Motivational influence on positive work attitudes: An exploration among Vietnamese workers

Chinh Thi Minh Ha*, Huong Thi Nguyen** | Hoan Thuy Vu*

*Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam. **University of Labour & Social Affairs, Vietnam. **Ha Noi Metropolitan University, Vietnam.

Abstract This research investigates positive work attitudes among Vietnamese workers, aiming to fill a significant gap in the literature by examining how motivation influences these attitudes. Using a sample from four joint stock companies in Vietnam, the study employed a newly developed questionnaire and the Motivation at Work Scale. The results showed a moderately positive attitude among workers, with intrinsic motivation emerging as the strongest predictor of positive attitudes. Age differences revealed that older workers display greater passion and effort. The study concludes that experience may contribute to deeper work engagement and resilience, underscoring the importance of aligning work with intrinsic interests while also considering the role of extrinsic motivators.

Keywords: positive work attitudes, intrinsic motivation, Vietnamese workers, employee engagement, organizational behavior

1. Introduction

Employees are the backbone of any organization, driving innovation, productivity, and competitiveness. Their skills, motivation, and engagement directly impact a company’s bottom line and its ability to navigate complex market dynamics (Clack, 2021). Recent research has reinforced this notion. Studies have linked employee engagement to enhanced organizational performance, lower turnover rates, and increased customer satisfaction (Khwaja & Yang, 2022; McCarthy et al., 2020; Mittal et al., 2018). Similarly, research has highlighted a positive correlation between engaged employees and improved financial outcomes, suggesting a significant influence on profitability and growth (Kumar & Pansari, 2015). Furthermore, employee adaptability and innovation are crucial assets in today’s rapidly evolving landscape characterized by technological advancements and shifting consumer preferences (Kumar & Pansari, 2014). Their creative contributions are essential for developing new products, services, and processes that ensure a sustainable competitive edge (Kreutzer, 2019). To unlock this innovative potential, organizations should prioritize fostering a supportive culture that encourages open communication, continuous learning, and psychological safety.

Contemporary research substantiates a strong nexus between positive work attitudes and positive organizational outcomes, encompassing both increased productivity and performance, as well as enhanced employee well-being and job satisfaction. Studies show that employees with enthusiasm, commitment, and satisfaction demonstrate greater motivation, loyalty, and a tendency to go beyond their core duties, ultimately driving organizational success (Bolino & Klotz, 2017). This link is further supported by research demonstrating a strong correlation between positive employee attitudes and higher levels of productivity and performance (Krekel et al., 2019). In essence, the psychological well-being of employees significantly impacts their output and efficiency (Haddon, 2018). This positive spillover extends beyond organizational performance. Research suggests that positive work attitudes, fostered by supportive leadership, meaningful work, and a culture of appreciation, significantly enhance employee well-being and job satisfaction (Donaldson et al., 2019; Frémeaux & Pavageau, 2020; Kundi et al., 2021; Sironi, 2019). Positive work environments that emphasize respect, autonomy, and growth opportunities contribute to overall happiness and satisfaction (Clausen et al., 2022; Leslie et al., 2021). Moreover, some studies provide evidence that positive work attitudes act as a mediator between job characteristics and well-being (Brokmeier et al., 2022). In other words, how employees perceive their work environment and their role within it plays a crucial role in their overall job satisfaction and mental health (Cao et al., 2022).

Positive work attitudes encompass a broad spectrum of employee emotions, behaviors, and mindsets that contribute to a productive and positive workplace (Bourgault & Goforth, 2021). These attitudes reflect employees’ positive evaluations of their jobs and work environments, characterized by dimensions such as job satisfaction, engagement, and organizational commitment (Čulibrk et al., 2018). Research suggests that positive work attitudes are essential for enhancing job performance, reducing work-related stress, and fostering a collaborative and harmonious work environment (Bourgault & Goforth, 2021; Kundi et al., 2021). Positive work attitudes go beyond mere satisfaction. They encompass a wellspring of
optimism, motivation, enthusiasm, and a sense of purpose (Hanssen et al., 2015). Employees with these positive outlooks are more likely to tackle challenges proactively, bounce back from setbacks with resilience, and contribute to a positive team environment (Caniëls et al., 2018; Peeters et al., 2022; Salcicinovic et al., 2022). The benefits of fostering such positive attitudes are vast, leading to a happier, more productive workforce with lower turnover.

