Working department	Management	23	10.6%
	Accounting & finance	42	19.4%
	Personnel	27	12.5%
	R&D	15	6.9%
	Sales	60	27.8%
	Manufacturing	22	10.2%
	Complex	27	12.5%
Industries	Agriculture	42	19.4%
	Manufacturing	30	13.9%
	Mining	11	5.1%
	Finance	42	19.4%
	Transportation & services	57	26.4%
	Retail and distribution	34	15.7%

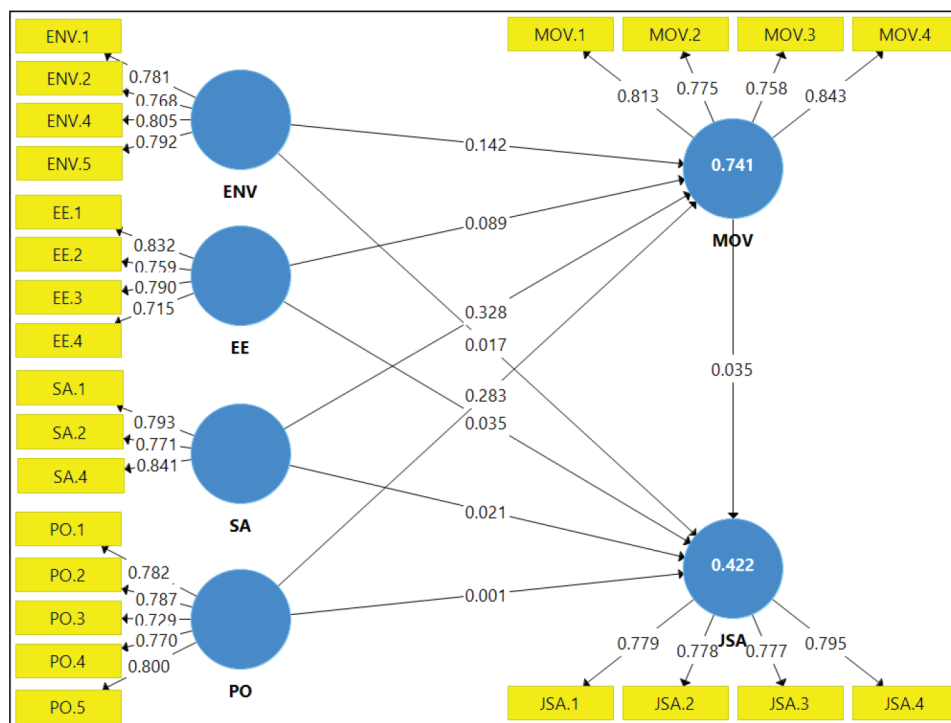
method has been widely applied in the social sciences field because it is convenient, flexible, and effective with few samples (Hair et al., 2019).

