

The role of trade unions in ensuring job security for workers in Vietnam



Vu Thi Ha ^{1,*}, Le Thi Huyen Trang ², Cu Thi Thanh Thuy ³

¹Faculty of Economics and Finance, Vietnam Women's Academy, Hanoi, Vietnam

²Institute of Workers and Trade Unions, Hanoi, Vietnam

³Faculty of Sociology, Trade Union University, Hanoi, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of trade unions in safeguarding job security for workers in Vietnam today. A qualitative approach was used, including in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. The researchers conducted interviews with 50 local trade union officials to gain insights into their efforts to protect workers' employment. Additionally, case studies were used to understand the strategies trade unions apply to secure workers' jobs. Trade unions are essential in promoting job security by recommending policies to employers and supporting workers in maintaining job stability, enhancing productivity, and protecting fair wages. However, trade unions have not fully succeeded in encouraging workers to improve skills to reduce the risk of job obsolescence. Based on these findings, the authors suggest solutions to strengthen the union's role in job security, providing both evidence of the current state of trade unions and recommendations to enhance their role in protecting job security in Vietnam.

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1. Introduction

The issue of job security is becoming a global concern, as the risk of job insecurity affects all countries, industries, and worker groups. Numerous nations are experiencing widespread job cuts, with projections indicating a rise in the coming years. Even well-established economic businesses are currently undergoing significant layoffs ([Stankevičiūtė et al., 2021](#)). In April 2024, a total of 21,473 employees were laid off from 50 distinct organizations (layoffs.fyi). The companies that have laid off the most staff are billionaire Elon Musk's Tesla, Turkey's rapid delivery service Getir, and the mammoth Apple. Tesla terminated over 14,000 positions, while Apple terminated nearly 600 employees. Conversely, Getir made the decision to halt its activities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Europe, resulting in the loss of over 6,000 jobs. In 2024, a total of 271 companies terminated the employment of 78,572 individuals. The wave of layoffs is spreading to densely populated countries around the world, including


India and China. Economic concerns, when corporations choose to terminate employees to address competitiveness and dwindling sales, are the primary cause of layoffs. Furthermore, corporations often embrace the tactic of recruiting foreign labor rather than relying on permanent personnel. The surge in layoffs results in unemployment and jeopardizes job stability in various countries, including Vietnam. As a result, the number of job terminations is increasing, jeopardizing the stability of social security and putting people's means of living at risk. The intensification of economic integration and global competition, coupled with the advancement of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and the demographic shift towards an aging population due to increased life expectancy in developed countries, are placing strain on the sustainability of social security systems. Additionally, the fragmentation of labor markets in numerous countries, characterized by the coexistence of both protected and unprotected workers, further emphasizes the significance of job security. The issue of ensuring job security for workers has emerged as a crucial one that demands the attention of individual countries and the global community ([Deruelle et al., 2024](#)).

In Vietnam, job security is emerging as an important social security issue. There are five reasons why job security attracts much attention: (i) Job security has a strong and direct impact on all

* Corresponding Author.

Email Address: havt@hvpnv.edu.vn (V. T. Ha)

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 Corresponding author's ORCID profile:

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9884-8942>

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aspects of life, from rural to urban areas, from lowlands to mountains, and from inland to islands; (ii) the unemployment rate in Vietnam is high, and jobs are not sustainable; (iii) the uncoordinated development of industrial zones leads to difficulties in attracting labor and inefficiency in job creation; (iv) the risk of job loss and difficulty in finding new jobs for workers over 35 years old in Vietnam is very high, which is a consequence of the labor-intensive technology used by enterprises; and (v) the work environment and conditions in Vietnam are still low, leading to risks of not ensuring health and occupational safety. Regulations on labor contracts, collective agreements, the legal framework for labor, and the capacities and skills of the workers themselves address this issue. The state, enterprises, workers, trade unions, and workers' families are all considered important actors in ensuring workers' job security. The government, businesses, employees, other social and political groups, and the families of employees are all expected to have a significant part in guaranteeing the job security of workers. Trade unions are workers' representative organizations whose important function is to protect the legitimate and legitimate rights and interests of workers. Therefore, trade unions have an important role to play in ensuring job security for workers. The authors conducted this study to understand the role of trade unions in ensuring job security for workers in Vietnam today. The research question posed is: What actions have grassroots trade unions in Vietnam taken to ensure job security for workers? To address this research question, the authors employed qualitative research methods, including in-depth interview techniques for data collection and thematic analysis techniques for data analysis. The authors structure the study into five main parts: the problem statement, literature review, research methods, research results, and a discussion of the research findings and policy implications. Based on exploring the practical role of trade unions in protecting job security, the authors proposed policy suggestions to further enhance the role of trade unions in ensuring job security for workers in Vietnam today. This study holds practical significance for trade union activities in Vietnam.

