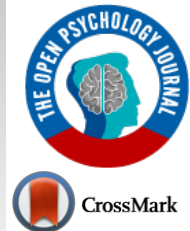




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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vietnamese Young Graduate Employees' Evaluation of Sources of Self-efficacy at Work

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Abstract:

Background:

Self-efficacy at work is considered to be one of the factors affecting employees' quality of work life and professional development. Understanding the sources of employees' self-efficacy at work is essential, especially in the context of Viet Nam's Doi Moi (Renovation) policy that has led to wide-reaching socio-economic changes in Viet Nam, including the workplace over the past 30 years.

Methods:

This article is based on a quantitative study of 166 Vietnamese graduates with less than 2-year working experience at their organizations, followed by 11 interviews. The study seeks to demonstrate their evaluation of the sources of self-efficacy at work.

Findings:

The results show that "physiological and emotional states", "vicarious experiences" and "verbal persuasion" have a significantly positive correlation with self-efficacy at work while no remarkable association is observed for "mastery experiences". In addition, the content of the interviews further clarifies the above-mentioned results.

Conclusion:

The findings suggest the important role of cultural-social factors and the characteristics of the workforce in Viet Nam in interpreting employee's self-efficacy.

Keywords: Self-efficacy at work, Source of self-efficacy, Vietnamese graduate employees, Collectivism culture, Social cognitive theory, Work life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Self-efficacy is defined as an individual belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainment [1]. It is a central concept of Social Cognitive Theory which emphasizes self-efficacy's influence on an individual's behavioral goals, intentions, and outcome expectancies [1]. Self-efficacy is not simply what one does with his/her skill but also lies in his/her perception of how to do those skills. In other words, an individual needs not only the knowledge and skills to perform a task, he/she also needs to

have the conviction to successfully perform such task, especially under challenging circumstances [2].

1.1. Self-efficacy at Work

Self-efficacy is found to have an important role in various areas such as education [3], psychotherapy [4], or work [5]. In the work context, self-efficacy is considered one of the most important personal resources [6] and it is defined as the perception of an individual about his/her abilities to effectively perform his/her work tasks [7]. A number of studies indicate the role of self-efficacy for perceived professional development [8]; for perceived quality of work life including employees' perception of wages, working hours, work environment, benefits and services; career prospects and human relations [9];

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or job satisfaction [10]. Furthermore, self-efficacy is also useful for unemployed graduates during the search for a job [11].

In general, employees with a higher level of self-efficacy have a stronger belief in their ability to succeed in their career. Moreover, in difficult situations, employees with low self-efficacy are more likely to fail in their attempt or give up their tasks while those with high level strive to overcome occupational stress and obtain good performance [12]. Individuals who feel strong about their self-efficacy, tend to approach difficult tasks as challenges rather than threats to avoid [13]. On the other hand, lower levels of self-efficacy are correlated with stress and depression symptoms at work [14] and job burnout [15].

Some research finds that early-career employees experience lower self-efficacy belief than experienced employees [16, 17] but other studies indicate that experienced recruits report lower self-efficacy score than new recruits depending on the nature of the job [14]. In term of factors influencing self-efficacy belief, it is demonstrated that stress can decrease early career employees' self-efficacy [18] while social support can increase this belief [14, 16]. In addition, among early career employees, self-efficacy has a positive relationship with career commitment [19].

1.2. Theoretical Background on Sources of Self-efficacy

As the self-efficacy belief plays a crucial role in each person's professional life, it is very important to carefully identify the sources that reinforce this belief. Four main sources to develop self-efficacy include mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and emotional states [1].