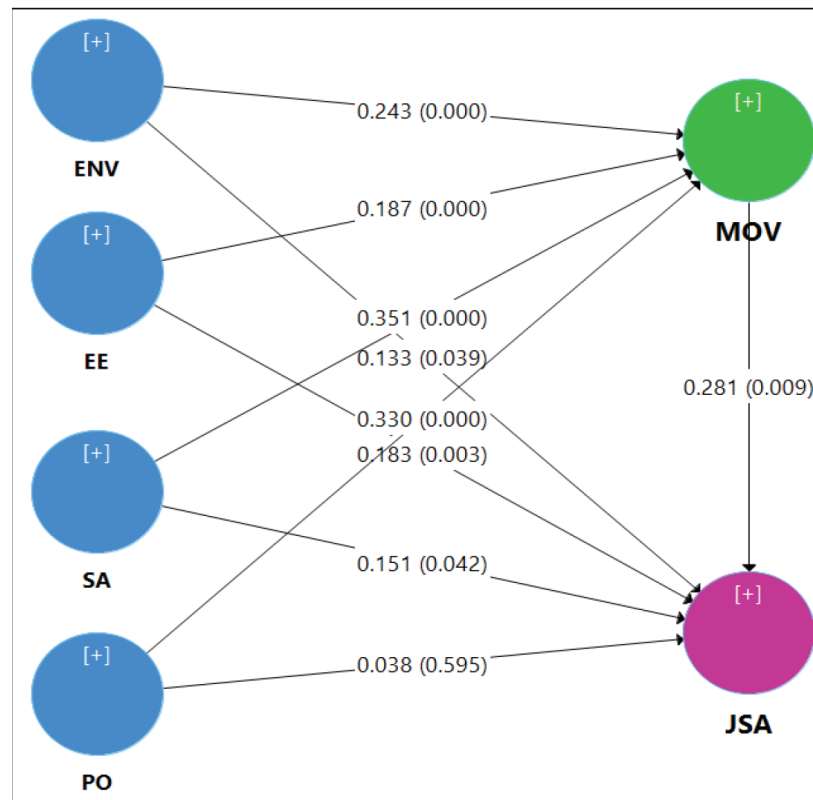
## 4. Results and Discussion

The research model focused on four groups of hypotheses; in detail, the study has identified four critical work factors (ENV, EE, SA, PO) that affect work motivation (MOV) and job satisfaction (JSA) of the young Vietnamese employees. Consequently, a total of thirteen hypotheses based on six constructs can be analyzed (shown in Figure 2 and Figure 3). This study employed the Smart-PLS software to evaluate these hypotheses. Therefore, the measurement model and the structural model have been mentioned in two separate parts.

### 4.1. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

Firstly, the measurement model has been evaluated and can be demonstrated in Figure 2 and Table 2. In the first test, two items as ENV3 and SA3, have been discarded due to their factor outer loadings values less than 0.708 cut-off (Do et al., 2021; Hair et al., 2019). However, apart from them, all twenty-four outer loading values of these constructs were

**Figure 2:** Evaluation of the Measurement Model



**Figure 3:** Evaluation of the Structural Model

**Table 2:** Evaluation the Measurement Model

No	Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
1	ENV	4	0.768–0.805	0.794	0.866	0.618
2	EE	4	0.715–0.832	0.778	0.857	0.601
3	SA	3	0.771–0.841	0.722	0.844	0.643
4	PO	5	0.729–0.800	0.832	0.882	0.599
5	MOV	4	0.758–0.843	0.810	0.875	0.637
6	JSA	4	0.777–0.795	0.789	0.863	0.612

more significant than the thresholds value, which indicates the model's content reliability. Thus, the authors need to re-run this test stage.

Secondly, after calculating in the second round, the suggested thresholds for the model fit must be less than 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2016); thus, this model has the SRMR value = 0.060, which indicates that it meets the required level. Thirdly, to evaluate the reliability and validity of the model, two concern values as Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values, recommendation by previous studies that these values will not be accepted if

less than 0.7 cut-offs (Do et al., 2021; Hair et al., 2019). Although based on the construct analysis, all constructs have Cronbach's alpha values and CR values; both were more significant than 0.7, which means the excellent reliability in terms of six constructs.

Finally, AVE values were also considered relying on the suggestion of several previous studies, such as Hair et al. (2019), Do et al. (2021), Dhir et al. (2020). They claimed that this value must be greater than 0.5 if the proposed model would move constructs to the bootstrap stage. As represented in Table 2, all AVE values are higher than 0.5 (Dhir et al., 2020;



Do et al., 2021; Hair et al., 2019); in detail, the PO construct has the minimum value = 0.599. Hence, it indicates the convergent validity. Consequently, all six constructs were accepted and can be evaluated in bootstrapping stage.

## 4.2. Evaluation of the Structural Model

Firstly, the authors checked the multicollinearity problem by variance inflation factor coefficients (VIF). According to Hair et al. (2019), the VIF values should be lower than 5, which means there is no multicollinearity between the data in the structural model (Figure 3).

More precisely, if the VIF values are less than three, it concludes that there is no multicollinearity among data in the structural model (Hair et al., 2019). This model has all of the VIF values ranging from 1.353 to 1.880 (less than 5), which illustrates it meets the requirement of the multicollinearity test.

Secondly, the  $R$ -Squared ( $R^2$ ) value helps the authors evaluate the structural model's power explanation. The three thresholds of  $R^2$  values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 can be considered three significant levels: weak to moderate and substantial (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016). MOV and JSA are two dependent variables in the structural model. According to the results shown in Figure 2, the two  $R^2$  values obtained were 0.741 and 0.422, respectively. The model achieved a relatively high level of explanation by the significant variance level of two constructs as work motivation job satisfaction are explained with 74.1% and 42.2%, respectively.

Lastly, the  $Q$ -Squared ( $Q^2$ ) value was utilized for evaluating the PLS-SEM model. In the case of indicating

predictive accuracy of a structural model, positive values of  $Q^2$  are required. More precisely,  $Q^2$  values higher than 0; 0.25; and 0.50 indicate small, medium, and large predictive relevance of the model (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2016). For example, the  $Q^2$  value of two indicators, namely MOV and JSA, were 0.464 ( $>0.25$ ) and 0.248 ( $>0$ ), respectively. Thus, the MOV construct's predictive relevance reached a medium level; meanwhile, the figure for the JSA construct reached a small level.