2. Literature review

2.1. Job security

Due to the constantly fluctuating labor market, workers may find themselves facing job loss at any given time. The negative consequences of unemployment have prompted nations to prioritize job security and ensure worker protection. The concept of job security evolved from the notion of job stability. It is understood as the workers' perception of the assurance of their current job (Hourie et al., 2018), reflecting a state where individuals feel secure in their employment (Davy et al., 1997; Huang et al., 2012), believe they can find a new job of at least equivalent quality (Wilthagen and

Tros, 2004), or are not worried about losing their current job (Huang et al., 2012; Rosenblatt and Ruvio, 1996). The concept of job security pertains to the psychological, perceptual, and subjective feelings of workers. It relates to the workers' ability to endure and protect their jobs. Ensuring job security prevents workers from worrying about unemployment, which in turn does not reduce their income (Frey and Stutzer, 2010; Hourie et al., 2018). Workers also avoid other negative impacts of job loss, such as reduced economic ability to care for their family, deteriorated mental and physical health, loss of status and self-esteem, etc. Workers desire sustainable employment to alleviate feelings of job insecurity, but their efforts alone are insufficient because job security also involves many other stakeholders, such as employers, workers' representative organizations, and policymaking, planning, and implementing bodies. Hence, job security is not only viewed from the perspective of workers' subjective perception but also as an objective state outside the worker. It includes unemployment issues, industry sector expansion or contraction, cyclical crises, and exogenous shocks. Therefore, people perceive job security in a broader sense than job stability. Job stability means the certainty that an individual will retain their job without fear of losing it, or, as the International Labor Organization (ILO) defined it, protection for workers against unfair dismissal without sufficient notice, while workers have long-term contracts and stable job relationships that are not seasonal. These concepts lead to the understanding that job stability is associated with workers' current jobs and the benefits they receive corresponding to those jobs. However, a flexible labor market does not bind workers to one job or one employer; it allows them to develop their careers with better jobs and better benefits. Thus, job stability means individuals have confidence, based on their experience, that they will be able to continue their working careers, either with a new job with the current employer or with another job with a different employer, whenever they need or want. Moreover, job stability also means those currently temporarily outside the workforce have the confidence that they can re-enter the labor market at any time. Job stability is the ability to ensure continuous employment, even if it is not for the same job. In other words, it is the security of an institutional framework for continuous employment. Here, job stability is synonymous with the confidence to maintain, seek, and create useful employment in the present and future based on the development of workers' human capital and labor market institutions. The concept of job stability has grown in scope and is multidimensional in its approach, encompassing many aspects and issues related to proactive measures for job protection. The ILO has asserted that to achieve better employment, it must aim for sustainable employment, which means "productive quality jobs for both men and women, under conditions of freedom, equality, safety, and human dignity." The ILO outlined six

main characteristics of sustainable employment: (1) job opportunities, (2) working in freedom, (3) productive work, (4) equity, (5) job security, and (6) dignity protection (ILO, 2012). The first two aspects relate to job availability, while the remaining four address employment conditions and quality. The ILO proposed broadening the concept of job stability to include the following elements:

1. Labor Market Security: Macroeconomic policies that ensure high employment rates provide adequate employment and job opportunities.
2. Employment Security: Protection against arbitrary dismissal and the sustainability of employment in a dynamic economy.
3. Job Security: Skills or professions are not at risk of becoming obsolete.
4. Work Security: Protection against accidents and illnesses in the workplace through safety and health regulations, limits on working hours, and working conditions.
5. Skill Reproduction Security: Expanded opportunities for vocational training and skill development through training and apprenticeships.
6. Income Security: Ensuring regular income and access to non-wage benefits, additional income (or replacement income), protection of income rights through minimum wage systems, social security policies, etc.
7. Representation Security: Protecting workers' collective voice through independent trade unions, workers' associations, and bodies that can represent workers' interests.