"Mastery experiences" are one's authentic performances, his/her perceptions of previous enactive experiences, which are viewed as successful or unsuccessful [1]. It refers to success or failure in the past that an individual has experienced. An individual uses it to assess one's capability to engage in similar activities in the future and to decide whether one will act in agreement with this assessment [6]. Mastery experiences are considered to be the most powerful source of information for a person's self-efficacy belief as these experiences provide the most authentic evidence of whether one can master whatever it takes to succeed [1, 20]. In this regard, success in the past increases individual's confidence in dealing with the same situations while failure tends to undermine individual's belief in her/his ability to successfully complete a task [21]. A sustainable sense of efficacy requires experiences in overcoming obstacles through persistent efforts [1]. Therefore, difficulties provide opportunities to learn how to turn failure into success by enhancing one's capabilities to exercise better control over challenges. At work, positive mastery experiences are always expected by employers. For young graduates in organizations, mastery experiences can come from their success in their studies at university [13]. It is not their own experience or skills, but the self-efficacy belief formed through these experiences shape academic performance and career choices. The individual's perceived effectiveness influences the type of work activities they believe they can do, which, in turn, are

related to the career they will pursue later.

The concept of "vicarious experiences" designates an observation or a comparison of the previous and present practice of other people. In other words, an individual makes an evaluation of his/her own effectiveness based on the abilities demonstrated by others. An individual is inclined to get their self-efficacy reinforced when exceeding others' performance; in contrast, such personal effectiveness tends to decrease when being overwhelmed. In this case, the person that was chosen for comparison becomes important for self-efficacy belief [22, 23]. Not only the comparison with those who are less effective can increase the individual's feeling of efficacy, but also, observations of more successful people can help the individual to recognize and avoid his/her limits for self-improvement. In the work context, employees will consider such factors as the similarity between the models and themselves (for example, age, gender), the competence of the models (incompetent *versus* competent models), multiplicity of modelling (observing different models or a single model) when they construct their personal efficacy beliefs [24]. For young employees, vicarious experiences or social models play a powerful role in the development of their self-efficacy at work, especially when they are uncertain about their own abilities or have limited experience with academic tasks at university [25].

"Verbal persuasion" or social persuasion comes from external social referents such as colleagues or leaders. This persuasion is often given in the form of positive or negative feedback on employees' performance. A leader's verbal persuasion can be considered a manifestation of the Pygmalion effect - a form of self-fulfilling prophecy highlighting the power of belief which significantly contributes to turning something one wishes to achieve into reality [6]. For young employees, the impact of verbal persuasion does not always depend on a leader's judgment, but it is also affected by people with higher expertise and knowledge or simply by colleagues in the same generation - the new-comers in the organization. From a psychological perspective, verbal persuasion increases employees' confidence in their value at work. In other words, this source is important to reinforce employees' self-efficacy.

"Physiological and emotional states" refers to an emotion or physical sensation (*e.g.* anxiety, fatigue and composure) that one experiences while performing a particular task [25]. This is regarded as the least powerful source of self-efficacy beliefs [1, 20]. However, it contributes to individuals' physical status by reducing their stress level and negative emotional tendencies [26]. In the work context, negative thoughts and fears about capabilities can decrease employees' self-efficacy. For young employees, the change of status (students towards workers) and the change of responsibilities can make them feel stressed, anxious and worried whenever they confront new tasks that are not part of their previous experience. This, in turn, affects their self-efficacy.

1.3. Sources of Self-efficacy in Different Cultures

Numerous studies have confirmed the role of the four above-mentioned sources of self-efficacy information. For example, a positive correlation between self-efficacy sources and mathematics achievement scores is found among American

engineering students, furthermore, a “mastery experience” is the main predictor for academic achievements of mathematics [27]. The same results are shared in a study on Turkish pre-service chemistry teachers [28]. However, the role of these sources and their influence degree on self-efficacy varies across different studies. The study on eleven Canadian pedagogical counsellors shows that “mastery experiences” and “verbal persuasion” are the most favourable sources for the development of participants’ self-efficacy, while “vicarious experiences” is to a lesser degree [29]. A qualitative research on eight Vietnamese English teachers showed that “verbal persuasion” is the most important source, followed by “vicarious experiences” and “physiological and emotional states”, and the “mastery experiences” is the least significant [30]. Research conducted on 128 American teaching assistants in science, technology, engineering and mathematics demonstrates that “mastery experiences” is one of the three factors influencing the sense of self-efficacy of this participant group [31]. Another study indicates the weight of the social context on the development of African-American professors’ sense of self-efficacy. Neither “mastery experiences”, “vicarious experiences”, “verbal persuasion” nor “physiological and emotional states”, but fighting against threats coming from stereotypes against African-Americans is most important in maintaining the professors’ sense of self-efficacy [32].

