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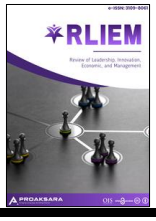

An Empirical Study on Career Orientation Intention among Economics Students in Vietnam: A PLS-SEM Approach

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ABSTRACT

Career orientation plays a critical role in shaping students' career decisions and long-term professional development, particularly for economics students facing increasing labor market uncertainty in emerging economies. This study investigates the factors influencing career orientation among economics students in Vietnam by employing PLS-SEM. Drawing on Social cognitive career theory, the Theory of planned behavior, and Self-determination theory, the proposed model integrates job related characteristics, social influence, and individual psychological factors. Data were collected from 393 economics students in Vietnam and analyzed using SmartPLS 4. The results indicate that person job fit is the strongest determinant of career motivation, while career motivation exerts a significant direct effect on career orientation. Social influence also has a positive and significant impact on career orientation. In contrast, job related factors such as career development opportunities, income expectations, and work environment influence career orientation primarily through the mediating role of career motivation rather than through direct effects. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, accounting for 75.1% of the variance in career orientation. These findings contribute to career development literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context and highlight the importance of aligning job characteristics, social context, and psychological resources in supporting students' career orientation.

Keywords: Career Motivation, Career Orientation, Economics Students, Person Job Fit, Social Influence

1. INTRODUCTION

Career orientation is a crucial factor influencing students' career decisions and long term professional development. For economics students, career orientation reflects not only individual interests and competencies but also labor market conditions, social expectations, and institutional environments. Understanding the determinants of career orientation is therefore important for higher education institutions in improving graduate employability and aligning training outcomes with market demands. In Vietnam, rapid economic transformation and increasing integration into the global economy have intensified competition in the labor market for economics graduates. Students are required to make career-related decisions under conditions of uncertainty, where job characteristics, social influences, and individual psychological factors interact in shaping career orientation.

A substantial body of empirical research has examined the determinants of career orientation and career choice across different contexts. Career development opportunities have been shown to enhance perceived employability and career commitment (Ergün & Şeşen, 2021). Income expectations also play a significant role in shaping students' job pursuit intentions, particularly in emerging economies (Duy et al., 2022; Thang & Trang, 2024). Similarly, the perceived work environment, including work-life balance and organizational support, has been identified as an important predictor of career decision-making (Duy et al., 2022). Person-job fit has consistently demonstrated strong explanatory power in predicting career-related intentions (Ab Hamid et al., 2022; Chowdhury et al., 2025). To the best of our knowledge, no prior research has systematically

integrated these factors into a comprehensive analytical framework to examine their combined effects in Vietnam.

Methodologically, although structural equation modeling has been widely applied in career research, the use of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine career orientation in an integrated framework is still limited, particularly among economics students in developing countries. PLS-SEM has been widely recommended for prediction-oriented research and for models involving complex relationships among multiple latent constructs (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022; J. F. Hair et al., 2019). PLS-SEM is well-suited for career research when the goal is to investigate the processes that mediate and increase the understanding of endogenous constructs. Moreover, PLS-SEM has been increasingly applied in studies conducted in developing countries where data distribution may not meet the strict assumptions of covariance-based SEM (J. F. Hair et al., 2011).

