

# HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AS THE DETERMINANTS IN ENHANCING VIETNAMESE RETAIL EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB ENRICHMENT

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## Article History:

- received 20 April 2023
- accepted 1 December 2023

**Abstract.** Although employee engagement has become a vital issue in business, research on how different bundles of Human Resource (HR) practices affect employee engagement remains insufficient. This study addresses two primary aims: firstly, to investigate the direct and indirect effects of general HR practices and organizational support on employee engagement in the Vietnamese retail sector; secondly, to assess the mediating role of job enrichment in these relationships. Using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) analysis on a sample of 796 retail employees in Vietnam, this study contributed to such a gap by investigating the mechanisms connecting different HR practices with job enrichment and engagement. Firstly, our findings confirm the direct positive impacts of organizational support and job enrichment on engagement and of organizational support and general HR practices on job enrichment itself. Secondly, although general HR practices are not found to influence employee engagement directly, their indirect influence is still significant via the full mediation of job enrichment. This research makes a substantial contribution to the current body of knowledge by enhancing our comprehension of the mechanisms that link HR practices and employee engagement. The study provides practical insights for Vietnamese retail organizations, emphasizing the importance of job enrichment, well-designed HR practices, and strong organizational support in promoting long-term employee engagement. This ultimately leads to the development of a more dedicated and committed workforce in Vietnam's dynamic retail industry.

**Keywords:** employee engagement, general HR practices, job enrichment, organizational support, retail sector, Vietnam.

**JEL Classification:** M12, M54.

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## 1. Introduction

Employee engagement has emerged among academics' and practitioners' most serious management matters. Given the findings that employee engagement is significantly linked to staff attitudes, actions, productivity, and well-being, this is not surprising (Chaudhary et al., 2021; Lambert et al., 2021; Saks, 2022). He et al. (2021) added that job engagement measures how emotionally, mentally, and physically committed a person is to their work. Retailers in volatile markets require skilled workers whom they can motivate to actively meet the evolving demands of

their customers (Liao & Chen, 2018). Thus, the question of how to increase employee engagement within the retail sector is receiving more attention in academia and the business world.

Leroy et al. (2018) noted that existing research on the organizational factors that influence employee engagement is primarily concerned with human resource management. The effects of human resource management (HRM) processes and systems on employees are the focus of this branch (He et al., 2021). Human resource practices aim to boost organizational performance by increasing worker engagement, skill development, and new possibilities

(Meijerink et al., 2020). Several studies have shown that HR policies and procedures help boost employee engagement (Chen, 2018). HR policies and procedures are not the only factors considering staff participation level. According to Madera et al. (2017), human resource practices have combined synergistic benefits with organizational support on employee engagement. How HR policies and organizational support affect worker engagement remains to be seen. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider the function of organizational support to study ways to promote employee engagement in response to calls for a more nuanced foundation for engagement.

He et al. (2021) asserted that the social exchange theory is the prevailing framework for analysing the impact of HR practices and organizational support on employee engagement. Social exchange theory defines employee engagement as the connection between a firm and its employees (Zhong et al., 2016; He et al., 2021). However, most social exchange theory-based employee engagement studies overlook job characteristics (Whittington & Galpin, 2010). In the context of the retail industry, this study examines how job enrichment serves as a mediating mechanism that links organizational support and HR practices to employee engagement.

Job enrichment is developing occupations to incorporate five fundamental dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Tumi et al., 2022). Job enrichment enables workers to arrange their schedules and supervise their responsibilities while at work. Researchers have discovered that employees given the ability to manage their flexible working hours and job processes are highly engaged.

Macey et al. (2009) posited that understanding employee engagement varies considerably across different geographic, demographic, cultural, and psychological settings, leading to "the need for" in-depth research in specific locations to understand employee engagement in those settings. While employee engagement has been extensively researched on the global stage, it is unsurprising that there needs to be more research on this topic in Vietnam, given the young and underdeveloped state of professional Human Resources Management in the country (Van & Nafukho, 2020). In Vietnam, the retail industry reached a total revenue of USD 221 million in 2020 (Statista, 2021a, 2021b) and is forecasted to remain the most promising sector of the country's economy in the coming years (Ministry of Finance, 2021). Such rapid growth requires an increase in not only the quantity but also the engagement of the retail workforce, especially in the post-COVID era. This is because the labor market, both worldwide and in Vietnam, has been observing an increase in turnover (Van & Nafukho, 2020). An Anphabe's (2019) study reveals a fast-growing uptrend in Vietnamese employees' intention to quit in recent years, rising from 19.1% in 2017 to 20.5% in 2018 and 23.7% in 2019. Among the potential leavers, rational and emotional engagement play two-thirds of the determining factors in their intention to quit (Anphabe, 2019). Such an alarming situation is compelling business

leaders in Vietnam to ask what is driving their employee's engagement and what appropriate actions can be taken to enhance it (Van & Nafukho, 2020).

