THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE SPIRIT ON JOB SATISFACTION OF UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN VIETNAM

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Abstract: ***This article aims to examine the impact of workplace spirit (WS) on the job satisfaction (JS) of lecturers at universities in Vietnam. The study employs quantitative research methods. Initially, a survey was distributed to 10 lecturers to refine the questionnaire. Subsequently, a large-scale survey was conducted, distributing 350 questionnaires to lecturers at public universities in Vietnam, resulting in the collection of 294 responses. After data classification and cleaning, 287 valid questionnaires were retained for official data analysis. The collected data were processed using Smart PLS4 software, employing the partial least squares structural equation modelling technique to assess the impact of factors related to workplace spirit on lecturers' job satisfaction. The results indicate that workplace spirit, encompassing a sense of community within a group, alignment between organisational and individual values, a sense of contribution to the community, enjoyment of work, and opportunities for personal growth, positively influences lecturers' job satisfaction. Finally, several recommendations are discussed to enhance workplace spirit, increase job satisfaction, and thereby improve the work efficiency of lecturers at universities in Vietnam.***

• Keywords: *job satisfaction, lecturer, workplace spirit.*

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1. Introduction

A positive working spirit supports lecturers' professional development, commitment, and enhances education quality (Dinham and Scott, 1998). When satisfied with their work, lecturers tend to be dedicated, innovate teaching methods, and stay longer, thereby improving training quality. Thus, alongside infrastructure, learning materials, and services, developing the teaching workforce is essential for universities to enhance quality and competitiveness. However, teaching is demanding and involves many pressures, leading to psychological issues such as exhaustion, anxiety, and fatigue. Lecturers must continuously improve their qualifications and serve as moral role models for students. A decline in working spirit can cause boredom and reduced passion for teaching, research, or community service. V. Parmar et al. (2022) show that burnout, especially exhaustion and reduced professional efficacy, is positively related to turnover intention, while organizational commitment and subjective vitality can reduce this likelihood. Globally, many studies have examined the influence of workplace spirit on job satisfaction, but most focus on stress or other contextual factors such as corporate culture or work environment. Few studies consider the simultaneous influence of workplace spirit factors, and research rarely focuses on lecturers. Most studies are conducted in developed countries, with little attention to developing contexts like Vietnam. Therefore, this study examines the influence of working spirit on lecturers' job satisfaction at Vietnamese universities to provide a reference for educational managers to improve working spirit, increase job satisfaction, and enhance performance.

2. Literature review

2.1. Definitions

Workplace Spirit: Workplace spirit and work ethic have been widely studied. Herzberg et al. (1959) divide work ethic into two factors: motivation (related to personal satisfaction and development, e.g., achievement, recognition, responsibility) and maintenance (related to work environment, e.g., salary, benefits, colleagues). Since the 1990s, work ethic has gained attention as managers sought high employee morale. Definitions vary depending on workers' roles and contexts (Iqbal, 2018). According to K.C. Cash et al. (2000) and D.P. Ashmos et al. (2000), workplace spirit reflects employees' beliefs, motivations, and needs that drive active participation in organisational activities. It develops through meaningful group work, helping employees feel engaged, motivated, and find their work more meaningful. A. Rego et al. (2008) defined workplace spirit with five aspects: sense of community in a group, alignment between

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organisational and individual values, sense of contribution to the community, enjoyment of work, and opportunities for the inner life of the worker.

The definitions of workplace spirit reflect both employee and organisational experiences, showing that the concept has evolved over time. Workplace spirit is multidimensional and complex. In this study, it is approached following A. Rego et al. (2008) through five aspects:

- Sense of community in a group: Formed when individuals feel emotionally and professionally connected to others at the group level.

- Congruence between organisational and individual values: Exists when employees' personal principles align with organisational standards, fostering a sense of connection.

- Sense of contribution to the community: Involves shared responsibility, commitment, and connection among individuals.

- Feeling of enjoyment at work: Relates to joy and happiness, making work more meaningful.

- Opportunities for employees' inner lives: Employees can express their abilities, personalities, and emotions at work (Belwalkar et al., 2018; Duchon et al., 2005).

Job Satisfaction: Hoppock (1935) introduced job satisfaction as a holistic concept, suggesting it can be measured by employees' overall evaluation of their jobs. Spector (1997) notes that job satisfaction can be assessed generally or by individual job components, with the latter helping organisations identify areas for improvement. Brayfield and Rothe (1951) highlight that satisfaction varies among individuals based on interest in the work or profession. For this study, job satisfaction is measured at the general level, reflecting employees' sense that their efforts are worthwhile and assessing satisfaction through work effort and achievements.