Beyond methodological considerations, the relevance of this study is strongly grounded in the current labor market realities faced by young people in Vietnam, where the transition from higher education to stable employment remains increasingly challenging. Recent reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO) emphasize that Vietnam's youth continue to face significant challenges in transitioning from education to decent employment. Despite relatively strong economic growth, many young people experience unstable work arrangements, high levels of unemployment, and a notable proportion classified as NEET (not in employment, education, or training), highlighting persistent labor market mismatches and limited career opportunities for graduates. In response to these gaps, this study investigates the determinants of career orientation intention among economics students in Vietnam using PLS-SEM, contributing both theoretically to the career orientation literature and practically to the understanding of graduate employability in an emerging economy context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes three different theoretical frameworks: Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), and Self Determination Theory (SDT). These theories work together to explain how behavioral intentions are formed, specifically focusing on students' career goals. The theories do not oppose each other, but instead work together to provide a complete understanding of intention formation. Each theory approaches the phenomenon from a distinct perspective, collectively contributing to a comprehensive analytical framework. SCCT focuses on how individuals' career choices and goals are influenced by their belief in their own capabilities and their learning from others. In contrast, TPB includes the impact of social factors such as subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, which demonstrate how family, professors, and society can shape students' decisions regarding their careers. In contrast, SDT focuses on motivation, highlighting that not only the presence of intention but also the quality of motivation determines the sustainability of career choices.

The compatibility among these three theories is evident in their core constructs. Self efficacy in SCCT closely corresponds to perceived behavioral control in TPB and the need for competence in SDT, as all three reflect individuals' perceptions of their capability to successfully perform a behavior. Social influence and subjective norms in TPB align with social learning mechanisms in SCCT and relate to the need for relatedness in SDT. Furthermore, career goals in SCCT can be viewed as manifestations of motivation in SDT and as antecedents of behavioral intention in TPB. These conceptual overlaps suggest that the three theories describe the same underlying reality from different angles and can be integrated into a unified framework.

Building on this theoretical foundation, the present study proposes an integrated model comprising three groups of factors: (i) job related characteristics, including career development opportunities, income expectations, work environment, and person job fit; (ii) social factors, encompassing family, lecturers, and society; and (iii) individual psychological factors, namely career self efficacy and career motivation. These factors are arranged in a logical causal structure, providing the basis for the proposed research model and the development of subsequent hypotheses.

Although previous studies have identified a wide range of determinants of career intention, including personality traits, family socioeconomic status, and prior work experience, this study prioritizes career

development opportunities, income expectations, work environment, and person-job fit for several reasons. First, empirical findings consistently show that job-related characteristics are among the most immediate and actionable predictors of career decision-making. Second, compared to relatively stable personal traits, job-related perceptions are more responsive to institutional interventions and labor market signals, making them particularly relevant for higher education policy and career guidance practices. Third, in emerging economies such as Vietnam, economic and employment-related considerations remain salient factors influencing students' career orientation. Therefore, focusing on these constructs allows the model to capture both theoretically grounded and contextually relevant determinants while maintaining analytical parsimony.

2.1.1. Career Development Opportunities (DEV)

Career development opportunities are defined as students' perceptions of their potential for career advancement, professional skill development, and role expansion within their field of interest. This construct reflects not only opportunities for promotion to higher positions but also opportunities to acquire new knowledge, enhance competencies, and engage in challenging projects. Ergün & Şeşen (2021) demonstrated that perceptions of development opportunities in the external labor market constitute the strongest determinant of students' perceived employability. Similarly, a study by Xuyen (2024) in Vietnam identified career exposure, an important dimension of career development opportunities as the most influential factor affecting students' career orientation intention.

2.1.2. Income Expectations (PAY)

Income expectations represent students' perceptions of starting salaries, long-term earning potential, and other financial benefits that a particular career field may offer. Income is important not only for its material value but also because it reflects the social recognition and perceived worth of an occupation. Although studies conducted in developed countries often suggest that income is not the primary determinant of career choice, in Vietnam and other Southeast Asian countries where average living standards remain relatively lower economic considerations continue to play a significant role. Thang & Trang (2024) found that the economic value of employer branding has a significant impact on Vietnamese Generation Z's job application intention. Similarly, Duy et al. (2022) in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, identified financial expectations as one of the two strongest factors influencing students' job choice decisions.