The objective of this study is twofold. First, we aim to investigate the effect of HR practices and organizational support on employee engagement. Second, we also aim to the indirect effect of HR practices and organizational support on employee engagement through job enrichment. This study makes critical contributions by studying these direct and mediation pathways. Besides, this study extends the research on employee engagement, job enrichment, HR practices, and organizational support by developing and empirically testing a theoretical model demonstrating the direct and indirect relationships among these constructs. This contribution is notable because while it may appear theoretically intuitive that HR practices and organizational support would increase employee engagement, empirical evidence in this area remains relatively tentative, and findings still need to be united (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). Besides, while prior research has long substantiated the direct links between HR systems and organizational performance (Kroon et al., 2013), academics' attention has recently been steered towards exploring the mediating mechanisms underlying such connections (Pak & Kim, 2018). Particularly, how to boost employee engagement through HR practices is still an under-researched issue that calls for more empirical investigations like the present study to fill the gap (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Shabbir & Malik, 2021). Furthermore, the study addresses the dearth of research on employee engagement in the retail sector, especially in Vietnam. As Macey et al. (2009) have stressed, without exploring the contextual influences in employee engagement models, our knowledge and application of this construct may be theoretically inconclusive or unsound. By examining this multifarious topic in a relatively under-researched national context such as Vietnam and among a specific group (i.e., retail employees), while employing a sample size of 796 – one of the most extensive samples in the country to date, the study elucidates a nuanced explanation for the relationships between the constructs under investigation.

The rest of the paper continues with a review of theory and literature on the primary constructs, which lays the foundation for the research's conceptual model, followed by the research methods and analytical results. Subsequently, the findings' discussions and theoretical and practical ramifications are demonstrated. Finally, limits and potential directions for further study are explored before the research conclusion.

## 2. Literature review and hypotheses development

### 2.1. Employee engagement

Even though there are many different conceptualizations of employee engagement (Trần & Morris, 2005; Omar, 2016; Aktar & Pangil, 2017), they can be categorized into

four main approaches. Regarded as the earliest and arguably most influential foundation on this subject, Kahn's (1990) Psychological Contract Model approach establishes that if organizations can ensure psychological meaningfulness, safety, and availability, their employees will, in exchange, demonstrate increased engagement in their work. To this day, many scholars, such as Saks (2019) and Nienaber and Martins (2020), still support this concept, which emphasizes the employees' physical, emotional, and psychological presence at work. Looking from the opposite perspective, Maslach et al.'s (2001) Burnout-Antithesis approach propose that employee engagement is the positive antithesis of burnout and characterized by positivity, energy, and excitement. Incorporating both Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al.'s (2001) works, Harter et al.'s (2002) Satisfaction-Engagement approach conceptualizes employee engagement as the enthusiasm, satisfaction, and involvement one has at work. Lastly, extending from all of Kahn's (1990), Maslach et al.'s (2001), and Harter et al.'s (2002) works, Saks' (2006) Multidimensional approach effectively synthesizes prior research, arguing that employee engagement comprises emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components, all of which are connected to personal role performance.

Drawing from the abovementioned myriad of conceptualizations of employee engagement, Imperatori (2017) classified employee engagement antecedents into five categories, among which synergy and collaboration exist: job-related, interpersonal, personal, HRM practices, and organizational-level antecedents. The such compilation, together with integrative engagement models like that of Whittington and Galpin (2010), suggests that to boost employee engagement, which is an important key to any company's performance and productivity (Kwon & Kim, 2019; Baran & Sypniewska, 2020), there needed to be a comprehensive suite of strategies spanning across not only macro-level policies and practices, but also micro-level job designs and personal considerations (Sungkit & Meiyanto, 2015; Straková et al., 2020).

## 2.2. Human resources value chain: general HR practices and organizational support

One of the vital requirements for any organization throughout history is the establishment of comprehensive and strategic HR policies and practices (Newton et al., 1996; O'riordan, 2017). Such policies and practices have been consolidated by Whittington and Galpin (2010) into a term called HR value chain, which is defined as "an integrated set of human resource management practices" (p. 16) that spans the entire employee life cycle and is all focused on engaging employees in a committed aspiration toward organizational goals and values. Adopting such a concept, this study differentiates between the two main components of HR value chain, i.e., the general HR practices and organizational support, for a more nuanced investigation. According to Whittington et al. (2017), general HR practices refer to high-level strategies such as

the alignment of the HR practices with the organization's strategies, or HR's responsiveness to the needs of the organization as well as the employees, etc. On the other hand, organization's support comprises the suite of operational HR practices, spanning from recruitment and performance evaluation to career management and professional training and development. Despite their differentiations, the social exchange theory, which lays the foundation for most organizational support studies, would posit that both are associated with employee engagement. Developed by Blau (1964), the social exchange theory alleges that the primary motivation for social behaviour is a result of an exchange process that is contingent upon the satisfaction of mutual interests between both parties, i.e., the employees and their organization in this case.

