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Article

Building sustainable workplaces: The role of organizational climate and recognition on employee task performance in Vietnamese SMEs

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Abstract: This research aims to study the relationships between Organizational Climate and Task Performance through Organizational Recognition in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Da Nang, Vietnam. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to examine the direct and indirect (mediated) relationships among the independent variables, the mediator, and the dependent variable. The population of this study is individual employees in SMEs; 402 respondents were obtained through a convenience and volunteer sampling method. The empirical results demonstrated an excellent model fit. The path analysis revealed that all four dimensions of Organizational Climate had significant positive direct effects on Organizational Recognition ($p < 0.001$), and that Organizational Recognition was significantly associated with Task Performance. Bootstrap analysis with 5000 resamples and bias-corrected 95 % confidence intervals indicated that all four indirect effects through Organizational Recognition were statistically significant. Standard of Work was fully mediated by Organizational Recognition, whereas Organizational Structure, Responsibility, and Commitment were partially mediated, retaining significant direct associations with Task Performance. These results suggest that, in the SME context of Da Nang, Organizational Recognition is an important mechanism through which a supportive climate is associated with employee performance. The study provides insights for SME management seeking to strengthen recognition practices as part of a more humane and socially sustainable work environment.

Keywords: organizational climate; organizational recognition; task performance; sustainable organization; SMEs

1. Introduction

In the context of contemporary management, human resources are recognized as a key strategic component and the most valuable asset of an organization [1]. The success of enterprises, whether global or small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), depends not only on material capital or technology but also on their ability to recruit and retain high-potential personnel to grow sustainably with the organization [2]. However, amidst fierce competition and free movement of labor, motivating employees solely through monetary compensation is becoming ineffective. Material benefits alone cannot create sustained psychological loyalty, on the other hand, they may impose a burdensome cost that impacts long-term competitiveness. Therefore, organizations need to shift their focus from solely on measurable productivity to prioritizing the psychological dimension and quality of life at work for their employees [3].

The Task Performance in an organization is no longer judged solely on financial indicators. It also encompasses internal processes that reflect the ability to adapt among dynamic and rapid shifting labor market. A crucial foundation for employee performance is the psychological and mental well-being of the organization [4]. The shift from a focus solely on quantifiable output to creating a happy work environment is a vital turning point in organizational psychology. When employees perceive their self-worth and work in a supportive, humane environment, it triggers intrinsic motivation, naturally driving them to their full potential [5]. This not only reduces management costs but also builds a strong and sustainable organizational culture.

One of the crucial structural factors associated with employee behavior is the organizational climate, which refers to employees' overall perception of the social environment and internal operational systems. A constructive and supportive Organizational Climate is associated with a stronger sense of belonging and engagement with the organization, which may encourage greater effort toward shared objectives without relying on rigid oversight [6]. Furthermore, Organizational Recognition is a variable that may enhance employees' sense of value and identity within the social context, serving as a link associated with the translation of a positive climate into favorable behavioral outcomes [7].

This research focuses on analyzing small and medium-sized enterprises in Da Nang City, Vietnam. Which is regarded as economic hub experiencing rapid growth and as the key center for foreign investment in the ASEAN region [8]. The remarkable GDP growth has presented SMEs in the area with complex human resource management challenges, particularly in mitigating high labor turnover and retaining a skilled workforce. Therefore, Da Nang was chosen as a crucial case study to extract lessons learned regarding organizational climate management and personnel acceptance within a highly dynamic and competitive business environment. The profound understanding of this particular context will be beneficial for developing resilient and sustainable organizations to support future regional economic expansion.

From a broader societal perspective, the sustainable development of organizations is inseparable from the well-being of their workforce [9]. Understanding how organizational climate and recognition practices contribute to employee performance is not merely a management concern, but a matter of sustainable social development. Organizations that invest in psychological well-being and equitable recognition cultivate socially sustainable institutions capable of contributing to broader community and economic resilience [10]. In this regard, examining how internal organizational mechanisms such as recognition shape employee performance contributes to the broader discourse on building humane, inclusive, and socially sustainable workplaces — a concern that extends well beyond individual firms to the fabric of society at large.

Although the relationships among organizational climate, recognition, and employee performance have received considerable attention, two gaps remain. First, while recognition is frequently treated as an outcome or a correlate of a positive climate, far less is known about whether recognition functions as a mediating mechanism that channels the influence of distinct climate dimensions into task performance, particularly within resource-constrained small and medium-sized enterprises. Second, evidence from Vietnamese SMEs—where non-financial

recognition may be especially salient given limited material resources—remains scarce. This study addresses these gaps by explicitly modelling Organizational Recognition as a mediator linking four organizational climate dimensions to task performance, and by testing these indirect pathways in the Vietnamese SME context. In doing so, it seeks to clarify how, and through what mechanism, a supportive climate is associated with employee performance, rather than simply re-establishing that such relationships exist.

Therefore, this research is aimed to study the role play of Organizational Climate and Organizational Recognition as a mediator variable among this relationship. The knowledge gained from this study will not only be useful for formulating human resource management policies in the context of the new economy, but will also help create a better way of human behavior for balanced and sustainable organizational development in the future. The following sections will include a literature review and previous studies to establish a conceptual framework, followed by a presentation of the research methodology used for data collection and analysis, then research findings are shown and interpreted. Finally, a discussion of the results and conclusion are shown in the last section.

