

## What fuels their passion? Exploring work motivation among physical education lecturers in Vietnam

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### Abstract

This study examines the key factors influencing work motivation among physical education lecturers at universities in Ho Chi Minh City, drawing on Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1980) and organizational justice theory. While previous research has largely focused on core job characteristics such as task significance, autonomy, and feedback, this study broadens the perspective by considering multiple dimensions of perceived fairness within the academic environment. Using a structured quantitative approach, data were collected via self-administered questionnaires distributed to physical education lecturers across multiple higher education institutions. The analysis reveals that perceived fairness significantly influences motivation beyond the traditional job characteristics model. Specifically, lecturers' perceptions of justice from direct supervisors, fair treatment by students, and distributive justice regarding income and rewards play a pivotal role. Furthermore, the study identifies significant variations in work motivation based on gender and levels of professional seniority. These insights contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of motivational dynamics within higher education, particularly in the context of physical education instruction.

**Keywords:** Work motivation, Lecturers, Physical Education, Justice

### Introduction

In the field of higher education, lecturer motivation is widely recognized as a key determinant of teaching quality, institutional engagement, and student learning outcomes (Watt, H. M., & Richardson, P. W., 2020). Among various academic disciplines, physical education (PE) holds a distinct position due to its emphasis on both cognitive and physical development (Baena-Morales, S., & González-Víllora, S., 2023). Physical education lecturers not only deliver theoretical knowledge but also play a vital role in promoting physical literacy, health, and discipline among students (Cereda, F., 2023; Umar, Y. O., & Mardesia, P., 2023). In the Vietnamese context, where educational reforms are increasingly prioritizing innovation, quality assurance, and human capital development, understanding the motivational dynamics of PE lecturers has become an urgent and timely research concern (Vu, N. N., & Lien, N. T. H., 2021).

Vietnam's higher education system has undergone rapid transformation over the past two decades, driven by the forces of globalization, labor market demands, and national education policy reforms (Tri, N. M., Hoang, P. D., & Dung, N. T., 2021). However, challenges persist in ensuring equity, recognition, and career progression opportunities for educators, particularly those in physically demanding and often underappreciated fields like physical education (O'Sullivan, M., 2021). Despite being essential to holistic student development, physical education remains marginalized in many universities, with lecturers frequently facing limited institutional support, low societal appreciation, and constrained pathways for professional growth. These issues collectively impact their work motivation and job satisfaction (Couto, C. J., Motlhaolwa, L. C., & Williams, K., 2024). Motivation theories such as Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1980) and the theory of organizational justice offer robust conceptual foundations for analyzing the factors that influence lecturers' motivation. The former focuses on intrinsic elements of job design, such as skill variety, autonomy, and task significance, while the latter emphasizes fairness in organizational processes and outcomes (Kim, M. et al, 2021). In the Vietnamese academic context, however, it is important to move beyond generalized models and consider specific cultural, institutional, and professional variables that shape faculty experiences and perceptions (Nguyen, H. T., & Tran, V. T., 2023).

This study proposes a comprehensive model that integrates job characteristics with various dimensions of perceived organizational justice to examine their combined impact on the work motivation of physical education lecturers across Vietnamese universities. The model includes fairness in income distribution, recognition, promotion opportunities, peer relationships, leadership behavior, student attitudes, and societal

valuation of the teaching profession. These dimensions are analyzed not only for their individual effects but also for how they interact with key demographic and institutional variables such as gender, age, years of service, academic position, and type of university (public or private).

By situating the investigation within Vietnam's evolving educational landscape and focusing on a traditionally overlooked academic discipline, this study seeks to fill a critical gap in the literature. It offers empirical insights that can inform policy-making, institutional management, and strategic interventions aimed at enhancing lecturer motivation, ultimately contributing to the development of a more equitable and effective higher education system in Vietnam. To achieve this, the researchers will address the following research questions: *Perceived fairness in income distribution, Perceived fairness in recognition, Perceived fairness in promotion opportunities, Perceived justice in relationships with colleagues, Perceived justice from direct leadership, Perceived fairness in student attitudes and evaluations, Perceived societal fairness in the appraisal of the teaching profession.*

This study adopted a **quantitative survey design** supported by qualitative validation to explore factors influencing the work motivation of Physical Education (PE) lecturers at Vietnamese universities. Drawing on **Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model** (1980) and the **theory of organizational justice**, the research examined both intrinsic job features and perceptions of fairness. The study was implemented through a **four-phase process**—qualitative exploration, pilot testing, formal quantitative analysis, and supplementary qualitative validation—to ensure methodological rigor, instrument reliability, and clarity of interpretation.