2.1.3. Work Environment (ENV)

The work environment encompasses factors related to physical working conditions, organizational culture, management style, coworker relationships, and work-life balance. A positive work environment is characterized by support from supervisors and colleagues, an open and fair organizational culture, opportunities for skill development, and flexibility in both working time and work arrangements. A study conducted in Indonesia in 2025 demonstrated that work-life balance has a significant effect on career decision making (Jamalulel & Chang, 2025). Similarly, Duy et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of work life balance in shaping career choices within the context of flexible employment arrangements in the post-pandemic era.

2.1.4. Person Job Fit (FIT)

Person job fit refers to the degree of compatibility between individuals' characteristics such as values, interests, personality traits, skills, and strengths and job-related attributes, including job requirements, organizational culture, and career development opportunities. The fit theory suggests that having a strong match between a person and their job can improve not just job performance but also boost job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and desire to stay in the job. Consequently, person job fit is important not only after individuals enter the workforce but should also be considered at the early stage of career orientation. Chowdhury et al. (2025) demonstrated the critical mediating role of person environment fit in the relationship between self-efficacy and career intention. Similarly, Ab Hamid et al. (2022) confirmed a strong mediating effect of fit in explaining career-related intentions.

2.1.5. Social Influence (SOC)

Social influence refers to students' perceptions of expectations, opinions, and support from significant others in their lives particularly family members, teachers, and peers regarding their career orientation decisions. The study by Yean & Chin (2019) demonstrates that influences from three key social sources, namely parents, teachers, and peers, all exert significant effects, with parental influence being the strongest. Similarly

Yean & Chin (2019) finds that social factors have the most substantial impact on career pursuit intentions, surpassing even income and career development opportunities.

2.1.6. Career Motivation (MOT)

Career motivation represents the extent to which students feel motivated, enthusiastic, and committed to pursuing a specific career field. In the proposed research model, career motivation functions as a mediating variable, linking self-efficacy to career orientation intentions. Although the mediating role of motivation has been theoretically suggested, it has rarely been empirically examined in a comprehensive manner. The study by Yean & Chin (2019) indicates that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence career intentions; however, motivation in their model is treated as an independent variable rather than a mediator. The present study is therefore among the few that empirically test the mediating role of career motivation.

2.1.7. Career Orientation Intention (INT)

Career orientation intention refers to the extent to which students plan and are determined to pursue a specific career field in the near future. Career orientation intention is not merely a vague or abstract idea; rather, it represents a deliberate and reasoned decision formed through evaluations of external factors, social influences, and individual psychological factors. A clear and strong career intention provides the foundation for students to proactively seek relevant information, engage in career-related activities, and develop the necessary skills for their chosen career path.

2.2. Proposed Research Model and Hypothesis

Based on these hypothesis, the research proposes the following model:

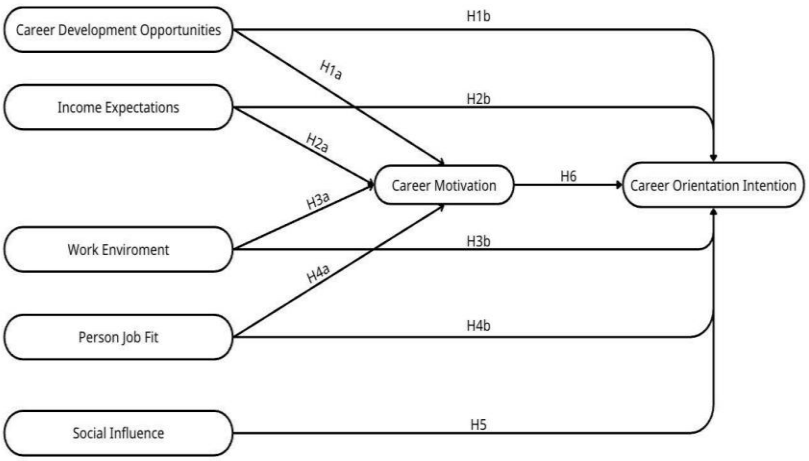

Figure 1. Proposed Research Model
Source: Authors

As illustrated in Figure 1, the proposed research model consists of key determinants: Career Development Opportunities, Income Expectations, Work Environment, Person Job Fit, Social Influence, Career Motivation, Career Orientation Intention. The research hypotheses put forward are:

H1a: Career Development Opportunities have a positive effect on Career Motivation.