This approach broadens the concept of job stability beyond its traditional scope, offering a more detailed view that, despite its complexity, clarifies the key participants and outcomes involved in developing research and solutions to the issue. The ILO's framework covers various employment dimensions, emphasizing that ensuring job stability requires involvement from multiple stakeholders, including state policies, socio-political organizations, employers, and workers. This analysis focuses on the role of trade unions in safeguarding job security within enterprises. The ILO's perspective on job stability encompasses several elements:

- Adequate employment and job opportunities: Adequate employment ensures that everyone who is able and willing to work can find a job within a reasonable period, avoiding unemployment or underemployment and the negative effects of job loss. Achieving this requires a labor market that creates numerous job opportunities. At the macroeconomic level, job opportunities are supported through policies such as economic stability measures, public investment, government spending, education, and training programs. Workers' employment prospects increase when businesses expand, and recruitment demand rises (Mitchell and Watts, 1997).

- Protection against arbitrary dismissal and employment sustainability in a dynamic economy: Legal frameworks specify the conditions under which workers can be dismissed. When employers dismiss workers without adhering to these regulations, it constitutes arbitrary dismissal. Protection against dismissal seeks to limit unjustified dismissals through strict legal conditions and effective enforcement of dismissal laws.
- No risk of skill or profession obsolescence: With rapid technological advancements and shifting production dynamics, workers' skills may become obsolete. To address this, workers need the capacity to quickly adapt to changing career demands, making future-oriented job skills essential.
- Expanding opportunities for vocational training and skill development: This involves creating workers' access to various vocational training and skill development opportunities. Achieving this goal requires numerous training options tailored to workers' needs, including both in-house and external training programs offered by the state.
- Protection against workplace accidents and illnesses: This includes ensuring safe working conditions, compliance with labor safety standards, reasonable working hours, and rest periods to protect workers' health and well-being.
- Ensuring regular income and access to benefits beyond wages: Workers should have consistent employment with fair wages. Beyond salaries, they should also have access to other job-related benefits and allowances.
- Protecting the collective voice of workers: This includes recognizing and safeguarding the role of trade unions as representatives of workers within labor relations.

2.2. Trade union and job security

Searching for articles on the role of trade unions in ensuring job security for workers is somewhat limited, even when using various search techniques such as "union and job security," "union and job insecurity," and similar terms. However, searching for articles on more specific aspects of job security, such as unions' involvement in job protection, layoffs, precarious work, or vocational training, tends to yield more results. Depending on the union model in different countries, trade unions may represent both union members and non-unionized workers. Gill (2009), Fiorito et al. (1996), and Raymo et al. (2011) argued that the 'voice of the union' provides job security for union members, while Keune (2013) suggested that merely being associated with unions brings job security, meaning unions can protect both union members and non-union workers.

The research by Sverke et al. (2019) specified that trade unions are considered a factor moderating the relationship between job insecurity and employee performance. The research results indicate

that differences in union density (measured by the ratio of workers who are union members to the total workforce) among countries can create varying levels of protection against job loss or the risk of job loss. In countries with low union density, job insecurity is higher, and performance is lower compared to countries with strong union density. The research results of Artz and Kaya (2014), Checchi and Lucifora (2002), Jones and McKenna (1994), and Booth (1984) are similar in that unions can protect their members' jobs. Checchi and Lucifora (2002) emphasized that union members have a higher overall employment probability, while Jones and McKenna (1994) and Booth (1984) showed that the probability of being laid off for a union member is exogenously lower compared to a non-member, creating a positive private value of union membership. In terms of worker protection strategies, the studies also highlight various strategies that unions can use. Specifically:

