




Office activities performance as a mediator between organizational drivers and firm performance: Evidence from Vietnamese SMEs

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ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 28 April 2025

Revised: 11 June 2025

Accepted: 20 June 2025

Published: 2 July 2025

Keywords

External pressures

Firm performance

Internal capabilities

Office activities performance

SMEs.

JEL Classification:

G30; G32; M00; M14.

Office activities performance is a critical but underexplored component of business operations, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam, an emerging market. This study aims to evaluate both the direct effects of internal and external factors on office activities performance and, more importantly, to assess its mediating role in the relationship between these factors and overall firm performance. Grounded in the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory, the proposed model positions leadership as a key driver of internal capabilities, including organizational culture, technological capability, and financial capability, while also accounting for external stakeholder pressures such as government support and customer pressure. Data were collected from 209 SMEs across Vietnam and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS software. The results reveal that both internal drivers and external pressures significantly and positively influence office activities performance, which in turn mediates their impact on firm performance. These findings emphasize the strategic role of office operations as an intermediary mechanism that connects organizational resources and stakeholder engagement to business outcomes. The study provides theoretical contributions to office management literature and offers practical guidance for SME leaders aiming to strengthen operational effectiveness and competitiveness through enhanced office performance.

Contribution/Originality: This study uniquely integrates office activity performance as a mediating variable between internal-external factors and firm performance in Vietnamese SMEs, filling a gap in emerging market research and advancing the application of RBV and Stakeholder Theory in office management contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the nearly 80-year history of development, office operations in Vietnam have become increasingly essential to the functioning of all types of organizations, whether governmental agencies, state-owned enterprises, private companies, or foreign-invested firms. The office plays a vital role, as it represents a rich and diverse field of management (Nguyen, 2005). However, research publications in this area remain limited. A search for literature using keywords such as "office management" and "administrative office" on platforms like Google Scholar, Scispace, and luanan.org yielded no more than five relevant studies. Furthermore, in the 20 years since office management became an official field of study in Vietnam, the number of academic conferences held has not even matched the number of years of training (Pham, 2020). In addition, journals related to or adjacent to the field of office management have

published very few articles in this area. In terms of teaching resources, both the quantity and quality of textbooks and specialized monographs are still insufficient (Pham, 2020). Domestic academic journals in management are also limited, often focusing on public sector management, thereby providing little opportunity for office management research in the private sector to be published. These observations suggest that there remains a significant research gap in this field.

From a theoretical perspective, the first gap lies in the absence of a robust conceptual foundation for the notions of “office” and “office activities performance” within organizational contexts. For example, the term “office” itself lacks a clearly defined scope. According to Nguyen (2005), the concept can be interpreted both narrowly and broadly. In its narrow sense, an office is merely the workplace of an organization. In contrast, from a functional perspective, an office is a unit responsible for general and direct support tasks for leadership. Another definition by Pham (2012) states that the office only handles the internal affairs of the organization, a view that may inadvertently diminish the perceived importance of the office within Vietnamese enterprises. From a management perspective, Zhang (2016) views the office as primarily responsible for information management, acting as the hub for information collection and distribution within an enterprise. However, this view is arguably incomplete, as it neglects other key functions such as logistics, advisory roles, and synthesis. Additionally, fundamental management theories such as the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory have rarely been fully applied in studies concerning office departments. According to the RBV, internal resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) form the basis for sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 2001). Similarly, Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that enterprises should create value for all stakeholders, including employees, customers, and regulatory agencies, rather than solely for shareholders (Freeman, Harrison, & Zyglidopoulos, 2018). However, previous research has seldom employed these theoretical lenses to analyze office activities, which are often perceived as support functions rather than strategic resources. This lack of conceptual clarity and theoretical grounding highlights a critical gap: existing studies have yet to develop a comprehensive theoretical model that explains the role of office activities' performance in enterprise success, especially within the frameworks of RBV and Stakeholder Theory.

Empirically, the body of research is also limited. Based on the available literature, the author suggests that office performance may be influenced by various factors such as leadership style (Ha, 2024; Nguyen, 2005; Zhang, 2016) technological capability (Fitrio, 2024; Zhang, 2016) financial capacity (Ghosh, 2025; Tuyen & Minh, 2025) organizational culture (Le & Tran, 2022) and customer pressure (Nguyen, 2005; Nguyen, 2005). However, most previous studies on office functions have primarily relied on qualitative approaches or case-based analyses, resulting in limited empirical evidence and poor generalizability. Many existing works tend to describe specific office restructuring cases or discuss conceptual frameworks rather than analyzing large-scale data. Rarely have studies developed comprehensive quantitative models to assess how both internal factors, such as organizational resources, and external pressures, such as customer or governmental demands, influence OAP and, subsequently, firm performance. This gap is particularly evident in emerging markets: in Vietnam and similar contexts, there is an almost complete absence of empirical evidence on how the office department in SMEs functions as a mediator between organizational drivers and business outcomes. In fact, some recent studies in the fields of service management and green governance have shown that external stakeholder pressures can improve firm performance by stimulating internal processes such as organizational learning and process innovation (Shi & Tsai, 2022). These findings strongly suggest that internal mediating mechanisms play a key role in linking environmental pressures to business results. However, in the specific domain of office management, the mediating role of OAP remains largely untested. In other words, we lack studies that investigate whether improving office activities' performance actually transforms internal capabilities and external pressures into better business outcomes. This represents a critical empirical gap, especially within SMEs in emerging markets like Vietnam, where office functions are often undervalued in terms of strategic contribution, despite their potential impact on overall organizational success (Fitrio, 2024).

In response to the aforementioned theoretical and empirical gaps, this study is designed to address both issues. From a theoretical perspective, it expands the application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory to the field of office management, thereby establishing a more solid theoretical foundation for the concept of Office Activities Performance (OAP). Specifically, the office and its associated activities are conceptualized both as a strategic internal resource of the enterprise from the RBV perspective and as a communication bridge with external stakeholders from the Stakeholder perspective. This dual view allows the development of a conceptual model that posits internal resources (e.g., leadership capability, organizational culture, technological capacity, and financial strength) and external stakeholder pressures (e.g., government support and customer demands) influence firm performance through the mediating role of OAP. From an empirical standpoint, the study employs a quantitative survey of 209 SMEs in Vietnam, utilizing partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to examine the mediating role of OAP in the relationship between organizational factors and firm performance. This approach offers the first empirical evidence of OAP's mediating role within the context of Vietnamese SMEs, thereby contributing to the resolution of the identified research gaps. The anticipated results aim not only to confirm the strategic importance of office departments, suggesting that when managed effectively, they can serve as a source of internal competitive advantage, but also to extend the applicability of RBV and Stakeholder Theory to an underexplored area of organizational management (Okoh, Alkali, & Jehu, 2021). In other words, this study contributes to building a more rigorous theoretical foundation for the concept of office activities performance while also offering new empirical evidence that positions the office as a vital link between organizational resources, stakeholder engagement, and business outcomes.