H1b: Career Development Opportunities have a positive effect on Career Orientation Intention.

H2a: Income Expectations have a positive effect on Career Motivation.

H2b: Income Expectations have a positive effect on Career Orientation Intention.

H3a: Work Environment has a positive effect on Career Motivation.

H3b: Work Environment has a positive effect on Career Orientation Intention.

H4a: Person Job Fit has a positive effect on Career Motivation.

H4b: Person Job Fit has a positive effect on Career Orientation Intention.

H5: Social Influence has a positive effect on Career Orientation Intention.

H6: Career Motivation has a positive effect on Career Orientation Intention.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Sample and Data Collection

After the survey period concluded, a total of 415 questionnaires were collected. Data cleaning was conducted by removing questionnaires with excessive missing responses to mandatory items. The data screening results indicated that 22 questionnaires failed to meet the required criteria due to missing critical information and were therefore excluded. The survey participants were undergraduate students from universities offering economics-related programs in Vietnam. The sample included students from the first year to the final year of study, with the majority being third- and fourth-year students. Participants represented various specializations, including Finance, Marketing, Business Administration, and International Business. This diversity enhances the representativeness of the sample within the population of economics students. The final valid sample comprised 393 questionnaires (102 males and 291 females), representing 94.7% of the total responses collected. This sample size exceeds the minimum requirement of 70 observations recommended by (J. F. Hair et al., 2017) for PLS-SEM analysis. Accordingly, a sample size of n = 393 is considered sufficiently large to ensure statistical reliability and representativeness of the population of economics students.

3.2. Data Analysis Technique

The research utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), a commonly used data analysis method in a variety of research areas. PLS-SEM was chosen for this study due to its ability to work without assuming multivariate normality (J. F. Hair et al., 2019) and is particularly suitable for prediction-oriented research and hypothesis testing (J. Hair & Alamer, 2022). The analysis of data was performed with SmartPLS 4, utilizing a two-step approach. Initially, the measurement model was assessed to determine the dependability and accuracy of the elements. Subsequently, the structural model was scrutinized to validate the assumed connections between the elements.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Measurement Model: Assesses the reliability and validity of the constructs.

Based on the proposed threshold, the outer loadings of all observed variables are valid, gain the standard and no variables are eliminated from the model. The results of the model are reflected in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Outer Loadings of Observed Variables in the Measurement Model

	DEV	ENV	FIT	INT	MOT	PAY	SOC
DEV1	0.780						
DEV2	0.819						
DEV3	0.822						
DEV4	0.780						
ENV1		0.786					
ENV2		0.810					
ENV3		0.812					
ENV4		0.856					
ENV5		0.791					
FIT1			0.827				
FIT2			0.838				
FIT3			0.849				
FIT4			0.812				
FIT5			0.822				
INT1				0.804			
INT2				0.842			
INT3				0.788			
INT4				0.825			
INT5				0.777			
MOT1					0.849		

	DEV	ENV	FIT	INT	MOT	PAY	SOC
MOT2					0.859		
MOT3					0.861		
MOT4					0.844		
PAY1						0.816	
PAY2						0.831	
PAY3						0.854	
PAY4						0.826	
SOC1							0.706
SOC2							0.826
SOC3							0.791
SOC4							0.804
SOC5							0.787

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that all observed variables in the model exhibit satisfactory outer loadings, with values ranging from 0.706 to 0.861. Among these, 31 indicators have outer loadings equal to or exceeding 0.708, which is considered the ideal threshold. Only the indicator SOC1 has a loading of 0.706, which is slightly below the ideal cut-off but remains within the acceptable range and was therefore retained, as the composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) of the SOC construct both meet the recommended criteria. At the construct level, the indicators of career motivation (MOT) demonstrate the highest and most consistent outer loadings (0.844-0.861), whereas the social influence (SOC) construct shows the greatest variability in loadings (0.706-0.826).