## 2.3. Job enrichment

Curtis and O'Connell (2011) defined job enrichment as the incorporating various elements into job performance to promote task variety, decision-making autonomy, increased involvement in decision-making processes, heightened responsibility, performance feedback, and participation in change initiatives. Furthermore, the primary goal of job enrichment is to restructure work roles with the aim of enhancing workers' intrinsic motivation (Gallagher & Einhorn, 1976; Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020). Job enrichment aims to augment the level of responsibility and decision-making authority of workers, hence increasing their autonomy and authority (Thamrin Benna et al., 2017). Job enrichment empowers individuals to autonomously structure their work schedules and assume responsibility for their assigned duties. Granting employees autonomy helps mitigate work-related family issues and foster job satisfaction in the workplace. According to Baral and Bhargava (2010), studies have discovered that employees who have the autonomy to control their own working hours and job processes exhibit a significant degree of motivation. The profound impact of autonomy is also seen in team performance. Granting the team the autonomy to select members based on their relevant information and skills can lead to increased creativity and productivity in achieving organizational objectives (Yang & Ok Choi, 2009). Several studies have demonstrated that enhancing the work experience of employees enhances their motivation and dedication to their profession (Ali et al., 2010; Tumi et al., 2022).

## 2.4. Hypotheses development

### 2.4.1. General HR practices, organizational support and employee engagement

Karatepe (2013) argued that when employees are satisfied with what they receive from their organization through the general HR practices and organizational support, they will demonstrate a high level of work engagement.

In support of this theory, Sun (2019) suggests that organizational support reflects the relationship between employees and the organization, which is essentially a

social exchange in both material and non-material terms. Along the same line, Dai and Qin (2016) and Kurtessis et al. (2017) proved that when employees perceived the organization's concerns for their welfare and appreciation of their contributions through organizational support, they would feel an inner obligation to reciprocate and developed a favourable attitude and growing attachment towards the organization. Since the early days, academics like Dessler (1999) and Pfeffer (2005) have highlighted the importance of strategically devising the numerous touch-points among the HR practices due to the critical impacts that they posed on employee engagement. More recently, scholars like Bondarouk et al. (2018) and Ferdian et al. (2021) have empirically proved that effective HR practices can meet the personal needs of employees and therefore enhance their engagement, commitment, and employee satisfaction, which, in turn, would further boost organizational performance.

Taking a contrasting view, the labour process theory (Delbridge et al., 1992) alleges that progressive HRM practices, in its focus on helping management achieve organizational goals including profitability, might lead to more pressure, monitoring, and even more exploitation of the employees, which would generally dampen their engagement (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). This view, however, has received very limited support (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019), with only a handful empirical studies backing its claims (Elorza et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2013). Such contrasting perspectives further underscore the need for more rigorous investigations like the present study to move the field forward, especially since the constructs under study are social, multifaceted variables that are undoubtedly influenced by contextual factors. This study supports the social exchange viewpoint, which is the most corroborated theory on the subject to date (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019), as well as the most prevalent stance among the existing literature in Vietnam (Trần, 2018; Phan & Doãn, 2019). Therefore, on the grounds of theoretical rationale and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are put forth:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *General HR practices positively influence employee engagement.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Organizational support positively influences employee engagement.*

#### **2.4.2. Job enrichment and employee engagement**

Job enrichment is developed by Hackman and Oldham's (1976) in their well-established task design model, which refers to the process of designing jobs to integrate five core dimensions – skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. The jobs that incorporate these dimensions are regarded as enriched and therefore hold a substantial motivational capacity for the workers (Gallagher & Einhorn, 1976). The five core dimensions in an enriched job is argued to establish three key psychological states, i.e., the senses of responsibility and meaningfulness in one's work, as well as awareness of that

work's results (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). In line with the social exchange theory, such states are, in turn, expected to promote advantageous outcomes such as greater employees' engagement, motivation, satisfaction, and performance (Grobelna, 2018). Moreover, Andy (2021) argues that since job enrichment increases the level of discretion, control, skill variety, and responsibility for employees, it ultimately helps to decrease monotony, repetitiveness, lack of creativity, and employee dissatisfaction. Such theoretical frameworks linking job enrichment and employee engagement have been empirically tested and confirmed by numerous researchers throughout the years. From as early as the 1990s, Griffin (1991) tested Hackman and Oldham's (1976) model and proved that the presence of the five job characteristics had a significant positive correlation with employees' job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment. Since then, many other academics have empirically corroborated the positive relationship between job enrichment and employee engagement, such as May et al. (2004) and Manjaree et al. (2021). Based on such evidence, the following hypothesis is put forth:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Job enrichment positively influences employee engagement.*

