

Lecturer motivation in community service and other academic service activities at Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 16 November 2025

Received in revised form

11 March 2026

Accepted 28 March 2026

Keywords:

Lecturer motivation

Community service

Non-teaching and non-research tasks

Academic citizenship

Higher education

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the current level of motivation among lecturers to engage in community service and other academic duties beyond teaching and research. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining a questionnaire survey with in-depth interviews conducted at six member universities of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM). The results show that lecturers generally reported a relatively high level of motivation for these activities, although the level of motivation varied across different types of tasks. The study also found significant differences in motivation among lecturers with different academic ranks and educational qualifications, particularly regarding their willingness to perform service-related responsibilities. These findings provide practical evidence that can assist VNUHCM leaders in developing targeted policies to improve lecturer motivation and increase participation in community service and other important institutional duties.

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1. Introduction

The work of university lecturers today is increasingly diverse. Alongside the two core responsibilities of teaching and research, lecturers are expected to engage in a wide range of activities that support learners, academic programs, community partners, and society at large—a trend well documented in the scholarship on academic roles and academic citizenship (Macfarlane, 2007; Macfarlane and Burg, 2018; Smith and Walker, 2025). In Vietnam's higher education regulatory framework, these responsibilities are collectively referred to as community service and other tasks, reflecting the broad scope of service-oriented duties that complement a lecturer's core academic role. These activities are not secondary obligations; they enrich lecturers' professional experience and strengthen the connection between higher education and the wider community (Hazelkorn, 2016; Smith and Walker, 2025). Through participation in academic support, training, and community-oriented

initiatives, lecturers gain valuable exposure to social realities and opportunities to connect academic knowledge with practice, while universities contribute more visibly to social progress and community development (Yamamura and Koth, 2018).

Vietnam National University-Ho Chi Minh City (VNUHCM), one of the two national university systems in Vietnam, has articulated a vision of becoming a leading Asian university and a center where science, technology, innovation, and Vietnamese cultural values converge. Its mission emphasizes high-quality human resource training, scientific advancement, innovation, and contributions to national development. To fulfill these commitments, VNUHCM requires not only strong performance in teaching and research but also an active and motivated academic workforce that can engage meaningfully in community service and professional support activities. These tasks form an important foundation for strengthening university-society linkages, an aspect explicitly highlighted in VNUHCM's institutional orientation.

Despite the recognized importance of these responsibilities, research on lecturer motivation at VNUHCM has so far focused mainly on teaching and research. Little is known about what motivates lecturers to participate in community service and other professional tasks, or how strongly they feel committed to these responsibilities. A deeper understanding of lecturer motivation in this area is

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<https://doi.org/10.21833/ijaas.2026.04.004>

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essential for designing appropriate managerial strategies and creating an enabling environment that supports lecturer engagement across all dimensions of their work. Such insights are important not only for improving individual performance but also for contributing to the sustainable development and societal reputation of VNUHCM.

2. Literature review

In contemporary higher education, community service has become an essential dimension of the university mission. Beyond teaching and research, universities are expected to engage with society, contribute to public welfare, and address local and global challenges. Hazelkorn (2016) noted that despite pressures from global rankings-often pushing universities toward research prestige-the social responsibility of higher education remains fundamental for maintaining relevance and responding to societal needs.

A foundational perspective on this issue comes from Boyer (1990), whose reconceptualization of scholarship emphasizes that academic work should extend beyond knowledge production. His four categories of scholarship-discovery, integration, application, and teaching-laid the groundwork for what later became known as community-engaged scholarship. Holland (2001) expanded Boyer's ideas by arguing that scholarship carries an intrinsic "caring" role: Universities and faculty should use their expertise to improve society. She proposed a comprehensive assessment framework for evaluating the impact of service-learning and university-community partnerships on students, communities, faculty, and institutions, reinforcing the legitimacy of engagement as a scholarly endeavor.

Across the literature, the benefits of community service appear at multiple levels. For universities, engagement strengthens civic identity, fosters long-term partnerships, and enhances institutional reputation by demonstrating societal relevance (Hazelkorn, 2016; Smith and Walker, 2025). For communities, partnerships offer access to expertise, applied research, technical assistance, and collaborative problem solving that support socio-economic, cultural, and environmental development (Yamamura and Koth, 2018; Vanaja et al., 2024). Faculty members themselves gain opportunities for professional learning, enhanced leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and stronger academic credibility through real-world application of knowledge (Beckman and Long, 2016).

