

# EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN THE VUCA ERA (VOLATILITY, UNCERTAINTY, COMPLEXITY, AMBIGUITY): A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF DETERMINING FACTORS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

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## Abstract

The VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era has fundamentally reshaped the organizational landscape, necessitating adaptive and responsive employee motivation strategies. This study aims to identify and analyze the key determinants of employee motivation and effective organizational strategies in navigating the dynamics of the VUCA environment. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA 2020 protocol, 25 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus (2019–2024) were analyzed thematically and narratively. The findings indicate that employee motivation is shaped by five core dimensions: psychological conditions and job expectations, agile leadership, adaptive organizational culture, continuous learning, and coaching. Effective organizational strategies include empowerment, value-based incentives, a collaborative culture, and the integration of motivation theories into human resource policies. This study extends the applicability of classical motivation theories within contemporary organizational contexts and offers practical guidance for designing work systems that are human-centric, flexible, and sustainable. The findings emphasize the importance of integrated and contextually grounded motivation strategies in reinforcing organizational resilience amid global uncertainty.

**Keywords:** *Employee motivation; Organizational strategy; VUCA era; Agile leadership; Organizational learning; Systematic Literature Review*

## INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation and global volatility have fostered a business ecosystem increasingly defined by the acronym VUCA—volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. VUCA is not merely a conceptual term but an operational reality that affects organizational strategies and human resource dynamics. Within this context, employee motivation emerges as a critical component for sustaining productivity, innovation, and adaptability. An organization's failure to respond to VUCA through empowerment strategies and internal motivation development may lead to performance decline and talent loss (Minciu et al., 2021; Shet, 2024). Traditional approaches to managing motivation have become inadequate. The complexity of the environment demands strategic responses such as agile leadership, adaptive coaching, and continuous learning (Minciu et al., 2025). Inclusive organizational cultures have been shown to enhance employee engagement (Boikanyo, 2024), while cultural misalignment and counterproductive work behaviors may diminish morale and hinder strategic effectiveness (Zhao & Brichko, 2023). Under such conditions, motivational strategies must be designed responsively to foster psychological cohesion among employees (Chowdhury, 2024). A review of the literature reveals several critical gaps. First, many studies remain fragmented, lacking an integrated framework that combines motivation, leadership, and organizational strategy in a way that is relevant to the VUCA context (Dhillon & Nguyen, 2021; Naqvi & Naqvi, 2023). Second, limited research has explored how cultural transformation sustains motivation during transitional phases (Zhao & Brichko, 2023). Third, the effectiveness of coaching as a psychological reinforcement tool is still underexplored in longitudinal studies (Minciu et al., 2025). Fourth, the link between organizational learning and sustained motivation in volatile environments has seldom been empirically examined (Pangaribuan et al., 2020; Baran &

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Woznyj, 2020). Fifth, no consensus yet exists on the most effective motivational strategies across sectors and organizational cultures (Chernobay & Shiron, 2023). Sixth, employee participation in strategic planning—proven to enhance workplace identity and loyalty—remains underexplored (Boikanyo, 2024). Seventh, the role of HR as a facilitator of motivation in the VUCA context has received little attention (Chowdhury, 2024). Eighth, the relevance of classical motivation theories such as Herzberg and Self-Determination Theory within VUCA scenarios has not been adequately revisited. Ninth, research on motivation in digital ecosystems, particularly in hybrid and remote work arrangements, remains limited (Minciu *et al.*, 2021).

