

**A STUDY ON THE MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS
OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE IN THE
FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN GANZHOU, CHINA:
THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT**

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UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAGR	Compound Annual Growth Rate
TFT	Two-Factor Theory
SET	Social Exchange Theory
HRM	Human Resource Management
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
PLS-SEM	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
HTMT	Heterotrait-monotrait Ratio of Correlations
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
CR	Composite Reliability
CS	Compensation
WE	Work Environment
JA	Job Autonomy
SS	Supervisory Support
EE	Employee Engagement
TP	Task Performance
IP	Innovation Performance

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**KAJIAN MENGENAI FAKTOR-FAKTOR MOTIVASI TERHADAP
PRESTASI PEKERJA DALAM INDUSTRI PERABOT DI GANZHOU,
CHINA: PERANAN PENGANTARA PENGLIBATAN PEKERJA**

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan meneroka kesan faktor motivasi (ganjaran, persekitaran kerja, autonomi kerja, dan sokongan penyelia) terhadap penglibatan pekerja dan prestasi pekerja (prestasi tugas dan inovasi) dalam kalangan pereka perabot di Ganzhou, China, dengan penekanan khusus kepada peranan mediasi penglibatan pekerja. Penyelidikan terdahulu banyak mengabaikan mekanisme motivasi dan peningkatan prestasi dalam kalangan pereka perabot di China. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan mengisi jurang tersebut dengan menyediakan bukti empirikal. Berdasarkan Teori Dua Faktor (TFT) dan Teori Pertukaran Sosial (SET), kajian ini membangunkan satu model untuk mengkaji hubungan antara faktor motivasi dan prestasi pekerja, dengan penglibatan pekerja sebagai pemboleh ubah mediasi. Seramai 344 pekerja daripada 40 syarikat perabot di Ganzhou telah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Analisis data dan pengujian model dilakukan menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Kajian ini menyiasat hubungan antara faktor motivasi, penglibatan pekerja, dan prestasi pekerja dari perspektif pereka. Sebanyak 22 hipotesis diuji dalam kerangka kajian ini. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa 14 hipotesis disokong, manakala 8 tidak disokong. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa ganjaran, autonomi kerja, dan sokongan penyelia mempunyai kesan signifikan ke atas penglibatan dan prestasi pekerja, manakala persekitaran kerja mempunyai kesan yang terhad. Penglibatan pekerja memediasi sebahagian daripada hubungan antara beberapa faktor motivasi dan

prestasi inovasi. Akhir sekali, implikasi teori dan praktikal, keterbatasan kajian, serta cadangan untuk penyelidikan masa depan turut dibincangkan. Kajian ini memberikan pandangan yang berguna untuk meningkatkan prestasi pereka melalui amalan motivasi yang berkesan, khususnya dari segi ganjaran, autonomi kerja, dan sokongan penyelia dalam konteks syarikat perabot di Ganzhou.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the impact of motivational factors (compensation, work environment, job autonomy, and supervisory support) on employee engagement and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in Ganzhou, China, with a particular emphasis on the mediating role of employee engagement. Prior research has largely overlooked motivational mechanisms and performance enhancement among Chinese furniture designers, this study aims to address this gap by providing empirical evidence. Based on the Two-Factor Theory (TFT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study develops a model to investigate the relationships between motivational factors and employee performance, with employee engagement serving as a mediating variable. The participants in this study comprise 344 targeted employees from 40 furniture companies in Ganzhou. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is used for data analysis and model testing. The study investigates the relationships between motivational factors, employee engagement, and employee performance from the perspective of designers. This study proposes and validates an integrated research framework that includes 22 hypotheses. The results reveal that 14 out of the 22 hypotheses are positively supported, while eight are not supported. The findings indicate that compensation, job autonomy, and supervisory support have a significant impact on both employee engagement and performance, whereas the work environment has limited effects. Employee engagement partially mediates the

relationship between certain motivational factors and innovation performance. Finally, the theoretical and practical implications are discussed, along with study limitations and future research directions. This study provides valuable insights into enhancing designer performance through effective motivational practices, particularly regarding compensation, job autonomy, and supervisory support, within the context of Ganzhou furniture companies.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study and is divided into eight sections. Section 1.1 explains the background of the study, while Section 1.2 describes the problem statement related to employee performance in the furniture manufacturing industry in Ganzhou, China. Section 1.3 elaborates on the research questions, followed by Section 1.4, which explains the research objectives. Section 1.5 discusses the significance of the study, and Section 1.6 covers the scope of the study. Section 1.7 provides a list of key terms, and finally, Section 1.8 summarizes the organization of the chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