The diversity in the results of these studies can be explained by differences in the methodology but it also suggests the importance of socio-cultural aspects of each research.

1.4. Research Context

This current research was undertaken in the context of a major change in the management of work and employment since the implementation of Doi Moi Policy in 1986. The end of the systematic mechanism of economic subsidies has put all actors in a new context. Since 1991, organizations that did not use to have their own rights have attained management autonomy to hire human resources as well as the abolition of the political curriculum in line with the rules of the market [33]. In addition, they have more autonomy and pro-activeness in the production process, also in making credit requests for materials and production or in seeking and selecting their customers. Besides the plan imposed by the government, organizations can prepare their own production plan [34]. For young people, political changes in the management of work and employment provide them with not only new opportunities but also challenges in their professional integration. Issues related to work, which were not mentioned in the past, have now become primary concerns of young people, including young graduates. The attainment of an academic qualification no longer guarantees them a job. Instead of being certain of the stability of work as in previous years, young graduates, especially those working for the private or semi-public sector, are at risk of securing their fixed-term contracts or losing their jobs without prior notice. Competition among young people to get and keep a job becomes stronger than ever. This reinforces the importance of self-efficacy at work and understanding its sources.

In the above-mentioned socio-economic context of Viet

Nam, the current study was conducted with an effort to identify and interpret the correlations among four sources and employees’ self-efficacy at work. The two principal research questions are as follows:

- [1] How do Vietnamese young employees evaluate the four sources - mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological in their self-efficacy at work?
- [2] Are there any socio-cultural impacts on their evaluation of the four sources of self-efficacy at work?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Design and Procedure

Data were obtained at different Vietnamese organizations in Hanoi. Firstly, a pilot study was conducted with the scope of 50 employees to check the face validity and reliability of translated scales applied in this study. This was followed by a survey of 166 employees. Confidentiality and anonymity were kept during data collection. Finally, 11 out of 166 participants were randomly chosen and invited separately for individual interviews to substantiate the quantitative results. Research objectives and questions were applied to ensure reliability and validity in the study. Regarding the conditions of ethical approval, the rights of participants to privacy and confidentiality were respected. Pseudonyms are used wherever we introduce the participant’s quotes.

2.2. Participants

The participants were 166 young employees who have an extensive academic background from secondary school (11.4%), bachelor (71.1%) and master (15.1%) in three types of organization in Hanoi, including state organizations (33.1%), private organizations (51.2%) and semi-state companies (15.7%). Young employees in this sample had less than 2-year working experience and ranged in age from 20 to 35 years (mean = 27.28, SD = 3.51). Most participants were female (61.4%). A questionnaire was distributed to young employees and the rights to freedom of consent were respected. There was not any condition of coercion, undue pressure, or undue reward.

2.3. Measure

2.3.1. Self-efficacy at Work

Self-efficacy at work was measured by using a 17-item general self-efficacy scale that measures general expectancies of success which are not tied to specific situations [35]. On a sample of 208 employees, this scale obtained good reliability of 0.86 [36]. Regarding the measuring tool, the use of general and non-specific self-efficacy scales was not appreciated because items of tests based on general efficacy did not bear enough relevance to the domain studied [37]. However, three levels of generality of assessment were distinguished, including the level for a particular accomplishment under a narrowly defined set of conditions, the level for a class of performances within the same domain and under similar conditions and the level without specifying the activities or the conditions sharing common properties [1].