Faculty community service encompasses a wide range of activities. Wade and Demb (2009) identified several major forms of engagement, including service-learning, community-based research, consultation, technical assistance, and training designed to address practical needs within communities. Expanding the understanding of such contributions, Macfarlane (2007) argued that many forms of academic service-particularly those that

sustain institutional functioning and community relationships-remain undervalued in university promotion systems despite being essential to academic citizenship. His framework highlights that faculty engagement is not limited to outward-facing activities but also includes a substantial amount of "invisible work," such as mentoring, committee participation, and institutional governance, which are vital for maintaining academic collegiality and public trust. Building on this conceptual foundation, Macfarlane and Burg (2018) extended the discussion from critique to institutional practice by emphasizing the need to formally recognize and reward academic citizenship through promotion criteria, workload models, and performance evaluation systems. Their policy-oriented perspective reinforces the argument that both externally oriented community engagement and internally focused, often invisible, academic work should be acknowledged as integral components of faculty roles. More recently, Smith and Walker (2025) further advanced this line of argument by demonstrating that such forms of academic citizenship-particularly developmental, collegial, and often unseen contributions-play a crucial role in shaping lecturers' professional identity and strengthening the relational connections between universities, their academic communities, and, more broadly, the wider society. This perspective underscores the dual nature of community service: it reflects both external engagement with society and internal responsibilities that uphold the academic community.

Within this broader conceptualization, Weerts and Sandmann (2010) viewed faculty as boundary spanners who link universities with societal partners by facilitating communication, co-developing solutions, and sustaining long-term collaboration. Complementing this perspective, Pyles (2020) emphasized the reciprocal nature of community engagement: Universities contribute expertise and resources, while faculty and students gain experiential learning opportunities, civic awareness, and strengthened professional identity. Yamamura and Koth (2018) further reinforced this view by advocating for place-based engagement, calling for universities to embed themselves in their local contexts and actively participate in shared problem-solving processes that promote mutual transformation. Extending this place-based and collaborative orientation, Vanaja et al. (2024) highlighted that higher education engagement contributes to community empowerment by expanding access to academic knowledge, expertise, and collaborative problem-solving processes that address local social and developmental needs. Smith and Walker (2025) extended these perspectives by showing that such relational and boundary-spanning forms of academic citizenship play a central role in sustaining collaborative partnerships and reinforcing the professional identity of academics engaged in community-facing and relational forms of academic work.

In Vietnam, the responsibilities of university lecturers are defined by key legal documents, notably the Law on Higher Education in 2012 and later revised in 2018, issued by the National Assembly. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) further details these responsibilities through regulations such as Circular No. 20/2020/TT-BGDĐT and Circular No. 25/2020/TT-BGDĐT. These documents define “community service and other tasks” as mandatory components of the academic profession, reflecting a scope of responsibilities that aligns closely with the international forms of engagement described by Wade and Demb (2009), Weerts and Sandmann (2010), and Yamamura and Koth (2018). Within the Vietnamese context, three core duties are highlighted: (i) concurrently holding academic or managerial positions; (ii) providing academic and student support activities; and (iii) participating in professional development, such as postgraduate study and obtaining professional certifications. Together, these duties demonstrate that community service is not merely an additional expectation, but a central and institutionalized component of the lecturer’s professional role.

Work motivation is generally reflected through individuals’ attitudes and behaviors in performing their duties. Although scholarly literature rarely lists explicit indicators, many studies indirectly describe characteristics of motivated employees, including persistence, enthusiasm, voluntary engagement, and commitment to achieving meaningful outcomes (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2021; Grieser, 2017). Vietnamese studies show similar patterns, emphasizing effort, willingness, resilience, enthusiasm, and a positive work spirit. Synthesizing these perspectives, Dung and Hao (2023) identified seven behavioral indicators of lecturers’ work motivation:

- (1) interest in performing tasks,
- (2) enthusiasm,
- (3) willingness and voluntariness,
- (4) dedication and hard work,
- (5) continuous effort,
- (6) persistence, and
- (7) the desire to achieve good results.