Tenth, motivation within sectors such as higher education, healthcare, and manufacturing in complex environments has yet to receive balanced attention. Eleventh, although VUCA-readiness competence development is recognized as essential (Shet, 2024), the mechanisms for embedding it through motivational systems remain under-investigated. Twelfth, studies on balancing performance and well-being in hyper-complex settings are still scarce. Thirteenth, the causal impact of non-financial incentives on motivation has rarely been analyzed (Dhillon & Nguyen, 2021). Fourteenth, cross-country comparative studies on motivational strategies during geopolitical crises are rare. Fifteenth, there is still no conceptual framework mapping the interrelations between organizational strategy, job design, and motivation as a systemic response to VUCA. To address these gaps, this study conducts a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of recent literature to identify the key determinants of employee motivation in the VUCA era and the organizational strategies that sustain it. The analysis of publications from the past five years aims to construct both conceptual and practical understanding of motivation as an adaptive strategy for strengthening organizational resilience. This research addresses two core questions: What are the main factors influencing employee motivation in a VUCA context? How can organizational strategies sustain work motivation in the VUCA era?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In a workplace ecosystem characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—as defined by the VUCA environment—employee motivation necessitates a theoretical approach that is both contextual and relevant. This study adopts two key theories: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, as foundational frameworks for understanding how organizational strategies can drive both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. SDT emphasizes the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In a VUCA context, addressing these needs becomes essential for maintaining sustained motivation. Strategies that support autonomy and competence have been shown to preserve work enthusiasm (Minciu *et al.*, 2025), while a supportive organizational culture enhances social connectedness (Boikanyo, 2024). Meanwhile, Herzberg's theory distinguishes between motivators and hygiene factors, both of which contribute to job satisfaction. Mismanagement of these elements can lead to diminished motivation, particularly under organizational stress (Zhao & Brichko, 2023; Chernobay & Shiron, 2023).

In disruption-affected organizational landscapes, leadership plays a pivotal role. Transformational and agile leadership styles not only steer the organization strategically but also foster psychologically empowering work climates (Rimita, 2024; Minciu *et al.*, 2025). Leaders who delegate proportionately and demonstrate empathy can reinforce the SDT dimensions within employees (Pangaribuan *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, open and collaborative organizational cultures promote relatedness and create the psychological safety necessary to sustain motivation under pressure (Shet, 2024; Zhao & Brichko, 2023). Learning organizations that encourage skill development and self-reflection also play a key role in maintaining performance amid change (Hakim *et al.*, 2024). Conversely, overly procedural training that lacks space for self-actualization may hinder long-term motivation.

From this integration, it can be concluded that adaptive organizational strategies influence motivation through three primary channels: leadership, organizational culture, and learning. These elements interact with the dimensions of SDT and Herzberg's factors. Coaching and delegation enhance autonomy; training and recognition foster competence; while collaborative cultures nurture relatedness. The synergy of these three channels stimulates intrinsic motivation, leading to increased engagement and performance. Conceptually, motivation is understood as a psychological drive—both intrinsic and extrinsic—that directs individual behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Transformational leadership centers on idealism and individualized consideration; organizational culture reflects collective norms and values; and learning organizations prioritize continuous development. Previous literature suggests that formal organizational structures alone are insufficient. What is required is a motivational system grounded in psychological needs, an adaptive culture, and transformative leadership. This study builds upon this framework to map how motivation is constructed and influenced by organizational strategies in the face of ongoing disruption.