This research is structured into seven main sections. Section 1 introduces the study. Section 2 presents the theoretical framework. Section 3 reviews the literature and develops hypotheses. Section 4 outlines the data collection and analysis methods. Section 5 reports the research findings. Section 6 discusses the results and their implications. Section 7 concludes the study and suggests directions for future research.

2. UNDERPINNING THEORY

2.1. *Resources-Based View and Stakeholder Theory*

To underpin the formulation of the research model, the study employs two baseline theoretical frameworks, namely the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory. Both theories are used to describe respective sets of variables in the model: RBV addresses internal resources, while Stakeholder Theory explains the influence of the external environment, i.e., the impact of customers and government support on office performance.

As per RBV, the competitive advantage and performance of a company are fueled by its internal capabilities and resources (Madhani, 2010). Valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources facilitate firms in gaining superior performance. In this study, leadership style, financial capacity, technological capacity, and organizational culture are considered strategic resources that drive office department performance (Pham, 2020; Tuyen & Minh, 2025). For example, a good leadership style activates human capital effectively; good financial capacity maintains ongoing investment in administrative activities; high technological capability maximizes information flow and task implementation; and a good organizational culture promotes employee motivation and innovation. Consistent with RBV reasoning, when these resources are highly developed and synergistically combined, the firm is able to enhance its administrative effectiveness.

On the other hand, Stakeholder Theory posits that an organization's success depends on its ability to meet the expectations of key stakeholders, including customers and government, who exert a direct influence on revenue and operational priorities (Freeman, 2010). Prior empirical studies have shown that customer pressure significantly affects firm performance, particularly in dynamic markets (Chu, Xu, Lai, & Collins, 2018; Luu, Duong, & Tu, 2025). For SMEs, increasing customer demands compel businesses to enhance their administrative procedures and office operations to deliver prompt, professional service. From an administrative perspective, Nguyen (2005) and Nguyen

(2005) emphasized that the office often handles external relations, including client reception, event coordination, and communication, thus serving as the organization's "face." As such, it is subject to direct pressure from customers and partners, necessitating improved efficiency and responsiveness.

2.2. Concept of Office

Each study offers a different approach to the concept of "office." Some perspectives consider the office as a general term referring to the workplace of an agency or unit. From the public sector approach, the office is a unit that directly assists the governing agency. For example, the Government Office is a ministerial-level body that supports the government and the Prime Minister (The Government Office, 2022). From this perspective, the concept of office is clearly defined in legal documents. However, the concept of the office in the private sector remains relatively limited (Pham, 2020), and different scholars have proposed different viewpoints. According to Nguyen (2005), the office can be understood in two senses: a narrow and a broad one. In the broad sense, the office is a general administrative apparatus that directly assists the management of an agency or unit. However, this definition presents certain problems regarding the overlap between the office, the general executive apparatus, and the advisory unit. In addition, Pham (2012) defines the office as a type of organizational activity, including tasks related to providing internal administrative services, ensuring working conditions for the organization, and carrying out procedures that serve as tools for managers to coordinate and control the operations of various departments. At the same time, the office is also the name of the unit responsible for this type of activity. However, the definition provided by Pham (2012) faces some limitations. First, in the context of increasingly specialized departments within enterprises, the office must be a dedicated unit rather than merely a type of activity. Second, in the context of international integration and business development, the office not only handles internal administrative tasks but also manages the organization's external affairs. Another definition by Nguyen (2005) views the office as an objectively existing entity in every agency or organization that performs functions required by the organization's manager. This perspective offers a definition that is too broad, since in reality, every department within an organization objectively exists depending on the organization's tasks, nature, strategies, and requirements set by leadership.

According to the Administrative Office Management training program at Cambridge University – UK, in companies with many specialized departments and units, the office serves as a communication and coordination hub for the organization (Pham, 2012). In agreement, Zhang (2016) defines the modern office as the center of the business, and to some extent, the strength of a company depends on the professionalism and operational efficiency of the office. The author believes that these two definitions are quite appropriate to the Vietnamese business context, where companies often have a structure comprising many specialized departments and units. In such an environment, the administrative office plays the role of a communication center, facilitating contact, coordination, and the unified transmission of information among departments.

Based on the analysis of the above perspectives, the author proposes the following definition of an office: An office is a department responsible for internal and external administrative functions, acting as a hub for receiving, processing, and transmitting information with the aim of promoting the operational effectiveness of agencies, organizations, and enterprises.

2.3. Office Activities Performance

Organizational performance is an abstract concept that depends on various influencing factors and measurement methods (Elena-Iuliana & Maria, 2016). According to Didier and Etienne (2002), organizational performance is evaluated by comparing the completion of tasks with the strategic directions of the enterprise. If tasks meet the requirements set by the strategy, then the organization is considered effective. The authors also observe that definitions of office performance remain quite limited; however, in the most general sense, office performance should be assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Managers need to establish specific numerical criteria as a basis for

evaluation, such as the number of documents with errors in a financial year, among others. Qualitative assessments should rely on managerial experience or logical reasoning to evaluate the level of effectiveness.

Using a mixed-method approach, the study by Tuyen and Minh (2025) identified three key dimensions through which office activities performance (OAP) can be evaluated: office human resources, information system management, and the standardization of office operations (see Table 1). First, human resources are considered the most critical factor, as people remain the core element in any organization (Diaz-Fernandez, Bornay-Barrachina, & Lopez-Cabral, 2015; Kwon & Rupp, 2013). Therefore, the effectiveness of office operations largely depends on staff competence, service attitude, interdepartmental coordination, and especially the awareness and role of office leadership. Second, information technology plays a vital role. Prior studies have shown that adopting electronic office systems and Industry 4.0 technologies significantly enhances work efficiency, reduces operational costs, and increases flexibility (Fitrio, 2024). The effectiveness of IT applications can be assessed through the extent of adoption, actual usage, and continuous improvement (Pan, Song, Zhang, & Zhou, 2019). Third, the standardization of office activities, although still lacking a unified definition, is emerging as an important approach to improving consistency in management and operations. These standards should be codified through formal regulations, serving as an objective basis for performance evaluation and requiring regular updates to meet evolving organizational needs (Vu, 2022).