## 4.3. Discussion

The second research objective aims to evaluate the impact of four critical work factors on work motivation and job satisfaction. Firstly, it aimed to test the hypotheses related to the direct effects of vital work factors on employee work motivation and job satisfaction. Secondly, it focuses on the role of work motivation factors in this proposed model; in detail, the direct and indirect relationship among them. Consequently, the bootstrapping assessment was utilized to point out the Path Coefficients (estimates) values and  $p$ -values (see Figure 2 and Table 3).

### 4.3.1. The Direct Affect of CWFs on MOV and JSA

#### *The direct relationship between CWFs and MOV:*

Consequently, all four hypotheses are supported due to those  $p$ -values which were significant ( $< 0.05$  cutoff) (Hair et al., 2019). These findings indicate that four critical work factors, namely Work environment, Employee empowerment, Salary, and Promotion opportunities, positively influence

**Table 3:** Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Estimates	$p$ -value	Decision
H1a	ENV $\Rightarrow$ MOV	0.243	0.000	Supported
H1b	EE $\Rightarrow$ MOV	0.187	0.000	Supported
H1c	SA $\Rightarrow$ MOV	0.351	0.000	Supported
H1d	PO $\Rightarrow$ MOV	0.330	0.000	Supported
H2a	ENV $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.133	0.039	Supported
H2b	EE $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.183	0.003	Supported
H2c	SA $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.151	0.042	Supported
H2d	PO $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.038	0.595	Not Supported
H3	MOV $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.281	0.009	Supported
H4a	ENV $\Rightarrow$ MOV $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.068	0.020	Supported
H4b	EE $\Rightarrow$ MOV $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.052	0.037	Supported
H4d	SA $\Rightarrow$ MOV $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.098	0.013	Supported
H4e	PO $\Rightarrow$ MOV $\Rightarrow$ JSA	0.093	0.010	Supported

employee Work motivation. Especially two factors, the Salary factor ( $\beta = 0.351$ ) and Promotion opportunities factor ( $\beta = 0.330$ ), have a significant role in estimates for employee work motivation by this empirical research.

#### ***The direct relationship between CWFs on JSA:***

The promotion opportunities factor was not found to positively affect the job satisfaction of the young Vietnamese workers ( $p\text{-value} = 0.595 > 0.05$ ). Meanwhile, the rest hypotheses testing the relationship among CWFs and JSA all be supported; particularly, the Employee empowerment factor has the value of the most significant estimate ( $\beta = 0.183$ ).

The findings in terms of the CWFs' role are matched with the results in previous studies. For instance, they emphasized the positive effect of working environment on job motivation by evidence in the Pakistan education field (Rasheed et al., 2016); in the Taiwanese shipping firms (Pang & Lu, 2018); in the case of the Indonesian police sector (Laras et al., 2021); in the Slovak Republic context (Hitka et al., 2021). The agreement regarding the positive impact of the EE factor on MOV and JSA is in line with the results of various contexts, such as in the Turkey hospitality sector (Pelit et al., 2011); in the Indonesian employees' context (Marta et al., 2021), job satisfaction of nurses (Dahinten et al., 2016). Importantly, these studies only analyzed the individual effect of empowerment on job satisfaction or work motivation, not concerning other factors. Unsurprisingly, the essential role of salary factors is in line with some prior studies (Heimerl et al., 2020; Hsiao et al., 2017; Pang & Lu, 2018). It is documented that income and wage must be considered if the managers enhance the workers' work motivation and satisfaction regardless of age or education (Kovačević et al., 2020). Although the positive influence of the Promotion opportunities factor under predictor role has been claimed in some previous studies (Addis et al., 2018; Nguyen et al., 2021; Pang & Lu, 2018), however, surprisingly; this study did not prove the hypothesis regarding the connection with JSA. It only has a positive direct impact on the job motivation of young Vietnamese workers.

#### **4.3.2. The Mediation Role of Work Motivation**

##### ***The direct impact of employee work motivation on employee satisfaction:***

As shown in Table 3, the testing result shows that work motivation has a positive influence on satisfaction by the data of young Vietnamese employees ( $\beta = 0.281$ ;  $p\text{-value} = 0.009$ ). This decision is consistent with some conclusions of other scholars, who claimed that the firms must pay attention to workers' motivation. In particular, some recent studies have revealed that the employee will be satisfied with their job by the motivation factors, such as the case of South African workers (Sabbagha et al., 2018), staff

of the Bhutan hospitality industry (Norbu & Wetprasisit, 2021). That could help the businesses toward sustainability and improve performance (Lorincová et al., 2019; Vlacseková & Mura, 2017).