2. Literature reviews

In order to deepen our understanding regarding this research objectives, the review of literatures could be divided into two sections. First, Organizational Climate as the independent variable consisting of Commitment, Organizational Structure, Standard of Work, and Responsibility. Then, Recognition as mediator variable to analyze direct effect, indirect effect and total effect on Task Performance.

2.1. Organizational climate

Organizational climate refers to the psychological environment and perceptions of employees towards the operational systems within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In this research Organizational Climate defined under the scope of four key dimensions; Commitment, Organizational Structure, Standard of Work, and Responsibility corresponding to the foundational framework of Pritchard and Karasick [11] and have been further validated in contemporary organizational research [12,13].

2.1.1. Commitment

Commitment refers to the psychological state in which employees feel a connection with the organization's goals and values, leading to a desire to dedicate their physical and mental energy to driving the organization's progress [14]. An environment that fosters engagement is reflected in employees' positive attitudes towards their workplace, as indicated by research questions focusing on pride in working for the organization, willingness to sacrifice personal time for the collective good, and the intention to perform at their best to contribute to organizational success [15]. This form of commitment transcends not merely job performance; it represents a psychological contract between the employee and the organization—a crucial driving force for SMEs that rely heavily on the unity and dedication of their personnel [16].

In terms of Organizational Recognition, highly engaged employees tend to exhibit behaviors that benefit the organization beyond their normal routine duties. This evident dedication and sacrifice are a key factor in employees being noticed and appreciated by supervisors and colleagues [17]. When employees perceive their loyalty and dedication as being valued and respected, it further enhances their perceived status within the organization [18]. Therefore, Commitment is a primary variable that attracts positive responses from the organization back to the individual [19].

Furthermore, employee Commitment directly influences work efficiency. Employees who love and are proud of the organization will perform their duties meticulously to maintain the company's image and benefits [20]. Focusing on collective success allows employees to utilize resources and time most effectively to produce accurate, high-quality work that meets organization goals. These employees possess strong intrinsic motivation, enabling them to consistently maintain high productivity even under pressure [21]. Therefore, Commitment is a key factor affecting a positive attitude to achieving maximum productivity for the organization.

According to these concepts between the Commitment of employees, Organizational Recognition and Task Performance, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 could be written as:

H1: Employees' Commitment directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction

H2: Employees' Commitment affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction

2.1.2. Organizational structure

Organizational Structure, in the context of organizational climate defined in this research, refers to employees' perception and understanding of the systems, procedures, management hierarchies, and clarity of regulations established by the organization to guide collaborative work [22]. A supportive structural climate is one where employees can clearly access and understand information about their responsibilities without ambiguity [23]. In other words, it is specific job descriptions which employees know who they need to coordinate or report to, so on and so forth in the chain of command, and the feeling that organizational rules and regulations are appropriate to efficient work performance.

Organizational Structure serves as a mechanism for controlling and coordinating the organization's activities to achieve their goals [24]. When employees perceive the organization has a systematic structure, clear discipline, and requirements that all employees must adhere equally, it reduces conflict and duplication of work [25]. This is a fundamental factor affecting personnel evaluation and value. Structural transparency allows employee performance to be ranked and recognized honestly, making the organizational recognition process more accurate and based on facts rather than personal preferences [26]. Employees gain confidence that, under this fair structure, their dedication and adherence to regulations will be noticed and appropriately recognized. A structured atmosphere thus acts as a fundamental psychological system linking adherence to discipline with receiving professional honor and recognition.

Based on a clear and transparent Organizational Structure systematically, we hypothesized this hypothesis as:

H3: Organizational Structure affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction

H4: Organizational Structure directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction

2.1.3. Standard of work

Standard of Work is to the level of expectations and performance set by an organization as a benchmark for work performance [27]. This factor creates an environment where employees recognize that simply completing daily task is insufficient; instead, they must focus on quality and efficiency. For example, employees being given challenging goals fosters a sense of commitment to achieving quality above general standards [28]. Clear standards act as a psychological compass, helping employees assess their progress in a directed manner, reducing work confusion, and building achievement motivation, maintaining Standard of Work is a crucial factor for the long-term survival of an organization [29].

Furthermore, performance standards crucially guarantee that Organizational Recognition is meaningful and powerful. If an organization praises or rewards employees without measurable criteria, that recognition will be perceived as biased or personal preferences [30]. However, when the standard is founded highly and clearly, employees will realize that their recognition or appreciation is a result of their abilities and the achievement of difficult goals [31]. Standards may thus serve as a condition associated with the translation of effort into tangible value. This state further reinforces employees' perception of fair recognition and fosters genuine pride in their work.

Based on the principle that Standard of Work is a key indicator of basis valuing, hypothesis 5 is formulated as:

H5: Standard of Work affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction

H6: Standard of Work directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction

2.1.4. Responsibility

In the context of Organizational Climate, Responsibility refers to the level of autonomy and trust the organization grants employees to make decisions and solve problems independently within their assigned tasks [32]. An atmosphere that emphasizes accountability motivates employees to feel empowered to control the outcome of their work, in other words, it explores employee decision-making abilities in emergency situations or when faced with challenging assigned tasks [33]. This type of empowerment is not merely about relieving management burdens, but a psychological mechanism that signals the organization values and trusts in the maturity of its employees [34].

In the context of Organizational Recognition, assigning employees higher responsibilities or granting them greater decision-making autonomy constitutes a powerful form of tacit recognition [35]. Employees immediately perceive that being entrusted with important tasks or solving immediate problems stems from the organization recognizing their skills and abilities [36]. This pre-emptive recognition fosters pride and motivates employees to demonstrate their full potential to prove the

trust placed in them. This leads to a causal relationship; increased responsibility results in a higher perception of recognition.