Based on these findings, Tuyen and Minh (2025) developed a measurement scale consisting of eleven indicators for evaluating OAP. The scale was constructed through surveys with employees and experts working in administrative and office management roles. Therefore, this current study adopts the same measurement framework to assess the mediating role of OAP in enhancing overall firm performance.

Table 1. Dimensions and components of office activities performance.

No.	Dimension	Components
1	Office human resources	1) Awareness 2) Professional skills and expertise 3) Collaboration ability 4) Training capability
2	Information technology management	1) Implementation approach 2) Utilization method 3) Innovation capability 4) Information transmission 5) Administrative procedure reform
3	Standardization of office operations	1) Consistency 2) Documentation 3) Improvement capacity 4) Strategic orientation 5) Monitoring and supervision capability

Source: Tuyen and Minh (2025).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1. The Relationship between Leadership and Internal Capabilities

When discussing the operational effectiveness of a business or a department within an organization, leadership is always considered a key factor. Indeed, many scholars have pointed out that leadership is one of the decisive factors for the success or failure of a business (Arham, 2014; Zainol, Daud, Shamsu, Abubakar, & Halim, 2018). An inspiring leadership style can encourage creativity, create opportunities for employees to contribute ideas, and foster stronger engagement with their work. This is especially true for small enterprises, where employees frequently interact with leadership (Simanjuntak & Pasaribu, 2023). Research by Tubagus (2018) shows that leadership style and orientation have a strong impact on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises. The office is no exception; leadership style profoundly influences office effectiveness, as it is the department that directly supports and advises leadership (Nguyen, 2005). Therefore, improving office effectiveness requires not only employee effort but also deep awareness from leaders (Ha, 2024). In this context, previous researchers have also found the important role of leadership or

senior manager in enhancing the organization's culture (Alvesson, 2011) financial capability (Koene, Vogelaar, & Soeters, 2002; Miloloža, 2018) and technological capability (Seyal, 2015). Indeed, leadership plays an important role in creating a supportive environment and providing unique advantages for their business. Therefore, positive leadership behaviors can psychologically motivate employees by enhancing their performance and job satisfaction. Employees are more likely to adapt effectively to changes in the organizational and external environment. Based on these arguments, we posit that leadership plays a crucial role in fostering internal organizational drivers.

H_{1a}: Leadership has a positive impact on organizational culture.

H_{1b}: Leadership has a positive impact on technological capability.

H_{1c}: Leadership has a positive impact on financial capability.

3.2. The Relationship between Internal Capabilities and Office Activities Performance

Organizational culture plays a crucial role in enhancing office performance, directly influencing employee morale, collaboration, and professionalism. A positive culture encourages open communication, enabling departments to coordinate more effectively, minimize errors, and optimize workflows (Shahzad, Luqman, Khan, & Shabbir, 2012). In office settings, innovation and the impact of technology also require employees to adopt a "speed culture" in task execution and develop a keen and comprehensive mindset to perform well in advisory and support roles for leadership (Le & Tran, 2022). Previous studies have mainly assessed the relationship between organizational culture and overall effectiveness (Martinez, Beaulieu, Gibbons, Pronovost, & Wang, 2015; Shahzad et al., 2012) but there is a lack of specific research addressing office performance. Therefore, this study tests the following hypothesis.

H₂: Organizational culture has a positive impact on office performance.

Office effectiveness must be closely linked with the management efficiency of office information systems (Zhang, 2016). It can be affirmed that in the context of modern administrative management, communication efficiency and information technology management must be improved (Bryson, Crosby, & Bloomberg, 2014). The implementation of electronic offices not only enhances office productivity but also improves overall enterprise performance (Zhang, 2016). In the era of Industry 4.0, applying information technology to office management is extremely important, as it directly affects business performance (Fitrio, 2024). Electronic offices are an inevitable trend in today's context, requiring organizations to promptly transition and enhance the application of software management tools in operations to improve work efficiency, save time, and reduce costs (Le & Tran, 2022). A study by Fitrio (2024) also revealed that implementing an office management website system at PT. Perkebunan Nusantara helped optimize the company's value chain. The design improved management efficiency in terms of speed, flexibility, and information flow, replacing manual document storage and communication systems (Fitrio, 2024). Additionally, applying information technology promotes the effectiveness of administrative reform, enabling office departments to be more flexible in task execution, reducing workload, and improving performance (Le & Tran, 2022). However, most existing studies use a qualitative approach. This indicates a lack of empirical evidence to evaluate the impact of technology on office performance. Based on these arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H₃: Technological capability has a positive impact on office performance.

From a business perspective, financial capability plays a crucial role in operational performance. Many studies have explored the relationship between financial literacy, innovation, and profitability in the context of SMEs (Chepkemai, Patrick, & Njoroge, 2017; Exposito & Sanchis-Llopis, 2018). These studies show that, for small and medium-sized enterprises, finance is a major concern and is positively correlated with operational performance. Strong financial capability helps businesses maintain the stable functioning of specialized departments and ensure employee compensation. For office departments, sound financial resources make it easier to carry out activities, especially in investing in science and technology. This is particularly important since the office is considered the center for receiving, processing, and transmitting information within a business (Berman, 2015; Haeder & Yackee, 2015; Tuyen & Minh, 2025). Strong finances also enable businesses to recruit high-quality personnel, organize

training programs, and enhance the skills of office employees, thereby improving work performance and professionalism in the workplace (Ghosh, 2025). Based on these arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H₁: Financial capability has a positive impact on office performance.