- Firstly, through social dialogue or lobbying, trade unions can influence national policies and legislation (Artz and Kaya, 2014). Trade unions will lobby for legislation aimed at reducing the value of unemployment by cutting unemployment benefits and protecting workers through high dismissal costs. Unions become very powerful if they strongly lobby to protect jobs, and conversely, they are relatively weak if their bargaining ability with the government is low, resulting in loose job protection laws (Artz and Kaya, 2014). The study by Signoretto and Valentin (2019) showed that the presence of unions and social pressure plays a role in safeguarding the application of appropriate labor laws protecting workers' jobs. However, the impact of unions on layoffs mainly occurs in the case of mass layoffs, especially during the development of a "job retention plan."
- Secondly, collective bargaining: Many countries around the world recognize trade unions for their ability to represent workers in collective bargaining. Through this, unions can represent members and workers to negotiate better job protection measures. According to Rätzzel and Uzzell (2011), unions could negotiate better conditions, such as retraining opportunities or job search assistance for those laid off. In cases where companies lay off employees, unions can also intervene to protect workers' rights by encouraging efforts from employers (Rätzzel and Uzzell, 2011). Frost (2001) investigated how workplace negotiations and union responses to job restructuring affect employee outcomes. While Kochan and Osterman (1994) emphasized that union cooperation with restructuring would improve workers' terms and conditions, Kelly (2012) argued that union struggles are necessary to force managers to share the benefits of increased productivity with employees. Unions may also play a small role in individual layoffs, as union representatives can attend meetings between employers and dismissed employees

where the employer explains the reasons for dismissal and gives the dismissed employee a chance to respond. However, this certainly plays only a minor role in protecting workers' jobs (Signoretto and Valentin, 2019).

- Thirdly, it entails worker advocacy, education, and mobilization. Keune (2013) suggested that strong unions can influence workers' perceptions through advocacy and education. In terms of job security, unions can promote, educate, and encourage workers to feel secure in their jobs, improve their skills, increase productivity, and comply with labor discipline. This helps maintain workers' employment and avoid the risk of job insecurity.

More broadly, in terms of worker job security strategies, Keune (2013) outlined five basic strategies that unions might use:

- Inclusion: Unions aim to include workers in precarious conditions within their constituency and serve as representative organizations for broad interests without making specific distinctions between precarious and regular workers.
- Exclusion: Unions act only as representative organizations for "insiders" (regular employees), excluding precarious workers from their constituency and union benefits.
- Segregation: Unions aim to separate precarious workers from the rest of their constituency, treating them as a specific group that requires special attention and has specific representation tools.
- Mitigation: Unions aim to narrow the gap between precarious and regular workers by reducing precariousness (e.g., through regulations that diminish the incentives for precarious jobs). Unions try to influence or implement changes in precarious workers' conditions to make them closer to or comparable to regular workers' conditions.
- Elimination: In the economy, unions aim to eliminate all forms of precarious work. This might include inclusion and segregation strategies, but it sees them as temporary steps toward the goal of completely eradicating precarious employment.

The forms of protection used also vary depending on many subjective and objective factors, such as:

1. The number of members impacted by job insecurity.
2. The extent of the job insecurity issue—whether it impacts a specific company, an industry, or the labor market.
3. The problem's origin—whether it stems from legal deficiencies, employer strategies, or a lack of collective voice.
4. The resources available to the union include the coverage of collective agreements, membership and bargaining rights, mobilization capabilities, positions in organizations (e.g., seats in national

bipartite or tripartite councils), and financial resources.

Additionally, concerns about job security drive the strengthening of worker unions (De Witte, 2005; Sverke et al., 2002). This is quite evident, as the union movement occupies a significant position in most national economic systems and can play a crucial role in mitigating job insecurity and its consequences.

2.3. Trade union and job security in Vietnam

In Vietnam, trade unions are socio-political organizations that represent the working class and laborers. According to IDEA (2013), the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor (VGCL) was voluntarily established by workers and laborers as a socio-political organization that represents, advocates for, and protects their legitimate interests and rights. It participates in state governance, socio-economic management, and oversees, inspects, and monitors the activities of state agencies, organizations, units, and enterprises concerning laborers' rights and obligations. Additionally, it promotes and educates workers, encouraging them to improve their skills, comply with laws, and contribute to national development and security.