Research specifically addressing motivation in community service highlights similar patterns. O’Meara (2008), through case studies of exemplary faculty members, found that engagement motivation arises from personal values, civic responsibility, and the emotional fulfillment associated with seeing positive social impact. Faculty often describe themselves as enthusiastic, committed, and deeply invested in engagement work. Wade and Demb (2009) contributed a systematic explanation through their Faculty Engagement Model, which integrates personal motivators (moral commitment, desire to contribute), professional motivators (applied research, interdisciplinary collaboration), and institutional motivators (policies and recognition

systems). They emphasize that intrinsic motivation often sustains faculty engagement even when institutional support is limited.

Although not centered on community service, Neumann’s (2006) analysis of emotion in academic work provides valuable insight into the motivational processes underlying faculty engagement. She argues that intellectual work is inherently emotional and shaped by passion, fulfillment, and commitment—all of which closely align with the intrinsic meaning faculty attribute to community service activities.

Together, these studies reveal that lecturer motivation in community service is multidimensional, shaped by personal values, academic aspirations, and institutional context. The seven indicators synthesized by Dung and Hao (2023) offered a practical framework for observing how such motivation manifests in lecturers’ behavior. These insights form the conceptual basis for the methodological approach presented in the next.

3. Methodology

This study examines the motivation of lecturers at VNUHCM in performing community service and other assigned professional duties. These duties, as stipulated in current Vietnamese higher education regulations, include holding concurrent administrative roles, providing academic and student-support services, and pursuing further professional development and qualifications.

The study is guided by two central questions:

- (1) What is the overall level of lecturer motivation in carrying out community service and other tasks at VNUHCM?
- (2) Does motivation vary across lecturer demographic characteristics?

The investigation was conducted within six member universities of VNUHCM. For reporting purposes and to maintain confidentiality, these institutions are anonymized and presented as U1 to U6. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was adopted to capture both the breadth of lecturers’ responses and the depth of their reflections.

A survey instrument was developed based on the theoretical framework outlined in the literature review. The questionnaire consisted of 21 items grouped into three dimensions corresponding to the recognized categories of “community service and other tasks.” Specifically, the 21 items were constructed by operationalizing the seven indicators of work motivation identified by Dung and Hao (2023) and aligning them with the legally and institutionally defined tasks within the domain of community service and other professional responsibilities of Vietnamese university lecturers. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree). The survey was distributed online using Microsoft Forms from

August to October 2022, a data collection mode selected due to practical constraints related to time, the geographical dispersion of participants across multiple member universities, and limited opportunities for face-to-face data collection. Given these conditions, a convenience sampling approach was employed. Nevertheless, deliberate efforts were made to ensure a diverse sample encompassing key lecturer characteristics, including managerial and non-managerial positions, academic titles and qualifications, gender, age groups, years of teaching experience, income levels, and institutional affiliation across six member universities (Table 1). After data screening, a total of 457 valid questionnaire responses were retained for subsequent analysis.

The reliability and construct validity of the measurement scales were assessed using Cronbach’s alpha and exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The results showed that all items had acceptable corrected item–total correlations (≥ 0.30), and Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for all scales exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Exploratory factor analysis further supported the construct validity of the scales, with all extracted factors having eigenvalues greater than 1 and a total variance explained exceeding 50%. In addition, all factor loadings were above 0.30, suggesting that the retained items were appropriately associated with their underlying constructs. Overall, these results provide evidence that the measurement scales were reliable and valid for subsequent analysis.

To further deepen the understanding of these quantitative findings, a qualitative component was subsequently implemented. To complement the survey results, semi-structured interviews were

conducted with 18 lecturers. Participants were selected from the survey pool using a stratified sampling procedure to ensure variation across institutional units and key academic characteristics. To protect confidentiality, interviewees were coded from L1 to L18. Prior to each interview, participants provided written informed consent and were informed of confidentiality principles. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using inductive coding. Codes were generated directly from the data and subsequently grouped into broader themes based on recurring patterns across interviews. Representative quotations were selected to illustrate typical viewpoints and experiences related to lecturers’ motivation in community service and other professional tasks.

In this design, quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data collection designed to explain the survey results. The quantitative survey provided an overall picture of lecturers’ motivation in community service and other tasks, while the qualitative interviews were developed based on the survey findings and used to further explain and contextualize key results.

Specifically, qualitative themes derived from interviews (L1–L18) were examined alongside quantitative results to clarify underlying motivations, experiences, and meanings that could not be fully captured through the questionnaire alone. This integration enabled a more nuanced interpretation of the findings and strengthened the explanatory power of the mixed methods approach.