3.3. The Relationship between External Environment and Office Activities Performance

Using stakeholder theory, many previous studies have shown that pressure from customers or markets strongly affects enterprise performance (Tian, Otchere, Coffie, Mensah, & Baku, 2021; Waheed & Zhang, 2022). Stakeholder pressure, such as from customers, suppliers, or banks, plays a critical role in influencing the performance of small and medium enterprises (Tian et al., 2021). By nature, a business exists to serve market demands in order to generate profits. Therefore, companies are constantly trying to improve their products and services to meet increasingly specific customer needs. From a departmental perspective, Nguyen (2005) states that office departments must also handle external tasks, such as reception, logistics, event organization, and travel arrangements for leaders and clients. Additionally, offices are often seen as the face of the business, regularly representing leadership in handling external affairs (Nguyen, 2005). As a result, the office faces significant pressure from customers and partners. This necessitates continuous improvement in office performance to meet client demands. However, some studies suggest that offices in private enterprises often do not directly receive feedback from customers. This task is usually handled by the customer service or sales departments (Groza, Zmich, & Rajabi, 2021; Márcio Tavares Thomé, Felipe Scavarda, Sucila Fernandez, & José Scavarda, 2012). These debates highlight that the role of the office is unclear in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Based on these arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis:

H₂: Customer pressure has a positive impact on office performance.

Government support plays an important role in improving business performance, especially for SMEs (Khatib & Nour, 2021; Vejseli & Rossmann, 2017). Studies show that firms receiving support, whether financial or non-financial, are more likely to survive and maintain performance. However, some also reduced staff, suggesting mixed effects. Support is even more effective when combined with strategies like diversification and innovation. For example, firms that diversified their operations while receiving government help achieved better results. Government support also helps firms build long-term competitive advantages and encourages innovation and knowledge sharing (Roxas, Chadee, & Erwee, 2012). Some previous studies, such as Amalia, Akib, and Sakawati (2024) and Haeder and Yackee (2015), have highlighted government efforts to reform administrative governance systems in the public sector. Qualitative analyses indicate that optimizing administrative procedures can significantly reduce costs, save time, and increase citizen satisfaction. However, these studies often focus on the government's role in enhancing overall firm performance while overlooking the specific role of office departments. Moreover, most office administration research has been conducted in the public sector. This reveals a need for further empirical studies in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Vietnam. Based on the above arguments, the author proposes the following hypothesis.

H₃: Government support has a positive impact on office performance.

3.4. The Mediation Role of Office Activities Performance

In line with the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory, the office department is positioned not only as a supporting unit but also as a strategic function that facilitates the transformation of internal capabilities and external pressures into firm-level outcomes (Fitrio, 2024; Tuyen & Minh, 2025; Zhang, 2016). While previous literature has examined the direct effects of leadership, technological capability, financial strength, organizational culture, customer pressure, and government support on organizational performance, few studies have empirically investigated the mechanisms through which these factors exert their influence.

Office Activities Performance (OAP) is proposed as a mechanism. As a central hub that coordinates internal processes and mediates external interactions, the office department plays a crucial role in operationalizing organizational strategies (Tuyen & Minh, 2025). For instance, effective leadership may foster a culture of efficiency and innovation, but without a capable office function to implement policies, facilitate communication, or manage information systems, the impact may not translate into tangible performance improvements. Similarly, external pressures from customers or government bodies often require rapid administrative responses, procedural adjustments, and documentation handling responsibilities typically assigned to the office department. Furthermore, the multidimensional nature of OAP, encompassing office human resources, IT system management, and standardized procedures (Tuyen & Minh, 2025), positions it well as a mediating variable. These components serve as both absorptive and transformative capacities: they absorb inputs from internal and external environments and convert them into efficient operational outputs. In this sense, OAP reflects how well a firm can integrate and actualize its resources and stakeholder expectations.

By empirically testing OAP as a mediating construct, this study contributes to addressing a critical gap in both theory and practice. It examines whether the effectiveness of organizational and environmental factors on firm performance is contingent upon the functioning of the office department. In doing so, the study seeks to confirm that improving OAP is not just beneficial on its own, but is, in fact, a necessary condition for maximizing the value of leadership, innovation, financing, and stakeholder responsiveness. Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H₁: Office activities performance has a positive impact on firm performance.

H_{2a}: Office activities performance mediates the relationship between internal organizational factors and firm performance.

H_{2b}: Office activities' performance mediates the relationship between the external environment and firm performance.

The research model is presented below (Figure 1).