This paper is structured as follows. Section Material & methods reviews current discourse in the areas of work motivation in case of physical education lecturers, details the adopted research model and research method, whilst section result presents survey results from the primary data collection. Section discussion presents and discusses the key theoretical and practical implications of the research, and Section limitation concludes by highlighting avenues for future studies, alongside some of the limitations of the study.

## Material & methods

### Research Model

Hackman and Oldham's (1980) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) posits that five core job dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—directly influence psychological states that lead to intrinsic motivation. This model has been extensively validated in diverse professional contexts, including education (Loher et al., 1985; Fried & Ferris, 1987). In the academic setting, when lecturers perceive their work as meaningful and autonomous, they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and engaged in teaching (Ambrose et al., 2005).

*H1: Job characteristics are positively associated with the work motivation of physical education lecturers in Vietnamese universities.*

Distributive justice, referring to the perceived fairness of outcomes such as salary, significantly impacts employee satisfaction and motivation (Adams, 1965; Colquitt et al., 2001). When lecturers perceive income distribution as equitable relative to their peers, they are more motivated and committed to their roles (Greenberg, 1990). Studies in Vietnam have similarly shown income-based disparities to be a major concern in higher education (Nguyen & Pham, 2016).

*H2: Perceived fairness in income distribution is positively associated with the work motivation of physical education lecturers.*

The fairness of recognition systems—how well an institution acknowledges an individual's contributions, plays a critical role in reinforcing motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Lecturers who receive consistent recognition for teaching achievements and research efforts are more likely to feel valued and driven (Gao & Smyth, 2010). Recognition also enhances lecturers' perception of procedural justice, which in turn fosters motivation (Niehoff & Moorman, 1993).

*H3: Perceived fairness in recognition significantly contributes to work motivation among physical education lecturers.*

Promotional justice pertains to fair and transparent career advancement opportunities. When promotion is based on merit and clear criteria, it strengthens motivation and reduces turnover intentions (Cropanzano & Wright, 2001). In academic settings, unclear or biased promotion processes can demotivate educators and hinder long-term commitment (Mustafa et al., 2020).

*H4: Perceived fairness in promotion opportunities is positively related to work motivation of physical education lecturers.*

The quality of peer relationships can significantly shape one's motivation in academia. Collegial justice reflects fairness, cooperation, and mutual respect among colleagues (Winter & Sarros, 2002). Healthy collegial relationships promote collaboration, reduce workplace stress, and improve job satisfaction (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

*H5: Perceived justice in relationships with colleagues is positively associated with work motivation.*

The fairness of leadership behavior—particularly from direct supervisors—can either enhance or suppress motivation (Greenberg, 1987). Leaders who demonstrate respect, transparency, and impartiality foster

psychological safety and increased commitment (Colquitt et al., 2013). Within Vietnamese universities, leadership fairness is particularly crucial given the top-down administrative culture (Pham, 2018).

*H6: Perceived justice from direct leadership is positively related to the work motivation of physical education lecturers.*

Student behavior and attitudes towards lecturers also contribute to perceived workplace fairness. Positive feedback and respectful interactions enhance morale and perceived efficacy (Green et al., 2013). When students fairly evaluate their teachers, especially in physical education where practical engagement is key, lecturers feel more motivated to improve their pedagogy.