2.2. Theory

The author uses two key theories. First, Herzberg et al.'s (1959) Two-Factor Theory categorises job satisfaction factors into hygiene factors: external aspects like salary, job stability, policies, working conditions, and relationships that prevent dissatisfaction and motivating factors, such as responsibility, recognition, achievement, and growth opportunities, which enhance satisfaction and motivation. Second, Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Theory argues that job satisfaction depends on job features and their alignment with employee needs. Five characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, with meaningful work and autonomy strongly boosting morale and positive attitudes.

2.3. The impact of workplace spirit and job satisfaction

According to Karakas (2010) and Pradhan & Jena (2015), workplace spirit helps employees find meaning and build moral relationships aligned with organisational values, positively influencing job satisfaction. A strong work spirit reduces stress and enhances comfort, satisfaction, and efficiency (Shirom et al., 2008). Studies such as Milliman et al. (2003) and Pawar (2009) show its direct impact on satisfaction, commitment, and performance. Specific elements like teamwork, trust, creativity, and respect (Daniel, 2010; Raziq et al., 2014), as well as compassion and meaningful work (Petchsawang & McLean, 2017), further enhance satisfaction. Overall, research confirms the positive link between workplace spirit and job satisfaction (Sony & Karingada, 2018; Garg, 2018), forming the basis for five proposed hypotheses on their relationship.

H1: Sense of community in a group positively affects job satisfaction.

H2: Alignment between organisational values and personal values positively affects job satisfaction.

H3: Sense of contribution to the community positively affects job satisfaction.

H4: Enjoyment of work positively affects job satisfaction.

H5: Opportunities for inner life positively affect job satisfaction.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Research design

The author employed quantitative methods for this study, proposing five research hypotheses on the influence of workplace spirit factors on lecturers' work outcomes. Data were collected via a survey of lecturers at public universities in Vietnam using convenience sampling, facilitated by the author's professional network. The survey was conducted in two phases: a pilot survey with 10 lecturers to refine the questionnaire, followed by a large-scale survey distributed via paper forms and Google Forms.

According to Hair et al. (2017), the minimum sample size for PLS-SEM is 10 times the number of indicators per latent variable. With 23 items across five independent variables and one dependent variable, at least 230 responses were required. The author distributed 350 questionnaires and received 294 responses (84% response rate). After data cleaning,

287 valid forms remained for analysis, exceeding the minimum required. Forms with excessive blanks or unreliable answers were removed, and the cleaned data were deemed reliable for analysis.

3.2. Measurement

Workplace spirit: To measure workplace spirit, respondents were asked to respond to items on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 5 indicating strong agreement. The questions are based on Rego & Pina E Cunha (2008) and have been adjusted in wording to suit lecturers and the context of universities in Vietnam.

Job satisfaction: The job satisfaction scale by R. Shravasti & Bhola (2015) has been evaluated for reliability through the research of Judge et al. (2000). The scale utilises six statements (indicators) to evaluate job satisfaction levels and is widely used in research. Since this study does not measure job satisfaction from distinct perspectives, the shortened version of the R. Shravasti & Bhola (2015) scale was selected and adjusted accordingly.

3.3. Research Sample

The author distributed 350 questionnaires and received 294 responses, resulting in an 84% response rate. However, during the classification of survey forms and data cleaning prior to analysis, only 287 valid questionnaires remained for official data analysis, as 7 forms were excluded due to excessive missing responses. Survey forms with too many unanswered questions and unreliable responses were excluded before data analysis.

The sample reflects the current landscape of Vietnamese universities. Lecturers form the majority, with 226 individuals (over 75%), mainly from public institutions (over 90%) a reasonable outcome given their dominance in the system. Most respondents (85%) hold doctoral or master's degrees, driven by Ministry regulations and institutional requirements. Only about 10% are associate professors and 5% professors. Half have 10-20 years of experience, and nearly 75% have over 10 years. Female respondents outnumber males, consistent with cultural and occupational trends. Age aligns with experience and qualifications, with 70% aged 40 or older and most between 40 and 50.