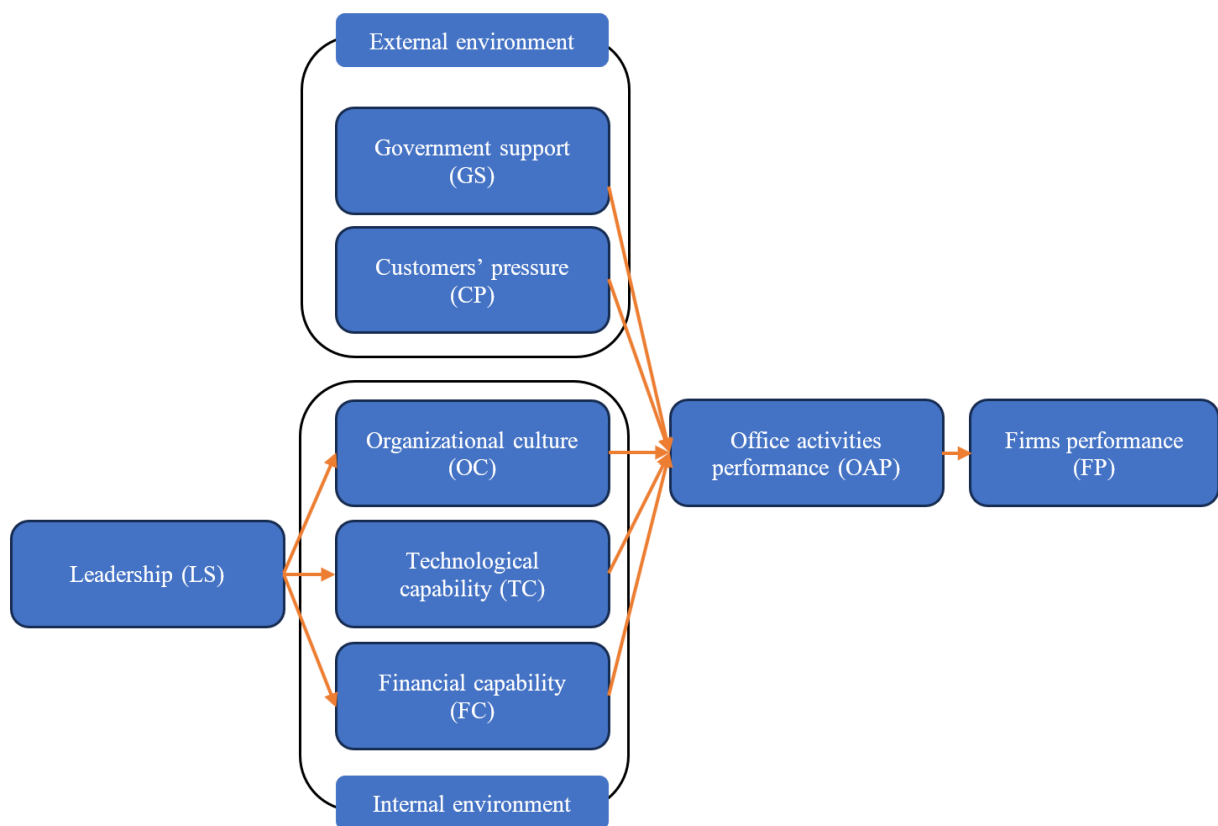


Figure 1. Research model.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Data Collection and Sampling

The study focuses on evaluating the factors affecting firm performance through the mediating role of office activities performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Vietnam, an emerging market. Due to limitations in resources and time, the study employed a convenience sampling method. Through existing networks, online survey questionnaires were sent to employees and leaders of SMEs in Hanoi. To ensure a high response rate, each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose and content of the research. Additionally, the author declared that all collected data would be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research purposes.

To ensure data reliability and a limited convenience sampling method, the author established several screening criteria for the questionnaires. First, the selected enterprises had to qualify as small or medium-sized businesses. Second, the enterprise must have a Human Resources and Administration Department or an Administrative Office. Third, respondents were required to have worked at the company for at least two years to ensure a sufficient understanding of the company's actual conditions. The survey was conducted from November 2024 to February 2025. Each enterprise received three questionnaires (142 enterprises). At the end of the data collection process, a total of 237 responses from 84 companies were collected, of which 209 valid questionnaires were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics of the research sample are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Characteristics of sample.

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
N = 209		
Gender		
Male	125	59.81
Female	84	40.19
Age		
20 to 30	23	11.0
31 to 40	54	25.84
41 to 50	71	33.97
Above 50	61	29.19
N = 84		
Company size		
Small-sized	14	16.67
Medium-sized	70	83.33
Field		
Finance	14	16.67
Production	27	32.14
Agriculture	12	14.29
Service	8	9.52
Other	23	27.38

4.2. Scales Development

To ensure the reliability of the measurement scales, the study adopted validated scales from previous research, with minor adjustments made to suit the context of office management in Vietnam and the specific objectives of the study. Specifically, the “Technological capability” scale, which includes six items, was adopted from [Samad \(2022\)](#). The “Leadership styles” scale including four-items is adopted from [Chowdhury et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Gelhard and Von Delft \(2016\)](#). “Organization culture” scale including four-items is adopted from [Gelhard and Von Delft \(2016\)](#). The “Customers’ pressure” is adopted from [Minh, Huong, Trang, Mai, and Trang \(2025\)](#). The “Government support” scales, including six items, are adopted from [Rodríguez-Espíndola et al. \(2022\)](#). Financial capability scales, including eight items, are adopted from [Agyapong and Tweneboah \(2023\)](#). The “Office activities performance” scale, consisting of eleven items, is adopted from [Tuyen and Minh \(2025\)](#). Finally, the “Firm performance,” including six items, is

adopted from Le (2023). All scales were designed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

In addition, to ensure the consistency and stability of the scales, the author followed several steps. First, the scales were translated into Vietnamese by two independent language experts. The two versions were compared and reconciled for accuracy. Second, the Vietnamese-translated scales were reviewed and refined by administration and office management professionals for applicability to research objectives as well as the conceptual meaning of the constructs. Third, the scales were pre-tested on a small group of respondents for clarity and to ensure there would be no problems in the large-scale survey.

4.3. Common Method Bias

To mitigate common method bias issues, both procedural and statistical remedies were applied. Procedurally, the questionnaire was designed with psychological separation between predictor and criterion variables to reduce consistency motifs. Anonymity and confidentiality were also ensured to lower social desirability bias and evaluation apprehension.

Statistically, Harman's one-factor test was conducted to determine if one factor explained most of the covariance between measures. It was discovered that no factor explained more than 50% of the variance, indicating that CMB was not a significant issue. Additional robustness tests, such as utilizing a marker variable approach, were also employed to validate these results.

4.4. Data Analyst

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the data with SmartPLS 4 software, following the two-stage approach recommended (Hair Jr et al., 2021). During the first stage, the measurement model was assessed to confirm the reliability and validity of the constructs. The reliability of the indicators was checked using outer loadings, which needed to be above 0.70. Internal consistency was calculated with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), both of which were hypothesized to be above 0.70. Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with acceptable values above 0.50. Discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with HTMT values below 0.85 indicating adequate discriminant validity.

In step two, the structural model was estimated. Multicollinearity was assessed using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), and all values were below 5. To test the significance of the path coefficients, a bootstrapping procedure with 1,000 resamples was applied. Mediation effects were also examined by conducting an indirect path analysis to validate OAP as a mediator between organizational drivers and firm performance.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated for the reliability of all constructs, convergent validity, and overall consistency. Regarding reliability, all constructs have Cronbach's Alpha values well above the cutoff of 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. Composite Reliability (C.R.) values for all constructs are also well above 0.7, reflecting the strength of the scales. To assess convergent validity, factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were examined. All observed variables' factor loadings exceed 0.7, demonstrating that the indicators strongly measure their respective constructs. Additionally, AVE values for all constructs are above 0.5, satisfying the criteria for convergent validity (Hair Jr et al., 2021). Overall, these results confirm that the measurement scales used in this study are valid and reliable for use in subsequent structural analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (C.R.), factor loadings, and AVE.