#### **2.4.3. General HR practices, organizational support and job enrichment**

Job enrichment refers to the incorporation of meaningful aspects into its design to support the performance of various duties, such as the autonomy to act independently regarding one's work, or the implications of enhanced decision-making power and ability, increased responsibility, performance feedback, and involvement in leading change (Curtis & O'Connell, 2011). As a result, job enrichment seeks to improve both employee's responsibility and decision-making authority or autonomy. Köse (2016) argues that such workplace autonomy and responsibility are to be preceded by the employees' state of psychological security, which, in turn, could be a result of organizational support. Accordingly, when employees experience or perceive increased support from their organization, they often feel psychologically secure and believe that the management is concerned about their self-development, which encourages them to seek out opportunities for increased responsibility and autonomy at work. Therefore, one could argue that employees who experience high levels of organizational support will also experience high levels of job enrichment. Similarly, it was emphasized by Thafe and Oladele (2014) that well-designed HR practices by the organization could increase job enrichment by making the job more interesting, adding a level of responsibility to the job, and requiring the organization to provide fair compensation for the jobs well done. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *General HR practices positively influence job enrichment.*

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Organizational support positively influences job enrichment.*

Saks and Gruman (2017) establish that HR practices and dimensions are related to the engagement levels through various “process variables” (p. 104), which act as mediators in these HRM–engagement relationships. Job enrichment has recently been increasingly proven as a process variable, or mediator, between organizational resources (such as empowerment and organizational culture) and personal outcome variables (like satisfaction, commitment, creativity, and innovation) (Salimi & Aveh, 2016; Ruiz-Palomo et al., 2020). Following this line of reasoning, in this study’s context, if H3, H4 and H4 are supported, it is reasonably deduced that the impacts of general HR practices and organizational support on employee engagement could be mediated by job enrichment. In other words, it is proposed that effective HR practices and support would improve job enrichment, which, as a process variable, would present an opportunity for personal growth and meaningful work experience, leading to enhanced employee engagement. This proposition is also in line with Peccei and Van De Voorde’s (2019) finding, which states that one of the key hypothesised mediators of the relationships between HR management and employee’s well-being, including engagement, is the person–job fit (Takeuchi & Takeuchi, 2013). Most of the existing literature has been dedicated to exploring the mediating roles of employee’s personal states, such as well-being and engagement, in the relationships between HR practices and organizational performance indicators (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). However, much less attention has been devoted to the process or mechanism via which HR practices could operate to impact engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2017). Therefore, in filling the research gaps with regards to the mediating process variables between HR practices and employee engagement, and based on existing theoretical support, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Job enrichment mediates the relationship between general HR practices and employee engagement.*

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** *Job enrichment mediates the relationship between organization’s support and employee engagement.*

Given the abovementioned hypotheses development, the conceptual framework of the study is exhibited in Figure 1.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Data analysis

In this research, SmartPLS 3.3.3 was utilized to conduct the hypothesis testing. The selection of PLS was built on its ability to provide an effective visual or programmatic user interface for understanding complex associations between components. The advantages of PLS lies in the ability to handle intricate structural models that encompass numerous constructs, indicators, mediation strategies, and moderating effects (Hair et al., 2017). The PLS process consists of two distinct steps. In the initial phase of the PLS algorithm, we assessed the measurement models to verify their validity and reliability. In stage two, the proposed hypothesis was evaluated by the implementation of a bootstrapping process.

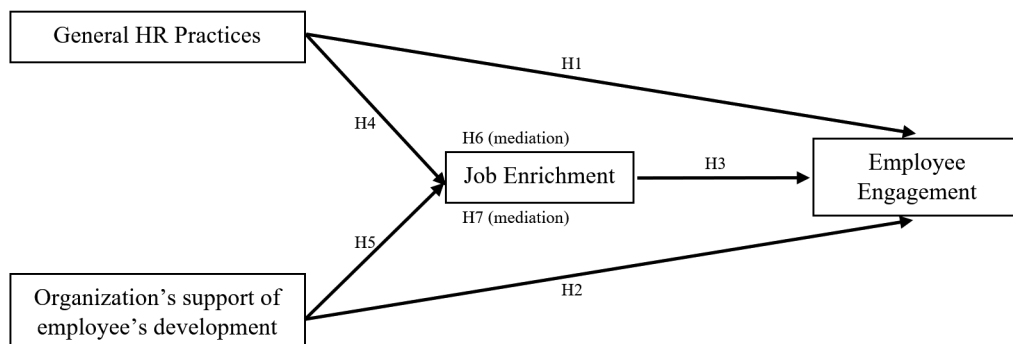
#### 3.2. Sample and data collection

The sample of this study comprises of full-time employees from 4 retail organizations in Vietnam, who were invited via work emails/Workplace accounts to complete an on-line anonymous survey. The initial data collection yielded a total of 818 responses, of which 22 were incomplete and hence eliminated, leaving the final sample of 796 valid responses.