In terms of work performance, accountability with autonomy reduces approval processes, systemic obstacles [37]. This formality minimization allows employees to respond promptly to problems, resulting in faster and higher-quality achievement of goals. When employees feel a sense of ownership of their work both psychologically and mentally, they are more attentive and results-oriented than simply following orders. Performance is therefore not just about the quantity of work, but also about accuracy and the most efficient use of time [38]. A culture of accountability is thus a key factor that both affirms employee value and drives work results towards organizational goals.

According to the empowered Responsibility to employees of an organization, we hypothesized hypothesis 7 and hypothesis 8 as follow:

H7: Responsibility affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction

H8: Responsibility directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction

2.2. Organizational recognition and task performance

Organizational recognition refers to the process by which an organization provides positive feedback or expresses appreciation for employees' behavior and achievements [39]. For instance, receiving praise for successful work, valuing feedback and suggestions, and receiving awards or recognition on various occasions of employees. Recognition acts as a positive reinforcement, directly impacting employees' mental well-being, particularly fulfilling their esteem needs [40]. It makes employees feel valued, important, and needed by the organization, leading to increased pride and motivation. This dimension is a key factor contributing to improved work efficiency, both in terms of work quality and timing to reach organizational goals [41].

According to the Social Exchange Theory, relationships between organizations and employees are based on interdependence and reciprocity [42]. When an organization offers acceptance and value to employees, they would perceive an emotional obligation and reciprocate that goodwill by dedicating themselves to achieving higher work performance [43]. Acceptance, therefore, is not merely a matter of occasional rewards, but a crucial mechanism for enhancing self-efficacy. This state empowers employees to make more confident decisions and perform their duties more effectively [44]. The result is reduced errors in work processes, minimizing negative impacts on operational procedures, and utilizing modern work techniques to shorten completion times. Consequently, employees can produce high-quality Task Performance that meets the organization's targets in terms of quantity and efficiency.

Furthermore, receiving recognition fosters an atmosphere of continuous learning and self-development. Employees who perceive their feedback as heard and valued are more enthusiastic about proposing new approaches to improve Task Performance [45]. This aligns with the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that require agility and continuous process improvement [46]. Therefore, Organizational Recognition serves as a bridge between psychological motivation and tangible organizational success.

According to these reinforcements from recognition of the value of work, we hypothesized hypothesis 9 as:

H9: Organizational Recognition affects Task Performance in a positive direction

Beyond these direct relationships, the present study proposes that Organizational Recognition functions as a mediating mechanism linking organizational climate to task performance. Social Exchange Theory suggests that favorable organizational conditions—clear structure, fair work standards, meaningful responsibility, and reciprocal commitment—signal that the organization values its employees, prompting employees to reciprocate with higher effort. Recognition makes this exchange visible and salient. Expectancy Theory [47] further implies that employees are more likely to translate a supportive climate into performance when they expect their contributions to be acknowledged and valued. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that the influence of organizational climate dimensions on task performance may operate, at least in part, indirectly through Organizational Recognition.

Accordingly, the following mediation hypotheses are proposed:

H10a: Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Organizational Structure and Task Performance.

H10b: Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Standard of Work and Task Performance.

H10c: Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Responsibility and Task Performance.

H10d: Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Commitment and Task Performance.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Population and sample

The population used in this study consists of working-age individuals employed in registered small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Da Nang City, Vietnam. There are over 32,000 registered SMEs in Da Nang City, encompassing a massive workforce of approximately 415,000 people who are crucial to driving regional productivity [48].

For the sample size, authors used the estimation table of Krejcie and Morgan [49]. According to the calculation criteria at a 95 % confidence level for a population of 100,000 or more, the appropriate minimum sample size is 384 people. However, to meet the requirements of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which requires a sufficiently large sample size to accommodate the estimation, this research conducted data collection through an online survey using volunteer convenient sampling from SME employees in the study area [50,51]. Since, the restrictive nature of data access in SMEs in Da Nang, where centralized employee registries do not exist, probability sampling was rendered practically impossible. Therefore, a convenience and volunteer sampling approach were intentionally utilized as a strategic solution to overcome these data collection hurdles. There are a total 402 respondents who completed the questionnaire, which covers the minimum sample size according to Krejcie and Morgan's [48] criteria and is sufficient for subsequent statistical analysis.

3.2. Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is calculated to measure the internal consistency for reliability test of the questions for each variable. The results from the sample group showed that all dimensions of the research instrument had reliability values higher than 0.70, which is an acceptable criterion for social science research Nunnally [51]. The details of the analysis are shown (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Commitment	0.708	4
Organizational structure	0.785	4
Standard of work	0.806	4
Responsibility	0.827	4
Organizational recognition	0.800	4
Task performance	0.807	5

According to **Table 1**, all variables have reliability values higher than the 0.70 threshold. The variable with the highest reliability is Responsibility, at 0.827, while the variable with the lowest reliability is Commitment, at 0.708. However, even the lowest value is still above 0.70, which is considered an acceptable level and sufficient for the analysis [52].

3.3. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis was performed to examine the construct validity of latent variables in the model, considering standardized factor loadings and the model's fit with empirical data. The results of the analysis are shown in **Table 2**. Each latent variable is constructed and measured by question items as shown in **Figure 1**.