Apart from analyzing the accuracy of the measurement model based on the outer loadings of the observed indicators, internal consistency reliability was also assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). Just like with outer loadings, it is necessary for both CA and CR values to exceed the widely accepted threshold of 0.7 or above (J. F. Hair et al., 2014). The results show that all components in the model meet the necessary reliability standards. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was utilized to assess convergent validity. According to J. F. Hair et al. (2019) convergent validity is established when AVE values reach or exceed the recommended threshold of 0.5. In this study, all constructs met this criterion, confirming adequate convergent validity. The results of reliability and conergent validity of the measurement model are shown in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2. Reliability (CA, CR) and Convergent Validity (AVE) of the Measurement Scales

	CA	CR	AVE
DEV	0.838	0.892	0.674
PAY	0.852	0.900	0.693
ENV	0.870	0.906	0.658
FIT	0.887	0.917	0.688
SOC	0.842	0.888	0.614
MOT	0.876	0.915	0.728
INT	0.866	0.903	0.652

Table 2 illustrates that the measurement scales in the model meet the criteria for reliability and convergent validity. The values for Cronbach's Alpha (CA) range from 0.838 to 0.887, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7. Similarly, the Composite Reliability (CR) values fall between 0.888 and 0.917, indicating a strong internal consistency. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are above 0.5, ranging from 0.614 to 0.728. This suggests that the latent constructs explain a significant amount of the variation in their observed indicators. In conclusion, the measurement scales have been confirmed as reliable and demonstrate satisfactory convergent validity, establishing a solid foundation for the structural model analysis using PLS-SEM.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Based on the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	DEV	ENV	FIT	INT	MOT	PAY	SOC
DEV	**0.821**						
ENV	0.705	**0.811**					
FIT	0.725	0.773	**0.830**				
INT	0.679	0.697	0.757	**0.807**			
MOT	0.703	0.718	0.802	0.826	**0.854**		
PAY	0.649	0.774	0.673	0.687	0.676	**0.832**	
SOC	0.658	0.733	0.762	0.683	0.682	0.681	**0.784**

Table 3 demonstrates that discriminant validity is established for all measurement scales in accordance with the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Specifically, the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with all other constructs in the model. These findings confirm that each latent construct is clearly distinct, measures a unique concept, and does not exhibit conceptual overlap with other constructs, thereby satisfying the requirements for discriminant validity in PLS-SEM analysis.

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratios Among Research Constructs

	DEV	ENV	FIT	INT	MOT	PAY	SOC
DEV							
ENV	0.824						
FIT	0.840	0.879					
INT	0.792	0.800	0.861				
MOT	0.819	0.822	0.910	0.947			
PAY	0.766	0.898	0.771	0.797	0.781		
SOC	0.784	0.859	0.881	0.798	0.794	0.804	

The results reported in Table 4 indicate that most construct pairs exhibit HTMT values below the threshold of 0.85, suggesting satisfactory discriminant validity. However, several construct pairs display HTMT values exceeding 0.85 and therefore warrant further examination. Specifically, the MOT-INT pair shows the highest HTMT value (0.947), followed by FIT-MOT (0.910). Other construct pairs exceeding the 0.85 threshold include ENV-PAY (0.898), FIT-ENV (0.879), FIT-SOC (0.881), INT-FIT (0.861), and SOC-ENV (0.859).

Despite some HTMT values surpassing the conservative threshold of 0.85, discriminant validity of the constructs in the model is still supported for several reasons. First, all constructs satisfy the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Second, the relatively high HTMT values are theoretically justifiable given the conceptual proximity among the constructs. Third, none of the HTMT values reaches 1.0 or exceeds the absolute threshold. Finally, these results are consistent with findings reported in prior studies. Collectively, these considerations support the continuation of structural model analysis with an acceptable level of confidence.