The sample comprised 68% female and 32% male respondents. Such higher female-to-male ratio is not uncommon in the retail sector, possibly due to its nature

**Table 1.** Respondents’ demographic characteristics

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	225	32%
	Female	541	68%
Age	Below 23	40	5%
	23–30	446	56%
	31–40	255	32%
	41–50	40	5%
	Above 50	16	2%
Tenure	Below 2 years	358	45%
	2–5 years	263	33%
	Over 5 years	175	22%



**Figure 1.** The study’s conceptual framework

of being more brains-intensive than browns-intensive, as well as its inherent sales-related inclination (Amin & Islam, 2014). In terms of age, the largest age group is 23–30 years old, which accounts for more than half of the sample (56%), followed by the 31–40 age group (32%). Table 1 summarizes the detailed characteristics of the respondents in this study.

### 3.3. Measurements

This study employed the validated measurement scales from well-established prior research. Employee engagement was measured using a 9-item version of the widely-used Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) – a scale that examines three factors of engagement i.e., vigor, dedication, and absorption. In comparison to the original UWES-24, the UWES-9 retains a high internal consistency of .92 Cronbach's alpha value after removing weaker items (Schaufeli et al., 2006). This version includes questions such as "When I wake up in the morning, I feel like going to work" (Vigor factor), "I am proud of the work I do" (Dedication factor), and "I am happy when I am working intensely" (Absorption factor). The Job Enrichment variable was assessed using the commonly used 5-item Job Diagnostic Survey ("JDS") (Idaszak & Drasgow, 1987), which assesses the five job dimensions namely autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task significance, and feedback. This scale has been widely validated, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .63 to .79 (Renn et al., 1993). This scale includes items such as "The job allows me to exercise my own initiative and judgment in carrying out the work" (Autonomy) and "The job requires me to use a variety of complex or high-level skills" (Skill Variety). The organizational support and general HR practices were assessed using scales adapted from the HR value chain measurement developed by Galpin et al. (2012). The scales contain 7 questions for general HR practices such as "The HR Practices in my organization are integrated with the company's strategy" (Cronbach's alpha of .75), and 6 questions pertaining to organizational support, such as "The organization supports my professional development needs" (Cronbach's alpha of .74). All variables were measured using 7-point Likert-type scales, ranging from "never" to "everyday" for employee engagement, and "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for the rest.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement model analysis

Our measurements were evaluated using both two main types of construct validity assessment i.e., discriminant validity and convergent validity. The model displayed evidence of discriminant validity through the examination of both Heterotrait-Monotrait correlations ratio (HTMT) and Fornell-Larcker criterion. A HTMT value greater than 0.90 implies a deficiency in discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 2, none of the HTMT values was

greater than 0.90, denoting that the variables under consideration were all discriminants. Additionally, the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE) values of all the variables were larger than the absolute value of their shared variances, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 2.** Fornell-Larcker and HTMT results

	1	2	3	4
Employee engagement	<b>0.873</b>	0.436	<i>0.514</i>	<i>0.500</i>
General HR Practices	0.401	<b>0.805</b>	<i>0.741</i>	<i>0.887</i>
Job enrichment	0.482	0.659	<b>0.814</b>	<i>0.840</i>
Org. support	0.459	0.761	0.744	<b>0.839</b>

Notes: The diagonal values in **bold** are the square root of AVE. The values in *italic* are the HTMT score.

Secondly, the measurement model also showed evidence of convergent validity. As reported in Table 3, the outer loading scores of measurements, which range from 0.716 to 0.907, are all higher than the cut-off value of 0.50. (Hair et al., 2017). Besides, the composite reliability (CR) of each variable, ranging from 0.901 to 0.967, was all above the 0.70 threshold; while their AVE values, which range

**Table 3.** The results of validity and reliability

Variables	Items	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employee Engagement	EE1	0.817	0.961	0.967	0.763
	EE2	0.878			
	EE3	0.907			
	EE4	0.863			
	EE5	0.895			
	EE6	0.874			
	EE7	0.847			
	EE8	0.891			
	EE9	0.887			
Human Resource Practices	HRP1	0.833	0.863	0.901	0.647
	HRP2	0.861			
	HRP3	0.797			
	HRP4	0.809			
	HRP5	0.716			
Job Enrichment	JE1	0.849	0.874	0.908	0.663
	JE2	0.868			
	JE3	0.764			
	JE4	0.743			
	JE5	0.841			
Organizational Support	OS2	0.764	0.859	0.904	0.704
	OS4	0.878			
	OS5	0.891			
	OS6	0.816			