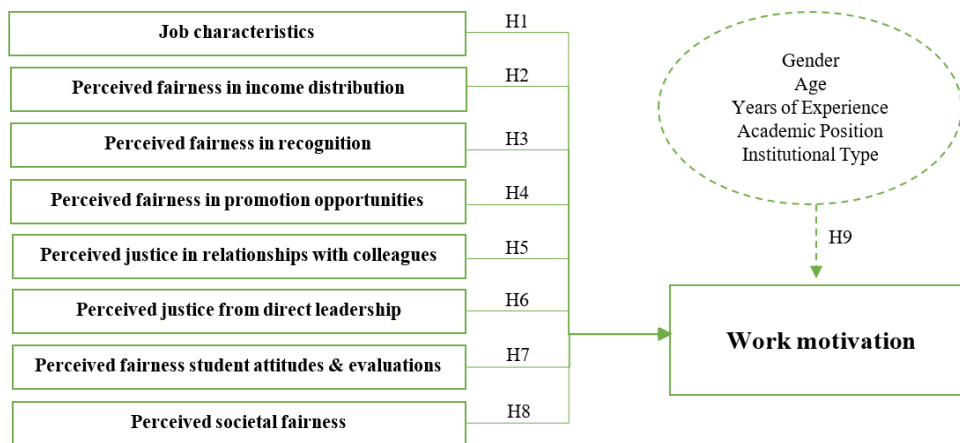
*H7: Perceived fairness in student attitudes and evaluations is positively associated with lecturers' work motivation.*

In many countries, including Vietnam, the societal perception of the teaching profession influences educators' morale and motivation (Nguyen, 2019). Fair societal appreciation, expressed through media, policy, and cultural discourse, plays a pivotal role in reinforcing educators' sense of purpose and professional identity (Day & Gu, 2007).

*H8: Perceived societal fairness in the appraisal of the teaching profession is positively associated with work motivation.*

Previous studies highlight that motivational drivers may differ by gender, age, job seniority, academic rank, and type of institution (Herzberg et al., 1959; Mustafa et al., 2020). For instance, younger faculty may prioritize promotion and income, while older faculty might value recognition and peer relationships more. Understanding these demographic effects is essential for crafting targeted HR strategies.

*H9: Gender, age, years of experience, academic position, and institutional type significantly control work motivation.*



**Figure1. The proposed research framework.**

#### *Research Instruments*

This study employed a mixed-method research design that primarily utilized a structured quantitative survey to examine the factors influencing the work motivation of physical education (PE) lecturers at Vietnamese universities. The research model integrated Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1980) with the theory of organizational justice, allowing for a multidimensional analysis that captured both intrinsic job characteristics and extrinsic fairness perceptions. To ensure methodological rigor and scientific validity, the research followed a four-phase sequential procedure, including (1) an initial qualitative exploration, (2) a preliminary quantitative pilot study, (3) a formal quantitative investigation, and (4) a supplementary qualitative validation phase. This systematic approach ensured the applicability of the theoretical framework, the reliability of measurement scales and research instruments, and the clarity, objectivity, and robustness of the study's findings.

The results of the initial qualitative exploration indicated that Equity Theory was appropriate for examining the effects of different dimensions of organizational justice on lecturers' work motivation. This phase also revealed how lecturers perceived fairness-related issues within their institutions and how those perceptions influenced their motivation at work. Participants' perceptions of organizational justice were found to be relatively consistent across different groups. During this stage, the researcher also conducted a pilot assessment of the wording and semantics of the questionnaire to ensure clarity and contextual accuracy for the subsequent quantitative phase. The initial instrument was reviewed by eight Physical Education lecturers from different universities, who were invited to evaluate and provide feedback on the clarity, accuracy, and wording of each item. This expert review aimed to ensure that all questions were free from ambiguity and clearly conveyed their intended meaning. Based on their comments and recommendations, the wording and phrasing of several items were revised to improve precision, eliminate potential misunderstandings, and enhance the overall clarity of the instrument.

The preliminary quantitative study, conducted through a pilot survey. The revised questionnaire was then distributed to a group of 50 Physical Education lecturers through both face-to-face and online formats to conduct a pilot test assessing the reliability of the measurement scales. The purpose of this stage was to evaluate the internal consistency of the items and identify potential issues in wording, structure, or response patterns. The results of the pilot test were analyzed to confirm the reliability of the scales and to make necessary refinements before proceeding to the large-scale survey.