For the participants with different work areas, the current study uses a general self-efficacy scale to gain a common understanding about how young employees believe in their capacity at work. This selection is in line with the above-mentioned third level of generality. Compared to the original scale, we added one more phrase related to work or the work environment like "occupational tasks" or "at work" to each item to reinforce the participants' identification to a sense of self-efficacy at work (e.g. "I am a self-reliant person *at work*", "When I decide to do something for my *occupational tasks*, I go right to work on it"). Participants were given questionnaires with responses on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The scale reflected good reliability with Cronbach's Alpha of .849.

2.3.2. Sources of Self-efficacy

Sources of self-efficacy scale were constructed with reference to the scales of "past performance scale" and "social persuasion scale" [38] and "sources of Teaching self-efficacy scale" [39]. Initially, the scale used in the author's study consisted of 48 items for four sources and each source included 12 items. Participants were asked to respond to a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) to indicate the extent to which they were characterized by each statement. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. To be retained, an item was required to load at the 50 levels and above on only one factor. As a result, 30 items were kept and 4-factor solutions were achieved: 1/Mastery experiences with 5 items (e.g. "I have been doing very well my occupational tasks"), 2/Vicarious experiences with 5 items (e.g. "Seeing others employees better than me pushes me to do better"), 3/Verbal persuasion with 9 items (e.g. "My leader /colleagues have told me that I am a good employee"), and 4/Physiological and emotional states with 11 items (e.g. "I start to feel stressed whenever I think about my work"). The estimated Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were 0.777, 0.778, 0.854 and .893 for mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological and emotional states, respectively.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were collected and then analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS, version 23.0). For descriptive statistics (the percentage or the mean value), we used initial data. For statistical inference (Bivariate Correlation and Regression in this study), we eliminated some extreme values to guarantee the criteria of normal distribution.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and inter-correlations of the variables. The results suggest that the better each of the independent variables is (except mastery experiences), the higher level of self-efficacy belief the young employees have in their job. The highest score was for "physiological and emotional states", then "vicarious experiences" and "verbal persuasion", respectively.

In the following part, we will discuss the degree of influence of each information source in seeking to explain their importance through the content of the interviews.

3.1. Mastery Experiences

According to young employees' evaluation, there is no significant correlation between "mastery experiences" and their self-efficacy at work. Furthermore, in comparison with the other three sources, "mastery experiences" reaches the lowest mean value.

Findings from interviews indicate that young employees consider the knowledge that they gained from the university as their mastery experiences. However, the discrepancies between the theory learned at university and the requirements of practical knowledge at work are much greater than what the participants anticipated before doing work. For this reason, they experience a feeling of failure when they are faced with new tasks at work.

Trang said: "I was one of the best students in the class at university. During the first days at work, I had great confidence in myself. I believed that I could easily handle occupational tasks, or at least I would not face too much difficulty at work. However, actual requirements make me understand that I am only a beginner, and knowledge at university cannot turn into experiences at work" (a female finance employee with 1-year experience at work).

"Mastery experiences" based only on previous educational achievements results in pressure.

Thang shared: "I feel very tense at work because I graduated from a prestigious university. My colleagues often complain about the quality of university education. They also ask me what I learned at university, why they have to teach me a lot at work" (a male employee at a city court, with 1 year and 3 months of working experience).

Some young graduates value their degree so much that they cannot accept the fact that they have not been competent enough for the job and they still need to be trained at work by doing simple tasks, especially during their first time at work. For example, a Bachelor of Architecture or a graduate in Psychology may assume that they can work at a professional level, but as a new-comer in a professional organization, they may feel their self-efficacy is low when they are denied to take on specialized tasks.

Quan shared: "As a graduate of the Architecture University, I cannot accept being given simple tasks like writing an administrative paper. I want to follow my boss and other colleagues for construction projects; or at least, I want to work on drawings, but they do not believe in my abilities" (a male employee at an architecture office with 6 months of working experience).

