







“Factors associated with academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam: The mediating role of individual professional development”

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FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG POLITICAL SCIENCE FACULTY IN VIETNAM: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Abstract

This study examines how institutional policy support, academic work environment, access to professional development opportunities, and academic compensation and incentives are associated with individual academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam, while also testing the mediating role of individual professional development. The analysis is based on 415 valid survey responses collected from political science faculty working in Vietnamese higher education institutions and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling. The results show that academic compensation and incentives emerge as the strongest positive predictors of individual academic performance ($\beta = 0.301$), followed by academic work environment ($\beta = 0.289$), individual professional development ($\beta = 0.189$), institutional policy support ($\beta = 0.165$), and access to professional development opportunities ($\beta = 0.081$). Individual professional development also positively predicts academic performance and partially mediates the relationships between the four contextual factors and academic performance. The model explains 30.7% of the variance in individual professional development and 52.0% of the variance in individual academic performance. These findings suggest that incentive systems, supportive academic environments, and meaningful professional development are important factors associated with academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam.

Keywords

higher education, professional development, work environment, incentives, institutional support, political science, performance

JEL Classification

I23, I28, J24

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, higher education systems have undergone profound transformations driven by globalization, digitalization, and increasing demands for knowledge creation and societal impact. Universities are no longer evaluated solely based on their teaching functions but are increasingly expected to demonstrate stronger research performance, innovation capacity, and contributions to socio-economic development. Within this evolving context, academic staff play a central role, as their teaching effectiveness and research productivity are closely linked to the overall performance and competitiveness of higher education institutions. Consequently, understanding the factors associated with individual academic performance has become a strategic priority for universities, particularly in developing and transitional economies.

In Vietnam, the higher education sector has experienced rapid expansion alongside structural reforms aimed at enhancing quality, autonomy, accountability, and international integration. These reform priorities are reflected in the Law on Higher Education No. 125/2025/QH15, which provides a legal framework for higher education activities, the organization and operation of higher education institutions, and the rights and responsibilities of relevant stakeholders. The law also reinforces the role of higher education institutions in teaching, research, governance, and quality assurance, thereby placing greater expectations on faculty performance and institutional responsiveness (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2025). Political science education occupies a distinctive position within this system due to its close linkage with ideological education, public governance, and policy-oriented knowledge. Unlike many other academic fields, political science faculty are expected not only to perform conventional teaching and research functions but also to contribute to political theory education, civic and ideological formation, and policy-relevant scholarship. Faculty members in this field are therefore required to ensure high-quality teaching aligned with national educational objectives while also producing research outputs that support governance and policy development.

However, despite these expectations, achieving strong individual academic performance remains a persistent challenge. This situation reflects a range of structural and organizational constraints, including limitations in institutional governance, academic work conditions, resource allocation, professional development opportunities, and incentive mechanisms. Against this background, a central research problem emerges concerning how institutional and organizational conditions are associated with individual academic performance in higher education systems undergoing transition. While universities increasingly implement various support mechanisms, their effectiveness in supporting individual academic outcomes remains insufficiently explained. In particular, there is limited understanding of how these conditions are translated into stronger teaching effectiveness and research productivity at the individual level. This issue is especially relevant in Vietnam, where higher education reforms emphasize autonomy, accountability, quality assurance, performance-based evaluation, and greater faculty research engagement.

Despite growing attention to institutional reforms, existing research has not provided a comprehensive explanation of how contextual conditions relate to individual academic performance within transitional higher education systems. This gap constrains both theoretical development and policy effectiveness, as it limits the ability to design effective strategies to enhance faculty development and institutional performance. The gap is even more evident among political science faculty, whose academic performance is shaped by both general higher education reforms and field-specific expectations for ideological education, governance, and policy-oriented scholarship. Therefore, examining the interaction between contextual conditions, individual professional development, and individual academic outcomes represents an important research direction in the study of higher education systems undergoing transformation.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Academic performance in higher education has been conceptualized as a multidimensional construct reflecting faculty members' effectiveness in both teaching and research activities (Shin & Cummings, 2010; Abramo et al., 2011). Rather than being solely determined by individual abilities, academic performance is increasingly understood as an outcome shaped by the interaction between individual capabilities and the institutional

contexts in which academics operate (Bland et al., 2005; Tight, 2012). Prior studies have consistently shown that teaching quality and research productivity represent the two core dimensions of academic performance, both of which contribute to the overall effectiveness of higher education institutions (Hattie & Marsh, 1996; Ramsden, 2003). Furthermore, faculty performance is embedded within broader organizational systems, where institutional arrangements and work conditions are associated with how individuals allocate effort and develop competencies (Bland et al., 2005;

Fox, 1992). Recent studies also emphasize that academic performance reflects a combination of productivity, teaching effectiveness, and knowledge transfer activities in modern universities (Teichler, 2017; OECD, 2019). This perspective highlights the need to examine academic performance through an integrated framework that simultaneously considers contextual factors and individual-level mechanisms.