4.2. Structural Model: Tests the hypothesized relationships between constructs

The variance inflation factor (VIF) is employed to assess the degree of multicollinearity in the structural model, where R^2 represents the coefficient of determination obtained when regressing an independent variable on the remaining independent variables. According to (J. F. Hair et al., 2019) the recommended VIF thresholds are as follows: VIF values below 3 are considered ideal; values between 3 and 5 are acceptable but warrant caution; and values above 5 indicate serious multicollinearity issues that require corrective action.

Table 5. Results of the Multicollinearity Assessment (VIF)

Structural relationships	VIF	Evaluation
DEV → MOT	2.440	Acceptable
PAY → MOT	2.660	Acceptable
ENV → MOT	3.653	Acceptable
FIT → MOT	2.987	Acceptable
DEV → INT	2.567	Acceptable
PAY → INT	2.831	Acceptable
ENV → INT	3.796	Acceptable

Structural relationships	VIF	Evaluation
FIT → INT	4.244	Acceptable
SOC → INT	2.875	Acceptable
MOT → INT	3.283	Acceptable

The data in Table 5 shows that all the relationships between variables in the model have VIF values under 5.0, varying from 2.440 to 4.244. This indicates that there are no significant issues with multicollinearity among the antecedent variables in the model, and the independent variables can exist together without significantly impacting the estimation of path coefficients. According to Chin, (1998) and J. F. Hair et al. (2011) the evaluation criteria for the coefficient of determination (R^2) in social and behavioral research are as follows: $R^2 = 0.75$ is considered substantial, $R^2 = 0.50$ moderate, and $R^2 = 0.25$ weak. However, it should be noted that these benchmarks are context-dependent. In behavioral and psychological research, R^2 values ranging from 0.40 to 0.60 are often regarded as satisfactory due to the complexity and multidimensional nature of human behavior

Table 6. Results of the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Adjusted R^2

Dependent variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Evaluation
MOT	0.608	0.604	Moderate - Strong
INT	0.751	0.747	Strong

The results presented in Table 6 indicate that the model exhibits strong explanatory power for both endogenous variables. Specifically, the construct career motivation (MOT) achieves an R^2 value of 0.608, indicating that the four antecedent variables (DEV, PAY, ENV, and FIT) jointly explain 60.8% of the variance in career motivation. This value falls between the "moderate" (0.50) and "substantial" (0.75) levels and is therefore considered satisfactory. The remaining 39.2% of the variance in MOT may be attributed to other factors not included in the model, such as personality traits, work experience, family economic conditions, or other psychological factors.

Notably, the construct career orientation intention (INT) records an R^2 value of 0.751, indicating that the model explains 75.1% of the variance in career intention. This represents a highly robust result in behavioral research and meets the threshold for a "substantial" level according to Chin (1998). The six antecedent variables (DEV, PAY, ENV, FIT, SOC, and MOT) collectively account for the majority of the variation in students' career orientation intentions, demonstrating that the integrated model grounded in three theoretical frameworks (SCCT, TPB, and SDT) is highly effective in explaining the phenomenon under investigation.

The effect size (f^2) measures the extent to which a specific independent variable contributes to an endogenous variable, thereby complementing the overall explanatory power indicated by the R^2 coefficient. While R^2 reflects the collective explanatory strength of the entire model, f^2 captures the unique contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable.