In some research, "mastery experiences" have been postulated to be the most potent sources of self-efficacy beliefs [16], whereas it was not demonstrated in other research as the most influential source of efficacy information because participants gave more weight to social persuasion than mastery experiences when constructing their self-efficacy [30]. In the current study, the above described overview on young and new employees' mastery experiences shows that their experiences are gained from their high level of education like university degrees in this study. It seems clear that the previous school

Table 1. Mean, standard deviations and correlations between four sources and employees' self-efficacy at work.

S.No.	Variable	M	SD	(I)
1	Self-efficacy at work	3.24	0.39	-
2	Mastery experiences	2.24	0.54	$r = -.007, ns$
3	Vicarious experiences	3.14	0.60	$r = .365, p = .000$
4	Verbal persuasion	2.69	0.39	$r = .248, p = .003$
5	Physiological and emotional states	3.16	0.53	$r = .501, p = .000$

In addition, a multiple regression between these three sources shows that "physiological and emotional states" ($\beta = .502, p = .000$) plays the most important role in predicting self-efficacy at work, followed by "vicarious experiences" ($\beta = .253, p = .000$) and "verbal persuasion" ($\beta = .159, p = .018$). Furthermore, the model has adjusted R^2 value of .399, which indicates that 39.9% of young employees' self-efficacy at work could be explained by these three sources predictors.

performance, the training courses and the school history of individuals have a decisive influence on their beliefs about effectiveness [40, 41]. But educational level does not always match the concrete demands at work. In this case, when new employees receive training designed to prepare them for occupational roles, they perform better at work [42].

3.2. Vicarious Experiences

In this study, "vicarious experiences" is rated as the second strongest impact on young employees' self-efficacy at work. "Vicarious experiences", which relies on social comparisons and modelling, is assumed to be a less dependable source of information about one's own capabilities than "mastery experiences" [1]. However, in the current study, young employees evaluated their correlation with their self-efficacy beliefs greater than "mastery experiences". The young employees use different strategies to learn from their colleagues.

They appear not to have one concrete model at work. They enrich their working experiences and abilities from different sources.

Tam said: "I do not have one model at work. I learn from all colleagues depending on their own strengths. I think that no one is perfect. So, I notice the strengths and weaknesses of others as my experience at work" (a male IT/technical employee with 1 year of work experience).

They learn from the success and failure of others.

Tuan Anh shared: "The talents who work in my field are exemplary to me. I can learn some lessons at work and also set my professional goals by observing them. But I also learn from successful people who work in other organizations, even in other areas. At the same time, colleagues who fail also help me to know what to do and what not to do. I'm sometimes self-aware through the failure of these colleagues" (a male business employee, with 1.5 years of working experience).

The self-efficacy beliefs of new-comers are also reinforced through what they have learned from work relationships.

Mai said: "The working environment in my company is tough, even harsh. Here, competition is very important and work relationship is driven by jealousy. Even when I do nothing wrong with my colleagues, they are not happy with me because of jealousy. After a year of working in this organization, I am confident that I can work with all types of colleagues. It's also my self-efficacy" (a female bank employee, with 9 months of work experience).

Vicarious experiences have been found to affect self-efficacy beliefs in numerous researches [43 - 45]. In the current study, it seems that as new-comers in a professional organization, young employees become aware of the necessity of learning from their colleagues. This is not limited to observations of their success and failure but also includes daily experiences at work, such as professional social behaviour and teamwork skills.

3.3. Verbal Persuasion

"Verbal persuasion" is seemingly an additional source of employees' self-efficacy at work in this study. Although verbal persuasion is not considered a powerful source of self-efficacy, it can also enhance or diminish one's self-efficacy [1, 32]. And the findings from the interviews further support the results in the quantitative study as well as those given by mentioned authors.