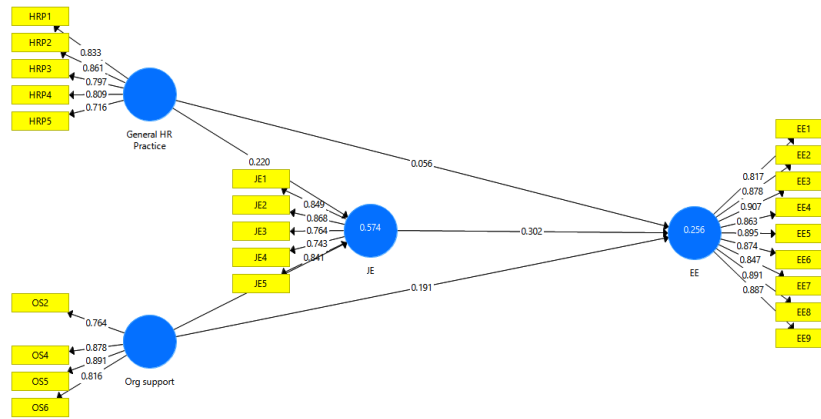


Figure 2. PLS structural paths

from 0.647 to 0.763, are all greater than the threshold value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014). Altogether, the CRs, AVEs, and high factor loadings all indicate convergent validity. Thus, we can draw the conclusion that this study’s model met both the discriminant and convergent validity requirements, indicating good construct validity. The results for outer loadings are displayed in Figure 2.

In terms of internal consistency, the model’s reliability was determined by the CR scores and Cronbach’s alpha values as reported in Table 3. Since the CR score of every variable is greater than 0.70, and the Cronbach’s alpha values, ranging from 0.859 to 0.961, are all significantly higher than 0.70, they are considered reliable (Hair et al., 2017).

### 4.2. Hypothesis testing

In this study, PLS-SEM path analysis was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. In particular, bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to assess the strength of the proposed hypotheses as this approach performs better in mediation analysis than other techniques (Hair et al., 2017; Hayes, 2017). As illustrated in Table 4, all the hypotheses on direct effects were supported except for H1. The general HR practices’ direct influence on employee engagement is determined to be positive but insignificant ( $\beta = 0.056$ ,

$p > 0.01$ ), thus, H1 was not supported. On the other hand, results showed that organizational support positively and significantly affects employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.191$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), thus supporting H2. H3 is also supported because job enrichment is shown to have a positive, significant relationship with employee engagement ( $\beta = 0.302$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). H4, which proposes that general HR practices will lead to job enrichment, is also supported in this study ( $\beta = 0.220$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Lastly, the notion that organizational support positively and significantly affects job enrichment is also supported in this study ( $\beta = 0.577$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), thus supporting H5.

With regards to the indirect effects, this study followed Zhao et al.’s (2010) approach, which suggested that when both the direct and indirect effects are significant, the mediating effect is deemed partial, and when the direct effect is not significant but the indirect effect is significant, the relationship is considered fully mediated. As discussed, no direct significant relationship was found between general HR practices and employee engagement. However, Table 4 shows that there is a significant indirect effect of general HR practices in predicting employee engagement through job enrichment ( $\beta = 0.066$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, it is deduced that job enrichment fully mediates the relationship between general HR practices and employee engagement. On the other hand, organizational support also has a

Table 4. Hypotheses testing results

		$\beta$	P Values	5.00%	95.00%	Remarks
<b>Direct effects</b>						
H1	General HR Practices → Employee Engagement	0.056	0.177	-0.04	0.158	Not supported
H2	Org. support → Employee engagement	0.191**	0.002	0.081	0.302	Supported
H3	Job Enrichment → Employee Engagement	0.302***	0.000	0.197	0.399	Supported
H4	General HR Practices → Job Enrichment	0.220***	0.000	0.143	0.296	Supported
H5	Org. support → Job Enrichment	0.577***	0.000	0.506	0.648	Supported
<b>Indirect effects</b>						
H6	General HR Practices → Job Enrichment → Employee Engagement	0.066***	0.000	0.043	0.101	Fully mediated
H7	Org. Support → Job Enrichment → Employee Engagement	0.174***	0.000	0.112	0.243	Partially mediated

significant indirect effect in predicting employee engagement through job enrichment ( $\beta = 0.174$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Since the direct effect of organizational support on employee engagement is also significant, it is inferred that job enrichment partially mediates the relationship between organizational support to employee engagement.