The formal quantitative phase was conducted directly with the target population of Physical Education lecturers. Drawing on insights from the pilot study, the finalized questionnaire was administered to a large-scale sample of 500 lecturers from universities across Vietnam. The instrument incorporated the most reliable and valid measurement items identified in the earlier testing stages. Data collected from this phase were analyzed using a range of statistical techniques, including reliability analysis, factor analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to examine the effects of independent variables on the dependent variable. All measurement scales employed in this study were adapted from established instruments widely used in prior research on organizational justice, job characteristics, and work motivation, ensuring both conceptual alignment and measurement reliability within the Vietnamese higher education context.

Finally, the **supplementary qualitative study** was conducted using the same methodological approach as the initial qualitative phase to validate and interpret the quantitative findings in greater depth. This section also provides detailed descriptions of the **sampling methods, questionnaire design, and measurement scales** used in the study. Sampling was performed using two non-probability techniques: **convenience sampling** and the **snowball sampling method**. All measurement scales were adapted from instruments widely used in previous studies on **organizational justice**, ensuring both conceptual relevance and empirical reliability.

The statistical analyses were performed using SPSS, SmartPLS 3, and AMOS software to test the measurement reliability, validate the research model, and examine the structural relationships among the study variables.

**Table 1.** Survey instrument

No.	Construct	Apply and adapt measurement scales from
1	Work Motivation	Stee & Porter (1983)
2	Job characteristics	Hackman and Oldham (1980)
3	Perceived fairness in promotion opportunities	Colquitt and etc (2001)
4	Perceived justice in relationships with colleagues	Niehoff and Mooman (1993)
5	Perceived fairness in income distribution	Leventhal et al. (1980)
6	Perceived societal fairness	Authors (based on the theoretical framework proposed by Tyler (1994) and Tyler and Lind (1992)).

#### *Sample and Data Collection*

The study population comprises university lecturers who are currently teaching physical education courses at public and private universities across Vietnam (see Table 1). A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure representation across geographical regions (North, Central, South), institutional types (public vs. private), and academic ranks (lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors).

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed, of which 395 valid responses were collected and used for analysis. Data collection was conducted through both online and paper-based surveys, with the support of university administrators and faculty coordinators to ensure accessibility and response reliability.

**Table 2.** Demographic and Institutional Characteristics

Category	Classification	Frequency	Percent (%)
Institute Type	Non-public	95	24.1%
	Public	300	75.9%
Gender	Female	246	62.3%
	Male	149	37.7%
Age (Year)	21-24	9	2.5%
	25-29	72	19.7%
	30-34	101	27.7%
	35-39	103	28.2%
	40-44	34	9.3%
	45-49	24	6.6%
	50-54	15	4.1%
	55-59	4	1.1%
	60-64	2	0.5%
Education level	65-70	1	0.3%
	Bachelor	51	12.9%
	Master	283	71.6%
	PhD	58	14.7%
	No answer	3	0.8%

Number of worked (Year)	1-5	165	42.3%
	6-10	108	27.7%
	11-15	56	14.4%
	16-20	39	10.0%
	21-25	10	2.6%
	26-30	7	1.8%
	More than 31	5	1.3%
Job position	Lecturer	332	84.1%
	Dean/Department	30	7.6%
	Deputy Head/Department	23	5.8%
	Other	3	0.8%
	No answer	7	1.8%

The study included 395 physical education lecturers from higher education institutions across Vietnam. Among them, 75.9% were employed at public universities, while 24.1% worked at private institutions. The gender distribution showed 62.3% female and 37.7% male lecturers. The majority of respondents were aged 30–39 years, with 28.2% in the 35–39 and 27.7% in the 30–34 age groups. In terms of academic qualifications, 71.6% held a Master's degree, 14.7% a doctoral degree, and 12.9% a Bachelor's degree. Regarding teaching experience, 42.3% had 1–5 years, 27.7% had 6–10 years, and 14.4% had 11–15 years. The majority (84.1%) were lecturers, while 7.6% were department heads and 5.8% were deputy heads.