4. Research Results

4.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

Evaluation of internal consistency reliability: The results of the measurement model analysis are presented in Table 4. Indicators for internal consistency reliability were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) of latent constructs, all of which are greater than 0.7. Thus, the measurement model meets the requirements for internal consistency reliability (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 1. Results of some indicators of the measurement model

Structure	Indicators	Indicator loadings	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	"R-squared coefficient." Rsquare	External VIF (Variance Inflation Factor)
WS1	WS11	0.828	0,820	0,875	0,585		2.038
	WS12	0.769					1.779
	WS13	0.803					1.798
	WS14	0.771					1.699
	WS15	0.639					1.251
WS2	WS21	0.689	0.816	0.872	0.578		1.362
	WS22	0.812					1.979
	WS23	0.747					1.668
	WS24	0.790					1.826
	WS25	0.757					1.703
WS3	WS31	0.815	0.706	0.834	0.627		1.379
	WS32	0.738					1.347
	WS33	0.822					1.409
WS4	WS41	0.816	0.621	0.839	0.723		1.254
	WS42	0.883					1.254
WS5	WS51	0.762	0.687	0.823	0.700		1.208
	WS52	0.906					1.208
JS	JS1	0.726	0.791	0.851	0.591	0.534	1.508
	JS2	0.786					1.838
	JS3	0.764					1.786
	JS4	0.606					1.306
	JS5	0.665					1.434
	JS6	0.636					1.437

Source: SmartPLS 4 analysis results.

Evaluation of Convergent Validity

The indicators for convergent validity (represented by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of latent constructs) are all greater than 0.5. Specifically, the results from Table 1 show that the values of this indicator range from 0.578 to 0.723, all exceeding 0.5. Additionally, all indicators have loadings greater than 0.600 (with the lowest value being 0.606 > 0.708). Thus, the scales in the model meet the requirements for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

Evaluation of Discriminant Validity

Both Fornell & Larcker (1981) criteria and the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT ratio) method were used to determine the discriminant validity of latent variables (Hair et al., 2019). Table 5 shows that discriminant validity is satisfied when the square root of the AVE for each latent variable is higher than the correlations with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker criteria for evaluating discriminant validity

	JS	WS1	WS2	WS3	WS4	WS5
JS	**0.701**					
WS1	0.552	**0.765**				
WS2	0.597	0.510	**0.760**			
WS3	0.628	0.507	0.599	**0.792**		
WS4	0.560	0.513	0.561	0.617	**0.850**	
WS5	0.578	0.513	0.565	0.586	0.547	**0.837**

Source: SmartPLS 4 analysis results.

Table 6 shows that the HTMT ratio for each construct is below 0.95, which Henseler et al. (2015) consider ideal. Therefore, all six latent constructs in the research model meet the requirements for discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity assessment using HTMT ratio

	JS	WS1	WS2	WS3	WS4	WS5
JS						
WS1	0.684					
WS2	0.734	0.624				
WS3	0.819	0.664	0.787			
WS4	0.778	0.716	0.784	0.925		
WS5	0.814	0.704	0.806	0.872	0.875	

Source: SmartPLS 4 analysis results.

The Bootstrap testing results in Table 7 show that the HTMT ratio in the original sample falls within the 2.5 to 97.5% percentile range with a 95% probability. All HTMT values from 5000 bootstrap samples within the 95% confidence interval are less than 1. For example, the 95% confidence interval for the HTMTWS1 - JS ratio is [0.099; 0.266], which is less than 1. The null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. In other words, all HTMT values are less than 1. Thus, both criteria for evaluating discriminant validity proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981) and the HTMT ratio confirm that the model meets the requirements for discriminant validity.

Table 4. Confidence interval testing for HTMT values

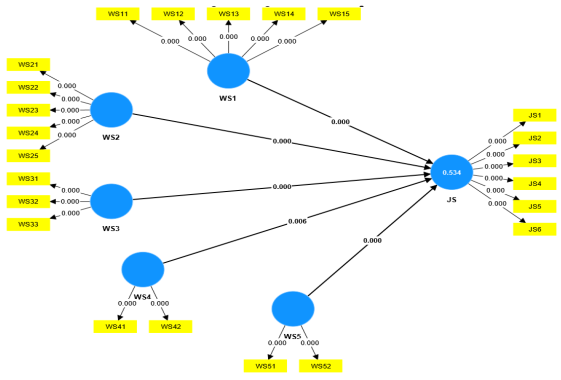
	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Bias	2.5%	97.5%
WS1 -> JS	0.182	0.182	0.001	0.097	0.266
WS2 -> JS	0.199	0.199	0.001	0.113	0.284
WS3 -> JS	0.252	0.253	0.001	0.165	0.338
WS4 -> JS	0.111	0.111	0.000	0.032	0.187
WS5 -> JS	0.164	0.163	-0.002	0.085	0.243

Source: SmartPLS 4 analysis results.