Institutional policy support has been identified as a fundamental contextual factor for faculty outcomes, as it shapes the regulatory and resource environment in which academic activities take place. Institutional policy support includes governance structures, research funding systems, and performance regulations that shape faculty behavior and expectations (Altbach, 2016). In higher education systems undergoing reform, such support provides direction and stability, enabling academics to engage in long-term teaching and research activities (Salmi, 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that effective policy frameworks are positively related to research productivity and teaching quality by aligning institutional priorities with individual efforts (Teichler et al., 2013; OECD, 2019). In addition, institutional governance quality has been shown to be linked to academic autonomy and research output, particularly in transitional economies (Shattock, 2010). However, the relevance of institutional policy support for individual outcomes depends on how faculty members internalize and utilize it. In Vietnam, this issue should be understood within the broader reform agenda of university autonomy, accountability, accreditation, and quality assurance, where institutional capacity, public disclosure, and implementation mechanisms are central to translating policy support into faculty-level outcomes (Pham et al., 2022; Ta et al., 2022; Bui & Nguyen, 2023). In the context of political science education, policy support is particularly important because faculty members often operate within institutional expectations that extend beyond teaching and research to include ideological education, public governance, and policy-oriented academic work. Political ideology education remains an important component of higher education in Vietnam, further differentiating the professional expectations placed on political science and political theory faculty (Ngo, 2024).

The academic work environment represents another critical contextual factor related to faculty performance. It encompasses collegial relationships, leadership support, and organizational culture, all of which shape daily academic practices (Ramsden, 1998). A supportive academic work environment facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, and innovation in both teaching and research activities (Shin & Jung, 2014). Positive organizational climates have also been associated with higher levels of motivation, job satisfaction, and professional engagement among faculty members (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). Studies on academic work settings further indicate that leadership style and collegial governance are significantly related to research productivity and teaching commitment (Bryman, 2007). In contrast, fragmented or unsupportive environments may constrain interaction and limit opportunities for professional growth, thereby weakening the conditions for achieving academic effectiveness. For political science faculty, the academic work environment may be especially relevant because teaching and research in this field often require collegial exchange, interdisciplinary dialogue, and institutional support for policy-relevant scholarship.

Access to professional development opportunities is widely recognized as a key enabler of faculty capability enhancement. These opportunities include training programs, academic workshops, research collaborations, and exchange activities that allow academics to update their knowledge and skills (Desimone, 2009). Continuous access to professional development opportunities supports adaptation to evolving academic standards and promotes lifelong learning (Avalos, 2011). Empirical studies have shown that participation in such activities is linked to improved teaching practices and increases research engagement (Guskey, 2002; Postareff et al., 2007). Moreover, structured faculty development programs have been found to enhance both pedagogical effectiveness and scholarly productivity in higher education institutions (Steinert et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the impact of these opportunities depends on the extent to which they lead to actual individual development rather than mere participation. Thus, access alone may not be sufficient, as professional development opportunities need to be relevant, sustained, and meaning-

fully connected to faculty members' teaching and research responsibilities.

Academic compensation and incentives constitute an important mechanism for aligning individual behavior with institutional objectives. In higher education, compensation systems typically include salaries, research funding, publication rewards, and promotion pathways (Decramer et al., 2013; Stephan, 2015). Well-designed incentive systems encourage faculty members to invest greater effort in teaching and research activities, thereby creating conditions conducive to stronger academic performance (Osterloh & Frey, 2000). Empirical evidence also indicates that performance-based funding and reward systems are significantly related to publication output and research intensity (Auranen & Nieminen, 2010). Moreover, the perceived fairness and transparency of these systems significantly influence motivation and engagement (Decramer et al., 2013). Conversely, poorly structured incentives may lead to reduced commitment and lower productivity. This issue is particularly relevant in reforming higher education systems, where performance evaluation, research productivity, and promotion criteria are increasingly emphasized.

While these contextual factors provide essential external conditions, their relationships with academic performance may operate indirectly (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Individual professional development is a key mechanism through which faculty members transform institutional resources and opportunities into enhanced competencies (Guskey, 2002). It involves continuous learning through training, research activities, and collaboration, enabling academics to adapt to changing educational and research demands (Avalos, 2011). From a capability perspective, professional development reflects the accumulation of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to respond to dynamic academic environments (Eraut, 2004). From this perspective, individual professional development reflects the extent to which faculty members internalize and utilize available institutional support (Opfer & Pedder, 2011), thereby acting as a bridge between external conditions and performance outcomes. This mediating mechanism is theoretically important because institutional resources and organizational support are unlikely to translate automati-

cally into stronger academic performance unless they are converted into individual capabilities, practices, and professional engagement.

In addition to its mediating role, individual professional development is also expected to be directly related to academic performance. Faculty members who actively engage in professional development are more likely to adopt innovative teaching practices and achieve higher levels of research productivity (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). Continuous professional learning also enhances adaptability and long-term effectiveness in dynamic academic environments (Day, 2002). Empirical evidence from a systematic review and meta-analysis further demonstrates that faculty development programs have a substantial positive impact on knowledge, skills, and professional competence, with a reported effect size of approximately 0.73 (Bilal et al., 2019). This evidence provides quantitative support for the role of individual professional development as an important factor related to academic performance, particularly in higher education systems where faculty members face increasing expectations for both teaching quality and research output.

Overall, the literature suggests that individual academic performance is linked to institutional policy support, academic work environment, access to professional development opportunities, and academic compensation and incentives, with individual professional development acting as a central linking mechanism. However, Vietnam-focused studies have mainly addressed university autonomy, accountability, quality assurance, public disclosure, and the politics of education at the institutional or system level (Nguyen et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2022; Ta et al., 2022; London & Duong, 2023). Less is known about how these contextual conditions relate to faculty professional development and academic performance at the individual level, particularly among political science faculty. This limitation highlights the need for an integrated model that captures both direct and indirect relationships through professional development.

To address this research gap, this study develops and tests an integrated research framework that examines both direct and indirect relationships among these variables.