Table 2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Variables	Question items	Factor loadings (λ)	t-value (C.R.)	*p*-value
Organizational structure	OrganStruc1	0.746	13.411	***
	OrganStruc2	0.729	13.146	***
	OrganStruc3	0.710	12.832	***
	OrganStruc4	0.678	(Reference)	-
Standard of work	Stnd1	0.748	14.668	***
	Stnd2	0.720	14.105	***
	Stnd3	0.759	14.902	***
	Stnd4	0.725	(Reference)	-
Responsibility	Resp1	0.697	13.039	***
	Resp2	0.704	13.165	***
	Resp3	0.732	13.660	***
	Resp4	0.696	(Reference)	-

Table 2. (*Continued*).

Variables	Question items	Factor loadings (λ)	t-value (C.R.)	*p*-value
Organizational commitment	Commit1	0.736	14.317	***
	Commit2	0.732	14.229	***
	Commit3	0.733	14.266	***
	Commit4	0.735	(Reference)	-
Organizational recognition	Recog1	0.742	14.313	***
	Recog2	0.725	13.995	***
	Recog3	0.728	14.050	***
	Recog4	0.700	(Reference)	-
Task performance	Effect1	0.690	12.180	***
	Effect2	0.670	11.888	***
	Effect3	0.691	12.196	***
	Effect4	0.667	11.835	***
	Effect5	0.659	(Reference)	-

Note: ***$p < 0.001$; (Reference) denotes the item used to fix the scale for parameter estimation.

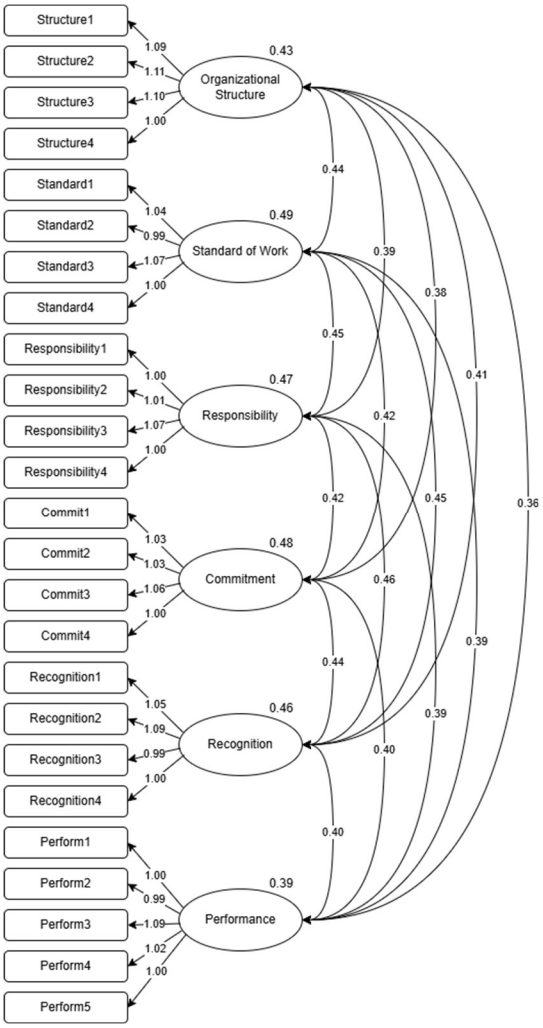

Figure 1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Factor loadings of all observed variables ranged from 0.659 to 0.759, which is higher than the acceptable criterion 0.50 [53], and the critical ratio (C.R.) ranged from 11.835 to 14.902, with statistical significance at the .001 level for all items [54]. This indicates that all observed variables have structural validity and can represent the latent variables well in this study (**Table 2**).

Additionally, the goodness-of-fit values of CFA model are also shown in **Table 3**, to confirm that CFA model demonstrates a good fit.

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit for CFA.

Indices	χ2/df	GFI	RMSEA	RMR	CFI	TLI	NFI
Criteria	<2.00	>0.90	<0.05	<0.05	>0.95	>0.95	>0.90
Value	1.389	0.936	0.031	0.025	0.981	0.978	0.936
Assessment	Fit	Fit	Fit	Fit	Fit	Fit	Fit

χ^2 According to **Table 3**, The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) indicate that the measurement model has a good fit. All fit indices meet the recommended criteria, composed of /df = 1.389, below criteria 3.0, GFI = 0.936, CFI = 0.981, TLI = 0.978 and NFI = 0.936 higher than 0.95 or 0.90 thresholds, RMSEA = 0.031, RMR = 0.025, which are below the 0.05 respectively. These values confirm the construct validity of the research model [55,56].

Table 4. Composite reliability (CR), Average variance extracted (AVE), and square root of AVE.

Construct	Items	CR	AVE	√AVE
Organizational Structure	4	0.808	0.513	0.716
Standard of Work	4	0.827	0.545	0.738
Responsibility	4	0.800	0.500	0.707
Organizational Commitment	4	0.824	0.539	0.734
Organizational Recognition	4	0.815	0.524	0.724
Task Performance	5	0.808	0.456	0.676

Note: CR = Composite Reliability (threshold > 0.70); AVE = Average Variance Extracted (threshold > 0.50); √AVE = square root of AVE. All CR values exceeded 0.80. Task Performance AVE (0.456) was marginally below the 0.50 threshold but is considered acceptable given its composite reliability of 0.808 and item loadings ranging from 0.659 to 0.691.