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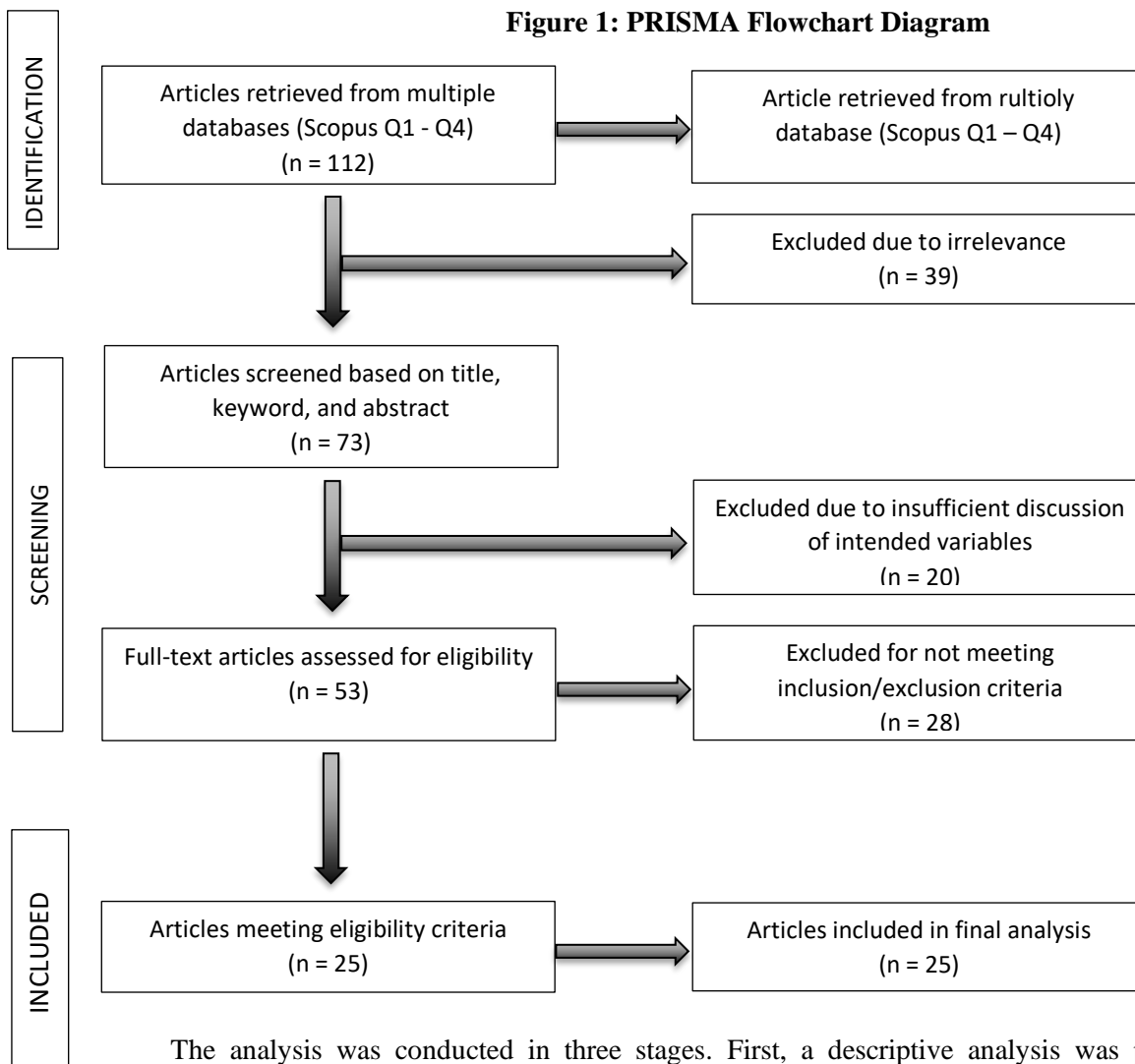
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## METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, guided by the PRISMA 2020 protocol to ensure transparency and accuracy in the literature review process (Page et al., 2021). The primary objective is to synthesize empirical and theoretical evidence related to employee motivation within the VUCA context and the corresponding organizational strategies. Literature sources were drawn from the Scopus database, selecting articles from journals ranked Q1 through Q4, with priority given to Q1 and Q2 journals due to their higher credibility and disciplinary scope, particularly within the fields of management, organizational psychology, and human resource studies. The inclusion criteria comprised English-language articles published between 2019 and 2024, focusing on employee motivation in the VUCA context or adaptive organizational strategies, and based on empirical research or systematic/narrative literature reviews. Exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed publications, articles not centered on organizational contexts, and those that did not explicitly reference VUCA.

The search was conducted using a systematic strategy on Scopus, applying a keyword combination of: “employee motivation” AND “VUCA” AND “organizational strategy” OR “organizational culture.” The search was filtered for publications from 2019 to 2024 through the Scopus interface. The initial search yielded 112 documents, which were then screened based on abstracts and keywords to eliminate duplicates and irrelevant studies. This selection process followed three phases: identification, initial screening, and full-text review, as illustrated in the PRISMA diagram (Gough et al., 2017). The screening phase was followed by the development of a PRISMA flow diagram documenting the number of articles at each stage, including those excluded due to methodological or thematic reasons. Of the 112 initially identified articles, 25 met all inclusion criteria and were retained as the primary dataset for SLR analysis.

Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart Diagram



The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, a descriptive analysis was performed to map the distribution of publications by year, country, journal, and method. Second, an inductive thematic analysis was

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carried out following Braun and Clarke's (2019) approach, generating key themes such as organizational culture, leadership style, coaching, and adaptive strategies. Third, content analysis was used to evaluate the application of motivation theories—such as Herzberg's theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Expectancy Theory—in the VUCA context and their implications for managerial policy.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE LITERATURE

This review synthesizes 25 scientific articles that are directly relevant to the topic of employee motivation in the VUCA context and related organizational strategies. These articles were rigorously selected through the PRISMA protocol and reflect a representative body of recent literature from diverse methodological, geographical, and disciplinary backgrounds. The composition includes 15 studies focusing on the key determinants of motivation in the VUCA era, and 10 studies examining organizational strategies aimed at maintaining and enhancing work motivation. In terms of quantity and temporal distribution, the literature reveals an upward trend over the past five years, underscoring the academic urgency of this topic amid global uncertainty. Three articles were published between 2019 and 2020 (e.g., Pangaribuan *et al.*, 2020; Panait, 2020), followed by a significant rise in publications between 2021 and 2024. The years 2023 and 2024 recorded the highest number of publications, with five and six articles respectively (see, for example, Wibowo *et al.*, 2023; Majumder *et al.*, 2024; Boikanyo, 2024; Rimita, 2024; Ramlall, 2024), signaling that motivation under VUCA conditions is receiving increasing scholarly attention.

Geographically, the studies included in this SLR span multiple countries and reflect a wide range of organizational contexts. Contributions originate from Asia (e.g., Tuyen, 2025; Wibowo *et al.*, 2023; Hakim *et al.*, 2024), Eastern Europe (Minciu *et al.*, 2024; Dima *et al.*, 2021), Africa (Ongalo & Tari, 2025; Thokozani & Maseko, 2023), and North America (Ramlall, 2024; Rimita, 2024). This diversity allows for contextual comparison between the approaches of developing and developed countries in managing employee motivation amid global challenges. From a methodological standpoint, quantitative approaches dominate, with 11 articles utilizing surveys or PLS-SEM to test variable relationships, as exemplified by the works of Hakim *et al.* (2024), Ongalo & Tari (2025), and Minciu *et al.* (2025). Meanwhile, 12 studies employed qualitative methods, including case studies, narratives, or literature reviews (e.g., Zhao & Brichko, 2023; Shet, 2024; Mahel, 2021). Two other articles were conceptual or theoretical reviews, such as those by Ramlall (2024) and Ochola (2018). This methodological diversity enhances triangulated validity and supports a multi-perspective interpretation of findings.

In terms of topic distribution, the articles fall within two primary spectrums. The first explores motivation in relation to VUCA dynamics, including job uncertainty, transformational leadership, organizational learning, and adaptive culture (e.g., Chernobay & Shiron, 2023; Pangaribuan *et al.*, 2020; Rimita, 2024). The second examines motivation as a strategic tool for improving organizational performance and employee retention (e.g., Dobre, 2023; Manzoor, 2022; Achim *et al.*, 2023). Several studies even demonstrate that recognition- and empowerment-based motivational strategies significantly enhance organizational effectiveness (Boswell *et al.*, 2022; Varma, 2023). Regarding Scopus journal quartiles, all reviewed articles were published in journals indexed from Q1 to Q4. Most of the studies were sourced from reputable Q2 and Q3 journals, such as *Personnel Review*, *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, and *Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Oeconomica* (Minciu *et al.*, 2025; Achim *et al.*, 2023; Shet, 2024). Other studies were published in respected regional journals in the fields of management and organization (e.g., *IJEBAR* by Wibowo *et al.*, 2023; *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review* by Thokozani & Maseko, 2023), which nonetheless meet rigorous academic standards in line with Scopus selection criteria.

## DISCUSSION

### Theme 1: Factors Influencing Employee Motivation in the VUCA Era

In an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world of work—collectively described as the VUCA era—employees are expected not only to survive but also to continuously grow. Within this context, work motivation can no longer be adequately explained solely through classical reward-and-punishment paradigms. Instead, it must be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction between individual psychological dynamics and adaptive organizational structures. Based on a mapping of sixteen scholarly articles specifically focused on the relationship between employee motivation and the VUCA context, five main thematic clusters consistently emerged across the studies. First, psychological conditions and individual expectations constitute the most foundational and dominant drivers of work motivation. In uncertain environments, factors such as perceived meaning, security, and hope increasingly outweigh financial incentives. Chernobay and Shiron (2023)

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observed a shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation—such as self-achievement and personal fulfillment—as a response to escalating external uncertainty. This finding is supported by Minciu *et al.* (2024), who reported that work pressure in unstable environments can diminish motivation unless accompanied by an empathetic and effective organizational support system. Second, leadership plays a critical role in stimulating and stabilizing employee motivation. Studies by Wibowo *et al.* (2023), Rimita (2024), Mahel (2021), and Tuyen (2025) highlight the importance of agile and transformational leadership styles. Leaders who are mentally and strategically equipped to manage change foster psychological safety and trust—two elements that significantly enhance employee commitment and motivation. Shet (2024) further emphasizes that developing leadership competencies to navigate VUCA complexity is a long-term investment that drives sustained employee engagement.