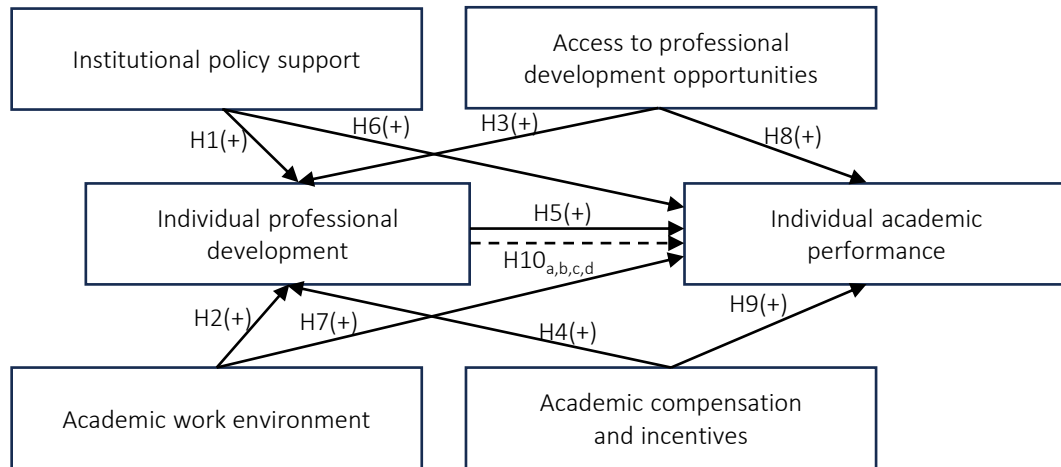


Figure 1. Proposed research framework

The purpose of this study is to examine how institutional policy support, academic work environment, access to professional development opportunities, and academic compensation and incentives relate to individual academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam, as well as to investigate the mediating role of individual professional development.

Based on the above, the following hypotheses are proposed (Figure 1):

- H1: Institutional policy support is positively related to individual professional development.*
- H2: Academic work environment is positively related to individual professional development.*
- H3: Access to professional development opportunities is positively related to individual professional development.*
- H4: Academic compensation and incentives are positively related to individual professional development.*
- H5: Individual professional development is positively related to individual academic performance.*
- H6: Institutional policy support is positively related to individual academic performance.*
- H7: Academic work environment is positively related to individual academic performance.*

H8: Access to professional development opportunities is positively related to individual academic performance.

H9: Academic compensation and incentives are positively related to individual academic performance.

H10a: Individual professional development mediates the relationship between institutional policy support and individual academic performance.

H10b: Individual professional development mediates the relationship between academic work environment and individual academic performance.

H10c: Individual professional development mediates the relationship between access to professional development opportunities and individual academic performance.

H10d: Individual professional development mediates the relationship between academic compensation and incentives and individual academic performance.

The proposed research framework is presented in Figure 1.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design using survey data collected from political science

faculty members in Vietnam. A survey-based approach is appropriate given the nature of the constructs under investigation. The key constructs, including individual academic performance, institutional policy support, academic work environment, access to professional development opportunities, academic compensation and incentives, and individual professional development, are latent and operate at the individual level. As such, they are appropriately operationalized through faculty members' perceptions and professional experiences using multi-item scales adapted from established studies. Because these constructs cannot be fully captured using a single objective or secondary data source, individual academic performance in this study is understood as self-reported academic performance rather than an objective measure based on administrative records, publication databases, or student evaluations. The proposed research model is estimated using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). This method is appropriate for examining complex structural relationships, particularly those involving mediating relationships, while accommodating data that may not meet strict distributional assumptions (Hair et al., 2019, 2022). In addition, PLS-SEM is well-suited for examining prediction-oriented relationships and supporting theory development in models comprising multiple interrelated constructs.

The target population consists of political science faculty members working in universities and higher education institutions in Vietnam. Eligible participants were faculty members whose academic work was related to political science, political theory, public governance, public administration, or closely related fields, and who were directly involved in teaching and/or research activities. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered using a mixed-mode survey approach, combining online and in-person distribution (Dillman et al., 2014). The online questionnaire was distributed through academic networks, institutional mailing lists, and professional contacts, while printed questionnaires were delivered with the support of university-based coordinators. A combination of purposive and convenience sampling was employed to reach respondents with relevant academic and disciplinary experience (Etikan, 2016). Given the absence

of a complete national sampling frame for political science faculty in Vietnam, this non-probability sampling strategy was considered suitable for reaching the intended respondent group, although it limits the generalizability of the findings. A pilot survey was conducted with a small group of faculty members to refine the wording and ensure the measurement items were clear and contextually relevant (Presser et al., 2004). The main survey was conducted from March to December 2025. Of the 426 returned questionnaires, 415 valid responses were included in the analysis after data screening. Questionnaires were excluded when they contained substantial missing responses, inconsistent response patterns, or incomplete information on key constructs. The final sample size meets the recommended requirements for PLS-SEM analysis and provides sufficient statistical power for estimating a model with multiple constructs and mediating relationships (Hair et al., 2022).