Critical work factors indirectly impact employee job satisfaction through the mediation role of the employee work motivation:

The mediate role of MOV has confirmed in the relationship of CWFs  $\Rightarrow$  MOV  $\Rightarrow$  JSA. The results in Table 3 confirm that all four minor hypotheses of this cluster are supported (all  $p\text{-values}$  less than 0.05). Importantly, this empirical research has not supported the direct effect of the promotion opportunities on the work satisfaction of the young Vietnamese employees. Overall, the findings of this study showed that when CWFs are considered as a whole, the positive correlation among work factors impacts employee motivation and satisfaction gets more remarkable improvement. In line with that, the mediation role of work motivation has been concerned. A similar exciting finding was also shown in examining the performance of human resource management, such as organizational commitment (Marta et al., 2021). Meanwhile, work design was not positively directly related to human resource performance, but it has an indirect contribution by the mediating role of work motivation (Al-Musadieq et al., 2018).

These study findings are in line with other research in this regard. Expectations related to employee motivation and satisfaction will grow remarkably if they have careful attention to CWFs (Marta et al., 2021; Pancasila et al., 2020). Unfortunately, some studies successfully identified several influential factors of organization, but the mediation position of motivation was not mentioned in these studies (Nguyen et al., 2021; Pancasila et al., 2020; Pang & Lu, 2018). Moreover, they only measured the direct effect of work motivation on job satisfaction and have not yet measured the indirect effect of motivational factors between CWFs and other final variables, such as firm performance (Pang & Lu, 2018); mid-manager performance (Nguyen et al., 2021). Regarding this topic, this study also pointed out some differences compared to studies conducted under emerging economies context. Specifically, regarding a few studies in Pakistan (Rasheed et al., 2016); Indonesia (Marta et al., 2021; Pancasila et al., 2020); or Bhutan (Norbu & Wetprasisit, 2021), which are concerned with various work factors and identified the most influential factors compared to our paper.

Furthermore, different national contexts, selected industries as well as interviewees were the reasons to point out the various findings (Hitka et al., 2021; Norbu & Wetprasisit, 2021). Hence, this study researched young workers with a lack of work experience, which often struggles with low-income beginning in their job. Importantly, this study suggests that managers in Vietnam need to pay more

attention to improving salaries for young workers. Besides, another essential work factor should be concerned as young Vietnamese workers aspire to be promoted, which substantially impacts their motivation and satisfaction.

## 5. Conclusion and Limitations

Work motivation and Job satisfaction are widely globally researched factors for the organization's success to obtain business sustainability. This paper focuses on the relation and examines the effect of the critical work factors on two dependent constructs as work motivation, job satisfaction. Particularly considering the mediation role of motivation between those factors. Consequently, the results contributed to systematizing, fulfillment, and enriching human resource management theories. Firstly, based on the research framework model and findings of this empirical research, four essential work factors for young Vietnamese employees have been identified: work environment, employee empowerment, salary, and promotion opportunities. Second, the structural model has assessed that these factors, directly and indirectly, affect work motivation and job satisfaction. Finally, these findings suggest that Vietnamese firms consider those four CWFs as excellent tools to improve employee motivation and satisfaction at work.

Further, the Work motivation construct plays a mediating role in the proposed research model. This empirical research shows that enterprises in Vietnam are fully motivated to pursue human resource management goals by focusing on improving these four CWFs. They are moreover enhancing the various organization's performances by concentrating on those suggested work factors.

This paper is the first empirical study that focuses on young employees, who are the most major workforces in an emerging country like Vietnam. Hence, there are certain limitations in this article, which provide some suggestions for future studies. First, based on an approach that systematically examines theoretical frameworks from previous studies in this regard, this document focuses on only four vital work factors. Thereby, to fill the gaps of this implementation, other critical elements could be considered in future studies, such as organizational culture or leadership. Second, this study focuses only on young workers in Vietnamese companies. Hence, the test results of this research may only be suitable for organizations with a high proportion of young workers. Third, this article has not considered the moderating effect of the respondent's information, such as the effect of the job sector, education, gender, and work contexts in this proposed model. Finally, there is a restriction regarding sample size. Due to time and resource constraints, this study was only tested on a survey size of 216 samples. Thus, the research conclusions may not generalize to the whole young

Vietnamese employees. Therefore, in future studies are carried out, other scholars should consider this topic with extensive sample size.

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