Table 1 summarizes demographic information of both survey and interview participants, including academic title, position, gender, age, income category, years of experience, and university affiliation.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of participants’ demographics

Variable	Category	Survey (n)	Survey (%)	Interviews (n)	Interviews (%)
Position	Manager	83	18.2	7	38.9
	Non-managerial lecturer	374	81.8	11	61.1
	Senior lecturer/professor/associate professor	26	5.7	3	16.7
Academic rank/qualification	Main lecturer – doctor	31	6.8	2	11.1
	Lecturer – doctor	106	23.2	6	33.3
	Lecturer – master	186	40.7	6	33.3
	Teaching assistant	89	19.5	1	5.6
Gender	Male	223	48.8	11	61.1
	Female	234	51.2	7	38.9
Age	Below 30 years	116	25.4	3	16.7
	30–40 years	184	40.3	8	44.4
	40–50 years	128	28.0	4	22.2
Teaching experience	Above 50 years	29	6.3	3	16.7
	Below 5 years	144	31.5	2	11.1
	5–10 years	114	24.9	9	50.0
	Above 10 years	199	43.5	7	38.9
Income level (VND/month)	Below 10 million	180	39.4	—	—
	10–15 million	126	27.6	—	—
	Above 15 million	151	33.0	—	—
University	U1	150	32.8	3	16.7
	U2	79	17.3	3	16.7
	U3	56	12.3	3	16.7
	U4	79	17.3	3	16.7
	U5	49	10.7	3	16.7
	U6	44	9.6	3	16.7
Total		457	100	18	100

Quantitative analyses were performed using SPSS. Reliability and validity checks were followed by descriptive statistics and comparative analyses (independent sample T-test and ANOVA) to examine differences across demographic groups. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was applied. Codes were synthesized into categories, and the frequency of viewpoints was calculated to indicate their prevalence among participants. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive understanding of lecturer motivation, combining measurable trends with in-depth insights into attitudes and experiences related to community service and other duties.

4. Results and discussion

This section corresponds to research question 1: What is the overall level of lecturer motivation in

carrying out community service and other tasks at VNUHCM? To answer this question, the study analyzes both quantitative data from a large-scale survey and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews, focusing on three key areas of “community service and other tasks”: Holding concurrent positions, performing other professional tasks, and pursuing further academic qualifications.

The motivation of lecturers at VNUHCM was assessed across three sub-categories of “community service and other tasks”: (i) In Holding Concurrent Positions, (ii) In Carrying out Other Professional Tasks, and (iii) In Studying to Improve Professional Qualification. The survey results using a questionnaire on the indicators of lecturers' motivation in activities from “community service and other tasks” are shown in [Table 2](#).

Table 2: Lecturers’ self-assessment of work motivation indicators

Category	Indicator	Mean	SD
	Overall	3.71	0.99
Holding concurrent positions (HCP)	Interested in concurrent positions	3.63	1.10
	Enthusiastic about concurrent positions	3.67	1.07
	Volunteer to hold concurrent positions	3.60	1.07
	Dedicated and work hard	3.75	1.04
	Try my best	3.78	1.04
	Persistent	3.77	1.02
Carrying out other professional tasks (COPT)	Desire to perform well	3.76	1.05
	Overall	3.94	0.82
	Interested	3.90	0.92
	Enthusiastic	3.90	0.89
	Volunteer	3.86	0.93
	Dedicated and work hard	3.97	0.86
Studying to improve professional qualification (SIPQ)	Try my best	4.00	0.86
	Persistent	3.97	0.85
	Desire to perform well	3.96	0.87
	Overall	4.19	0.80
	Interested	4.19	0.85
	Enthusiastic	4.19	0.84
Overall	Volunteer	4.22	0.85
	Dedicated and work hard	4.21	0.85
	Try my best	4.21	0.84
	Persistent	4.16	0.87
	Desire to perform well	4.18	0.86
		3.95	0.73