Measurement items for all constructs were adapted from prior established instruments in the literature and modified to reflect the characteristics of Vietnam's higher education context. The wording of the items was modified to fit the context of the political science faculty while retaining the conceptual meaning of the original constructs. The complete list of measurement items and supporting sources is provided in Appendix 1 to ensure transparency and replicability. Institutional policy support captures the extent to which institutional regulations, governance mechanisms, and resource allocation support faculty teaching and research. The academic work environment reflects collegial relationships, leadership support, and the institution's organizational culture. Access to professional development opportunities refers to the availability of training programs, academic exchanges, and research-related activities. Academic compensation and incentives represent both financial and non-financial rewards linked to teaching and research performance. Individual professional development reflects faculty engagement in continuous learning and capability enhancement, while individual academic performance captures self-reported teaching effectiveness and research productivity. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Likert, 1932). All constructs were specified as reflective, consistent

with prior research in higher education and organizational studies.

Common method bias was considered because all variables were collected from the same respondents using a single questionnaire. Following Podsakoff et al. (2003), procedural remedies were incorporated into the survey design, including confidentiality assurance, voluntary participation, neutral item wording, and the organization of constructs into separate item blocks. In addition, a full collinearity assessment was conducted in SmartPLS. For this purpose, a dummy dependent construct was created, and all latent constructs were specified as predictors of this dummy construct. The resulting VIF values were examined as a diagnostic for potential common method bias. As reported in Appendix 2, all full collinearity VIF values ranged from 1.114 to 1.717, well below the recommended threshold of 3.3, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to pose a serious threat to the findings.

Table 1. Sample characteristics (n = 415)

Category		Number of Responses	Percentage (%)
Academic Rank	Lecturer	162	39.0
	Senior Lecturer	136	32.8
	Associate Professor	94	22.7
	Professor	23	5.5
Years of Experience	< 5 years	52	12.5
	5-10 years	144	34.7
	11-15 years	126	30.4
	> 15 years	93	22.4
Institution Type	Public Universities	218	52.5
	Political Academies	142	34.2
	Private Universities	55	13.3

Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the survey sample (n = 415) across academic rank, experience, and institution type. Lecturers (162) and senior lecturers (136) constitute the majority, while associate professors (94) and professors (23) account for smaller proportions, reflecting the typical structure of higher education in Vietnam. Most respondents have 5-15 years of experience, indicating a relatively experienced academic workforce. In terms of institutional affiliation, public universities (218) dominate the sample,

followed by political academies (142) and private universities (55). Overall, the sample includes respondents with different academic ranks, levels of teaching experience, and institutional affiliations. This sample is appropriate for examining the proposed relationships among political science faculty within the PLS-SEM framework.

Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4.1 following a two-stage procedure. The measurement model was examined to ensure that the indicators adequately represent their underlying constructs. Indicator reliability was verified through outer loadings, while scale consistency was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability. The extent of variance captured by each construct was assessed using the average variance extracted, and discriminant validity was further confirmed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT).

The structural relationships among constructs were then analyzed. Collinearity was assessed using variance inflation factors, while path coefficients and R² were used to evaluate the model’s explanatory power. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was applied to assess the significance of direct and indirect effects. The mediating role of individual professional development was determined based on the significance and confidence intervals of the indirect effects, following recommended PLS-SEM procedures (Hair et al., 2022).

3. RESULTS

Based on the 415 valid responses, the PLS-SEM results are reported in two sequential stages. The first stage assesses the reflective measurement model for indicator reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The second stage evaluates the structural model using collinearity diagnostics, direct and indirect effects, hypothesis testing, and coefficients of determination.

Table 2 summarizes the evaluation of the measurement model. The findings provide evidence on the adequacy of the indicators, the consistency of the measurement scales, and the extent to which each construct captures its underlying variance.

The strength of the relationships between indicators and their respective constructs is reflected in the outer loadings. All measurement items exhibit loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022), with values ranging from 0.718 to 0.951, indicating that the observed variables adequately represent their respective latent constructs.

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR). The results show that Cronbach’s alpha values range from 0.854 to 0.908, while composite reliability values range from 0.895 to 0.932. All values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2022), confirming satisfactory internal consistency. Convergent validity was examined using the average variance extracted (AVE). The AVE values for all constructs range from 0.631 to 0.735, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2022). The findings show that over

50% of the variance in the indicators is captured by their respective constructs, supporting convergent validity.

Overall, the results presented in Table 2 indicate that the measurement model satisfies all recommended criteria for reliability and validity, confirming the robustness and adequacy of the measurement scales. The constructs exhibit strong internal consistency and convergent validity, indicating that the indicators reliably capture their respective latent variables. These results support proceeding with the structural model analysis and hypothesis testing.

Following the assessment of reliability and convergent validity, discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT). As shown in Table 3, HTMT values range from 0.187 to 0.619, with the highest values observed for IAP-AWE (0.619), ACI-IAP (0.611), and IPD-IAP

Table 2. Assessment of measurement quality

No.	Construct	Outer loadings	α	CR	AVE	
1	Institutional policy support (IPS)	IPS1	0.823	0.899	0.925	0.712
		IPS2	0.858			
		IPS3	0.872			
		IPS4	0.856			
		IPS5	0.807			
2	Academic work environment (AWE)	AWE1	0.845	0.908	0.932	0.735
		AWE2	0.832			
		AWE3	0.756			
		AWE4	0.889			
		AWE5	0.951			
3	Access to professional development opportunities (APD)	APD1	0.798	0.869	0.905	0.656
		APD2	0.797			
		APD3	0.736			
		APD4	0.874			
		APD5	0.838			
4	Academic compensation and incentives (ACI)	ACI1	0.834	0.882	0.915	0.684
		ACI2	0.718			
		ACI3	0.788			
		ACI4	0.843			
		ACI5	0.937			
5	Individual professional development (IPD)	IPD1	0.840	0.890	0.920	0.698
		IPD2	0.809			
		IPD3	0.730			
		IPD4	0.869			
		IPD5	0.918			
6	Individual academic performance (IAP)	IAP1	0.851	0.854	0.895	0.631
		IAP2	0.792			
		IAP3	0.719			
		IAP4	0.826			
		IAP5	0.776			

(0.583), all of which remain well below the conservative threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2022). The results confirm that the constructs are empirically distinct. Therefore, the measurement model satisfies discriminant validity requirements and can be used for the analysis of structural relationships.