This study aims to address two key areas. First, it seeks to fill a critical gap in research by exploring positive work attitudes among Vietnamese workers, a topic understudied in the literature. Second, the study investigates how various motivational factors influence these attitudes. By identifying key predictors that contribute to a more positive and engaged Vietnamese workforce, this exploration becomes crucial for developing effective strategies to cultivate workplace positivity and employee motivation within the Vietnamese context.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Participants

A convenience sampling approach was employed to recruit participants. Workers from four joint stock companies in Vietnam were invited to participate, with 318 individuals consenting to the study (91 from Lilama 69-1 (28.6%), 69 from Dang Gia (21.7%), 83 from May Duc Giang (26.1%), and 75 from 26-8QP Joint Stock Company (23.6%). The sample included 151 females (47.5%) and 167 males (52.5%). Regarding age distribution, 89 participants (28.0%) were aged 18-25 years, 166 (52.2%) were aged 25-35 years, and 63 (19.8%) were aged older than 35 years.

2.2. Measurement

To assess positive work attitudes among Vietnamese workers, a new questionnaire was developed. It comprises four subscales: proactive work (α = 0.763), passion for work (α = 0.806), creativity at work (α = 0.761), and effort to overcome difficulties (α = 0.766). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Definitely untrue") to 5 ("Definitely true"). The Cronbach’s α values (ranging from 0.763 to 0.806) indicate good internal consistency of the questionnaire.

The Motivation at Work Scale (MAWS), developed by Gagné et al. (2010), measures work motivation across a continuum. It includes four subscales: intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, and external regulation. Workers rate their agreement with statements reflecting these types of motivation on a scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("exactly"). The original scale demonstrated good internal consistency, with reliability coefficients of 0.89, 0.83, 0.75, and 0.69 for the respective subscales.

A rigorous forward and back translation process was employed to ensure the cultural and linguistic equivalence of the Vietnamese questionnaire. Initially, a bilingual expert translated the English version into Vietnamese. Subsequently, a different bilingual expert, unaware of the original English version, translated the Vietnamese questionnaire back into English. Finally, the research team collaborated to compare the translations, resolve any discrepancies, and adapt the questionnaire to the specific cultural context of the study.

2.3. Data analysis

Malhotra et al. (2017) argued that a scale's origin and units are arbitrary and that positive linear transformations (y = a + bx) do not change its properties. This has implications for extending the coding of scale items during analysis.

+ Original scale: 1 (a little of the time) to 5 (most of the time)
+ Extension: Difference between highest and lowest values (5 - 1 = 4)
+ Unit length ('b'): 4/5 = 0.80 (increment between transformed values)

To determine the upper limits of the transformed categories, "y = a + bx" was used with 'a' = 1 and 'b' = 0.80. Applying this, we obtain:

+ 1.00 – 1.80 = Definitely untrue/Not at all
+ 1.81 – 2.60 = Untrue/A little
+ 2.61 – 3.40 = Neither/Moderately
+ 3.41 – 4.20 = True/Strongly
+ 4.21 – 5.00 = Definitely true/Exactly

Following data collection, the dataset was coded and cleaned in Microsoft Excel to remove errors. Subsequently, the data were imported into SPSS version 20 for analysis. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s α. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, and one-way ANOVA with pairwise comparisons was conducted for group differences. Pearson’s correlation and linear regression analyses explored the relationships between positive attitudes at work and worker motivations.

3. Results
Descriptive statistics revealed an average score of 3.46 (SD = 0.47) on the Positive Attitudes at Work Scale, indicating that workers generally held somewhat positive attitudes. Proactivity Work was the factor with the highest mean score (M = 3.60, SD = 0.42), followed by Effort to Overcome Difficulties (M = 3.58, SD = 0.45), Passion for Work (M = 3.56, SD = 0.41), and Creativity at Work (M = 3.09, SD = 0.59). Table 1 summarizes the mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach’s alpha for the Positive Attitudes at Work Scale.