The primary function of trade unions is to protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers, including ensuring job security. According to the 2012 Trade Union Law, trade unions are mandated to participate in state management, monitoring, and supervision of policies related to employment, as well as the rights, interests, and obligations of workers concerning job security. These policies cover social insurance, health insurance, labor contracts, wages, bonuses, working conditions, housing, labor disputes, complaints, and collective labor agreements. The key roles of trade unions in ensuring job security include:

1. Participating in policy formulation related to protecting laborers' rights.
2. Engaging in policy formulation regarding laborers' welfare.
3. Leading the development of policies on trade union structures and enhancing the union's role in practical activities within enterprises is crucial.
4. Representing and protecting laborers' job-related rights.
5. Ensuring the material and spiritual well-being of laborers.

The union's protective mechanism encompasses two scenarios: ensuring job security and reducing the risk of job loss, as well as providing support to laborers who involuntarily lose their jobs. Enhanced workplace dialogue is one of the best ways to maintain job security and reduce the risk of job loss. The 2019 Labor Code mandates workplace dialogue and collective bargaining when requested by either party. Enterprise-level, sectoral, and group-level

collective bargaining now form part of the expanded scope and level of bargaining. The Labor Code and Trade Union Law also outline the roles of grassroots unions and higher-level unions in workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, and addressing labor relations issues (ILO, 2012; 2019).

Job security policies and trade union regulations aimed at ensuring job security have contributed to fostering harmonious and fair labor relations by adjusting and supplementing regulations on the union's role in labor relations, such as workplace dialogue, collective bargaining, and collective labor agreements. Gender equality principles have been supplemented and refined not only in recruitment and use but also in training, working hours, rest periods, wages, and other regimes. The expansion of rights for female workers and vulnerable workers includes measures like increasing maternity leave and adding leave for spouses. Trade unions have been progressively enhancing their role in representing laborers' rights through diverse and practical activities aligned with laborers' lives and employment. Nonetheless, the activity of unions in protecting laborers' employment still faces several challenges, such as the weak role of grassroots unions in workplace dialogue, unclear guidance from higher-level unions, and a lack of protection mechanisms for union officials.

Regarding job security in enterprises, unstable working hours, irregular shifts, and changes in order volumes are primary reasons why workers leave their jobs. Some employees resign due to excessive overtime, which negatively affects their health; others face unstable wages, inconsistent income, and inadequate social welfare benefits for themselves and their families. Additionally, some workers are forced to leave their jobs involuntarily when there is no work available. Labor relations in industrial zones are often weak and unstable. Workers frequently leave their jobs to seek better benefits or when they encounter conflicts or disagreements. High labor turnover is common, especially with workers moving between nearby companies. Many also return to their hometowns due to the expansion of industrial zones in those areas. Factors such as increased workload, extended working hours, unpaid or arbitrary overtime, and incomplete social and health insurance contributions by employers are major triggers for strikes, slowdowns, and worker resignations.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative research method to gather rich textual data on the role of trade unions in ensuring laborers' job security. In-depth interviews were utilized as they are suitable for qualitative research and allow exploration of aspects that are not easily observable, such as emotions, thoughts, intentions, and past behaviors. The researchers interviewed 50 union officials at different levels to assess their views on trade unions' role in protecting laborers' job security. A purposive sampling method

was used to gain deeper insights into specific cases (Patton, 2023).

Vietnam's current union system consists of four levels: the national confederation, provincial/city federations, upper-level unions, and grassroots unions. Each of these levels has specific roles and responsibilities in ensuring laborers' job security, though their methods and participation differ. At the highest level, the VGCL consults on policies and laws regarding job security, issues action programs for the union system to ensure job security, and oversees the implementation of policies and laws on job security. Provincial/city federations and upper-level unions advise local governments at the same level on action programs to ensure laborers' job security and monitor compliance and implementation of policies and laws on job security. On issues related to job security, union officials directly consult, propose, negotiate, and bargain with

employers (who play a crucial role in ensuring laborers' job security) at the grassroots level. However, to align with the research objectives, the authors chose to conduct in-depth interviews with grassroots union officials who directly interact with laborers and protect their jobs in enterprises. The authors selected six provinces and cities representing six major economic regions of Vietnam: Hanoi representing the Red River Delta, Bac Giang representing the Northern Midlands and Mountains, Nghe An representing the North Central and Central Coastal regions, Ho Chi Minh City representing the Southeast, Can Tho representing the Mekong Delta, and Lam Dong representing the Central Highlands. In each province, the authors selected five grassroots union officials from five enterprises in different industries and sectors, mainly grassroots union chairpersons or vice-chairpersons. The survey structure is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Composition of union officials participating in the survey