SD: Standard deviation

Based on the descriptive statistics presented in [Table 2](#), the overall motivation of lecturers in performing “community service and other tasks” is rated at a relatively high level, with an average score of 3.95. Among the three categories, motivation related to “studying to improve professional qualification” received the highest mean score of 4.19. Although motivation for “concurrent positions” was lower than that for “other professional tasks,” its standard deviation was notably higher (0.99 compared to 0.82), indicating greater variability in lecturer responses. Most motivation indicators across the three task categories were rated at the “somewhat agree” level, while several indicators within the category of “studying to improve professional qualification” reached the “totally agree” level. The result implies a differentiated pattern of motivational engagement across task types. To gain deeper insights into lecturers' motivation levels in performing “community service

and other tasks,” the research team conducted in-depth interviews with 18 lecturers from six member universities of VNUHCM. Two open-ended questions guided the interviews: (1) respondents were asked to list the specific “community service and other tasks” they were currently undertaking or had undertaken, excluding teaching and research; (2) they were then asked to rank the three categories of “community service and other tasks” (concurrent positions, other professional tasks, and studying to improve professional qualification) based on their personal motivation, from highest to lowest, and explain the reasons for their ranking.

The responses to the first question revealed that all 18 lecturers (100%) had participated in various tasks under the category of “other professional tasks,” such as academic advising, supervising internships and practical work, guiding student research projects, and supporting training activities for local communities or external organizations.

Similarly, all 18 had engaged in professional development activities-pursuing advanced degrees or certifications to meet institutional expectations - thus falling into the “studying to improve professional qualification” group. Meanwhile, 7 out of the 18 respondents (38.9%) were concurrently holding administrative or leadership positions, aligning them with the “concurrent positions” category.

Regarding the second question, 17 out of 18 lecturers (94.4%) ranked “studying to improve professional qualification” as the task with the highest motivational value. The most frequently cited reasons, despite variations in expression, were its obligatory nature within the university system and its alignment with personal goals to meet the expectations of a modern academic role. All respondents (100%), including those currently holding administrative positions, placed “concurrent positions” in second place. While many noted that such appointments brought a sense of honor, they also mentioned the accompanying stress and heavy responsibilities.

Notably, 17 out of 18 lecturers (94.4%) ranked “other professional tasks” as the least motivating. Several comments captured this sentiment vividly:

“I find the ‘other tasks’ quite exhausting - they’re undefined, take up a lot of time, and there are no clear evaluation criteria. Sometimes, people who do a lot are still evaluated the same as others who do less.” (L2–Female, Lecturer, M.S., 30 years old, 6 years of experience).

“I’ll participate in these tasks only if they fit my expertise and I have extra time. But they are the lowest priority after teaching and research-they’re not considered essential.” (L5–Male, Lecturer, M.S., 27 years old, 4 years of experience).

Only one lecturer (5.6%) ranked “other professional tasks” highest in motivational value, citing a deep passion for laboratory management:

“I truly enjoy managing the lab-it’s my favorite part of the job. Every day I get to guide students through hands-on experiments that reinforce their learning.” (L6–Male, Lecturer, M.S., 32 years old, 9 years of experience).

These qualitative findings suggest that while professional development is widely regarded as meaningful and personally valuable, other professional tasks are often perceived as vague, low-priority, and insufficiently recognized, both in formal evaluations and in day-to-day academic life.

According to the first research question - what is the current level of motivation in carrying out activities in the “community service and other tasks” group among VNUHCM lecturers - the findings suggest that lecturers’ motivation is not uniform, but varies according to the nature and institutional positioning of each task category. Rather than reflecting a general tendency toward higher or lower motivation, the results indicate that lecturers’ engagement is shaped by how different activities are embedded within academic structures, career pathways, and professional expectations.

The particularly strong motivation associated with studying to improve professional qualifications can be understood in light of both institutional regulations and individual career aspirations. Vietnamese higher education policy provides a clear explanation for this pattern. Under Article 72 of the Law on Education, lecturers must hold at least a Master’s degree to teach at the university level, while a Doctoral degree is required for supervising graduate research. The Law on Higher Education further stipulates that faculty appointed to positions such as Head of Faculty or Department must meet the PhD qualification requirement. Additional regulations from the Ministry of Education and Training establish minimum quotas for PhDs, professors, and associate professors as prerequisites for opening and maintaining undergraduate and graduate programs. These mandates have created a structural demand that compels universities, including VNUHCM, to consistently promote and incentivize professional development among their academic staff.