Table 1 Workers’ Positive Attitudes at Work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Work</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion for Work</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity at Work</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort to Overcome Difficulties</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: M. Mean; SD. Standard deviation; α. Cronbach’s α

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed significant age group differences in Passion for Work (p < 0.01) and Effort to Overcome Difficulties (p < 0.01). Workers over 35 years of age had higher average scores on both subscales—Passion for Work (M = 3.73, SD = 0.39) and Effort to Overcome Difficulties (M = 3.67, SD = 0.42)—than did those aged 25-35 (M = 3.52, SD = 0.40; M = 3.61, SD = 0.42, respectively) or 18-25 years (M = 3.52, SD = 0.41; M = 3.46, SD = 0.50, respectively). Interestingly, the ANOVA also indicated a significant overall difference in positive attitudes at work across age groups (p < 0.05). Consistent with the subscale findings, the over 35 years old age group had the highest average score (M = 3.54, SD = 0.33), followed by the 25-35 (M = 3.43, SD = 0.35) and 18-25 years old age groups (M = 3.37, SD = 0.38). Table 2 shows the detailed ANOVA comparisons between age groups.

Table 2 ANOVA between age groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18-25 years old</th>
<th>25-35 years old</th>
<th>&gt; 35 years old</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M±SD</td>
<td>M±SD</td>
<td>M±SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive Work</td>
<td>3.57±0.46</td>
<td>3.60±0.41</td>
<td>3.64±0.38</td>
<td>&gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion for Work</td>
<td>3.52±0.41</td>
<td>3.52±0.40</td>
<td>3.73±0.39</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity at Work</td>
<td>3.03±0.56</td>
<td>3.10±0.59</td>
<td>3.15±0.64</td>
<td>&gt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort to Overcome Difficulties</td>
<td>3.46±0.50</td>
<td>3.61±0.42</td>
<td>3.67±0.42</td>
<td>&lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.37±0.38</td>
<td>3.43±0.35</td>
<td>3.54±0.33</td>
<td>&lt; 0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: M. Mean; SD. Standard deviation; p. p value of ANOVA.

Pearson’s correlation analysis revealed a strong positive association between positive attitudes at work and intrinsic motivation (r = 0.624, p < 0.001). Moderate positive associations were found with introjected regulation (r = 0.574, p < 0.001) and identified regulation (r = 0.479, p < 0.001). Finally, a weak positive association emerged with external regulation (r = 0.353, p < 0.001). Table 3 shows the Pearson’s correlation coefficients.

Table 3 Correlation between Positive Attitudes and Motivation at Work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Attitudes at Work</th>
<th>Intrinsic Motivation</th>
<th>Identified Regulation</th>
<th>Introjected Regulation</th>
<th>External Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitudes at Work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.479</td>
<td>0.574</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified Regulation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.465</td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introjected Regulation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Regulation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ***. The correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed); **. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to explore whether motivational factors significantly predicted positive work attitudes. The results revealed that intrinsic motivation (β = 0.400, p < 0.001) was the strongest significant predictor of positive attitudes at work. Introjected regulation (β = 0.305, p < 0.001) and external regulation (β = 0.137, p = 0.001) were also found to be significant predictors.

Table 4 Regression model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>β</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1.174</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>10.887</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Motivation</td>
<td>0.265</td>
<td>0.027</td>
<td>9.662</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introjected Regulation</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>7.219</td>
<td>&lt; 0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Regulation</td>
<td>0.065</td>
<td>0.019</td>
<td>3.350</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dependent Variable: Positive Attitudes at Work.
4. Discussion

This study investigated positive work attitudes among Vietnamese workers from joint-stock companies. The findings revealed that workers generally possessed somewhat positive attitudes. Interestingly, the over 35 age group displayed significantly higher scores on the Passion for Work and Effort to Overcome Difficulties subscale, as well as the overall Positive Attitudes at Work scale. The study also identified a positive association between positive attitudes and motivational factors. However, only intrinsic motivation, introjected regulation, and external regulation emerged as significant predictors of positive attitudes at work.

The average score of 3.46 on the Positive Attitudes at Work scale, reflecting moderately positive attitudes among workers, suggests a baseline of positive psychological capital within the organizational setting. This finding aligns with key principles from positive organizational behavior (POB), which underscore the role of positive psychological attributes in fostering workplace well-being and productivity (Choudhary & Kunte, 2023; Donaldson et al., 2019). Although the score indicates a generally positive disposition, the room for improvement highlights an opportunity for organizations to further enhance their work environments, potentially leading to even higher levels of employee satisfaction and organizational performance (van der Voordt & Jensen, 2023). This result aligns with that of Luthans et al. (2007), who argue that higher levels of psychological capital are predictive of better work attitudes, behaviors, and performance, resonating with the somewhat positive attitudes observed in this study (Miao et al., 2021; Pan et al., 2018). The moderately positive attitudes suggest that employees possess a degree of the psychological resources necessary for success and well-being at work. However, the proximity of the score to the midpoint also suggests that many employees may not be fully engaged or realize their potential in terms of job satisfaction and productivity (Sypniewska et al., 2023).