No.	Criteria	Quantity (People)	Proportion (%)	
1	Gender	Male	29	58
		Female	21	42
2	Location	Hanoi	12	24
		Bac Giang	8	16
		Nghe An	7	14
		Can Tho	6	12
		Ho Chi Minh City	11	22
		Lam Dong	6	12
3	Educational level	University	21	42
		College	23	46
		Other	6	12
4	Industry group	Manufacturing	13	26
		Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply	5	10
		Mining	4	8
		Construction	7	14
		Services	14	28
		Other	7	14
5	Age	Under 30	12	24
		31 to 40	19	38
		41 to 50	13	26
		Over 50	6	12
Total		50	100	

The in-depth interview topics specifically revolved around the union's role in ensuring job security for laborers.

- How do you evaluate the union's role in ensuring full employment and job opportunities for laborers?
- How do you assess the union's role in protecting against arbitrary dismissal and ensuring job sustainability in a dynamic economy?
- How do you view the union's role in protecting laborers from the risk of skill or occupational obsolescence?
- How do you evaluate the union's role in expanding vocational training and skill development opportunities?
- How do you see the union's role in protecting against workplace accidents and illnesses?

- How do you assess the union's role in ensuring regular income and access to benefits beyond wages?
- How do you evaluate the union's role in protecting the collective voice of the workforce?

Most of the interviews lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. The shortest interview lasted only 32 minutes, while the longest interview lasted 49 minutes. Both the interviewer and the interviewees conducted all interviews in Vietnamese, their native language. With the interviewees' permission, the interviewer took notes and used a small, specialized digital recorder to record each interview. Additionally, ethical considerations were seriously addressed in this study. All potential informants were guaranteed confidentiality of their identities and were contacted via email to invite them to participate in the study.

In addition, the authors used the case study technique to collect qualitative data. The union officials are requested to engage in comprehensive interviews, during which they delineated the measures they had implemented to safeguard workers' employment stability. This methodology provided the study with tangible, empirical data to support the research conclusions.

The data analysis process for this study began with transcribing all the recorded interviews. Specifically, each recorded interview was transcribed in its original language (Vietnamese) to "capture the information in the words, phrases, and expressions of the participants themselves, allowing researchers to explore cultural meanings." Each transcript was assigned a file name for anonymity purposes. Fifty individual interviews were labeled from PI-1 to PI-50. A thematic approach was employed to analyze the interview data. The initial categorization stage helped identify emerging key points. The researcher also revisited the interview questions to identify common themes and corresponding sub-themes in the interview data. Creating a system of themes and sub-themes helped manage the data, and key issues emerged from the analysis process. Important information related to the union's role in protecting job security, as provided by the interview participants, was highlighted. At this stage, the quotes shared in Vietnamese were carefully translated into English to facilitate the discussion of the findings.

4. Research results

The research findings revealed important insights into the union's role in safeguarding workers' job security. Grassroots union officials contribute to job security by promoting stable employment, preventing skill obsolescence, increasing access to vocational training, ensuring workplace safety and hygiene, protecting wages and benefits, and representing workers' collective voice.

In terms of maintaining employment and job opportunities, unions employ various strategies depending on circumstances. When workforce reductions are necessary, they may propose transferring or retraining workers in response to technological changes or reducing working hours to avoid layoffs during periods of reduced orders. Union representatives also undertake indirect measures such as educating workers on discipline and productivity, thereby helping avoid disciplinary dismissals.

Some participants shared examples of their actions, such as proposing reduced work hours or rotating leave during economic difficulties to prevent layoffs or encouraging skill development when new technology is introduced to keep workers employed. Proposals to business leaders often reflect mutual interests, emphasizing benefits for both the enterprise and the workforce.