Table 3. Assessment of discriminant validity (HTMT criterion)

Variable	ACI	APD	AWE	IAP	IPD	IPS
ACI						
APD	0.327					
AWE	0.372	0.365				
IAP	0.611	0.394	0.619			
IPD	0.429	0.334	0.516	0.583		
IPS	0.348	0.187	0.324	0.469	0.371	

The structural model was evaluated by examining collinearity and the significance of direct effects. As reported in Table 4, all hypothesized direct relationships (H1-H9) are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), providing empirical support for the proposed theoretical framework. In addition, all variance inflation factor (VIF) values range from 1.161 to 1.443, which are well below the recommended threshold of 3 (Hair et al., 2022), indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in the model.

A more detailed examination shows that, for individual professional development (IPD), academic work environment (AWE) is the strongest positive predictor within the model ($\beta = 0.312$), followed by academic compensation and incentives (ACI) ($\beta = 0.194$), institutional policy support (IPS) ($\beta = 0.161$), and access to professional development opportunities (APD) ($\beta = 0.116$). These results suggest that a supportive academic environment is particularly relevant to faculty professional development.

Table 4. Direct effects and hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Relationship	Estimate	VIF	p-value	Conclusion
H1	IPS → IPD	0.161	1.161	0.001	Supported
H2	AWE → IPD	0.312	1.258	< 0.001	Supported
H3	APD → IPD	0.116	1.168	0.010	Supported
H4	ACI → IPD	0.194	1.238	< 0.001	Supported
H5	IPD → IAP	0.189	1.443	< 0.001	Supported
H6	IPS → IAP	0.165	1.199	< 0.001	Supported
H7	AWE → IAP	0.289	1.398	< 0.001	Supported
H8	APD → IAP	0.081	1.188	0.041	Supported
H9	ACI → IAP	0.301	1.292	< 0.001	Supported

For individual academic performance (IAP), academic compensation and incentives (ACI) emerge as the strongest positive predictor within the model ($\beta = 0.301$), followed by academic work environment (AWE) ($\beta = 0.289$), individual professional development (IPD) ($\beta = 0.189$), and institutional policy support (IPS) ($\beta = 0.165$). Access to professional development opportunities (APD) shows the weakest but still statistically significant relationship with IAP ($\beta = 0.081, p < 0.05$). These findings highlight the relevance of incentive mechanisms and the work environment in explaining individual academic performance within the model. Overall, the results provide empirical support for the hypothesized direct relationships and provide a basis for examining the mediating role of individual professional development.

The mediating role of individual professional development (IPD) was examined by analyzing the significance of indirect relationships. As shown in Table 5, all indirect relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting that IPD mediates the relationships between contextual factors and individual academic performance (IAP). Therefore, hypotheses H10a–H10d are supported.

The strongest indirect relationship is observed for the relationship between academic work environment (AWE) and individual academic performance through IPD ($\beta = 0.059, p < 0.001$), followed by academic compensation and incentives (ACI) ($\beta = 0.037, p < 0.01$) and institutional policy support (IPS) ($\beta = 0.030, p < 0.01$). Access to professional development opportunities (APD) shows the weakest indirect relationship ($\beta = 0.022, p < 0.05$), although it remains statistically significant. These results indicate that IPD partially mediates the relationships between con-

Table 5. Indirect effects and hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses	Path	Original sample	p-values	Conclusion
H10a	IPS → IPD → IAP	0.030	0.007	Supported
H10b	AWE → IPD → IAP	0.059	< 0.001	Supported
H10c	APD → IPD → IAP	0.022	0.030	Supported
H10d	ACI → IPD → IAP	0.037	0.003	Supported

textual factors and individual academic performance. In particular, a supportive academic work environment is related to academic performance both directly and indirectly through individual professional development. Overall, the findings suggest that IPD serves as a key mediating mechanism linking contextual factors to individual academic performance within the model.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to assess the explanatory power of the structural model (Hair et al., 2022). As shown in Table 6, the model demonstrates moderate explanatory power for the endogenous constructs. Specifically, the R^2 value for individual professional development (IPD) is 0.307 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.300$), indicating that institutional policy support, academic work environment, access to professional development opportunities, and academic compensation and incentives explain approximately 30.7% of the variance in IPD.

Table 6. R^2 and adjusted R^2 coefficients

Endogenous constructs	R^2	Adjusted R^2
IPD	0.307	0.300
IAP	0.520	0.514

For individual academic performance (IAP), the R^2 value is 0.520 (adjusted $R^2 = 0.514$), suggesting that the predictors included in the model explain 52.0% of the variance in IAP. This proportion is higher than that explained for IPD. In summary, these results show that the model accounts for variation in both individual professional development and individual academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnamese higher education.