Employee performance plays a crucial role in propelling businesses toward achieving their success objectives (Rampen, 2023). It directly impacts operational efficiency, profitability, and competitive standing in a fiercely competitive market environment (Susanto, 2023; Haryono, 2020). As globalization intensifies, furniture companies face unprecedented competition not only from domestic markets but also from international adversaries (China National Furniture Association, 2023). In such a competitive environment, relying solely on the physical attributes of products and price competition is insufficient (Callon, 2021). Consequently, delivering high-quality products and exceptional design has become crucial for furniture businesses to gain a competitive edge (Ahmad, Xian, & Rashid, 2023). Against this backdrop, the innovative design capabilities, quality control, and sensitivity to customer needs

of designers in the furniture industry emerge as key factors in attracting customers and enhancing customer satisfaction (Vuong, 2022; Conti, 2021).

To boost designers' performance, organizations typically implement a variety of human resource management incentive strategies aimed at stimulating proactivity and creativity in completing assigned tasks (China National Furniture Association, 2023; Mahapatro, 2021). Research indicates that a fair and motivating performance evaluation system, including rewards for exceeding standard duties, can encourage designers to adopt innovative measures and improve the quality of products and services beyond their regular responsibilities (Tarigan, 2023; Dangol, 2021). Furthermore, creating a supportive work environment that fosters team collaboration and knowledge sharing is also critical to enhancing designer performance (Ye, 2022; Usmanova, 2021). Such an environment not only facilitates mutual learning among designers but also inspires the spirit of innovation within the team, collectively propelling the company's growth (Caires, 2023). Therefore, exploring the impact of incentive mechanisms on the performance of designers in furniture companies is of paramount importance (Seclen-Luna, 2021; Ali, 2021). This not only aids in crafting effective management strategies to unleash the potential and creativity of employees but also ensures the long-term success and sustainable development of furniture companies (Agustian, Pohan, Zen, Wiwin and Malik, 2023).

1.2.1 Global Furniture Industry Development

The global furniture industry is a vital component of home decoration, offering a diverse range of products and comprehensive solutions to consumers over the long term (Grace, 2021). According to Grand View Research, the furniture market size reached USD 677.09 billion in 2022 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.9% from 2023 to 2030. However, the

report also highlights that multiple factors, including design innovation, sustainability requirements, and urbanization, influence furniture industry growth. In terms of regional distribution, the Asia-Pacific region, led by China, accounts for 36% of the market, North America represents 23%, and Europe holds 28%. However, growth in Europe has slowed due to environmental regulations (Sohu, 2024).

In the furniture industry, designer performance has become a core driver for companies to achieve competitive advantage and sustainable development (Liu, 2024). However, with changing market demands and growing consumer focus on sustainability and personalisation, many designers struggle to adapt their design approaches promptly, resulting in limited innovation and a slow market response (The Guardian, 2023), which reflects limitations in their job autonomy. At the same time, as environmental regulations become increasingly stringent worldwide, some designers lack the necessary skills in material selection and green design, which can create barriers to market entry and harm brand reputation (Lectra, 2023).

Consequently, challenges related to designer performance have become a major obstacle to the development of furniture companies. Effective incentive mechanisms are widely recognised as a crucial means to enhance designer performance and foster greater innovation and motivation (Zhang, 2025; Nendi, 2024; An, 2024).

Nevertheless, recent years have seen a growing concern over inadequate incentive mechanisms for designers in the furniture industry. According to a furniture industry survey, many designers report the absence of robust incentives and systematic training, which has significantly undermined their motivation and performance (China National Furniture Association, 2022). International data echo these findings. Reports indicate that most North American furniture firms still rely on

a basic salary plus commission, with few rewards based on research and development (R&D) or innovation (U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2024; Solomon Coyle, 2023). Additionally, most furniture companies underinvest in compensation and career development, making it challenging to retain highly qualified designers through effective incentive mechanisms (Allied Market Research, 2024). Furthermore, the industry generally lacks systematic incentive programs for young designers, highlighting a gap that furniture companies need to address (Guangdong Furniture Association, 2024).