## 5. Discussions and implications

### 5.1. Discussions and theoretical implications

This study discovered several novel insights with regards to how general HR practices and organizational support influence employee engagement, both directly and indirectly through the mediation of job enrichment, thus adding more depth to the body of literature on these constructs and their relationships.

One of the most notable results of this study is that general HR practices do not have a significant direct influence on employee engagement, but only an indirect one through job enrichment, indicating a full mediation. In other words, this study suggests that general HR practices can still influence employee engagement, but they can only do so if they lead to job enrichment first. This finding is in line with Griffin's (1982) study, which emphasized that the most well-intended macro-level practices may still be undermined or ineffective if they are not related to and supported by micro-level factors. In this study's case, the above indicates that while it is critical that the macro-level HR strategies are well designed and developed, it is just as important, if not more so, to keep a keen focus on the micro-level jobs-related factors (Saks & Gruman, 2017). While this finding partially contradicts some prior studies that demonstrated a direct relationship between general HR practices and employee engagement (e.g., Whittington & Galpin, 2010; Ferdian et al., 2021), it adds novel and deeper insights into the currently lacking literature on job enrichment as a vital conduit through which HR management can enhance employee engagement (Saks & Gruman, 2017). Whilst social exchange theory posits that effective HR practices would enhance employee engagement, one of the drawbacks of this theory is that in some cases, it might be inconsistent with reality since employees might not all respond to those high-level HR practices in the same way (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019). However, given that the job itself is one of the two primary contact points between an employee and their organization, beside their managers (Griffin, 1982), if the organization can ensure that such high-level HR practices can enrich the employees' jobs, this study shows that their engagement will be improved accordingly.

On the other hand, the results confirm that organizational support has both a direct and indirect effect on employee engagement through job enrichment, hence corroborating prior studies. Comprising a suite of operational HR practices, from recruitment, performance evaluation, career management to training and development, organizational support directly impacts the employees' work

cycle and serves as a signal of how much the organization values and invest in the employees. In turn, the perception of such organizational support acts as a motivator, boosting intrinsic motivation by encouraging employees to better enjoy their work and become more engaged and committed to their organization (Truss et al., 2013; Dai & Qin, 2016; Sun, 2019). These findings could be reasoned by the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), which posit that when the organization provides adequate socio-economic resources to its employees, they tend to feel obligated to reciprocate by devoting themselves cognitively, emotionally, and physically in their work, thereby demonstrating greater engagement.

Notably, the discrepancy between H1 and H2 results could be due to the differently perceived proximities of impact on employees between the high-level HR strategies and the employee-level HR practices. While the operational HR practices, which directly touch on the employees' everyday work life, have the power to either directly or indirectly influence employee engagement, the macro-level HR strategies, which are more related to the high-level organizational factors, could only enhance engagement if they are transitioned through a crucial employee-level factor i.e., job enrichment. Such findings are in line with Griffin's (1982) and Saks and Gruman's (2017) emphases on the micro-level process variables via which the HR management is connected to outcome criterion.

The rest of the results largely corroborated prior literature. This study confirms that job enrichment positively affects work engagement, supporting prior studies such as those of Griffin (1991), Whittington et al. (2013), and Park et al. (2020). In line with the social exchange theory, it is affirmed that highly-enriched jobs may give employees the space and incentives to bring more of themselves to work and enhance their engagement (Grobelna, 2018).

Lastly, this study's results corroborate previous research in confirming the direct influences of general HR practices and organizational support on job enrichment (Köse, 2016; Park et al., 2020). On one hand, well-developed HR practices can enhance job enrichment by making the job more interesting and adding more degrees of autonomy to the job (Thafe & Oladele, 2014). On the other hand, when employees believe that their organization is committed to their personal and professional development through the perception of their HR practices and organizational support, they would feel psychologically secure and therefore more inclined to seek additional resources to complete tasks, accept greater responsibilities, or take an interest in additional work activities (Köse, 2016).

All in all, this study has contributed to the literature on the HRM – engagement nexus by deepening the understanding of the mechanisms that could translate different bundles of HR practices to employee engagement. As Peccei and Van De Voorde (2019) highlighted, the existing theoretical arguments in support of this nexus are usually pitched at a relatively general level. Therefore, differential investigations like this study can contribute to providing



more adequate explanations for the links of the nexus in question.

## 5.2. Practical implications

Based on its findings, this study could offer several insightful implications for practitioners in developing such engagement-enhancing strategies. Organizational support has been shown to have direct and indirect influences on employee engagement via job enrichment. Hence, it is advisable for organizations to invest in the development of its operational HR functions and tactical activities, which encompass direct touchpoints with the employees' work cycle, including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, and career management, etc. On the other hand, of similar importance are strategic and general HR practices, which entail the integration of HR practices with organizational strategies, the responsiveness of HR department to the needs of employees and organization, the timeliness of communications about HR changes, etc. However, managers are reminded that no matter how well-intended the high-level HR practices are, or how aligned such practices are to the organizational strategies, they should still maintain a focus on ensuring job enrichment should they want to ultimately enhance employee engagement.