In this context, professional development is closely tied to formal requirements for academic promotion, leadership eligibility, and institutional accreditation. Pursuing higher degrees or professional certifications is therefore widely perceived not only as a compulsory obligation, but also as a strategic investment in long-term academic advancement. This pattern reflects the alignment between institutional expectations and personal goals, which helps sustain motivation over time. As [Pham et al. \(2021\)](#) suggested, when professional development is simultaneously valued by institutions and internalized by individuals, it contributes positively to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In this sense, motivation to pursue higher qualifications represents both instrumental value and intrinsic meaning related to competence, growth, and professional identity.

By contrast, motivation in performing other professional tasks-such as student advising, supervising internships, or participating in outreach activities-was consistently perceived as the least motivating across both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Although a few lecturers expressed strong motivation for these tasks due to a personal affinity with their assigned responsibilities (e.g., managing laboratories), most respondents perceived them as “nameless,” non-essential, or insufficiently recognized. Qualitative responses further reveal that many lecturers view such tasks as time-consuming and marginal to their professional identity, largely because they do not receive clear institutional acknowledgment or evaluative mechanisms. This pattern aligns with [Flynn’s \(2013\)](#) interpretation of motivation as a complex and context-sensitive construct shaped by the interaction between personal intentions and the surrounding environment. When a task lacks clear goals or institutional reinforcement, its motivational force tends to erode over time. [Neumann’s \(2006\)](#) analysis

of academic emotion complements this view by suggesting that academic work is sustained not only by rational calculation but also by affective investment—passion, fulfillment, and a sense of meaningful contribution. Tasks that are framed as routine, invisible, or peripheral seldom evoke such emotional engagement, making it difficult for lecturers to sustain effort or persistence. Similar insights appear in O’Meara’s (2008) study of faculty committed to community engagement, where she found that motivation is reinforced when academic work aligns with personal values, civic purpose, and opportunities to generate visible social impact. In contrast, when tasks are perceived as administratively assigned rather than intrinsically meaningful, motivation tends to diminish. Wade and Demb’s (2009) Faculty Engagement Model also reinforces this interpretation by showing that sustained engagement depends on the convergence of personal motives, professional opportunities, and institutional incentives. In the absence of clear recognition or reward structures, lecturers are less likely to invest in activities classified as “other professional tasks,” as these do not contribute visibly to their academic trajectory or professional identity. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that low motivation in such tasks is not merely an individual issue but reflects a broader institutional dynamic. Strengthening motivation, therefore, requires a more coherent organizational framework that clarifies expectations, acknowledges the value of these tasks, and aligns them with lecturers’ professional goals and identities.

To address this gap and enhance motivation in the “community service and other tasks” domain, university leadership should consider several strategies.

First, task assignments should be aligned with lecturers’ interests and strengths to foster meaningful engagement and a sense of ownership, particularly in roles such as student mentoring, community service, or institutional development.

Second, institutions should raise awareness of the institutional and societal significance of these tasks - many of which are mandated in national policies - and highlight their long-term benefits for individual growth and institutional visibility.

Third, transparent and specific evaluation criteria are needed to ensure fair and consistent assessment of lecturers’ contributions, reducing the ambiguity and lack of recognition frequently reported in this study.

Finally, incentive mechanisms - such as workload credits, financial allowances, or recognition awards - should be introduced to acknowledge and reward contributions beyond core teaching and research.

In such institutional contexts, lecturers are less likely to invest in activities classified as “other professional tasks,” as these do not contribute visibly to their academic trajectory or professional identity (Macfarlane, 2007; Macfarlane and Burg, 2018). Viewed in this way, low motivation in such tasks should not be understood merely as an individual

issue, but rather as a manifestation of a broader institutional dynamic, particularly in how collegial, developmental, and relational forms of academic work are valued within universities (Smith and Walker, 2025).

These findings illuminate a critical yet underexplored dimension of academic work: academic citizenship. As Macfarlane (2007) argued, many forms of academic service—especially those that sustain collegiality, shared governance, and public engagement—are essential to the functioning of universities, yet they often remain “invisible” within formal reward systems. In the Vietnamese context, where national development is closely tied to higher education reform, motivating lecturers to undertake these vital but undervalued tasks represents not only a managerial challenge but also a potential strategic opportunity for universities such as VNUHCM to lead in institutional innovation and the development of a more holistic and sustainable academic workforce.

This section addresses the second research question: Does motivation vary across lecturer demographic characteristics?