As shown in **Table 4**, composite reliability (CR) values for all six constructs ranged from 0.800 to 0.827, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 and confirming adequate internal consistency. Average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the 0.50 criterion for five of the six constructs, supporting convergent validity. Task performance recorded an AVE of 0.456, marginally below the conventional threshold; however, its composite reliability (0.808) and consistent item loadings (0.659–0.691) indicate that the construct remains acceptable for subsequent structural analysis.

3.4. Common method bias assessment

Harman's single-factor test was conducted by entering all 25 observed items into a principal component analysis with a single factor constrained. The single factor accounted for 49.30 % of the total variance, marginally below the 50 % threshold suggested by Podsakoff et al. [57]. However, because Harman's single-factor test is a relatively insensitive diagnostic, and because the proportion of variance explained lies close to the threshold, this result cannot be taken as confirmation that common method variance is absent. As all constructs were measured from the same respondents using self-report items at a single point in time, the potential for common method and social-desirability bias is acknowledged and the findings should be interpreted with this in mind.

3.5. Mediation analysis procedure

To test the mediation hypotheses (H10a–H10d), the indirect effects of the four organizational climate dimensions on task performance through Organizational Recognition were estimated within the structural equation model using the bootstrapping method. A bias-corrected bootstrap procedure with 5000 resamples was employed to construct 95 % confidence intervals for each indirect effect. Consistent with current methodological recommendations, an indirect effect was considered statistically significant when its bias-corrected 95 % confidence interval did not include zero, rather than relying solely on the Sobel test, which assumes a normal sampling distribution of the indirect effect.

To allow the mediating role of Organizational Recognition to be tested appropriately, direct paths from all four climate dimensions to task performance were specified in addition to the indirect paths through recognition. This specification avoids inferring full mediation merely from the omission of direct paths. Following established criteria, full mediation was inferred when the indirect effect was significant and the corresponding direct effect was non-significant, whereas partial mediation was inferred when both the direct and indirect effects were significant. Because the data are cross-sectional, the results are interpreted in associational rather than causal terms.

4. Results and interpretation

4.1. General information of respondents

Table 5 shows the general information of the respondents who participated in this study. The demographic data, including sex, age, educational level, working experience, monthly income, and types of organization, were analyzed in descriptive statistics. The summarized profile of the 402 respondents is illustrated in **Table 5**.

Table 5. Respondents.

Respondents' information	Ranges	Number of respondents	Percentage
Sex	Male	168	41.8 %
	Female	234	58.2 %

Table 5. (*Continued*).

Respondents' information	Ranges	Number of respondents	Percentage
Age	Less than 25 years	187	46.5 %
	years	127	31.6 %
	More than 30 years	88	21.9 %
Education	High School or Equals	41	10.2 %
	Diploma of Higher Education/Associate Degree	9	2.2 %
	Undergraduate	320	79.6 %
	Graduate	32	8 %
Working experiences	Less than 1 year	93	23.1 %
	1–5 years	151	37.6 %
	6–10 years	84	20.9 %
	More than 10 years	74	18.4 %
Income/salary	Less than 10 million VND	147	36.6 %
	10-15 million VND	117	29.1 %
	More than 15 million VND	138	34.3 %
Types of Organization	Wholesales and Retails	112	27.9 %
	Production	97	24.1 %
	Services	175	43.5 %
	Other	18	4.5 %

Note: 10 million VND is approximately equivalent to 400 USD as of May 2026.

According to **Table 5**, the majority of the respondents were female, accounting for 58.2 % (n = 234), while males represented 41.8 % (n = 168). In terms of age, the largest group of participants was under 25 years old (46.5 %), followed by those aged 25–30 years (31.6 %). Regarding educational background, most respondents held an undergraduate degree (79.6 %), indicating a high level of literacy among the participants. In terms of professional profile, 37.6 % of the respondents had 1–5 years of working experience. When considering their financial status, 36.6 % earned less than 10 million VND per month, closely followed by those earning more than 15 million VND (34.3 %). Finally, regarding the types of organization, the highest proportion of respondents worked in the Service sector (43.5 %), followed by Wholesales and Retails (27.9 %) and Production (24.1 %).

4.2. Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis is analyzed to examine the relationships between the variables used in the research to initially investigate the problem of multicollinearity as shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficients.

Variables	Mean	S.D.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
(1) Structure	3.85	0.62	1					
(2) Standard of Work	3.92	0.58	0.783*	1				
(3) Responsibility	3.88	0.65	0.707*	0.752*	1			
(4) Commitment	3.82	0.70	0.696*	0.719*	0.708*	1		
(5) Recognition	3.90	0.64	0.755*	0.780*	0.797*	0.767*	1	
(6) Performance	3.95	0.55	0.724*	0.730*	0.729*	0.743*	0.757*	1

Note: * Statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

Table 6 shows that all pairs of variables are statistically significantly correlated at the 0.01 level with correlation coefficients ranging from 0.696 to 0.797. Considering Kline's [58] criterion that the correlation coefficient should not exceed 0.85 to avoid multicollinearity, all these variables can therefore be appropriately analyzed in the structural equation modeling (SEM) subsequently.

Table 7. Construct correlations among climate dimensions with 95 % bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

Construct correlation	Estimate	95 % CI Lower	95 % CI upper
Structure ↔ Commitment	0.696	0.584	0.777
Responsibility ↔ Commitment	0.708	0.606	0.783
Standard ↔ Commitment	0.719	0.613	0.795
Standard ↔ Structure	0.783	0.709	0.837
Responsibility ↔ Structure	0.707	0.611	0.778
Standard ↔ Responsibility	0.752	0.671	0.810

Note: Estimates are standardized correlations among the four exogenous organizational climate dimensions; confidence intervals are bias-corrected and based on 5000 bootstrap samples.