## Results

### *Work Motivation of Lecturers According to Demographic Characteristics*

The average level of work motivation among the respondents was relatively high, with a mean score of 3.95. Statistical analyses revealed significant differences in motivation according to gender, years of experience, and type of institution ( $p < .05$ ). No significant differences were found by age, educational qualification, or academic position.

### *Comparison of Work Motivation by Gender*

According to the Independent Samples Test, female lecturers reported higher motivation scores than male lecturers, consistent across the sample. Lecturers from public universities exhibited higher motivation levels compared to those from non-public institutions, with the lowest motivation found among male lecturers in non-public institutions. Approximately 50% of lecturers from both institutional types reported enthusiasm for their work, thinking about job-related tasks at home, and willingness to begin work early or stay late to meet responsibilities. Public university lecturers showed greater persistence in completing difficult assignments and higher diligence in minimizing errors than their non-public counterparts. Only 29.6% of male lecturers in non-public universities frequently thought about work outside official hours, compared with 40% across the total sample. The overall proportion of lecturers willing to work beyond normal hours was low, though public university lecturers showed slightly higher readiness, while only 37% of non-public lecturers expressed such willingness.

**Table 3.** Demographic and Institutional Characteristics

	Gender	Observations	Average	Std.dev	Average standard error
Work Motivation	Female	246	3.9949	.59273	.03779
	Male	149	3.8787	.66779	.05471

**Table 4.** Levene Test for Equality of Variances

		Motivation	
		Equal variances	Unequal variances
Levene Test for Equality of Variances	F	1.856	
	Significance level	.174	
	t	1.798	1.746
	df	393	283.895
Test of equality of means	Significance level (2-sided)	.073	.082
	Mean difference	.11610	.11610
	Standard error difference	.06458	.06649
	Reliability 90% Low	.00963	.00638
	High	.22257	.22583

### *Work Motivation Among Lecturers by Years of Experience*

The analysis also highlights notable differences in work motivation across varying lengths of professional experience. Lecturers with over 31 years of service report the highest motivation levels, followed by those with 21–25 years of experience. Conversely, individuals with 16–20 years of experience register the lowest motivation. Those in the early stages of their careers (1–5 years) and those with 6–10 years of experience demonstrate moderate levels of motivation. The gap in motivation between senior and mid-career lecturers is particularly evident in terms of effort, resilience in overcoming challenges, enthusiasm for teaching, and cognitive engagement with work beyond formal hours.

Overall, the data suggest that lecturers with more than 21 years of experience tend to exhibit strong professional commitment and motivation, likely stemming from a stable career trajectory and strong occupational identity. However, they comprise only a small segment of the academic workforce (approximately 4% based on survey data). The majority of lecturers fall within the moderate motivation range, while those with 16–20 years of experience, despite their seniority and institutional attachment, show the lowest motivation levels. This finding warrants further investigation and targeted support, as this group represents a potentially vulnerable cohort within the academic profession.

#### *Measurement Scales for Variables*

To ensure the reliability and validity of the constructs used in this study, a thorough evaluation of the measurement scales was conducted. This process included both reliability testing and factor analysis to confirm the internal consistency and dimensional structure of the scales. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for each variable to assess internal consistency. All scales demonstrated acceptable levels of reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, indicating that the items within each construct were sufficiently correlated and measured the same underlying concept.

The results of the second-order factor analysis revealed a refinement in the underlying constructs. Specifically, the factor previously labeled as “perceived fairness in income distribution” was decomposed into two distinct dimensions: “fairness in income distribution” and “fairness in income outcomes.” Likewise, the construct “fairness in students’ attitudes and evaluations” was disaggregated into “procedural fairness in student assessment” and “interpersonal fairness in students’ behavior.” These revisions allowed for a more nuanced categorization of the factors, which were subsequently regrouped and relabeled, as detailed in Table 4.