Third, organizational culture emerges as an institutional determinant that frames motivation within a collective context. Research by Zhao and Brichko (2023) and Boikanyo (2024) reveals that misalignment between cultural values and employee behavior can generate latent conflict and erode motivation. Conversely, an inclusive culture that welcomes feedback and embraces diverse perspectives serves as a motivational amplifier, especially in organizations undergoing restructuring due to VUCA pressures. Fourth, organizational learning and the development of adaptive competencies are proven mechanisms for sustaining long-term motivation. Pangaribuan *et al.* (2020) emphasize that motivation functions as a significant mediator in the knowledge transfer process. Likewise, studies by Shet (2024) and Hakim *et al.* (2024) show that organizations that provide continuous learning opportunities and space for competency exploration enhance employees' sense of purpose amid uncertainty. Dima *et al.* (2021) further note that adaptive training is a critical determinant of performance-based motivation in dynamic work environments.

Fifth, the literature also highlights the importance of integrating motivational theories into organizational strategy design. Majumder *et al.* (2024), drawing on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, argue that motivator factors—such as recognition, responsibility, and self-actualization—are more relevant than hygiene factors in times of uncertainty. Coaching is also presented as an alternative approach to strengthening intrinsic motivation. Minciu *et al.* (2025) report that coaching not only enhances emotional preparedness but also strengthens employees' reflective capacity in facing change. A study by Dhillon and Nguyen (2021) offers an additional perspective by demonstrating that adaptive coping strategies employed by organizations have a direct impact on enhancing employee motivation and engagement. When strategies are consciously designed to respond to VUCA threats, organizations can foster a work environment that not only tolerates change but also nurtures intrinsic commitment. These sixteen articles consistently affirm that employee motivation in the VUCA era is shaped by an interplay of psychological readiness, visionary leadership, adaptive organizational culture, continuous learning, and institutional strategies rooted in motivational values. This indicates a need for conceptual renewal in human resource management—one that prioritizes the design of flexible, relational, and participatory work systems over administrative or material compensation policies alone.

## Theme 2: Organizational Strategies to Enhance Motivation in the VUCA Context

The radical transformation of the work environment in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era has compelled organizations not only to adapt to uncertainty but also to formulate managerial strategies capable of sustaining employee motivation over time. In this context, motivation is no longer viewed merely as a byproduct of reward systems but as a vital indicator of the effectiveness of organizational strategies in managing change, performance, and employee retention. Based on a systematic review of ten articles focusing on the relationship between organizational strategies and employee motivation, four primary strategic categories were identified. First, empowerment- and recognition-based strategies have been shown to significantly improve employee motivation and performance. Dobre (2023) found that when organizations provide space for self-actualization and acknowledge individual contributions, organizational performance tends to increase substantially. Similarly, Ongalo and Tari (2025), through a quantitative approach, demonstrated that motivation strategies based on empowerment and trust positively influence employee loyalty and productivity. Ramlall (2024) adds that motivational theories can serve as a foundational framework for crafting more targeted and impactful retention policies. Second, in terms of organizational systems and structures, the literature points to the central role of incentive systems and internal communication in sustaining motivation during organizational change. Boswell *et al.* (2022) showed that organizations with incentive systems aligned with individual values and goals generate more consistent work engagement. Emphasis is also placed on the importance of open communication structures, which can reduce anxiety in VUCA environments and foster a stronger sense of involvement. Manzoor (2022) supports these findings by asserting that organizational effectiveness depends heavily on the extent to which HR strategies

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are aligned with the psychological needs of employees. Third, the reinforcement of organizational culture is positioned as the most stable long-term strategy for supporting motivation, particularly in transitioning organizations. Thokozani and Maseko (2023) found that organizations with strong cultures and values aligned with employee behavior can cultivate collective motivation and long-term commitment. Panait (2020) adds that strategies based on non-financial motivation—such as emotional attachment and moral recognition—have more enduring effects on loyalty than material incentives alone. Varma (2023) further affirms that psychological satisfaction is a critical component in designing strategies that integrate motivation and organizational performance simultaneously.