To account for sampling uncertainty in the construct correlations, 95 % bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were estimated for the correlations among the four exogenous organizational climate dimensions in **Table 7**. Although several point estimates approached the square roots of the corresponding average variance extracted, the bootstrap intervals indicate that these estimates carry meaningful sampling variability. The comparatively high correlations among the climate dimensions are theoretically expected, as Structure, Standard of Work, Responsibility, and Commitment represent interrelated sub-facets of a broader organizational climate construct rather than wholly independent variables [12,59].

Importantly, all construct correlations remained below the 0.85 threshold recommended by Kline [58]. Furthermore, following the approach proposed by Bagozzi and Phillips [60], the 95 % bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were evaluated, and none of the upper bounds for the construct correlations included or reached 1.000. Collectively, these findings provide robust empirical support for the discriminant validity of the constructs, confirming that Organizational Recognition and Task Performance retained adequate separation from the climate dimensions. Taken together with composite reliability values exceeding 0.80 and average variance extracted values reported in **Table 4**, these findings support the adequacy of the

measurement model for the structural analysis that follows, while acknowledging that the climate dimensions are empirically related.

4.3. Structural equation model (SEM)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) evaluated that whether or not the proposed model is fit with the empirical data and hypotheses. Initially, the goodness-of-fit indices were examined to ensure the structural model's validity. The results show an excellent fit with the empirical data in **Table 8**.

Table 8. Structural model fit.

Indices	χ^2	df	*p*	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	RMR
Criteria	-	-	>0.05	<2.00	>0.90	>0.95	>0.95	<0.05	<0.05
Value	0.000	0	N/A	N/A	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000
Assessment	-	-	Saturated		Fit	Fit	Fit	Fit	Fit

Table 8 shows the structural equation modeling (SEM) goodness-of-fit analysis, revealing that all indicators are excellent fit. It is supported by a Chi-square (χ^2) statistic equals to 0.000 with 0 degree of freedom, indicating that the hypothesized model is a just-identified (saturated) model that perfectly reproduces the empirical data covariance matrix. The relative chi-square statistic (χ^2/df) and the p-value cannot be computed due to zero degrees of freedom, consistent with the goodness-of-fit indices (GFI) is 1.000 exceeding the criterion of 0.90 [52].

Furthermore, additional fit indices were evaluated based on the thresholds suggested by Hu and Bentler [55]. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) of 1.000 exceeded the recommended cut-off value at 0.95, while indices like TLI and RMSEA are not applicable for a saturated model structure. The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicating excellent fit.

Following the confirmation of the structural model fit, Path Analysis was conducted to examine the research hypotheses, direct and indirect relationships between the variables. The results are shown in **Table 9**.

Table 9. Path analysis: Standardized direct, indirect, and total effects with bootstrap confidence intervals.

Path	Direct β	Indirect β	Total β	Indirect 95 % BCCI	Mediation
Commitment → Recognition	0.260**	—	0.260**	—	—
Structure → Recognition	0.183**	—	0.183**	—	—
Standard → Recognition	0.199**	—	0.199**	—	—
Responsibility → Recognition	0.335**	—	0.335**	—	—
Commitment → Performance	0.265**	0.046	0.311**	[0.016, 0.083]	Partial
Structure → Performance	0.183**	0.032	0.215**	[0.009, 0.066]	Partial
Standard → Performance	0.126	0.035	0.161*	[0.011, 0.074]	Full
Responsibility → Performance	0.177**	0.059	0.237**	[0.018, 0.108]	Partial
Recognition → Performance	0.177**	—	0.177**	—	—

Note: β = standardized coefficient. 95 % BCCI = bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval based on 5000 bootstrap samples; an indirect effect is significant when the interval excludes zero. **$p < 0.001$, *$p < 0.01$. Mediation type: Partial = significant direct and indirect effects; Full = significant indirect effect with non-significant direct effect.

Table 9 presents the standardized direct, indirect, and total effects estimated from the structural model. All four organizational climate dimensions exerted significant positive direct effects on Organizational Recognition (β = 0.183–0.335, p < 0.001). When direct paths from all climate dimensions to task performance were included, Organizational Recognition retained a significant but modest direct effect on task performance (β = 0.177, p = 0.002), a substantially smaller estimate than in models omitting these direct paths. This pattern indicates that climate dimensions are associated with task performance both directly and indirectly through recognition, rather than recognition serving as the sole conduit.

Bootstrap analysis with 5000 resamples confirmed that all four indirect effects were statistically significant, as none of the bias-corrected 95 % confidence intervals included zero. Standard of Work exhibited a full-mediation pattern: its direct effect on task performance was non-significant (β = 0.126, p = 0.072) while its indirect effect through recognition was significant (β = 0.035, 95 % BCCI [0.011, 0.074]). The remaining three dimensions—Commitment, Organizational Structure, and Responsibility—showed partial mediation, with both significant direct and indirect effects. These results indicate that Organizational Recognition operates as a partial mediating mechanism linking organizational climate to task performance, with the strength of mediation varying across dimensions.

Path analysis and research model could be illustrated as in **Figure 2**.