In summary, the measurement scales used in the research model have satisfied reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Therefore, all measurement scales JS, WS1, WS2, WS3, WS4, and WS5 will be used to evaluate the structural model.

4.2. Structural model evaluation results

Fig. 1. Structural equation modelling (SEM)



The results of testing the relationships between latent constructs are presented in Table 7. The structural model was tested using Bootstrap with a resampling size of N = 5,000 to estimate the specific relationships between latent variables. Table 7 shows that the direct relationships between variables are statistically significant, and all research hypotheses are accepted at a 95% confidence interval, as the P-value is less than 0.05. This indicates that all key relationships in the model are confirmed to be statistically significant.

Table 5. Results of estimating direct relationships

	Path Coefficient	Standard Deviation	T-Statistic Value	P-value	Hypothesis	Internal VIF (Variance inflation factor)	f-Square Coefficient
WS1 -> JS	0.182	0.043	4.268	0.000	Supported	1.619	0.044
WS2 -> JS	0.199	0.044	4.491	0.000	Supported	1.908	0.044
WS3 -> JS	0.253	0.045	5.622	0.000	Supported	2.088	0.065
WS4 -> JS	0.111	0.040	2.773	0.006	Supported	1.927	0.014
WS5 -> JS	0.163	0.040	4.069	0.000	Supported	1.861	0.031

Source: SmartPLS 4 analysis results.

Additionally, the signs of the path coefficients reveal that all exogenous factors, including WS1, WS2, WS3, WS4, and WS5, have a positive and statistically significant impact on job satisfaction, with the factors "Fit between organisational values and personal values" and "Sense of contribution to the community" having a more significant impact on job satisfaction compared to other factors, with all P-values being less than 0.05.

Results in Table 8 also show that both the external Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and the internal VIF are less than 2, indicating that no perfect multicollinearity occurs in the structural equation modelling (SEM) (Hair et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the f-square effect size coefficient indicates that most impacts of WS1, WS2, WS3, and WS5 significantly affect lecturers' job satisfaction, with f-square values greater than 0.03, whereas only the impact of WS4 (Job enjoyment) is not significant to job satisfaction, with an f-square value less than 0.015.

Evaluation of the model fit

To assess the explanatory power of the factors included in the model, the coefficient of determination, R-squared, is recommended by statisticians.

Table 6. Evaluation of explanatory power of factors using R-squared

	R-square
Job satisfaction (JS)	0.534

Source: SmartPLS 4 analysis results

The table above shows that 53.4% of the variance in job satisfaction is explained by the five factors

included in the model, with R-squared > 50%. This indicates that the model constructed by the author and the selected factors are highly appropriate and meaningful in explaining the variability in lecturers' job satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The study confirmed all five hypotheses: each aspect of work spirit sense of community, value congruence, contribution, enjoyment, and inner life positively affects lecturers' job satisfaction. These results support established theories, including Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model and Herzberg et al.'s (1959) Two-Factor Theory. Practically, they highlight the need for universities to foster work spirit to enhance satisfaction, performance, and effectiveness. Consistent with prior studies (e.g., Sony & Mekoth, 2019; Garg et al., 2018), the findings emphasize that promoting work spirit reduces stress, boosts motivation, encourages innovation, and strengthens lecturer-student relationships, contributing to sustainable educational development.

6. Recommendations

As universities become more multidisciplinary and competitive, improving lecturers' performance, satisfaction, and commitment is essential. Key measures include:

(1) Strengthening connections within faculties through professional and extracurricular activities;

(2) Aligning lecturers' values with institutional goals via fair pay, supportive culture, and inclusive decision-making;

(3) Enhancing their sense of contribution through community service and external training opportunities;

(4) Reducing work pressure with adequate facilities and recognition; and

(5) Supporting well-being by providing spaces for rest and recovery.

7. Limitations and future research directions

This study only examines the independent variable (work spirit) and the dependent variable (job satisfaction), without including control variables such as institution type, region, or demographics. The absence of control variables may overlook confounding factors, leading to bias and less accurate conclusions. Future studies should add appropriate control variables to increase the validity and reliability of the findings and better explain their effects in context.

8. Conclusion

This study concludes that work spirit positively affects lecturers' job satisfaction. Lecturers who align their values with the university, feel attached to their faculty, enjoy their work, contribute to society, and have their personal values respected tend to be more satisfied, improving work efficiency. This aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which emphasizes fulfilling higher-level needs such as respect and self-realization after basic needs are met (Maslow, 1943). These findings help universities develop strategies to enhance lecturer performance and retention.

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