Moreover, employee engagement remains a significant concern. Gallup (2023) reports that 59% of employees globally are not engaged at work, and 44% experience significant daily stress. In the furniture industry, low designer engagement contributes directly to longer furniture product development cycles and an increase in design errors, while a high-pressure environment further exacerbates talent turnover and knowledge loss (Li, 2023; Dorta-Afonso et al., 2023).

Therefore, developing effective incentive mechanisms to enhance designers' performance and engagement has become a critical measure for sustaining competitive advantages in the furniture industry.

1.2.2 Furniture Industry Development in China

The Chinese furniture industry holds a significant position in the global economy, according to the China National Furniture Association's 2023 report. In 2022, the furniture industry's output accounted for over 35% of the global furniture industry's total, making China the world's leading furniture-producing nation. However, the sector faces intensifying competition due to global economic instability, the impact of pandemics, and the acceleration of technological change (Pei, 2021).

Driven by both consumption upgrades and increasing demands for sustainability, the core competitiveness of China's furniture industry is shifting from large-scale production toward design innovation and technological integration. However, the industry continues to face significant structural challenges. On the one hand, China maintains a dominant position in the global supply chain, supported by large-scale industrial clusters such as Nankang in Jiangxi province and Shunde in Guangdong province, which together account for approximately 68% of China's total furniture output (China National Furniture Association, 2023). On the other hand, persistent issues, including frequent product quality complaints, a lower design value-added rate and an original patent conversion rate, highlight the furniture industry's dilemma of being 'large but not strong' (China National Furniture Association, 2023).

Furthermore, the 2023 Annual Report of the China National Furniture Association indicates that more than 60% of Chinese furniture companies experience varying degrees of product homogeneity, which directly undermines export competitiveness and the ability to secure international orders. According to data from Qichacha, a leading Chinese business information platform, as of 2023, only 10,603 active furniture companies in China hold design patents, highlighting the untapped potential for innovation within the industry. By 2023, China had 2.457 million registered furniture manufacturing companies, yet only 42.33% remained in regular operation. Although furniture industrial clusters provide clear advantages in terms of scale, limited design efficiency and slow technological adoption continue to hinder industry upgrading. Moreover, due to incomplete incentive mechanisms, many furniture companies struggle to retain creative talent, as designers' motivation and sense of belonging are often undermined, ultimately affecting the long-term

innovation capacity of these enterprises (China National Furniture Association, 2023).

In conclusion, designers play a crucial role in the success of furniture companies. For furniture companies aspiring to distinguish themselves in a highly competitive industry, enhancing the performance and innovation capabilities of their designers becomes an indispensable task.

1.2.3 Ganzhou and Its Furniture Companies

Located in the southern part of Jiangxi Province, China, Ganzhou City stands not only as the largest and most populous prefectural-level city in the province but also as a pivotal centre for regional economic and cultural activities (Huanqiu.com, 2023). Within the territorial expanse of Ganzhou, the Nankang District occupies a distinctive and crucial role (Ganzhou Municipal People's Government, 2023). As one of the three municipal districts of Ganzhou, Nankang is renowned for its deep-rooted furniture industry, earning the accolade 'Capital of Solid Wood Home Furnishings in China' (China News Service, 2023). It is recognized as the largest production base for solid wood furniture in China and a global manufacturing hub for furniture (Nankang District People's Government, 2023).

According to a report by 'China Economic Weekly' in 2020, Nankang district consumes 70% of the world's rubberwood supply. By importing large volumes of raw materials, Nankang has gained significant control over the prices of major wood species, such as ash (Ganzhou Municipal Government, 2021). The furniture industry in Nankang is not only a pillar of the local economy but also an integral part of China's broader furniture market. In 2023, the region's furniture industry cluster exceeded 270 billion RMB in output value, with over half of China's solid wood furniture originating from this area. Due to its substantial industrial scale, control of

raw materials, and global market influence, Nankang district has emerged as a key hub in furniture manufacturing, both domestically and internationally (Nankang District Government, 2023).

However, according to the 2023 Jiangxi Provincial Quality Supervision Report on Wooden Furniture published by the Jiangxi Market Supervision Administration in September 2023, 20 of 21 firms identified with quality issues (95.2%) were located in Nankang district, indicating that low employee performance negatively impacts production and product quality, thus challenging provincial and municipal targets (Wang, 2023e). Insufficient innovation and poor design quality among furniture company designers have resulted in unstable product structures, inappropriate material choices, and unmet consumer expectations. These issues have led to an increase in consumer complaints, which has adversely affected the corporate reputation and market position (Nankang Furniture Association, 2023).