Figure 2 presents the confirmed PLS-SEM framework. The results show that all direct paths are statistically significant, with academic work environment being the strongest predictor of individual professional development, and academic compen-

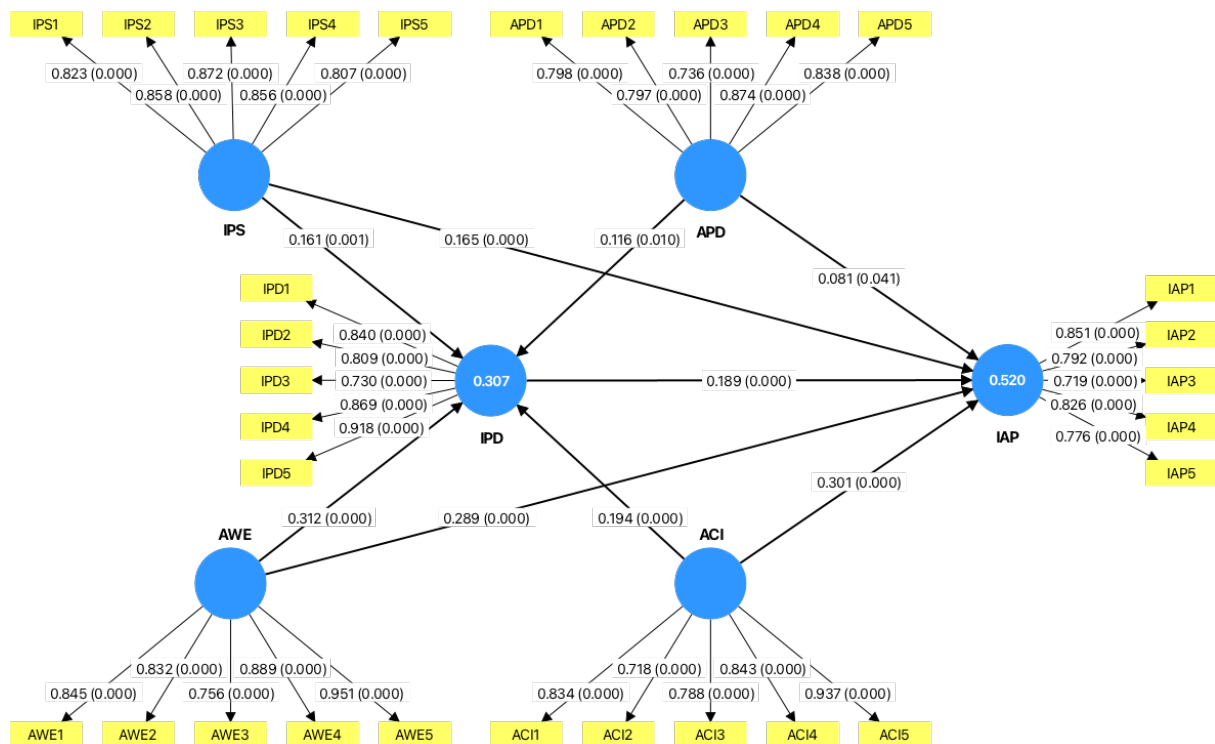


Figure 2. Confirmed research framework

sation and incentives being the strongest predictor of individual academic performance. The model explains 30.7% of the variance in individual professional development and 52.0% of the variance in individual academic performance.

4. DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide empirical support for the proposed research model and offer important insights into the factors associated with individual academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam. Overall, the findings suggest that both institutional and organizational factors are significantly related to academic performance, either directly or indirectly through individual professional development. This reinforces the argument that academic performance should be understood as an outcome of the interaction between contextual conditions and individual-level capability development rather than solely as a function of individual effort (Bland et al., 2005; Teichler, 2017).

The results indicate that the academic work environment (AWE) is the strongest positive predictor of individual professional development (IPD) and has a substantial positive relationship with individual academic performance (IAP). This finding highlights the critical role of collegial support, leadership, and organizational culture in shaping faculty outcomes. A supportive academic environment facilitates collaboration, knowledge sharing, and engagement in scholarly activities, thereby creating conditions conducive to both professional development and performance. This result is consistent with prior studies that emphasize the importance of academic climate and collegiality in supporting research productivity and teaching effectiveness (Shin & Jung, 2014). It also aligns with Bryman's (2007) findings, which argue that leadership and organizational practices are significantly related to academic performance.

Academic compensation and incentives (ACI) emerge as the strongest positive predictor of individual academic performance and are also significantly related to professional development. This suggests that incentive systems play a central role in aligning individual efforts with insti-

tutional objectives. In contexts such as Vietnam, where performance-based evaluation systems are increasingly emphasized, financial and non-financial rewards may encourage faculty members to enhance both teaching and research outputs. This finding is consistent with the literature on academic incentives, which highlights the relationship between reward structures, research productivity, and faculty behavior (Auranen & Nieminen, 2010; Stephan, 2015). Moreover, it supports the argument of Osterloh and Frey (2000) that well-designed incentive systems can effectively guide individual effort toward desired organizational outcomes.

Institutional policy support (IPS) demonstrates a significant, though comparatively moderate, positive relationship with both individual professional development and academic performance. This suggests that while governance frameworks, regulations, and resource allocation are important, their impact depends on how they are implemented and internalized at the individual level. This finding aligns with studies by Altbach (2016) and Salmi (2009), which argue that institutional policies provide essential structural conditions but do not automatically translate into improved performance without effective implementation mechanisms. In the Vietnamese higher education context, this result is particularly relevant, as policy reforms on autonomy, accountability, and quality assurance may create a supportive framework. However, their contribution to faculty outcomes depends on institutional-level implementation and faculty engagement.