The ANOVA results, revealing significant age group differences in Passion for Work, Effort to Overcome Difficulties, and overall Positive Attitudes at Work, add an intriguing layer to understanding workplace dynamics. These findings echo and expand upon existing research on age and work attitudes, suggesting that age is a potentially important factor in how employees engage with work and approach challenges. Interestingly, workers over 35 years of age had higher scores on the Passion for Work and Effort to Overcome Difficulties subscale than younger workers. This aligns with the notion that age can be associated with deeper work engagement and resilience (Scheibe & Moghim, 2021). These findings support theories suggesting that older workers benefit from accumulated experience, potentially leading to a stronger passion for their work and enhanced abilities to overcome challenges (Taneva et al., 2016). Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) theory of adult age differences in work motivation strengthens this perspective by proposing that older workers tend to develop more stable work values and stronger emotional regulation skills, potentially explaining their higher scores in these areas (Scheibe & Moghim, 2021; Vasconcelos, 2018). Building upon the findings regarding passion and effort, the significant overall difference in positive attitudes at work across age groups further underscores the role of age in shaping workplace attitudes. This result aligns with research by Ng and Feldman (2010), who found that older employees often exhibit more positive work attitudes, including job satisfaction and organizational commitment, than their younger counterparts. The current findings suggest that these positive attitudes extend to broader domains such as passion for work and effort, highlighting the potential for older workers to contribute positively to organizational culture and performance (Pfrombeck et al., 2024; Toth et al., 2021).

The multiple regression analysis results shed light on the mechanisms influencing positive work attitudes. Intrinsic motivation, introjected regulation, and external regulation all emerged as significant predictors. This finding aligns with self-determination theory, a prominent framework in motivational psychology, suggesting that various motivational forces can influence employee attitudes (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The finding that intrinsic motivation emerged as the strongest predictor aligns perfectly with the core principles of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Self-determination theory posits that motivation stemming from genuine interest or enjoyment in the task itself fosters higher quality engagement and satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000). As Deci and Ryan (2000) suggest, intrinsic motivation correlates with greater well-being and is considered the most autonomous form of motivation. This emphasizes the importance of designing job roles and organizational environments that offer inherently interesting and fulfilling tasks, enabling a natural synergy between individual interests and work activities (Meinhardt et al., 2018; Shemshack & Spector, 2020). The significant role of introjected regulation adds complexity to our understanding of how various motivations influence employee perceptions and behaviors. Unlike intrinsic motivation, introjected regulation stems from internalized pressures, such as guilt or maintaining self-esteem, rather than inherent task enjoyment (Howard et al., 2020). However, its positive association with positive work attitudes suggests that some internal pressures can be beneficial. Introjected regulation might foster a sense of responsibility or commitment to work, ultimately contributing to positive attitudes. The significant influence of even external regulation, the most extrinsic form of motivation in SDT where actions are driven by rewards or punishment avoidance, adds another layer of complexity (Ryan & Deci, 2020). This might seem surprising given the emphasis on intrinsic motivation. However, it reflects the workplace reality: not all tasks can be inherently interesting. External incentives can play a crucial role in motivating employees to complete these necessary tasks (Elrayah & Semlali, 2023). This finding underscores the need for well-designed external motivators that effectively complement, rather than undermine, intrinsic motivation.

5. Final Consideration
This study explored positive work attitudes among Vietnamese workers from joint-stock companies. While a baseline positive psychological capital score was found (average score of 3.46 on the Positive Attitudes at Work Scale), significant variations emerged across age groups and motivational factors. Interestingly, workers over 35 years of age displayed greater passion for work and a stronger ability to overcome challenges, suggesting that experience may contribute to deeper work engagement and resilience. Furthermore, the investigation of motivational factors revealed a nuanced picture. Intrinsic motivation emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the importance of aligning work with employees’ inherent interests. However, the significance of introjected and external regulation suggests that a spectrum of motivational influences, from internal pressures to external rewards, can contribute to positive work attitudes. These findings offer valuable insights for organizations to cultivate a work environment that fosters intrinsic motivation while strategically incorporating well-designed extrinsic motivators to enhance employee engagement and well-being.

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Ethical considerations

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Declaration of Helsinki and the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association (APA) regarding research involving human participants. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Conflict of Interest

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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References