Moreover, Qin Zhanxue, president of the China Building Materials Circulation Association, in an interview in 2022, highlighted that despite its considerable scale, the Nankang furniture industry is fragmented, with varying levels of development, and many enterprises are in the process of transitioning from mid-low to mid-high ends. Designers must continually enhance their innovation capabilities and create products with cultural connotations and diverse functionalities to adapt to the industry's transformation and upgrading. Additionally, Zhong Yuhua (2020), president of the Nankang Industrial (Furniture) Design Center, noted the severe homogenization competition, inadequate R&D investment and insufficient competitiveness within the Nankang furniture industry. Faced with a fiercely competitive market, designers must focus more on innovation and differentiated design, actively participate in increasing R&D investment and product innovation

processes, to highlight product uniqueness and competitive advantages, thereby enhancing corporate competitiveness and market positioning.

Therefore, for Nankang furniture enterprises, continuous improvement in design quality, especially in enhancing designers' innovation capabilities and design thinking, is crucial. In the highly competitive furniture industry, this not only concerns market competitiveness and brand image but also directly affects the market position and economic benefits of enterprises.

1.3 Problem Statement

In recent years, frequent quality issues in furniture products have triggered a significant surge in consumer complaints in Nankang District, posing a serious threat to the sustainable development of the local furniture industry. According to the *2023 Consumer Complaints and Reports Analysis* released by the Ganzhou Municipal Administration for Market Regulation, a total of 18,507 complaints were filed regarding household products, accounting for 33.1% of all consumer complaints and marking a 54% year-on-year increase. Strikingly, 87.4% of these complaints originated from Nankang District, with the majority targeting substandard product quality and failure to fulfil delivery promises. A customer satisfaction survey in Nankang—China's largest furniture production hub—further revealed that 60% to 70% of customers reported low satisfaction levels. The key reasons cited were irrational structural design and inappropriate material selection, both of which severely compromised product durability and customer experience (Nankang Furniture Association, 2023).

In response, furniture enterprises in Nankang have begun conducting internal evaluations to identify the root causes of these persistent quality problems (Nankang

District People's Government, 2023). An internal audit conducted in 2023 found that over 60% of product defects stemmed from the design stage, particularly relating to material selection and non-compliance with design specifications. Specifically, 40% of non-compliance cases were due to designers' inadequate consideration of material durability and applicability, while another 20% resulted from deviation from design standards, leading to failures in meeting safety and ergonomic requirements (Nankang Furniture Association, 2023).

Although delivery failures are often superficially attributed to logistics and fulfilment operations, in-depth analysis reveals that a substantial portion of these issues actually originate from inefficiencies in task execution during the design phase. The *2023 Nankang Furniture Industry Development Report* indicates that 38% of enterprises face process bottlenecks in the design-to-production workflow. Notably, the average number of design revisions reached 4.7 per order, severely delaying production schedules. Designers with limited professional competence or lacking standardised workflows often fail to produce production-ready designs in a timely manner. These repeated revisions disrupt production plans, increase operational friction, and ultimately lead to product delivery delays (Nankang Furniture Association, 2023).

In the furniture industry, designers play a pivotal role in creative innovation, material selection, and structural configuration. Their task performance directly affects product quality, delivery efficiency, market competitiveness, and customer satisfaction. As such, improving designer performance and engagement is crucial for enhancing overall quality and securing a stronger market position.

Previous studies have shown that employee performance is shaped by several factors, including incentive mechanisms, job competence, satisfaction, engagement,

and organisational culture (Yin & Liu, 2023; Bai & He, 2022). Among these, incentive mechanisms are particularly critical. In today's complex business environment, incentives are increasingly recognised as the cornerstone of performance management (Li, 2023a). As Iacocca (2007) aptly stated, the essence of management lies in effectively motivating employees, and sustained enterprise development depends on the active participation and outstanding performance of its workforce (Qu et al., 2023).

Specifically, factors such as compensation, work environment, job autonomy, and supervisory support exert a significant influence on designers' motivation, which in turn directly impacts their engagement and performance (Dong, 2023; Li, 2023c; Huang, 2022; Chen, 2022a; Ma, 2021). Research consistently indicates that insufficient or unfair compensation, poor working conditions, restricted autonomy, and weak supervisory support diminish employee motivation, ultimately undermining task performance and job outcomes (Kuswati, 2020). Therefore, sustaining designers' motivation is essential for achieving high-level and consistent performance.