Table 7. Results of the Effect Size (f^2)

Structural relationship	f^2	Effect size	Effect size
DEV → MOT	0.023	Small	Meaningful effect
PAY → MOT	0.041	Small	Meaningful effect
ENV → MOT	0.027	Small	Meaningful effect
FIT → MOT	0.371	Large	Strong effect
DEV → INT	0.007	Not significant	-
PAY → INT	0.010	Not significant	-
ENV → INT	0.010	Not significant	-
FIT → INT	0.055	Small	Meaningful effect
SOC → INT	0.063	Small	Meaningful effect

The results presented in Table 7 reveal clear differences in the magnitude of effects among the variables in the model. Most notably, career fit (FIT) exhibits an f^2 value of 0.371 in its relationship with career motivation (MOT), which represents a large effect size according to Cohen's (1988) criteria. This indicates that removing FIT from the model would result in a substantial reduction in the R^2 value of MOT. Accordingly, career fit

emerges as the most influential factor in fostering students' career motivation, which is consistent with Self-Determination Theory in highlighting the role of perceived fit in satisfying individuals' needs for autonomy and competence.

Career motivation (MOT) shows an f^2 value of 0.238 in its relationship with career orientation intention (INT), corresponding to a medium effect size. This relationship represents the second-largest effect size in the model and provides strong support for the mediating role of motivation. The variables DEV, PAY, and ENV display f^2 values ranging from 0.023 to 0.041 in their relationships with MOT, indicating small but meaningful effects ($f^2 > 0.02$). These findings suggest that development opportunities, income, and the work environment all contribute to the formation of career motivation, although their influence is weaker than that of career fit. This pattern aligns with SDT's distinction between extrinsic motivation (e.g., PAY and ENV) and intrinsic motivation, which is more strongly driven by perceived career fit.

Regarding the direct effects on career orientation intention (INT), only FIT ($f^2 = 0.055$), SOC ($f^2 = 0.063$), and MOT ($f^2 = 0.238$) demonstrate meaningful effect sizes. In contrast, DEV, PAY, and ENV exhibit f^2 values below 0.02 in their direct relationships with INT, indicating negligible direct effects. This suggests that these factors do not directly influence career intention but instead exert their effects through the mediating role of career motivation. This issue will be examined in greater detail in the mediation analysis section. Compared with prior studies, the f^2 results of the present research are largely consistent with existing findings. Chowdhury et al. (2025) reported an f^2 value of 0.38 for the relationship between person environment fit and attitude, which is closely comparable to the f^2 value of FIT → MOT (0.371) observed in this study. Similarly, Ab Hamid et al. (2022) reported an f^2 value of 0.71 for person-job fit, which is higher but was obtained within a more parsimonious model. Collectively, these comparisons reinforce the pivotal role of career fit in career orientation models.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing

The bootstrapping procedure is employed in PLS-SEM to estimate standard errors and to test the statistical significance of path coefficients. Bootstrapping is a resampling technique with replacement from the original dataset to generate a large number of subsamples, which allows for the estimation of the sampling distributions of the model parameters. In this study, bootstrapping was performed with 5,000 subsamples, as recommended by J. F. Hair et al. (2019) to ensure the stability and accuracy of the estimates. The results of the PLS-SEM structural model are shown in Figure 2, demonstrating the connections between the variables and the estimated path coefficients. The findings from testing the hypotheses, such as path coefficients, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals, can be found in Table 8.