When it comes to protecting workers from arbitrary dismissals, union officials face challenges

such as ensuring compliance with labor regulations and negotiating with employers. Strong leadership within unions can enhance their effectiveness in advocating for employees. Arbitrary dismissals are infrequent due to widespread legal awareness and localized labor shortages in many regions.

Union involvement in addressing occupational or skill obsolescence is less prominent, as many officials are unaware of these risks. Consequently, there is limited focus on expanding vocational training. However, union initiatives for workplace safety and hygiene are well-supported, with measures like safety training, provision of protective equipment, and health monitoring.

Regarding wages and benefits, unions play a key role in negotiating terms within labor contracts and collective agreements, monitoring compliance, and advocating for improvements. Their efforts include ensuring timely wage payments and promoting non-wage benefits such as attendance bonuses and allowances.

The union's role in protecting the collective voice of workers varies across organizations. Where effective, unions bridge the gap between workers and management, fostering job security and labor discipline. Limitations often stem from the skills of individual union officials.

5. Discussion and policy implications

The authors conducted in-depth interviews with 50 union officials from grassroots and industrial unions in Vietnam to investigate the efficacy of union operations in safeguarding workers' job security. Job security entails a sense of assurance in one's employment, free from the potential threats of unemployment when there is a willingness to work. Job security is achieved when workers are treated properly, respected, and have solid labor relations. Conversely, job security also encompasses an individual's capacity to secure other employment with reasonable ease. Job security encompasses several key elements: sufficient employment opportunities and job availability, safeguards against arbitrary termination and job stability in a rapidly changing economy, protection against the risk of occupational or skill obsolescence, increased access to vocational training and skill enhancement, prevention of workplace accidents and illnesses, assurance of a consistent income and access to additional benefits beyond wages, and preservation of the collective representation of workers. The authors examined the union's involvement in the current implementation of these activities for workers in Vietnam.

The research findings indicate that unions play a significant role in ensuring job security for workers. Grassroots unions in companies have effectively served as a bridge between management and workers, voicing workers' concerns and protecting their jobs with the enterprise's management. Unions have undertaken numerous effective and beneficial activities for workers, such as maintaining

employment, reducing unfair dismissals, protecting the working environment, ensuring wages and income for workers, enhancing workers' skills, and encouraging workers to feel secure in their jobs. Within their functions and duties, unions have employed an inclusive strategy, representing all workers in labor relations (Keune, 2013). This strategy has garnered support from workers. Our research reconfirms the findings of Keune (2013) that unions can protect both union members and non-members. Many enterprises have included wage agreements in collective labor agreements, and union officials can assist workers in negotiating wage-related terms in labor contracts and collective labor agreements. Concerning job maintenance and protecting workers' job opportunities, unions have implemented measures to limit worker dismissals, such as initiatives on worker rotation, work spreading, and reduced working hours. This way, unions can maintain jobs and limit dismissals in situations of reduced orders. A crucial function of unions is monitoring compliance with labor-related benefits as prescribed by law (ILO, 2019; 2012). Our research shows that enterprises in Vietnam have effectively implemented regulations on work safety, labor protection, and creating a friendly working environment. The authors believe that unions in Vietnam should continue to enhance their role in ensuring workers' job security to cover a broader range of individuals who are protected and benefit from job security policies. The authors suggest the following:

- Enhance the credibility of union officials with enterprises and workers: By doing so, unions will bring more benefits to both workers and enterprises; thus, the role of connecting workers and enterprises will be more effectively fulfilled. When a company's decisions have a detrimental effect on job security, union leaders could suggest alternatives to reduce the number of layoffs.
- Improve skills and methods of grassroots union officials: Skilled union officials will have a thorough understanding of workers' rights and interests related to job security, enabling better implementation of job protection measures. In addition, they have a profound comprehension of employment and job distribution throughout the organization, enabling them to suggest strategies to reduce undesirable layoffs. Experienced union officials possess effective strategies and techniques to promote and motivate workers to maintain labor discipline, enhance production, and acquire skills to guarantee long-term employment stability.
- Strengthen the supervisory function of grassroots unions related to labor and employment at enterprises: On one hand, grassroots unions should promote and encourage workers to comply with labor regulations and safety measures; on the other hand, they should propose and recommend that enterprises adhere to labor safety laws and establish suitable labor regulations for the

enterprise. In this way, trade unions play a vital role in preventing workplace accidents and diseases, which is essential for preserving long-term job stability for workers (Shabannia Mansour and Hassan, 2019).