Employee engagement, a vital psychological construct in modern organisations (Liu, 2023; Ren, 2021), enhances designers' work enthusiasm and sense of purpose, reduces turnover, and fosters discretionary effort (Wang, 2021b; MM, 2021). Empirical studies have demonstrated that higher engagement levels are associated with better motivation, higher performance, and reduced turnover intentions (Jeong & Bai, 2023; Riyanto, 2021; Ghosh, 2020). Furthermore, engagement functions as a key mediating variable between incentives and performance, as confirmed by the Sobel test (www.danielsoper.com). That is, appropriate incentives and supportive environments enhance employee engagement,

which in turn elevates performance outcomes (Chen, 2022a; Ali, 2021; Ma, 2021). This suggests that employee engagement mediates the relationship between incentive structures and designer performance in organisational contexts.

Therefore, this study introduces employee engagement as a mediating variable to strengthen the linkage between compensation, work environment, job autonomy, supervisory support, and employee performance. Focusing on furniture enterprises in the Nankang District of Ganzhou City, this study seeks to explore how reinforcing designer incentives and engagement can effectively enhance their performance within the current economic landscape.

1.4 Research Objectives

This study takes performance management in human resource management in the context of the new development pattern, combines the connotation of employee performance motivation and establishes a model of employee performance motivation. The primary purposes are as follows:

(1) To study the relationship between motivations (extrinsic, intrinsic) and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China.

(2) To investigate the relationship between motivations (extrinsic, intrinsic) and employee engagement among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China.

(3) To assess the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China.

(4) To examine the mediating role of employee engagement to the relationship between motivations (extrinsic, intrinsic) and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China.

1.5 Research Questions

After considering the issues mentioned above, there are four research questions have been proposed, namely:

RQ1: Does motivation (extrinsic, intrinsic) have a relationship with employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China?

RQ2: Does motivation (extrinsic, intrinsic) have a relationship with employee engagement among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China?

RQ3: Does employee engagement have a relationship with employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China?

RQ4: Does employee engagement mediate the relationship between motivations (extrinsic, intrinsic) and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance) among furniture designers in furniture companies in Jiangxi province in China?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study will examine the impact of motivational factors on employee performance in furniture companies in Ganzhou City of Nankang District. The study will also examine specific motivators, extrinsic factors (compensation, work environment) and intrinsic factors (job autonomy, supervisory support). Furthermore, the study also explored the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between motivation (extrinsic, intrinsic) and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance).

This study focuses on designers employed by large-scale furniture companies in Ganzhou, Jiangxi Province, China. Specifically, the study targets designers working in the design departments of these furniture enterprises. The inclusion criteria require that participants must be designers with at least one year of work experience in design and hold formal contract positions. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other industries or sectors in China.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to the literature on motivational factors and employee performance. This study offers both theoretical and practical contributions within the 4-dimensional theme of extrinsic motivations (compensation, work environment) and intrinsic motivations (job autonomy, supervisory support) established through employee engagement to predict the effect of motivation factors on employee performance in furniture companies.

1.7.1 Theoretical Significance

The theoretical significance of the current research is manifested in its contribution to the field of performance evaluation among designers in furniture

companies in China, involving a few factors such as employee engagement and motivational elements (compensation, work environment, job autonomy, supervisory support). From a theoretical standpoint, this study builds upon the exploration of the intricate relationship between motivational factors, employee engagement, and employee performance by grounding its analysis in the Two-Factor Theory (TFT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET). It constructs a theoretical framework that elucidates the interactions between these variables and their impact on organisational outcomes.

The Two-Factor Theory posits that employee performance is influenced by various motivational factors, including compensation, work environment, job autonomy, and supervisory support (Ihensekien, 2023; Guo, 2023; Tezel, 2023; Forson, 2021; Yousaf, 2020). These elements have a direct impact on both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of employees, which are essential for enhancing employee performance (Ndudi, 2023; Aljumah, 2023; Good, 2022).