**Table 5.** Validation of Measurement Scales for Variables

Variables	Variable Code	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Work Motivation	WM1	0.835	0.889
	WM2	0.818	
	WM3	0.811	
	WM4	0.756	
	WM5	0.804	
	WM6	0.806	
Perceived justice from direct leadership	PJDL1	0.832	0.971
	PJDL2	0.811	
	PJDL3	0.808	
	PJDL4	0.805	
	PJDL5	0.802	
	PJDL6	0.791	
	PJDL7	0.782	
	PJDL8	0.781	
	PJDL9	0.781	
	PJDL10	0.778	
	PJDL11	0.770	
	PJDL12	0.765	
Perceived fairness in recognition	PFR1	0.794	0.939
	PFR2	0.788	
	PFR3	0.741	
	PFR4	0.740	
	PFR5	0.716	
	PFR6	0.694	
	PFR7	0.650	
Perceived justice in relationships with colleagues	PJRC1	0.731	0.926
	PJRC2	0.709	
	PJRC3	0.707	
	PJRC4	0.697	
	PJRC5	0.630	
	PJRC6	0.624	
	PJRC7	0.610	
Job characteristics	JS1	0.811	0.864
	JS2	0.787	
	JS3	0.773	
	JS4	0.739	
	JS5	0.670	
	JS6	0.609	
Perceived fairness in promotion opportunities	PFPO1	0.709	0.948
	PFPO2	0.706	
	PFPO3	0.702	
	PFPO4	0.701	

	PFPO5	0.682	
	PFPO6	0.63	
	PFPO7	0.479	
Perceived fairness in student attitudes and evaluations	PFSAE1	0.845	
	PFSAE2	0.771	
	PFSAE3	0.747	
	PFSAE4	0.722	0.864
	PFSAE5	0.773	
	PFSAE6	0.767	
	PFSAE7	0.699	
Perceived fairness in income distribution	PFID1	0.762	
	PFID2	0.756	
	PFID3	0.598	0.835
	PFID4	0.586	
	PFID5	0.581	
Perceived societal fairness	PSF1	0.639	
	PSF2	0.630	
	PSF3	0.600	0.823
	PSF4	0.599	
	PSF5	0.548	

#### *Correlation Analysis of Variables in the Model*

The correlation analysis among variables in the research model reveals a strong association between several independent factors (Table 5). Following the refinement process through reliability assessment and factor analysis, the model identifies ten key variables: perceived fairness from leadership, recognition, collegial relationships, job characteristics, promotion opportunities, income distribution, student evaluations, income outcomes, student attitudes, and social fairness perception.

Pearson correlation coefficients indicate that all variables are positively correlated, reflecting a general tendency for the factors to move in the same direction. Among them, "job characteristics" exhibit the highest correlation with the dependent variable "work motivation." Several pairs of variables demonstrate particularly strong correlations, notably between "income distribution process" and "income outcomes"; "recognition" and "promotion opportunities"; and "collegial relationships" and "direct leadership." Furthermore, perceived social fairness shows substantial correlations with variables such as "collegial relationships," "leadership," and "student attitudes."

The presence of high correlations among independent variables highlights the necessity of evaluating the individual impact of each factor within the regression model. This step is essential to mitigate the risk of multicollinearity and to enhance the precision of the quantitative impact assessment.

**Table 6.** Results of Regression Analysis on Factors Influencing Coaches' Work Motivation

Variables	Model 1 $\beta$	Model 2 $\beta$	Model 3 $\beta$	Model 4 $\beta$	Model 5 $\beta$	Model 6 $\beta$
<i>Control Variables</i>						
Gender	-.120**	-.077+	-.106*	-.093+	-.111*	-.115*
Age	-.025	.031	.020	.003	-.029	-.025
Education	.027	.025	.039	.038	.049	.058
Position	.007	.013	.014	-.006	-.018	-.003
Years of service	.067+	.069+	.027	.054	.083+	.096+
School type	.004	.038	.071+	.070+	.089+	.053
<i>Independent Variable</i>						
Job Characteristics	.638***					
Equity in Compensation Process		.389***				
Equity in Compensation Results			.272***			
Equity in Recognition				.305***		
Equity in Promotion Opportunities					.378***	
Equity in Relationships with Colleagues						.451***
$R^2$ Square	.407	.146	.070	.089	.134	.197
F	39.101***	10.506***	5.211***	6.413***	9.613***	14.619***