- Increase dialogues between union officials or the union executive committee and workers: The aim is to understand the workers' aspirations and difficulties. Gathering and filtering such opinions will form the basis for discussions and negotiations with the enterprise's management to guarantee adequate employment, assure the fulfillment of workers' rights, provide access to training, ensure safety and security, and promote worker participation in decision-making at the workplace.
- Enhance the effectiveness of dialogue with employers or enterprise management: This is to suggest workers' legitimate aspirations. This activity is a highly successful method for ensuring that the opinions and perspectives of workers are acknowledged and considered within the workplace. To guarantee efficacy, such dialogues should be conducted in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. Not every issue proposed by the union will be accepted. However, through open and direct discussions, many conflicts will be resolved, dispute resolution mechanisms will be established, and many solutions will be formed.
- Actively participate in signing collective labor agreements: This role needs to be implemented on several fronts: (i) This is the most crucial opportunity for unions to demonstrate their role in protecting workers' rights; (ii) Negotiating wages and other issues such as working conditions, overtime, housing, commuting, meals, benefits, sports, and recreation is essential to workers' lives; hence the agreed terms should exceed the minimum legal requirements; (iii) Negotiated terms should be widely consulted and agreed upon by workers, and similarly, in signing; and (iv) Effective negotiation processes will form the basis for future negotiations.
- Encourage and persuade workers to study and improve their skills: This is to proactively cope with the risk of occupational and skill obsolescence. Additionally, it proposes mechanisms to employers for organizing training for workers. There is a need to broaden the scope of corporate training and development. Businesses should not only address company regulations, labor discipline, and occupational safety and health but also offer workers additional knowledge in areas such as future career development, technological advancements, market demands, and other skills that promote a sense of security in their roles, such as family care skills, childcare, and stress management techniques.
- Proactively identify emerging conflicts within enterprises: This includes conflicts between workers and employers and between employees and managers to implement timely mediation measures. In cases where mediation fails,

including at higher levels, grassroots unions should lead and organize strikes as prescribed by law.

- Expand activities outside enterprises: This is to better support workers, especially migrant workers living in dormitories and boarding houses outside industrial zones, such as activities building cultural life in residential areas; activities related to the care, education, and protection of workers' children; and activities for celebrating holidays and festivals for employees.
- Actively advocate for and guide the establishment of grassroots unions: Provide training and capacity building for union activities, especially in understanding and reflecting workers' aspirations to make timely adjustments that meet workers' needs.

6. Conclusion

The presence of a trade union representative in an organization is seen to convey the worker's voice to the employer. Thus, the ILO advises employers to select official union representatives. Unions will protect the legitimate and rightful interests that workers are entitled to, including maintaining job security. The authors conducted in-depth interviews and sample research to gather information that combines the information collected through thematic analysis techniques. Their findings provide unique insights into the union's role in safeguarding job security for workers in Vietnam. Unions have effectively showcased their function in safeguarding job stability for employees through the enhancement of working conditions, the proposition of advantageous terms in labor contracts and collective labor agreements, the promotion of measures to prevent dismissal due to labor discipline, and the safeguarding of wages and income for workers. Our article has made a practical contribution to ongoing union operations in Vietnam. Nevertheless, this article does possess certain constraints. Initially, the authors exclusively conducted interviews with grassroots union officials, suggesting that these individuals are the primary individuals engaging with workers and had the most comprehensive understanding of workers' job security. Nevertheless, as previously said, Vietnam's union organization comprises four tiers, and extending to higher tiers would offer a more comprehensive perspective on union activity in Vietnam. Furthermore, job security is a multifaceted concern that is examined from both a macro and micro perspective. However, analyzing job security solely based on the perspectives of union leaders at specific companies does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the job security situation in Vietnam. These directions could serve as potential avenues for future investigation.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

All participants provided informed consent, and their confidentiality was ensured throughout the study. The research was conducted following ethical guidelines to protect participant welfare and data integrity.

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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