Moreover, Social Exchange Theory provides deeper insights into the interaction between motivational factors and both employee engagement and employee performance (Ahmad, 2023; Panda, 2022; Atapattu, 2022; Ghosh, 2020). This theory highlights the influence of relationships built on mutual trust, obligations, and expectations on individual behaviour (Meira, 2021). From this vantage point, the presence of both tangible and intangible rewards from the organisation instils a sense of satisfaction and respect in employees, thereby fostering positive employee sentiments (March 2023). This fosters their motivation and engagement, ultimately leading to enhanced performance (Layek, 2024; Aderinto, 2023).

Accordingly, this study not only introduces a new theoretical perspective on enhancing employee performance but also provides actionable guidance for

managers in developing effective motivational strategies. Through understanding the dynamics between motivational factors, employee engagement, and employee performance, organisations can more effectively provoke employee passion, boost employee engagement and performance, and thus secure success in the fiercely competitive marketplace (Susanto, 2023; Siswanto, 2021; Almawali, 2021).

1.7.2 Practical Significance

This study examines the influence of motivational factors on employee performance and explores the role of employee engagement as a mediator. It establishes that employee engagement is the critical connector between motivational factors and employee performance. Effectively executing performance management and incentive strategies is essential for optimising human resource performance, aligning individual and organisational goals, and cultivating a culture of continuous improvement, thereby boosting corporate competitiveness. The study suggests that performance incentives are a potent mechanism to activate employee initiative and motivation. By aligning organisational objectives with the rewards system, employees perceive their efforts and contributions as valued, which enhances their work commitment and passion.

Additionally, this study thoroughly examines the multitude of factors that influence employee performance, underscoring the crucial role of employee motivation in enhancing employee performance. Through the implementation of effective employee performance management and incentive practices, furniture manufacturing enterprises not only drive their organizational success forward but also significantly contribute to the growth of China's furniture industry.

The findings of this study offer significant value to a wide range of stakeholders. First, government agencies can use these insights to develop more effective talent incentive policies and industry development strategies, thereby promoting the healthy and sustainable growth of the furniture sector. In addition, managers and human resource departments within furniture companies can apply these findings to optimize performance management processes, which will help increase motivation and overall efficiency among key employees such as designers. Moreover, furniture designers themselves will benefit from increased opportunities for career development and advancement, resulting in a greater sense of achievement and belonging. As employee performance and corporate competitiveness continue to improve, the furniture industry as a whole is expected to experience a positive cycle, ultimately benefiting all stakeholders across the entire value chain.

In summary, the development of furniture enterprises is closely tied to effective employee performance management. This relationship not only influences the professional growth of individual employees but also determines the long-term prosperity of organizations. By prioritizing employee performance management and incentive mechanisms, companies can fully unlock their employees' potential and foster a more dynamic and innovative business environment, both regionally and across China's highly competitive furniture industry.

1.8 Definition of Key Terms

Definitions of key terms used for the study are as follows:

Employee performance

Employee performance is defined as a comprehensive understanding of how employees achieve work goals and contribute to mission-related accomplishments

within a specific job function. The objective is to provide accurate evaluation results based on a comprehensive consideration of observed work behaviour and attitudes (Subariyanti, 2024; Persada, 2023; Zhang, 2019; Moeheriono, 2012; Levy, Williams, Janssen, Van YperenI, 2004; Rao, SunBo, 2003; Pulako, 2000; Yang, Fang, Ling, 2001; Borman, Motowidlo, 1993).

Task performance

Task performance is defined as the efficiency of individual employees in completing specific tasks with quality of job or work products using raw materials of operating goods (Chang, 2024; Adekiya, 2024; Zhang & Zhu & Peng, 2021; Liu, 2021; Calvin, 2017; Koopmans, 2014; Bakker, 2012; Werner, 2000; Conway, 1999; Borman & Motowidlo, 1997).

Innovation Performance

Innovation performance is defined as achieving innovative and beneficial outcomes via voluntary innovative and creative behaviour or thinking of work methods or business processes (Liu et al.,2025; Luo et al.,2024; Xu, 2022; Li, 2021; Rosing, Zacher, 2016; Janssen, 2003; Loch, Tapper, 2002).

Employee motivation

Employee motivation is to use comprehensive methods to stimulate the internal and external to make employees form specific needs, and then meet the needs of employees, stimulate their internal motivation and improve their enthusiasm for work (Vantage, 2024; Simpplr, 2024; Ye, 2023; Al-kharabsheh, 2023; Dong, 2018; He, 2022; Brown, 2022; Vinoy Vincent, Senthil Kumar, 2019; Hitka, Ližbetinová, 2019; Mangkunegara, 2017; Yu Huajun, 2016; Bangun, 2012; Atkinson & Birch, 1978; Littman,1958).