To answer this, the research employed both t-tests and ANOVA analyses to examine variations in motivation across three sub-groups of “community service and other tasks”: (1) Holding Concurrent Positions (HCP), (2) Carrying Out Other Professional Tasks (COPT), and (3) Studying to Improve Professional Qualification (SIPQ), segmented by position, academic title and degree, gender, age, teaching experience, income level, and university. The full results are presented in Table 3.

Overall, the analyses revealed no statistically significant differences in motivation across most demographic groups. However, three notable exceptions were identified:

- Academic title and degree: Significant differences ($p < 0.05$) were found in motivation to carry out other professional tasks (COPT). Lecturers with lower academic qualifications (e.g., Master’s degree) reported higher motivation in this domain than those holding senior academic titles (e.g., Associate Professors and Professors). This pattern is consistent with MOET regulations, which typically assign heavier research responsibilities to senior academics, leaving them with less time—and often lower motivation—for non-research-related professional tasks.
- University affiliation: Motivation levels for both HCP and SIPQ varied significantly across the different member universities of VNUHCM. These differences may reflect variation in institutional culture, leadership expectations, support mechanisms, or resource distribution. Further research is needed to explore university-specific factors influencing motivation in non-teaching tasks.
- Gender, age, income level, and teaching experience: No statistically significant differences were detected across these groups, suggesting a

relatively uniform perception of “community service and other tasks” in terms of motivational appeal across these demographic dimensions.

5. Discussion

These findings suggest that motivation to engage in “other professional tasks” tends to decrease with increasing academic seniority, a pattern that can be explained through time allocation pressures and shifting role priorities. As academics advance in their careers, their professional focus often pivots toward research productivity and institutional leadership, reducing the time and cognitive investment available for service-oriented responsibilities that receive limited recognition. This observation is partially supported by [Pham et al. \(2021\)](#), who highlighted that extrinsic motivation, particularly in relation to workload and performance expectations, has a significant positive effect on job satisfaction. Although their study does not directly address administrative burden, it underscores the importance of perceived task relevance in sustaining motivation.

When activities such as advising or community engagement are viewed as unrewarded or

peripheral, especially among senior academics, they are more likely to be deprioritized in favor of core responsibilities. This dynamic suggests a need to reconsider institutional incentive structures so that all dimensions of academic work, including service and outreach, are meaningfully incorporated into recognition and reward systems.

Moreover, the observed variation among universities indicates that institutional environment and support play a crucial role in shaping lecturer motivation. This finding aligns with [Azizi and Firdaus \(2024\)](#), who emphasized that a conducive work environment and well-defined organizational structures significantly enhance employee motivation and organizational commitment. When universities implement supportive mechanisms, such as transparent evaluation criteria, recognition systems, and workload policies that reflect diverse faculty roles, they are better positioned to sustain motivation, particularly for non-teaching and non-research tasks. These institutional factors not only provide clarity and structure but also reinforce the perceived value of “community service and other tasks,” fostering broader and more consistent engagement across academic ranks.

Table 3: Comparison of motivation by demographics

Variable	Group	HCP (Mean±SD)	COPT (Mean±SD)	SIPQ (Mean±SD)	Test	p-value
Position	Manager	3.81±0.94	3.81±0.94	4.04±0.94	t-test	0.277/0.120/0.050
	Non-managerial lecturer	3.67±0.98	3.97±0.79	4.23±0.77		
	Senior lecturer	3.53±0.97	3.65±0.81	3.93±0.72		
Professional title	Main lecturer	3.69±1.00	3.84±0.77	4.06±0.86	ANOVA	0.753/0.106/0.187
	Lecturer	3.71±0.99	3.94±0.82	4.23±0.79		
	Teaching assistant	3.77±0.99	4.07±0.85	4.22±0.81		
Academic title, degree	Prof./assoc. prof.	3.53±0.97	3.65±0.81	3.93±0.72	ANOVA	0.426/0.008/0.151
	PhD	3.66±1.01	3.81±0.83	4.16±0.87		
	MS	3.75±0.98	4.02±0.81	4.23±0.77		
Gender	Male	3.68±1.02	3.91±0.83	4.20±0.83	t-test	0.550/0.518/0.816
	Female	3.73±0.95	3.96±0.82	4.12±0.78		
Age	< 30	3.75±0.99	4.04±0.77	4.30±0.73	ANOVA	0.796/0.253/0.374
	30 ≤ 40	3.70±0.97	3.95±0.83	4.14±0.78		
	40 - 50	3.65±1.00	3.83±0.82	4.18±0.88		
Teaching experience	> 50	3.82±1.03	3.89±0.95	4.18±0.84	ANOVA	0.713/0.230/0.478
	< 5 years	3.76±0.98	3.97±0.86	4.24±0.80		
	5 - 10 years	3.67±0.96	4.03±0.77	4.23±0.76		
Income level	> 10 years	3.69±1.01	3.87±0.82	4.14±0.82	ANOVA	0.460/0.263/0.844
	< 10 million	3.64±0.99	3.88±0.87	4.21±0.77		
	10 - 15 million	3.76±0.92	4.03±0.73	4.16±0.83		
University	> 15 million	3.75±1.04	3.93±0.84	4.21±0.82	ANOVA	0.008/0.344/0.003
	U1	3.67±0.96	3.89±0.86	4.20±0.84		
	U2	3.75±1.08	3.97±0.89	4.32±0.67		
	U3	3.65±1.00	3.89±0.84	3.99±0.85		
	U4	3.91±0.84	4.07±0.76	4.36±0.79		
	U5	3.29±1.14	3.78±0.76	3.82±0.82		
U6	3.95±0.82	4.06±0.75	4.33±0.70			