Construct	Items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	C.R	AVE
CP	CP1	0.817	0.885	0.921	0.745
	CP2	0.892			
	CP3	0.892			
	CP4	0.849			
FC	FC1	0.895	0.908	0.926	0.610
	FC2	0.763			
	FC3	0.785			
	FC4	0.754			
	FC5	0.774			
	FC6	0.774			
	FC7	0.789			
	FC8	0.703			
FP	FP1	0.870	0.895	0.920	0.660
	FP2	0.851			
	FP3	0.873			
	FP4	0.802			
	FP5	0.703			
	FP6	0.760			
GS	GS1	0.911	0.904	0.926	0.678
	GS2	0.734			
	GS3	0.856			
	GS4	0.796			
	GS5	0.835			
	GS6	0.797			
LS	LS1	0.856	0.891	0.925	0.754
	LS2	0.894			
	LS3	0.878			
	LS4	0.845			
OAP	OAP1	0.724	0.930	0.940	0.590
	OAP10	0.771			
	OAP11	0.720			
	OAP2	0.784			
	OAP3	0.754			
	OAP4	0.852			
	OAP5	0.807			
	OAP6	0.772			
	OAP7	0.770			
	OAP8	0.742			
	OAP9	0.741			
OC	OC1	0.850	0.904	0.933	0.778
	OC2	0.928			
	OC3	0.860			
	OC4	0.888			
TC	TC1	0.788	0.872	0.904	0.611
	TC2	0.798			
	TC3	0.836			
	TC4	0.743			
	TC5	0.725			
	TC6	0.796			

The Fornell-Larcker Criterion was applied to assess the discriminant validity of the constructs in the measurement model. Discriminant validity is considered present if the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct (the diagonal values) exceeds the correlations between that construct and all other constructs within the model, according to [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#). These findings indicate that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with indicators of other constructs, thereby providing satisfactory

discriminant validity for the model. This confirms that the constructs are conceptually distinct and that the measurement model is valid and reliable for subsequent analysis (see Table 4).

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	CP	FC	FP	GS	LS	OAP	OC	TC
CP	0.863							
FC	0.535	0.781						
FP	0.513	0.542	0.812					
GS	0.427	0.403	0.373	0.824				
LS	0.378	0.572	0.407	0.261	0.869			
OAP	0.600	0.615	0.741	0.490	0.505	0.768		
OC	0.424	0.489	0.628	0.385	0.477	0.608	0.882	
TC	0.470	0.542	0.610	0.391	0.450	0.609	0.615	0.782

5.2. Structural Model

The results (see Table 5) from the structural model assessment indicate that all proposed hypotheses (H1a to H7) are statistically supported, as all path coefficients are significant at the 0.05 level or lower. Specifically, Leadership Support (LS) has a strong and positive influence on three key constructs: Organizational Commitment (OC) with a path coefficient of 0.477 ($T = 8.595$, $p < 0.001$), Technology Capability (TC) with a coefficient of 0.450 ($T = 8.117$, $p < 0.001$), and Firm Capability (FC) with the highest coefficient of 0.572 ($T = 11.887$, $p < 0.001$). These relationships also demonstrate medium to large effect sizes (f^2 ranging from 0.254 to 0.486), suggesting that leadership plays a critical role in shaping organizational resources and capabilities.

Furthermore, OC, TC, FC, CP, and GS are all shown to positively impact OAP, with respective coefficients of 0.237, 0.177, 0.219, 0.239, and 0.139. These effects are statistically significant (all $p < 0.01$), although their effect sizes are generally small to moderate (f^2 ranging from 0.036 to 0.090), indicating that these factors contribute to the organization's ability to adapt, but to varying extents.

Most notably, OAP has a substantial and significant impact on Firm Performance (FP), with a very strong path coefficient of 0.741 ($T = 26.174$, $p < 0.001$) and a large effect size ($f^2 = 1.217$), emphasizing that the ability to adapt plays a decisive role in enhancing performance outcomes.

Additionally, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all relationships are well below the threshold of 5, indicating no concern of multicollinearity. These findings collectively validate the hypothesized relationships and confirm the importance of internal capabilities, leadership, and strategic practices in driving organizational adaptability and performance.

Table 5. Hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Path	Coefficient	STDEV	T statistics	P values	f^2	VIF
H1a	LS → OC	0.477	0.056	8.595	0.000	0.295	1.000
H1b	LS → TC	0.450	0.055	8.117	0.000	0.254	1.000
H1c	LS → FC	0.572	0.048	11.887	0.000	0.486	1.000
H2	OC → OAP	0.237	0.061	3.863	0.000	0.080	1.753
H3	TC → OAP	0.177	0.064	2.778	0.006	0.041	1.906
H4	FC → OAP	0.219	0.060	3.683	0.000	0.069	1.734
H5	CP → OAP	0.239	0.057	4.193	0.000	0.090	1.593
H6	GS → OAP	0.139	0.048	2.901	0.004	0.036	1.349
H7	OAP → FP	0.741	0.028	26.174	0.000	1.217	1.000

5.3. Indirect Relationship Testing

The results of the indirect relationship testing (see Table 6) highlight the mediating role of Organizational Adaptive Practices (OAP) in the model. All indirect effects are statistically significant with p-values below 0.01, confirming that OAP serves as an essential intermediary between several organizational antecedents and firm performance (FP).

Specifically, Customer Perception (CP) influences FP indirectly through OAP, with a path coefficient of 0.177 ($T = 4.144$, $p < 0.001$), while Firm Capability (FC) also demonstrates a significant indirect effect on FP via OAP ($\beta = 0.163$, $T = 3.582$, $p < 0.001$). Likewise, Green Strategy (GS) impacts FP indirectly through OAP ($\beta = 0.103$, $T = 2.871$, $p = 0.004$), despite having a comparatively smaller effect size.

Moreover, both Organizational Commitment (OC) and Technology Capability (TC) exert meaningful indirect effects on FP via OAP, with coefficients of 0.176 ($T = 3.843$, $p < 0.001$) and 0.131 ($T = 2.730$, $p = 0.007$), respectively.

Table 6. Indirect relationship testing.

Group	Hypotheses	Path	Coefficient	(STDEV)	T statistics	P values
Internal environment	H7a	FC → OAP → FP	0.163	0.045	3.582	0.000
	H7a	OC → OAP → FP	0.176	0.046	3.843	0.000
External environment	H7b	TC → OAP → FP	0.131	0.048	2.730	0.007
	H7b	CP → OAP → FP	0.177	0.043	4.144	0.000
	H7b	GS → OAP → FP	0.103	0.036	2.871	0.004

6. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION

6.1. Discussion

The research results confirmed that six hypotheses are supported, indicating that leadership style, technological capability, financial capability, organizational culture, customer pressure, and government support all have positive effects on office activity performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This not only aligns with the foundational theories proposed in the study but also corresponds with findings from previous research. These factors represent both internal resources of the enterprise (e.g., leadership, technology, finance, culture) and external influences (e.g., government support). The fact that all of them have positive effects underscores the comprehensive nature of the model. These findings clarify that enhancing office performance requires simultaneous improvement across various dimensions, from internal management practices to adapting to external demands. Additionally, office activity performance has a positive impact on firm performance. These findings highlight the office department as a key intermediary that translates internal and external capabilities into improved firm performance.