Sometimes, verbal persuasion can increase young employees' self-efficacy at work.

Duong said: "Verbal persuasion can be simple but its effect is important. For me, it increases motivation for work. I feel happier at work and I am able to confront work pressures" (a male military officer with 10 months of working experience).

Sometimes, either verbal or non-verbal persuasion can become an obstacle for young employees when they see the gap between what colleagues expect from them and what they can do.

Trung also shared: "My boss expects that I, with my Bachelor in Psychology from the USA, can work better than other colleagues at my age. My colleague, as I know, they admire my educational background. I'm very happy about that. But at the same time, I feel pressured by this expectation. I'm always afraid to disappoint them" (a male researcher with 8 months of working experience).

It should be emphasized that the nature of "verbal persuasion" is greatly influenced by cultural factors in the working context in Vietnam, which can explain the moderate correlation between this source and employees' self-efficacy at work. In a professional organization, the hierarchical structure of collectivism (hierarchical rank in terms of not only position but also age) is well-noted in the working environment in Viet Nam [46]. The evaluation of new-comers, for this reason, can be influenced by their age. Accordingly, it is difficult for young people to be highly rated for their abilities. In some organizations, there is no common practice of encouraging employees

when they have fully accomplished their tasks. Instead, if they make any mistakes, they will receive lots of complaints.

Thang explained: "It seems that success at work is obvious. We rarely receive any verbal persuasion from our elder colleagues or our leader. But when we cannot finish difficult tasks, our leader often shows his discontent, even he gets angry" (a male employee at a city court, with 1 year and 3 months of working experience).

Verbal persuasion can also be understood as the attention of the leader or elder colleagues to the private life of young employees.

Mai said: "In fact, young employees like me rarely receive verbal persuasion which really concerns our work. But they often ask me about my life, for example, if I'm in a romantic relationship, when I will get married, if I have any brother or sister, what my parents do, *etc.* It is also the other way to encourage young employees at work" (a female bank employee with 9 months of working experience).

From a gender perspective, social expectations of women's and men's roles have led to different criteria used to assess performance subject to their sex.

Mai shared: "Because I am the youngest woman at work, everyone expects me to do trivial stuff. In the morning, I have to do dish-washing, prepare tea for my colleagues. I once did not wash the cups, they showed their discontent. I learn that they will appreciate me if I know to well-behaved. I have to continue such non-work things until another young woman will be recruited in my office. I would like to be appreciated for my working capability" (a female bank employee with 9 months of working experience).

As for young employees, encouragement is expected *via* not only verbal persuasion but also material rewards.

Trang said: "I think it is better to have some rewards to recognize the efforts of young employees. It may be a small sum of money or a small gift, but showing that the organization is concerned about the needs of their employees. Moreover, I think material reward is a way to public verbal persuasion" (a female finance employee with 1 year of working experience).

The effect of each source depends on the domain and cognitive processing strategies of the individual [47]. In this regard, "verbal persuasion" might be understood by the participants in a way that they are accepted to be new-comers in their organizations. Moreover, cultural factors may influence the way the leaders or elder colleagues encourage young employees, as well as the way young employees understand about "verbal persuasion" at workplace. In addition, the study on Vietnamese English teachers indicated that the lack of formal feedback from leader and colleagues also stem from Vietnamese collectivism culture. And this led to the feeling of anxiety and doubt about their teaching competence [30].

3.4. Physiological and Emotional States

Among the 4 information sources, "physiological and emotional states" is considered the least powerful one of self-efficacy beliefs [1, 20]. However, the current study shows the opposite results with the highest evaluation from the partici-

pants and the greatest correlation between this source and employees' self-efficacy at work. Findings from interviews suggest that negative or positive physiological and emotional states in young employees, for different reasons, can correlate their self-belief.

For example, young graduates' negative or positive states can be built on the comparison with the academic results as well as work characteristics of their fellows.