Drawing on the regression analysis results, it is evident that all identified independent variables exert a statistically significant and positive influence on faculty work motivation (Table 6). Among these, the factor pertaining to the nature and content of the job emerged as the most influential predictor. This finding underscores the centrality of intrinsic job characteristics in shaping motivational outcomes. Following closely are variables associated with perceived societal recognition of the teaching profession and perceptions of fairness demonstrated by direct supervisors—both of which reflect the importance of external validation and equitable treatment in enhancing motivation.

Interpersonal dimensions within the workplace, including collegial support and student respect, also demonstrate a notable contribution to work motivation, highlighting the relevance of a positive and supportive

social environment. In contrast, variables associated with structural and procedural fairness—such as income distribution, recognition mechanisms, opportunities for professional advancement, and student evaluation processes—exhibited moderate effects. This suggests that while organizational mechanisms are important, their impact may be less immediate than factors encountered in day-to-day professional practice.

Moreover, the findings reveal that motivational levels differ significantly based on gender, tenure, and type of educational institution. Notably, no statistically significant differences were observed with respect to other individual attributes such as age or administrative position. This pattern indicates that motivational dynamics are more closely linked to experiential and institutional contexts than to demographic or hierarchical variables.

**Table 7.** Regression Analysis Results on Factors Influencing Coaches' Work Motivation

Variables	Model 7 $\beta$	Model 8 $\beta$	Model 9 $\beta$	Model 10 $\beta$	Model 11 $\beta$
<i>Control Variables</i>					
Gender	-.111*	-.114*	-.124**	-.117**	-.120***
Age	.006	.041	.001	-.023	
Education	.021	.049	.038	.076+	
Position	.028	-.013	.046	-.001	
Years of service	.098*	.032	.042	.067+	.110**
School type	.075+	-.005	.067+	.049	
<i>Independent Variable</i>					
Job characteristics					.495***
Fairness in the income process					.082+
Fairness in income outcomes					
Fairness in recognition					
Fairness in promotion opportunities					
Fairness in relationships with colleagues					
Fairness of direct leadership	.459***				.213***
Fairness in the attitude of treatment by students		.429***			.097*
Fairness in the evaluation process by students			.279***		
Fairness in society's attitude and evaluation toward the teaching profession				.477***	
$R^2$ Square	.201	.179	.073	.225	.481
F	19.949***	13.124***	5.365***	17.153***	60.362***

## Discussion

The findings provide comprehensive insights into the determinants of work motivation among physical education lecturers in Vietnamese higher education. Overall, lecturers reported a relatively high level of motivation, reflecting a generally positive attitude toward their profession. However, motivation levels varied notably across gender, work experience, and institutional type, while age, educational attainment, and academic position showed no significant influence. These results suggest that motivational differences arise more from contextual and experiential factors than from demographic or hierarchical ones.

Female lecturers consistently demonstrated higher motivation than males, supporting previous evidence that women in academia often exhibit greater intrinsic commitment and affective engagement (Bilimoria, D., & Liang, X. (2012)). This pattern may stem from stronger relational orientations and a greater sense of responsibility in student-centered teaching roles. Similarly, lecturers in public universities displayed higher motivation than those in non-public institutions. This can be attributed to greater job security, clearer career progression pathways, and institutional support, which are more prevalent in public settings (Hou, J., & Lu, Y. (2017)). Conversely, lower motivation among lecturers in non-public institutions may result from unstable employment conditions and limited professional recognition (Altbach, P. G. (2005)).