Firstly, the leadership style was confirmed to positively impact the internal environment (organization culture, financial capability, and technological capability), supporting H1. This result reinforces previous studies suggesting that leadership is a key determinant of SME success (Arham, 2014; Zainol et al., 2018). Specifically, an inspirational and supportive leadership style can foster employee creativity and engagement, thereby improving administrative work efficiency. Conversely, a lack of leadership attention may demotivate office staff and hinder effective operations. This finding also aligns with Nguyen (2005), who argued that the office department serving as direct support and consultancy for leadership is significantly influenced by the leader's style and concern. Thus, the discovery of leadership's role not only extends the research of Tubagus (2018) on leadership's effect on SME performance but also highlights the importance of this factor in office effectiveness, a domain that remains underexplored.

Secondly, organizational culture was identified as a positive factor influencing office performance, confirming H2. This result agrees with earlier studies on the relationship between corporate culture and performance (Martinez et al., 2015; Shahzad et al., 2012) and extends those conclusions to the office setting. A positive culture emphasizing open communication, collaboration, and innovation creates a conducive environment for office staff to actively share information and coordinate smoothly, thereby minimizing errors and optimizing workflow. This finding also supports

Le and Tran (2022), who asserted that in the fast-evolving technological landscape, a culture of speed and flexibility enables office departments to quickly adapt and effectively perform their support and advisory roles for leadership. Conversely, a bureaucratic or stagnant culture may negatively impact office performance due to a lack of cooperation and improvement initiatives. Hence, the influence of organizational culture underscores the importance of not only technical and structural factors but also soft human-related elements in enhancing office effectiveness.

Thirdly, financial capability was discovered to have a positive effect on office performance, validating H3. This finding is an expression of sheer economic sense: financially capable firms tend to be in a position to maintain seamless functional operations, like administrative offices. Our findings agree with Chepkemai et al. (2017), who asserted that financial position is a key determinant of SME performance. In the administrative offices, adequate financial support enables investment in modern equipment and technology, apart from running skill enhancement programs for staff. This is in line with Ghosh (2025), who stated that good financial ability enables firms to hire quality employees and promote professionalism in operations. Financial limitations would, however, mean poorly equipped offices as well as shortages in personnel, resulting in overuse and watered-down performance.

Fourth, the confirmation of H4 indicates that technological competence has a significant positive influence on office performance. This finding aligns with the Industry 4.0 context, in which IT application is regarded as one of the drivers for enhancing administrative effectiveness (Bryson et al., 2014). Our research provides quantitative evidence complementing prior qualitative research efforts such as Zhang (2016), which demonstrated that high-tech office systems and sophisticated information management tools boost productivity and flexibility in administrative operations. Specifically, high-technology-enabled businesses are able to consolidate management software, automate document processing and communication, minimize processing time, and cut errors. This result aligns with Le and Tran (2022), where the authors describe that technological change in office work is a trend aimed at increasing efficiency, saving time, and reducing costs. Therefore, this study generates empirical knowledge confirming the primary reason for the application of technologies in SME offices to ensure effective operations. Additionally, a gap in the literature is identified due to the lack of quantitative evaluations in this area.

Customer pressure was found to have a significantly positive effect on office performance, supporting H5 and stakeholder theory. This result implies that instead of being a constraint, high expectations and demands from customers act as a driving force for enterprises to improve their office operations. This is consistent with studies by Waheed and Zhang (2022), which showed that pressure from customers or partners drives SMEs to enhance performance to better meet market demands. In the office context, customer pressure may include expectations for faster procedures, better administrative service, and professionalism in all communications. Our findings indicate that SMEs have been striving to meet such pressures by streamlining procedures, improving service quality, and enhancing external communication skills among office staff. The assertion by Nguyen (2005) that the office represents the "face" of the business in external relations reinforces the significance of this result: when enterprises value external feedback and requirements, office departments are motivated to improve performance, thereby elevating organizational reputation and image. Thus, this study provides empirical evidence that customer pressure not only impacts overall business performance but also directly affects the effectiveness of administrative office activities, expanding the understanding of external influences in office management.

As far as government support goes, the study concluded a firm and positive influence on OAP (H6), indicating that support from government agencies, whether it be training, financing, or digitization plans, can empower office departments and enhance internal processes. The positive effect may also emanate from institutional tools and control environments because office departments are traditionally tasked with collecting, processing, and implementing government agency official papers and directives. This emphasizes the office's pivotal position in translating external policy signals into domestic action. This finding verifies the influence of the external institutional environment in building administrative capacity in SMEs, especially in emerging economies where government intervention is significant.

In addition to the direct effects, this study confirmed the mediating role of office activities performance in the relationship between organizational drivers and firm performance (H7a). This hypothesis represents a novel contribution to the literature, as few prior studies have empirically examined how internal capabilities are channeled through office departments to improve firm performance. The evidence supports the view that improvements in internal capabilities such as leadership, technology, finance, and culture are more likely to enhance firm performance when channeled through a well-functioning office department. This reinforces the conceptualization of the office as a strategic intermediary that translates internal strengths into operational success.

Furthermore, the study also validated H7b, which proposed that Office Activities Performance mediates the relationship between external environmental factors and firm performance. This hypothesis introduces a new analytical perspective into the office management literature, expanding the role of the office from a purely internal function to a dynamic translator of external institutional inputs. While customer pressure did not show a direct effect on OAP, government support emerged as a significant driver. This suggests that external institutional influences, particularly regulatory support, policy facilitation, and administrative coordination can enhance firm performance, but their effectiveness depends on the office's capacity to absorb, implement, and institutionalize such influences.