Trung shared: "I have sometimes struggled to continue my job as a researcher or to look for another job. Some classmates did not have good study results but they are now working in a very dynamic environment and their salary is really high. Whenever I meet them, I feel that I am being left behind because my occupational tasks are monotonous and simple. I also find my work quite tedious. I like working as a researcher; but being a new-comer, I do not have opportunities to undertake scientific tasks and participate in an actual study. I experience quite a lot of unhappy moments because of these internal conflicts" (a male researcher with 8 months of working experience).

On the other side, the conflict between what one wants to do and what one "must do" can cause negative emotion, which causes young employees' low self-efficacy at work.

Linh said in tears: "I'm doing this job for my parents' wish. They tell me that because I'm a woman, it's better for me to work in a state organization. This will give me more time to take care of my family after I get married. But I do not like this job, I cannot stand it anymore. Every morning, I feel tired; I keep thinking about my job. I do not want to do this job anymore. I can no longer suffer for this discomfort with my current job" (a female administrative employee with 1.5 years of working experience).

Positive or negative feeling for their job sometimes depends on their work relationship.

Trang shared: "Competition at work is very important in my office though it happens quietly. Everyone is always ready to compete and warn other colleagues in a sensible way. This relationship is detrimental to employees' morale and health, which can be clearly seen *via* our skin. At first, we are all beautiful, pretty but after working here, we have acne and pimples on our skin. I'm so tired thinking about my job as well as other colleagues" (a female finance employee with 1-year experience at work).

In general, it seems that “physiological and emotional states” at the work of young employees in this study are subject to other people in their life.

4. DISCUSSION

Firstly, we suggest that one of the explanations for the lowest young employees’ evaluation of mastery experiences in the Vietnamese context is the characteristics of the participants. As young graduates, they do not have past work experiences, and their self-belief is only based on their high educational degrees or qualifications. This reality is explained by the importance of academic qualifications in Vietnamese society where recruitment, salary level and professional advancement are decided upon the educational level. As education and training at universities are quite theoretical and impractical, graduates with good study performance will lack a number of necessary skills for their future job. For this reason, in spite of their high educational level, most young graduates cannot meet the recruiters’ expectations. They normally need orientation and on-the-job training for 1 to 2 years within the organization. Not only objective success but also the meaning assigned to their performances by individuals and the interpretation of their experiences are important to enactive mastery experiences [48]. In this regard, academic success, which is only shown *via* a diploma (especially for the young without higher study), cannot assure their abilities at work. The young employees in the current study may have the same problems like all new Vietnamese bachelors; they believe that graduation from a university can act as an indicator for their capacities. But they need both certain skills and their will to successfully function within different domains and under a variety of circumstances [24].

Secondly, on the contrary, the highest correlation between physiological and emotional states and self-efficacy can be explained from the perspective of organizational psychology. Participants in this study are all new-comers in their organizations. This is also the time for their self-actualization at work where they resolve contradictions and ambiguities by the affirmation of an identity which adapts to the norms of commitment, performance and loyalty of the organization [49, 50]. Due to the incompatibilities between professional and private life, young employees have to cope with different conflicts, for example, the confusion of roles (*i.e.* role of new-comers in their organizations, role of the youngest in an office, role of a male or a female in a group) or the conflicts between their desire and parents’ wish. This complex context implies that all factors related to either personal or professional life might have certain influences on their physiological and emotional states which become an important source of their self-efficacy beliefs at work. As newcomers, they have to meet different requirements at the same time, for example, self-affirmation in the organization is not only recognized by their performance but also by their behaviour in work relationships. This situation can cause them to internal conflicts that they could not imagine when they were in university. These conflicts may be related to their physical and psychological health, depending on satisfaction or non-satisfaction of their leader/colleagues. We suppose that after a few years of work, these young employees can reach certain stability; their physiological and emotional

states should be internally generated rather than from external factors. Hence, their physiological and emotional states at that time may no longer play the most important role in their self-efficacy at work.