Access to professional development opportunities (APD) has the weakest, though still significant, positive relationship with both IPD and IAP. This result implies that the mere availability of training programs and academic activities is insufficient to improve faculty outcomes substantially. Instead, the effectiveness of such opportunities depends on the extent to which faculty actively engage with and utilize them. This finding supports the argument of Desimone (2009) and Avalos (2011), who emphasize that the quality and relevance of professional development are more important than simple participation. For political science faculty, professional development opportunities may be particularly useful when they are closely connect-

ed to pedagogical innovation, research capacity, policy analysis, and the specific requirements of political and governance-related education.

Importantly, the study provides evidence that individual professional development (IPD) appears to play a significant mediating role within the model. The results indicate partial mediation, suggesting that institutional and organizational factors are linked to academic performance both directly and indirectly through professional development (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This finding is consistent with the perspective that professional development functions as a capability-building mechanism, enabling individuals to transform external resources into stronger competencies and academic practices (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Day, 2002; Teece, 2007). It also aligns with empirical evidence from recent meta-analyses demonstrating the positive effects of faculty development on knowledge, skills, and professional competence (Bilal et al., 2019).

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by integrating institutional, organizational, and individual-level factors into a unified framework, thereby extending existing research that often examines these factors in isolation. The findings provide empirical support for the view that academic performance is a multidimensional construct shaped by both contextual conditions and internal capability develop-

ment processes (Shin & Cummings, 2010; Teichler, 2017). In particular, the study highlights the central role of professional development as a mediating mechanism, bridging the gap between institutional conditions and individual outcomes. This contribution is especially relevant to research on higher education in transitional contexts, where institutional reforms may not directly translate into stronger individual outcomes unless they are accompanied by meaningful professional development processes.

From a practical perspective, the findings offer important implications for higher education institutions and policymakers in Vietnam. Universities should prioritize the development of supportive academic work environments and design transparent incentive systems that are aligned with teaching and research expectations. In addition, policies aimed at supporting faculty outcomes should focus not only on providing resources and opportunities but also on fostering meaningful engagement in professional development activities. Strengthening institutional mechanisms that facilitate the translation of external support into individual capability development may help create conditions for stronger academic performance in transitional higher education systems. However, given the cross-sectional and self-reported nature of the data, these implications should be interpreted as guidance for policy and institutional practice rather than as evidence of causal effects.

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the factors associated with individual academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam by integrating institutional, organizational, and individual-level factors. The findings provide empirical support for the proposed relationships, showing that institutional policy support, academic work environment, access to professional development opportunities, and academic compensation and incentives are positively related to academic performance, both directly and indirectly through individual professional development.

Among these factors, academic work environment and academic compensation and incentives emerge as the strongest positive predictors in the PLS-SEM model, underscoring the importance of organizational conditions and incentive structures in supporting faculty outcomes. Institutional policy support and access to professional development opportunities also show positive relationships with academic performance, although their relationships are comparatively weaker. Importantly, individual professional development appears to function as a key mediating mechanism within the model, partially linking contextual factors to academic performance.

Theoretically, this study contributes by developing an integrated framework that connects contextual factors with individual capability development. It highlights that academic performance is linked not only to external conditions but also to how these conditions are internalized through professional development processes.

Practically, the findings suggest that higher education institutions should prioritize supportive academic environments, transparent incentive systems, and high-quality professional development programs. Ensuring that institutional support is translated into meaningful individual development may help create conditions conducive to stronger academic performance.

This study has several limitations, including the use of cross-sectional data, reliance on self-reported measures, and a focus on a specific disciplinary context. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as evidence of statistical relationships rather than causal effects. Future research could employ longitudinal designs, incorporate objective performance indicators, and extend the analysis to other disciplines and national settings.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Vu Thi Kieu Ly, Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Vu Thi Trang, Tran Thi Hong Lieu.

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APPENDIX A

Survey Questionnaire, Measurement Items, and Supporting Sources

Hello Sir/Madam!

My name is Vu Thi Trang, Lecturer, Graduate Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam. This survey is conducted as part of a research project examining the determinants of individual academic performance among political science faculty in Vietnam, with particular attention to institutional settings and professional development processes.

Your responses will help provide insights into how institutional support, working conditions, development opportunities, and incentive mechanisms relate to teaching and research outcomes in higher education.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any question or discontinue your participation at any time. All responses will be used exclusively for research purposes and will remain confidential. The data will be analyzed and reported only in aggregated form, ensuring that no individual respondent can be identified.

Thank you for your time and valuable contribution.

PART 1: RESPONDENT PROFILE

1. Gender:

- Male
- Female

2. Age:

- Under 30
- From 30–40
- From 41–50
- Over 50

3. Academic rank:

- Lecturer
- Senior Lecturer
- Associate Professor
- Professor

4. Type of institution:

- Public university
- Political academy
- Private university

5. Years of teaching experience:

- Less than 5 years
- 5–10 years
- 11 – 15 years
- More than 15 years

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF ACADEMIC CONDITIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using a five-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Table A1. Assessment of academic conditions and performance