Compensation

Compensation is defined as the total package of rewards that an organization provides to its employees in exchange for their work. It includes direct financial payments, such as salaries and bonuses, as well as indirect benefits, including insurance, paid leave, and various allowances (Savira, 2024; Arif, 2024; Du, 2022; Mei, 2022; Wang, 2022; Tang, 2021; Hermawan et al., 2021).

Work Environment

The work environment means physical work. Physical work relations refer to the physical conditions of the workplace that directly or indirectly affect employees, such as light, temperature, humidity, air circulation, noise, etc. (Savira, 2024; Ling, 2020; Anggi, 2015; Zhang, 2014; Holte, 2010; Sedarmayanti, 2001; Spector, 1997).

Job autonomy

Job autonomy is defined as the extent to which individuals are granted flexibility, independence, and the decision-making authority to plan job processes, make work decisions, and determine work methods. It is distinctly differentiated from independence and focuses on aspects that traverse the entire work process (Kivrak et al., 2025; Ting et al., 2025; Diaa, 2024; Wang, 2023; Zhou, 2020; Kubicek, Paškvan, and Bunner, 2017; Preston, 2013; Holzclaus et al., 2012; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Breugh, 1985; Kiggundu, 1983; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Supervisory support

Supervisory support can be defined as the comprehensive assistance provided by a supervisor to subordinates, encompassing guidance and assistance with work tasks as well as the establishment of positive interpersonal relationships. It involves expressing concern and providing support for various aspects of subordinates' professional and personal lives within the workplace and beyond (Liu et al., 2025;

Van Hees et al., 2025; Sijbom et al., 2024; Zeb, 2023; Odai, 2021; Bao & Liu, 2011; George et al., 1993; Burke et al., 1992; Kottke et al., 1988).

Employee engagement

Employee engagement is a comprehensive concept of attitude and behaviour. When employees have a favourable attitude towards their employment, they will also have behaviours that are willing to help the company make profits (Dutta, 2025; Ekhsan, 2023; Turner, 2020; Kwon & Park, 2019; Anpat, 2019; Jose, 2014; Imandin, 2014; Ortiz, 2013; Markos, 2010; Cha, 2007).

1.9 Summary and organization of all chapters

This proposal is arranged into five main chapters.

Chapter One introduces the background of the study, which comprises the problem statement, research questions, research objectives, scope, and significance of the study, as well as the definition of key terms.

Chapter Two provides a comprehensive literature review, which examines previous studies and empirical findings on compensation, work environment, job autonomy, supervisory support, employee engagement, and employee performance (task performance, innovation performance). Further, it prompts the hypotheses and theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter Three outlines the research method that will be employed in the study, including the research design, the population of respondents, sample size, and sampling method, as well as the development and procedure of the questionnaire, data collection, and statistical analysis.

Chapter Four shows the outcomes of data analysis and hypotheses tests.

Chapter Five presents the findings of the data analysis, discusses the theoretical and practical implications, and outlines limitations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that is relevant to this study. This chapter consists of 10 sections. Section 2.1 discusses an overview of the study. Section 2.2 explains employee performance (task performance, innovation performance). This is followed by Section 2.3, which describes employee motivation (extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation). Next, Section 2.4 elaborates on mediating employee engagement. Section 2.5 explains the theoretical perspectives. Later, Section 2.6 discusses the research framework. Additionally, Section 2.7 explains the development of hypotheses. Section 2.8 describes the list of hypotheses. Section 2.9 discusses the identification of research gaps, followed by a summary in Section 2.10.

2.2 Overview of the Study

Under the influence of rapid global economic development and global economic integration, market competition is becoming increasingly fierce (Wu, 2023). Human resources are a crucial dimension for the survival and development of enterprises in China, and they are also the primary source of organisational creativity (Shi, 2020). A reasonable and feasible incentive system will effectively stimulate employees' enthusiasm and work motivation, leading to a higher level of performance (Zheng, 2022).

Currently, employee performance is low due to issues such as low work enthusiasm, poor working conditions, and inadequate compensation (Sitopu, 2021). Scholars have identified improvement measures, with employee motivation being one of the key measures to enhance employee performance (Zhang, 2017). Moreover,

motivation measures should encourage employee participation, and employee engagement can also improve employee performance to a certain extent (Susanto, 2023). Therefore, this study will focus on employee performance and employee engagement as mediator factors and examine whether different incentive factors have a positive influence on employee task performance and innovation performance.