Thirdly, to explain the correlation between vicarious experiences and employees’ self-efficacy at work, the authors state the awareness of employees - the new-comers, who find it important to learn from other successful colleagues. In this sense, they also undertake one of four tasks of new-comers within organizations [49], to identify and develop expected behaviours as part of one’s new role or clarify one’s role in the group. In fact, technical skills can be learned, but psychological skill is more difficult to develop [1]. Also, this result seems to reinforce the necessity of serial tactics for the organizational socialization of new-comers. An organization can provide their new employees with guided mastery experiences (elder colleagues, for example) or effective models [51].

Finally, the importance of verbal persuasion can be explained by both historical and individual characteristics in Viet Nam. From socio-economic and historical aspects, Viet Nam has undergone long wars and different socio-political regimes. After unification of the country in 1975, Viet Nam was embargoed and the new embargo policy was lifted by the United States in 1994. Besides, Doi Moi Policy was only implemented in 1986. These conditions caused a number of difficulties in Viet Nam including slow growth, stagnation in the economy and national production, poverty, and lack of basic living conditions [34]. In this context, parents are constantly teaching their children to always keep trying without complacency. In addition, Vietnamese people hardly give compliments. Even when they congratulate others, they always express their encouragement in a way that makes others feel necessary to keep on trying. Some common congratulations on others’ success can be listed as “wish you to be more successful, to do it better”, *etc.* This characteristic is also expressed in the organizational culture. Since the introduction of Doi Moi Policy, the government has decided to legalize the private sector and encourage foreign investment in Viet Nam to boost economic growth [52, 53]. The notion of “organizational culture” has been popularly mentioned recently and more attention to verbal persuasion has been paid to building organizational culture. From the individual perspective, the Vietnamese always appreciate the value of a good reputation, especially in public. In particular, they would prefer encouragement or recognition to be publicly acknowledged. There is a Vietnamese saying that it is better to be publicly recognized even with small rewards than personally praised with verbal persuasion. In other words, material encouragement is more appreciated than verbal recognition even when this material reward is small in terms of economic value [46]. Other explanations were attributed to contextual and cultural factors at workplace in Viet Nam. With the collectivistic culture in Viet Nam [54], all people belong to groups which expect lasting loyalty. Moreover, members cannot easily free themselves and they receive protection from the in-group members. In this sense, young employees, as new-comers in their organizations have to be socially accepted first. This means that they should foster their relationship at work before focusing on enhancing their work performance. Verbal persua-

asion, in the Vietnamese culture, is often expressed through regards and concerns about employees' families (health of their parents, learning of their children or even marriage schedule of young employees). These concerns bear no relation to persuasion at work though they can provide spiritual support for new-comers to reduce their anxiety in the new working environment. We suppose that this verbal persuasion, apart from their efforts at work, lead them to consider verbal persuasion to be an additional source of self-efficacy belief.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the results of the current study suggest that to understand the correlation between different sources and employees' self-efficacy at work, it is necessary to investigate different factors which can influence the way young employees evaluate each source such as working context, social and cultural aspects, or even employees' characteristics at workplace. In addition, the absence of mastery experiences' relationship with young employees' self-efficacy at work emphasizes the necessity of practical education applying work-based learning approach at universities and the importance of continuous development for employees, especially for new-comers given Vietnam's context.

The results from this study confirm partly Bandura's sources of self-efficacy at work. Furthermore, they partly explore the impacts of socio-economic and cultural conditions and employment-related factors on young employees' evaluation of the role of each source in their self-efficacy at work. These findings, at the same time, suggest that further research should investigate the mediator and/or moderator role of socio-economic and cultural variables in the correlation between the four sources and self-efficacy belief at work of young employees.

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

Not applicable.

HUMAN AND ANIMAL RIGHTS

No animals/humans were used for studies that are the basis of this research.

CONSENT FOR PUBLICATION

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict or interest, financial or otherwise.

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