No.	Survey Statement	Code	1	2	3	4	5	Adapted from/ Supporting sources
1. Institutional policy support (IPS)								
1.1	The institution provides clear policies supporting teaching and research activities	IPS1						Altbach (2016); Salmi (2009); Teichler et al. (2013)
1.2	Institutional regulations facilitate academic autonomy in teaching and research	IPS2						
1.3	The institution provides sufficient resources to support academic activities	IPS3						
1.4	Policies related to research funding and evaluation are transparent and consistent	IPS4						
1.5	Institutional policies effectively encourage academic performance improvement	IPS5						
2. Academic work environment (AWE)								
2.1	The academic environment encourages collaboration among faculty members	AWE1						Bryman (2007); Johnsrud and Rosser (2002); Shin and Jung (2014)
2.2	Faculty members receive strong support from academic leadership	AWE2						
2.3	The organizational culture promotes innovation in teaching and research	AWE3						
2.4	There is a high level of trust and collegiality among colleagues	AWE4						
2.5	The working environment motivates faculty to improve performance	AWE5						
3. Access to professional development opportunities (APD)								
3.1	The institution provides regular training and development programs	APD1						Avalos (2011); Desimone (2009); Guskey (2002); Steinert et al. (2006)
3.2	Faculty have access to academic workshops and seminars	APD2						
3.3	Opportunities for research collaboration are readily available	APD3						
3.4	The institution supports participation in academic exchange programs	APD4						
3.5	Professional development opportunities meet the needs of faculty members	APD5						
4. Academic compensation and incentives (ACI)								
4.1	The institution provides adequate financial rewards for teaching performance	ACI1						Decramer et al. (2013); Osterloh and Frey (2000); Stephan (2015)
4.2	Research achievements are fairly rewarded by the institution	ACI2						
4.3	Promotion policies are clearly linked to academic performance	ACI3						
4.4	Incentive systems motivate faculty to improve teaching and research	ACI4						
4.5	Compensation and reward systems are transparent and fair	ACI5						
5. Individual professional development (IPD)								
5.1	I actively participate in professional development activities	IPD1						Avalos (2011); Clarke and Hollingsworth (2002); Guskey (2002); Opfer and Pedder (2011)
5.2	I continuously update my knowledge and academic skills	IPD2						
5.3	I engage in research and academic collaboration to improve my competencies	IPD3						
5.4	I apply newly acquired knowledge to improve my teaching and research	IPD4						
5.5	I actively seek opportunities for continuous learning and development	IPD5						

Table A1 (cont.). Assessment of academic conditions and performance

6. Individual academic performance (IAP)						
6.1	I achieve high effectiveness in teaching activities	IAP1				Bland et al. (2005); Hattie and Marsh (1996); Shin and Cummings (2010); Teichler (2017)
6.2	I produce research outputs that meet academic standards	IAP2				
6.3	I contribute effectively to academic and institutional goals	IAP3				
6.4	My teaching performance is positively evaluated by students or peers	IAP4				
6.5	My research productivity meets institutional expectations	IAP5				

Sincerely thank!

APPENDIX B

Table B1 presents the results of the full collinearity assessment conducted to examine potential common method bias.

Table B1. Full collinearity VIF results for common method bias assessment

Construct	Full Collinearity VIF
ACI	1.424
APD	1.180
AWE	1.114
IAP	1.717
IPD	1.533
IPS	1.136

All VIF values ranged from 1.114 to 1.717, which are well below the recommended threshold of 3.3. These results indicate that common method bias was unlikely to pose a serious concern in this study.

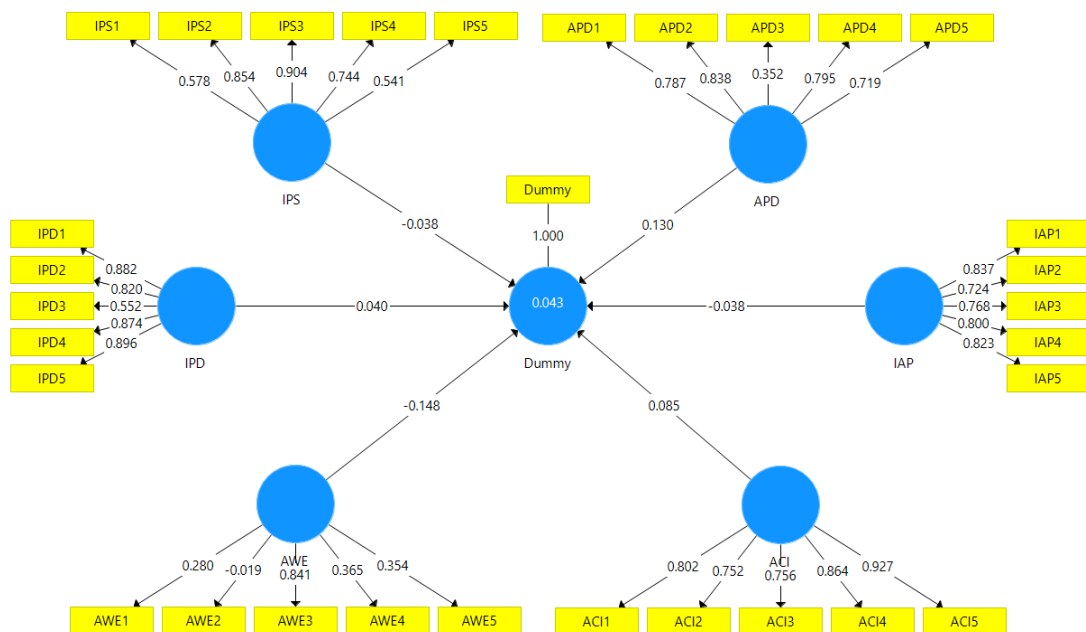


Figure B1. Full collinearity VIF model for common method bias assessment