The regression analysis highlights that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors significantly influence motivation. The nature and content of work emerged as the strongest predictor, emphasizing the central role of intrinsic satisfaction derived from teaching, mentoring, and professional accomplishment. Equally important were societal recognition and supervisory fairness, suggesting that lecturers' motivation is reinforced when their work is respected by society and managed with equity and transparency (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000)). Interpersonal relationships, including collegial support and student respect, also contributed substantially to motivation, confirming that a positive social and emotional climate fosters professional engagement (Saks, A. M. (2006)). Meanwhile, structural and procedural factors such as income distribution, promotion opportunities, and evaluation mechanisms showed moderate effects, indicating that organizational policies alone cannot sustain motivation without daily relational and professional fulfillment (Amabile, T. M., & Kramer, S. J. (2011)).

Overall, the findings reinforce the notion that motivation in academia is multidimensional, shaped by the interaction of personal values, social context, and institutional structures (Eccles, J. S., & Wigfield, A. (2002)). To enhance motivation, universities—particularly non-public institutions—should focus on creating supportive environments that promote fairness, recognition, and meaningful work (Hackman & Oldham (1976)). At the



same time, leadership development and transparent management practices are essential to build trust and maintain engagement among faculty (Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L. (2002).).

### Limitations and Recommend

Although the study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing work motivation among physical education lecturers in Vietnam, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships between motivational factors and observed outcomes. Future studies could adopt longitudinal or experimental approaches to capture changes in motivation over time and verify causal pathways.

Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported survey data, which may be subject to social desirability bias and respondents' subjective perceptions. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, could provide richer and more nuanced insights into lecturers' motivational experiences.

Third, the sample was confined to Vietnamese higher education institutions, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to other cultural or educational contexts. Comparative research across countries or regions would help identify cultural or systemic influences on faculty motivation.

Finally, the model included only selected institutional and personal variables. Other potential determinants—such as leadership style, institutional culture, workload intensity, and psychological well-being—were not examined and may further explain variations in work motivation. Addressing these factors in future research would strengthen the explanatory power and practical applicability of the findings.

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance work motivation among physical education lecturers in higher education.

First, universities—particularly non-public institutions—should prioritize creating supportive and fair working environments. Policies that ensure transparent evaluation, equitable income distribution, and clear promotion pathways can strengthen lecturers' sense of stability and professional value.

Second, institutional leaders should focus on enhancing intrinsic motivation by enriching the content and autonomy of teaching roles. Providing opportunities for lecturers to participate in curriculum development, research, and community engagement can help them experience greater meaning and ownership in their work.

Third, fostering positive interpersonal relationships within academic departments is crucial. Encouraging collaboration, mutual respect, and student appreciation contributes to a healthy social climate that reinforces motivation. Leadership training for department heads should emphasize fairness, empathy, and recognition to promote trust and engagement among faculty members.

Fourth, public communication strategies that enhance societal recognition of the teaching profession—especially in the field of physical education—can elevate morale and attract new talent to the discipline.

### Conclusions

Lecturers represent a pivotal element within the higher education system, playing an essential role in enhancing educational quality and advancing human resource development. This study aims to identify the factors influencing the work motivation of lecturers teaching Physical Education at universities in Ho Chi Minh City. To this end, a novel research model was developed and empirically tested within the specific context of this region. The findings demonstrate that job characteristics and multiple dimensions of organizational justice are positively associated with lecturers' work motivation.

The research was conducted in four sequential phases: an initial qualitative exploration, preliminary quantitative analysis, formal quantitative assessment, and supplementary qualitative investigation. Throughout these stages, equity theory served as the theoretical foundation guiding the development and evaluation of the model. Quantitative data from both preliminary and formal stages confirmed that the measurement scales possessed strong reliability and validity within the study context. Most hypotheses were supported, with several receiving full empirical validation and others partial support.

Key determinants exerting the strongest influence on lecturers' motivation included job content and nature, perceived fairness from leadership, societal attitudes toward the profession, student treatment of lecturers, income distribution processes and outcomes, recognition of effort, and promotion opportunities. Overall, work motivation was rated relatively high, with significant variation observed according to gender, professional experience, and institutional type. Notably, lecturers at public universities exhibited higher motivation levels compared to their counterparts in private institutions, a difference that carries important implications for human resource policy development in higher education.

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