2.3 Employee Performance

Employee performance has historically been the focus of organizations (Zheng, 2023). Because having high-performance employees can help the organization achieve its strategic goals, can produce high-quality products and high-standard services, and finally gain a strong competitive advantage in the market competition, thereby gaining a firm foothold in the market (Wang & Li & Song, 2023). Therefore, this study mainly focuses on the employee performance.

2.3.1 Conceptualization of Employee Performance

Currently, there is no unified definition of employee performance. Li, Zhu, and Lian (2023) believed that employee performance can be conceptualised as reflecting the individual's comprehensive work level and work performance over an extended period. According to scholars' research statements, the definition of employee job performance can be divided into three categories: one considers it as the outcome, another views it as the behaviour, and the third sees it as a mix of both result and behaviour (Lei, 2022; Liang, 2020).

(1) Employee performance is the result.

Employee performance refers to the results an employee achieves within the organisation. Early scholars, such as Bernardin and Beatty (1984), described employee performance as the output produced by employees in fulfilling assigned

tasks within a specified time frame. Building on this idea, Kane (1996) viewed employee performance as an objective achievement, independent of the process and directly linked to organisational goals. Similarly, Li (2003) emphasised that employee performance is reflected in productivity and work quality over a specific period. Luthans (2002) also highlighted that the quantity and quality of completed work can be used to evaluate employee performance. More recently, Ma (2023) suggested that employee performance serves as a foundation for assessing organisational value creation. Thus, from this perspective, employee performance is best understood as the measurable outcomes or achievements that employees contribute to organisational success (He, 2023).

(2) Employee performance is behaviour.

Employee performance from the perspectives of behaviour achieved by the employee in the organisation. The definition of employee performance has evolved from a focus on outcomes to an emphasis on employee behaviours at work. Early scholars argued that employee performance should be understood as the actions and processes employees demonstrate while fulfilling their roles (Campbell, 1990; Murphy, 1989; Smith, 1976). Later research extended this view to include both in-role and extra-role behaviours, such as organisational citizenship and pro-social actions, which also support organisational goals (Van Dyne, 1995; Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). However, some scholars stress that only those behaviours directly related to organisational tasks, which are controllable by employees and measurable through their actions, constitute actual employee performance (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). Building on these perspectives, Dogbe (2024) highlights that employee performance is essentially a behavioural attribute, requiring not only task completion but also alignment with organisational expectations and ethical values.

(3)Employee performance is a combination of results and behaviour.

Employee performance from the perspectives of a combination of results achieved by the employee in the organisation and their behaviour towards it. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) argued that a comprehensive definition must combine employees' work behaviours with the results they achieve in pursuit of organisational goals. Similarly, Yang, Fang, and Ling (2001) suggested that employee performance involves not just results but also the processes and methods employees use over time. Other scholars have further expanded this view, highlighting that performance includes work behaviours, attitudes, adaptability, and evaluation results (Levy et al., 2004; Rao & Sun, 2003; Pulakos, 2000).

More recent studies support this integrated perspective. Persada (2023) defined employee performance as both outcomes and behaviours demonstrated in fulfilling assigned responsibilities, while Subariyanti (2024) emphasised that employee performance should be measured by both behaviour and outcomes, enabling organisations to assess not only what employees achieve but also how they achieve it.

Table 2.1 Definition summary of employee performance

Category	Author (Year)	Definition
Result	Bernardin, Beatty (1984)	Records of job outputs
	Kane (1996)	Exists as an independent achievement
	Luthans (2002)	Degree of task completion
	Li (2003)	Productivity and quality
	Ma (2023)	Results tied to organizational value
Behaviour	Hall, Goodale (1986)	Behaviours expected by the organization
	Campbell (1994)	Behaviours in specific job roles
	Van Dyn (1995); Brief, Motowidlo (1986)	Extra-role and citizenship behaviours
	Rotundo, Sackett, (2002); Sonnentag, Frese (2002)	Behaviours directly related to organizational goals, controllable and measurable
	Dogbe (2024)	Performance as a behavioural attribute
Combination of result and behaviour	Borman, Motowidlo (1997)	Evaluation of both behaviour and results
	Yang, Fang and Ling (2001)	Process and results shown over time