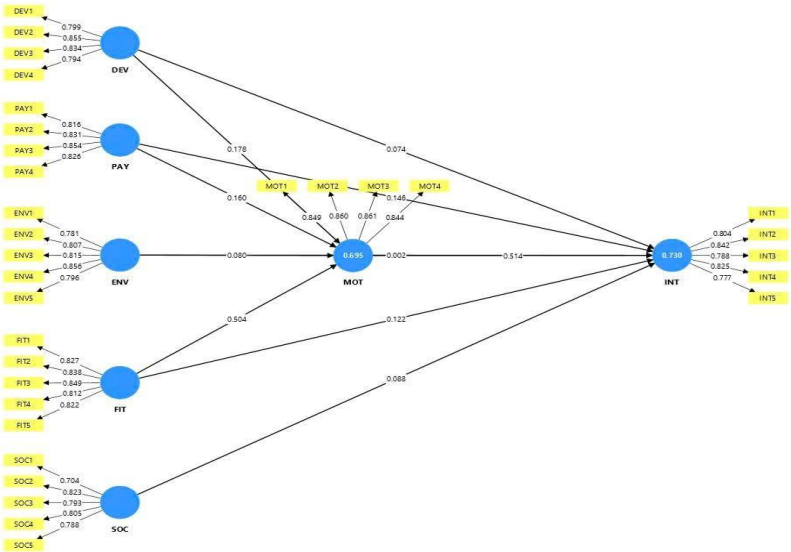

Figure 2. Results of the PLS-SEM Structural Model

Table 8. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	β	t-value	p-value	CI 95%	Conclusion
H1a	0.115	1.842	0.066	[-0.008; 0.237]	Rejected
H1b	0.061	1.098	0.272	[-0.048; 0.169]	Rejected
H2a	0.158	2.826	0.005	[0.049; 0.267]	Supported
H2b	0.082	1.447	0.148	[-0.030; 0.193]	Rejected
H3a	0.140	2.227	0.026*	[0.018; 0.263]	Supported
H3b	0.079	1.273	0.203	[-0.043; 0.201]	Rejected
H4a	0.485	8.419	0.000	[0.373; 0.598]	Supported
H4b	0.200	3.015	0.003	[0.070; 0.330]	Supported
H5	0.186	3.615	0.000	[0.086; 0.288]	Supported
H6	0.416	5.881	0.000	[0.278; 0.556]	Supported

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study examined the factors influencing career orientation among economics students in Vietnam using a Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. The hypothesis testing results reveal a differentiated pattern of relationships among the proposed determinants. Specifically, hypotheses H2a, H3a, H4a, H4b, H5, and H6 were supported, while H1a, H1b, H2b, and H3b were not supported. These findings indicate that income expectations, work environment, and person-job fit significantly influence career motivation, whereas only person-job fit and social influence exert direct effects on career orientation intention. Notably, career motivation demonstrates a strong and significant direct effect on career orientation intention, confirming its central mediating role in the proposed framework. Drawing on established theoretical foundations, the proposed model integrated job-related characteristics, social influences, and individual psychological factors to provide a comprehensive explanation of students' career orientation.

The findings indicate that career orientation is influenced by job-related factors, social influence, and individual psychological resources. Job attributes including career development opportunities, income expectations, work environment, and person-job fit significantly shape students' career preferences. Social influences from family, lecturers, and society also remain important, reflecting the contextual dynamics of emerging economies. In addition, individual factors such as career self-efficacy and motivation play a significant role, emphasizing the importance of internal beliefs and motivation in career decision-making. Overall, the results contribute empirical evidence from Vietnam and demonstrate the usefulness of PLS-SEM for examining career orientation within a multidimensional framework among economics students in a developing country context.

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for universities, educators, and policymakers. First, higher education institutions should place greater emphasis on integrating career development components into academic programs, including experiential learning, internships, and industry-based projects, to enhance students' perceptions of career development opportunities and person job fit. Second, universities should strengthen collaboration with employers and industry partners to provide students with accurate information about income prospects, working conditions, and career pathways. Such cooperation can help reduce information asymmetry and support more informed career decisions among students.

Third, given the significant role of social influence, career guidance initiatives should actively involve families, alumni, and industry professionals through career talks, mentoring programs, and networking events. This approach is particularly relevant in collectivist cultural contexts, where social expectations strongly affect career choices. Finally, universities should invest in developing students' psychological resources by offering training programs aimed at enhancing career self efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Career counseling services, skills development workshops, and personalized guidance can help students build confidence and sustain motivation in pursuing suitable career paths. By addressing both external conditions and internal psychological factors, these managerial implications can support more effective career orientation and improve employment outcomes for economics graduates in Vietnam.

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