Job enrichment was confirmed by this study to be crucial because of not only its ability to directly influence engagement by itself, but also its role as an important or even indispensable conduit that could translate HR practices and organizational support to engagement. Therefore, efforts and resources should be devoted to ensuring that the HR policies and practices could lead to better job enrichment. For instance, in terms of performance management, managers may shift from micro-management to results-based management by granting employees greater autonomy over arranging their own tasks and deciding the strategies, techniques, and even places where their work is conducted. Since job enrichment is a vertical job loading or development (Herzberg, 1987), employees can be entrusted with additional responsibilities and expanded duties provided they match their capabilities and aspirations. Job rotation is another practice that may boost the job's skill variety. Moreover, there should be a mechanism for supervisors, colleagues, or even the job itself to provide regular, honest, and constructive feedback so that employees may reflect on the quality of their work. In addition, recognition, and incentives, such as individualized praises, bonuses, paid time off, or prizes, should be given for a job well done, which not only enhance task significance for the employees and motivate them to remain focused, productive, and engaged.

However, caution should be exercised when applying the job enrichment enhancements since not everyone is keen on taking on more control and responsibility, and those who are would normally anticipate higher remuneration and benefit packages in exchange. Therefore, the key to success is to strike a balance between the needs of the

organization and its employees, taking in account the organizational resources and culture, as well as employees' characteristics.

## 6. Limitations and future research directions

Despite the contributions of our findings, they should be evaluated considering several limitations. Firstly, similarly to most of the research on employee engagement, this study was conducted on a cross-sectional basis (Saks, 2019). Future study may employ longitudinal research design in an effort to minimize the common method variance usually associated with cross-sectional studies. Secondly, this study only employed three antecedents in predicting employee engagement. Given that engagement is a multi-faceted construct, future studies may investigate other variables to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms in question. For example, moderating factors that can strengthen or weaken the associations between engagement and its antecedents could be further explored. Thirdly, also due to the multidimensionality of engagement, Boxall et al. (2016) asserted that no one comprehensive theory can be anticipated to account for all relationships of interest in this field. Hence, a combination of theories such as social exchange theory, JD-R, conservation of resources theory, etc. would be helpful in advancing theoretical clarifications on when, how, and why specific HRM practices may impact engagement at work (Van De Voorde & Beijer, 2015). Lastly, this study is a purely quantitative research. Although such research design is most prevalent in this field of study and most appropriate in establishing the structural relationships among constructs (Peccei & Van De Voorde, 2019), methodological triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative could enrich the findings with more nuanced understanding of the underlying justifications for such relationships.

## 7. Conclusions

This study has examined the intricate relationship between general human resources practices, support from the organization, job enrichment and employee engagement, particularly in the retail industry in Vietnam. The importance of employee engagement in shaping staff attitudes, behaviors, productivity, and well-being is emphasized by numerous research publications, indicating the increasing focus this topic receives in academic and corporate spheres. The study's findings unveiled intricate linkages among these constructs. It is worth mentioning that although overall HR policies did not have a direct effect on employee engagement, their influence was fully mediated by job enrichment. The importance of micro-level issues, such as job design and enrichment, in guaranteeing the success of higher-level HR policies is emphasized by research. Conversely, organizational support was found to be both a direct and indirect factor influencing employee engagement, with job enrichment playing a partial role in

mediating this relationship. It highlights the significance of organization in cultivating a nurturing atmosphere that encompasses both overarching strategies and daily operational procedures.

Furthermore, this study enhances the existing body of knowledge by elucidating the intermediary function of job enrichment in linking human resources practices and organizational support to employee engagement. Job enrichment, characterized by skill variety, task identity, task relevance, autonomy, and feedback, has been recognized as a crucial factor in improving employees' dedication, contentment, and ultimately, their involvement. These studies provide valuable information for the retail industry in Vietnam. Organizations are advised to allocate resources to both strategic HR practices and operational support activities, acknowledging the crucial role of job enrichment in effectively translating these efforts into improved employee engagement. Implementing strategies that enhance job satisfaction, such as granting employees autonomy, acknowledging their contributions, and offering regular feedback, can play a pivotal role in fostering a highly productive and actively engaged staff. The study emphasizes the necessity of adopting a well-rounded approach that takes into account the varied requirements and anticipations of employees. In light of the tremendous expansion and problems faced by the retail industry in Vietnam, it is crucial for business executives to comprehend and tackle the factors that drive employee engagement. This research establishes a basis for future studies in this changing field, highlighting the significance of context-specific inquiries to enhance our comprehension of employee engagement dynamics.

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