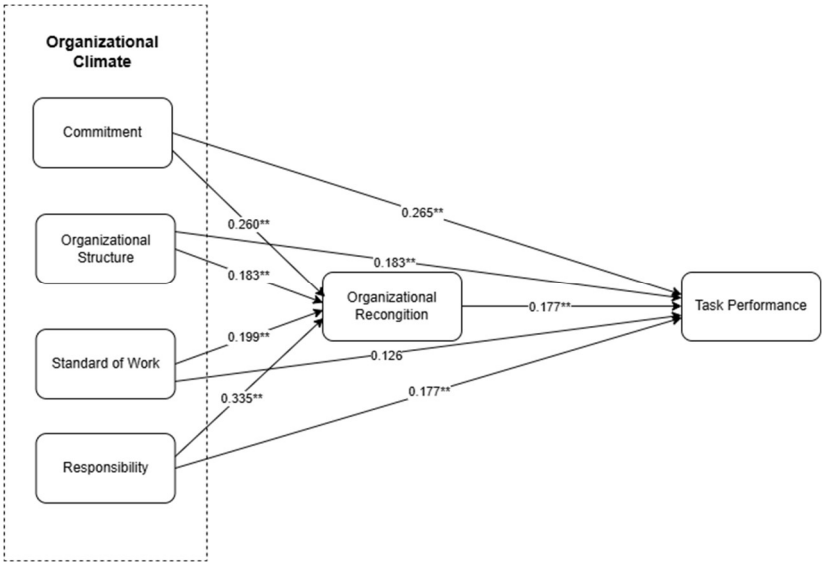

Figure 2. Research model.

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

According to **Figure 2**, The statistically significant paths are shown in green arrow, while the red arrow depicts non-significant paths as aforementioned.

5. Discussion

There are several key issues to highlight regarding organizational behavior and human resource management in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Da Nang, Vietnam. A central finding concerns the role of Organizational Recognition as a mediating mechanism linking organizational climate to Task Performance. When

direct paths from all four climate dimensions to Task Performance were included, the bootstrap analysis indicated that all four indirect effects through Organizational Recognition were statistically significant. Standard of Work showed a full-mediation pattern, whereas Organizational Structure, Responsibility, and Commitment showed partial mediation, retaining significant direct associations with Task Performance in addition to their indirect effects. This pattern suggests that recognition is one important pathway—though not the sole pathway—through which a supportive climate is associated with performance. This interpretation is consistent with Vroom's Expectancy Theory [47], which proposes that employees are more likely to invest effort when they expect their performance to be acknowledged. In this sense, Organizational Recognition may function as a psychological bridge that complements, rather than replaces, the direct influence of climate dimensions.

The mediating role of Organizational Recognition in this study may be further understood through the cultural lens of Vietnamese society, which has often been described as influenced by values of emphasizing hierarchy, collective harmony, and the social importance of being acknowledged by one's superiors [61]. In a more collectivist cultural context, individual effort that goes unrecognized may feel less socially salient, as personal achievement can derive part of its meaning from public or formal validation within the group. This cultural dynamic offers one possible interpretation for why recognition is so strongly associated with performance and why the climate dimensions are linked to performance partly through recognition. It should be emphasized, however, that cultural values were not directly measured in this study and no cross-cultural comparison was conducted; these cultural explanations are therefore offered as plausible interpretations rather than as demonstrated mechanisms.

In terms of Responsibility, as one dimension of Organizational Climate, was found to have the greatest influence on creating a sense of being recognized. This reflects that SMEs in Da Nang, empowering and trusting employees to have autonomy and full responsibility in their work, it is seen as an implicit affirmation of individual ability and competence. When employees perceive that the organization values and believes in their abilities, their sense of belonging and being recognized increases, leading them to strive to improve their Task Performance to match the trust they have received. This aligns with the concept of organizational psychology that emphasizes creating a state of happiness through valuing human dignity, which is a crucial foundation for sustainable organizational growth amidst fierce competition in the emerging economic area. Corresponding to the study of Li et al. [62], which demonstrates that empowering leadership and the delegation of responsibility significantly enhance employees' perceived insider status and self-worth and Ahmed and Nawaz [63], which emphasizes that when organizations provide employees with autonomy and high-level responsibilities, it serves as a powerful non-financial recognition signal.

Moreover, the fact that Organizational Structure and Standard of Work have a significant and direct positive effect on Organizational Recognition confirms that clarity in procedures and objective Task Performance measurement criteria is the fundamental basis for a fair process of organization to be accepted among employees. When an organization has clear standards, employees perceive that the recognition they receive is based on actual achievements, not the personal preferences of

management. This atmosphere fosters a results-oriented work culture, a key characteristic for sustainable organizational growth in the future. this finding is also supported by Rendi et al. [64], who argue that when task requirements and performance standards are transparently defined, it minimizes perceived bias and enhances the legitimacy of organizational recognition.

In summary, this research suggests that managing SMEs in economically growing areas like Da Nang involves not only restructuring or delegating tasks, but also fostering a psychological environment in which employees feel accepted and valued. Theoretically, this interpretation is consistent with the reciprocal logic of Social Exchange Theory, in which organizational recognition can be understood as a form of exchange associated with translating employee attitudes into performance behaviors, and with Vroom's Expectancy Theory, in which recognition serves as a perceived reward that may make effort feel worthwhile. Together, these lenses offer a plausible account of the mediation patterns observed in this study and point toward a broader implication: that institutionalizing recognition as a systematic practice, rather than an occasional gesture, may support more humane and socially sustainable workplaces. This is presented as an implication of the study rather than a directly tested outcome, since indicators of well-being, dignity, or social sustainability were not measured here.