6.2. Theoretical Implications

This study offers several important novel theoretical contributions to the field of office management. Firstly, it proposes a new academic definition of “office activities,” building upon traditional perspectives while addressing the limitations of previous conceptualizations. This revised definition clarifies the scope and role of office functions in modern enterprises, emphasizing that office activities are not limited to routine administrative tasks but also contribute directly to organizational efficiency and performance. By redefining the concept, the study provides a stronger theoretical foundation for understanding office performance as a strategic element within the enterprise. Secondly, the study extends the application of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory to the domain of office management, an area that has received limited attention in academic research. These theories have traditionally been applied to general management or core business functions such as production and marketing. By applying them to office operations, this study demonstrates that office-related resources (e.g., human capital, processes, administrative technology) and stakeholder management within the office (e.g., employee satisfaction and engagement, support from leadership and other departments) can significantly influence a firm's competitive advantage and performance. These findings broaden the scope of RBV and Stakeholder Theory, affirming that even support functions like office management can be analyzed from strategic and stakeholder perspectives. Thirdly, the study helps to reinforce and validate the OAP measurement scale in the context of Vietnamese enterprises. The results of the study show that this scale effectively measures the various aspects of office activity performance.

In addition, the study provides particular value within the context of Vietnamese small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where office departments are often undervalued. Empirical findings emphasize that office units play a vital role in the operation and success of SMEs. This contributes to enhancing theoretical awareness of the importance of office activities in SME environments and reinforces the argument that all internal resources, including those within support departments, can become competitive advantages when managed effectively.

6.3. Managerial Implication

Based on the above findings, this study offers significant implications for business practice. SME managers must fully recognize the importance of the five identified factors to develop appropriate improvement strategies, thereby enhancing office performance and overall business efficiency. Specifically, this study proposes the following measures:

Business leaders should adopt supportive and inspirational leadership styles that encourage employee participation and contribution. This can be achieved by establishing open communication channels, listening to staff

feedback, and acknowledging process improvement initiatives. When leaders build trust and a positive working spirit, office staff are more motivated to contribute, improving daily task efficiency.

Companies need to make investments in the modernization of IT infrastructure and provide administrative staff with digital training. The utilization of document management software, task management applications, and internal communication tools, for instance, helps automate administrative processes, reduce manual effort, and prevent errors. Furthermore, frequent upgrades and the adoption of new technology (e.g., electronic office solutions, cloud storage) help offices stay ahead in terms of digital transformation, enhancing administrative service quality and efficiency. Companies need to build sound financial foundations to attain stable office activities. This includes spending reasonable amounts on administrative activities (office supplies, software, office equipment) and investing in training and professional development of office personnel.

Managers also need to improve their money management skills (cost control and budgeting) to make the best use of available resources. With sufficient and well-managed finances, the office can improve the working environment, adopt new technologies, and increase productivity. Companies should foster a culture of initiative, cooperation, and flexibility. In particular, they should encourage open communication between departments and between managers and staff, leading to every individual being willing to share facts and assist colleagues with administrative matters. Executives should also demonstrate a continuous improvement attitude to enable innovation within the organization.

Empowering workers to be constructively engaged and capable of change enhances office productivity in the long term. Managers must view customer and partner needs as a source of inspiration to improve service. Firms should establish mechanisms to regularly collect and act on customer feedback, including customer service or satisfaction surveys. In office departments, this involves upgrading visitor reception, documentation, and procedures to become more responsive and efficient. Additionally, firms can organize communication and customer service skills training for office staff to improve their handling of high-pressure interactions. When customer pressure is managed proactively, firms not only improve office performance but also enhance reputation and customer relations, building competitive strengths. In practice, SME managers should recognize the importance of aligning their office operations with government efforts, such as adopting digital solutions, complying with regulatory frameworks, and participating in training and financial support initiatives. Through this, office departments can effectively utilize external resources, consolidate policy regulations, and improve internal efficiency. For example, government aid can significantly contribute to simplifying administrative procedures, upgrading communication systems, and fostering organizational flexibility. Furthermore, the research indicates that government aid is only effective when office departments have the capacity to absorb, utilize, and institutionalize these external influences. Therefore, it is not sufficient for businesses to merely receive government assistance; there must be a proper organizational structure within the office to accept initiatives from outside and convert them into operational improvements. The findings of this study highlight the strategic role of the office in determining overall business performance. The research demonstrates that office activities performance (OAP) mediates the transfer of organizational capabilities and external pressures to improved firm performance. This suggests that the office is not merely an administrative function but a vital strategic unit with significant effects on operational success and competitive advantage.

For business executives and managers, this study suggests that the office should be a part of the firm's strategic architecture. Office departments require the right resources, leadership, and training to enable them to function optimally. Since the office acts as an internal coordination point and also deals with external constituents, its ability to harmonize strategic goals with operational routines cannot be overstated. Managers should be proactive in creating an innovative and collaborative culture within their office departments, challenging employees to take more active roles in generating business outcomes. This can be achieved through leadership development programs that address the strategic impact of office functions, combined with the provision of modern technological tools to facilitate effective functioning and improved service delivery.

Besides, recognizing the strategic role of the office involves ensuring that it is coordinated with other departments in the firm to facilitate effective communication and coordination. Such coordination between departments is critical in converting internal strengths into tangible performance improvements. Therefore, managers should pay greater attention to optimizing office functions, such as investing in technology, human capital, and organizational processes, to achieve its full potential as a strategic business success driver.

7. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

This study contributes to addressing the research gap in the field of office management in Vietnam by providing empirical evidence on the factors influencing office activity performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The results indicate that leadership style, financial capability, technological capability, organizational culture, government support, and customer pressure all have positive effects on the performance of office departments. Accordingly, the study not only clarifies the strategic role of the office in business operations but also suggests new approaches to modern administrative management. Theoretically, the study proposes a revised definition of office management, building upon and addressing the limitations of previous research. These findings can serve as a foundation for developing training policies, improving administrative processes, and applying technology in office management.

However, the study still has some limitations. First, the use of convenience sampling may limit the representativeness of the findings for all SMEs in Vietnam. Second, the research model only considers a few basic internal and external factors, without covering other possible influences such as government policies, individual employee characteristics, or industry-specific variables. Therefore, future research may expand the sample size and scope to include other regions beyond Hanoi, while also incorporating additional variables to better understand the mechanisms influencing office performance. Moreover, conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to test the long-term stability and sustainability of the relationships proposed in the model.

Funding: This study received no specific financial support.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Data Availability Statement: The corresponding author can provide the supporting data of this study upon a reasonable request.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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