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Define differentiated task expectations by academic title to ensure that higher-ranking academics are not overburdened and can continue to contribute meaningfully to “community service and other tasks.”
- Develop incentive systems tailored to diverse demographic profiles, particularly to sustain motivation among senior staff and in universities where motivation is comparatively lower.
- Strengthen institutional environments by establishing transparent evaluation mechanisms, formal recognition schemes, and clearly communicated workload expectations to foster

sustained engagement in non-core academic duties.

- Pursue future research using a multi-case study design to examine how internal governance structures, task allocation policies, and recognition frameworks differ across universities, and how these variations shape motivation for non-core academic responsibilities.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the motivation of lecturers at VNUHCM in undertaking “community service and other tasks,” which are officially recognized responsibilities in addition to teaching and research. According to Vietnamese regulations, these tasks comprise three categories: (i) holding concurrent managerial positions; (ii) performing professional duties such as advising students, supervising internships, and participating in educational outreach; and (iii) engaging in professional development to meet institutional and national academic requirements. Drawing on both large-scale survey data and follow-up in-depth interviews conducted across six member universities of VNUHCM, the study found that while the overall level of lecturer motivation in undertaking non-teaching and non-research duties was relatively high, the extent of motivation differed considerably depending on task type and lecturer demographics. Notably, activities related to professional development elicited the highest levels of motivation, likely due to their alignment with institutional promotion policies and individual career aspirations. In contrast, motivation to perform professional service roles was consistently reported as low. Many participants expressed concerns that these tasks were undervalued, insufficiently recognized in performance appraisals, and contributed little to their career progression. The study further found that motivation tended to decrease with increasing academic seniority, suggesting a shift in role priorities toward research productivity and institutional leadership. In addition, institutional differences in motivation levels highlighted the importance of contextual factors such as governance structures, evaluation systems, and reward mechanisms. These findings have significant implications for higher education management. To sustain motivation in non-core academic duties, university leaders should implement differentiated expectations, align task assignments with individual strengths, provide transparent evaluation criteria, and offer tangible incentives. Recognizing the value of academic citizenship is essential not only for institutional effectiveness but also for contributing to broader societal development.

List of abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
Assoc.	Associate professor

prof.	Carrying out other professional tasks
COPT	Exploratory factor analysis
EFA	Holding concurrent positions
HCP	Interview participant codes
L1–L18	Ministry of education and training
MOET	Master of science
MS	Doctor of philosophy
PhD	Professor
Prof.	Standard deviation
SD	Studying to improve professional qualification
SIPQ	Statistical package for the social sciences
SPSS	Anonymous universities (six member universities of Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City)
U1–U6	Vietnamese dong
VND	Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City
VNUHCM	

Acknowledgment

This research was supported by Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNU-HCM) under grant number “C2022-18b-12.”

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

This study was conducted under the oversight of the Ethics Review Board (ERB) of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University–Ho Chi Minh City (USSH, VNU-HCM). In accordance with institutional guidelines (Document No. 906/QĐ-XHNV-TCCB), the requirement for full ethical review was waived due to the study’s minimal risk and use of anonymized, non-sensitive data. Participants were fully informed about the study and provided written informed consent, and confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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