6. Conclusion

The statistical calculation and analysis in the structural equation model in this study can summarize the results of all testing hypotheses to provide an overview of the relationships among the variables in the model, as shown in **Table 10**.

Table 10. Research hypotheses summary.

Hypotheses	Path analysis	Result
H1	Employees' Commitment directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction	Supported
H2	Employees' Commitment affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction	Supported
H3	Organizational Structure affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction	Supported
H4	Organizational Structure directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction	Supported
H5	Standard of Work affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction	Supported
H6	Standard of Work directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction	Not Supported
H7	Responsibility affects Organizational Recognition in a positive direction	Supported
H8	Responsibility directly affects Task Performance of an organization in a positive direction	Supported
H9	Organizational Recognition affects Task Performance in a positive direction	Supported
H10a	Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Organizational Structure and Task Performance	Supported (partial)

Table 10. (*Continued*).

Hypotheses	Path analysis	Result
H10b	Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Standard of Work and Task Performance	Supported (full)
H10c	Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Responsibility and Task Performance	Supported (partial)
H10d	Organizational Recognition mediates the relationship between Commitment and Task Performance	Supported (partial)

The empirical evaluation of the proposed research hypotheses, as derived from the structural model analysis, is comprehensively summarized in **Table 10**. The results provide substantial evidence supporting five out of the seven hypothesized paths, thereby validating the intricate dynamics of the conceptual framework.

The analysis confirms the statistically significant role of Organizational Climate influencing Organizational Recognition. Particularly, Commitment (H2), Organizational Structure (H3), Standard of Work (H4), and Responsibility (H5) were all found to be significant factors, exerting positive direct effects on the recognition perceived within the organization. Furthermore, the link between Organizational Recognition and Task Performance (H7) was strongly validated, reinforcing its position as a critical outcome variable in this study.

In the revised model that included direct paths from all climate dimensions to Task Performance, the direct effects of Commitment (H1) and Responsibility (H6) on Task Performance were statistically significant, in addition to their significant indirect effects through Organizational Recognition. These dimensions therefore show a pattern of partial mediation: they are associated with Task Performance both directly and indirectly via recognition. This finding indicates that internal motivation and individual responsibility are associated with performance in their own right, while recognition provides an additional, complementary pathway. Because the data are cross-sectional, these relationships are interpreted in associational rather than causal terms.

This pattern is informative in the Vietnamese SME context. The significant direct effect of Commitment suggests that committed employees—those who take pride in their organization and willingly invest discretionary effort—tend to show higher task performance, and that this association is further strengthened when the organization visibly acknowledges their contribution. Similarly, the significant direct effect of Responsibility indicates that employees entrusted with autonomy tend to perform well, with recognition providing an additional associated pathway. Rather than acting purely as latent potential that depends entirely on recognition, commitment and responsibility appear to operate both as direct correlates of performance and as antecedents whose influence is partly channeled through Organizational Recognition.

Beyond the organizational level, these findings may have implications for sustainable social development. SMEs are central to emerging economies, and the way they structure recognition practices is plausibly linked to the quality of working life for a large segment of the workforce. Managerial practices that promote organizational recognition may therefore serve a dual purpose: supporting firm-level performance while contributing to broader social sustainability goals related to decent work, equity,

and human well-being. These broader connections are offered as reasoned implications rather than as relationships directly tested in this study, since the present analysis measured organizational climate, recognition, and self-reported task performance rather than well-being or social-sustainability outcomes.

6.1. Practical implications

Based on the findings of this study, several practical suggestions may be considered by SME managers seeking to cultivate recognition-supportive workplaces; these are offered as suggestions rather than as tested interventions, since the specific practices below were not directly evaluated. First, structured peer-to-peer recognition—where employees acknowledge each other's contributions in team meetings or through simple internal platforms—may help foster a culture of mutual appreciation that does not rely on top-down management alone. Second, transparent feedback on how individual performance contributes to organizational goals may help ensure that recognition is perceived as merit-based rather than arbitrary. Third, informal mentorship or buddy systems, particularly for younger employees who constitute much of Da Nang's SME workforce, may provide an ongoing channel of guidance and acknowledgment. Importantly, recognition practices may also have unintended negative effects if they are perceived as unfair, inconsistent, exclusive, or politically influenced. From a social-sustainability perspective, recognition should therefore be transparent, inclusive, accessible to different employee groups, and connected with procedural fairness and employee voice. These approaches appear low in cost, but their effectiveness, scalability, and fairness would need to be examined directly in future research.

6.2. Limitations and future research

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the use of convenient volunteer sampling, while practical given the structural realities of the SME sector in Da Nang, introduces the possibility of selection bias, as voluntary participants may hold more favorable perceptions of their workplace than the broader SME workforce; the use of the Krejcie and Morgan [49] table reflects a minimum sample-size guideline only and does not imply probability sampling or representativeness. The age distribution, concentrated among younger employees, may further limit generalizability. Second, all variables were measured from the same respondents using self-report items at a single point in time, which raises the possibility of common method and social-desirability bias. Third, data were collected from individual employees, so the measures reflect individual (psychological) perceptions of climate rather than objectively aggregated organizational-level climate; firm-level identifiers were not collected, and organizational-level claims should therefore be made with caution. Fourth, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal relationships, and the results are interpreted in associational terms. Future research employing longitudinal designs and multi-source or firm-level data would help clarify these relationships, and replication across other emerging-economy contexts would help determine whether the mediation pattern observed here—full

mediation for Standard of Work and partial mediation for the other dimensions—is culturally specific or more broadly generalizable.

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