Fourth, the literature underscores the importance of integrating motivational theory into the formulation of human-centered organizational strategies. Achim *et al.* (2023) argue that employee motivation is a prerequisite for sustainable organizational performance. When organizational strategies extend beyond goals and procedures to encompass the affective dimensions of the workforce, a competitive advantage is created—one that is difficult for competitors to replicate. Ochola (2018) even asserts that motivation is not merely a supplementary tool but the very foundation of any strategic framework for organizations aiming to thrive in a complex and competitive ecosystem. These ten articles affirm that effective organizational strategies in the VUCA era are those that integrate elements of empowerment, flexible structures, strong culture, and applicable motivational theories. Such strategies are not only relevant for current performance stability but also crucial in building organizational resilience against future disruptions. Therefore, organizations must move away from ad-hoc or technocratic motivational approaches and begin designing motivation strategies as an integral component of governance and comprehensive organizational transformation.

Synthesis of the literature from 25 reviewed articles reveals the complex dynamics involved in understanding employee motivation amid the challenges of the VUCA era. In this context, critical and comparative discussion is crucial to explore the strengths, limitations, consistency, and variation in the approaches adopted across these studies. This section addresses three key aspects. First, from a methodological and theoretical standpoint, a clear differentiation emerges between studies adopting an individual-psychological lens and those grounded in a strategic-organizational perspective. Most studies focusing on psychological dimensions—such as those by Chernobay and Shiron (2023), Pangaribuan *et al.* (2020), and Shet (2024)—utilize qualitative methods or descriptive surveys that examine individual perceptions of work pressure, self-actualization, and adaptive needs in rapidly changing work environments. These approaches often concentrate on variables such as job expectations, psychological needs, and personal learning.

In contrast, studies taking a strategic organizational approach—such as those by Dobre (2023), Ongalo and Tari (2025), and Boswell *et al.* (2022)—emphasize institutional structures like incentive systems, organizational culture, and retention policies as levers for motivation. This contrast reflects a fragmented literature: one that views motivation as an intrapersonal phenomenon, and another that frames it as a product of organizational design. Nevertheless, an important convergence emerges: both micro and macro perspectives implicitly point to the importance of a human-centered strategy as the connecting thread between personal motivation and organizational effectiveness (Majumder *et al.*, 2024; Achim *et al.*, 2023).

Second, in terms of limitations in the literature, several research gaps demand further investigation. One key gap is the lack of integration between classical motivation theories and contemporary managerial models for understanding the complexity of the VUCA era. For instance, while Majumder *et al.* (2024) adapt Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, very few studies explore how this theory might be modified in hybrid work environments, digital ecosystems, or structurally disrupted contexts. Additionally, there is limited research adopting design thinking or systems thinking in developing organizational strategies that align with motivation in VUCA conditions. Another major limitation lies in geographical and sectoral bias. Much of the existing research is concentrated in the public and education sectors and in developing countries such as Indonesia (Wibowo *et al.*, 2023), South Africa (Boikanyo, 2024), and Romania (Minciu *et al.*, 2024).

Consequently, there is a lack of cross-sectoral comparisons, particularly in high-impact industries such as technology, finance, or logistics, which are central to the global digital transformation. Moreover, longitudinal designs—which are essential for capturing the dynamic evolution of motivation over time—remain largely absent from the current literature. Third, regarding convergence and divergence in findings, there is broad agreement across studies that employee motivation in the VUCA era is shaped by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Most studies concur that strategies such as coaching, empowerment, and organizational learning have significant effects on employee motivation (Minciu *et al.*, 2025; Shet, 2024; Hakim *et al.*, 2024). These findings consistently indicate that organizations fostering inclusive, trust-based work cultures are more likely to sustain

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employee engagement. Divergences arise in how motivation is positioned within organizational strategy. For example, Ochola (2018) and Manzoor (2022) argue that motivation should be a central strategic pillar in performance planning, whereas Varma (2023) and Ramlall (2024) view motivation more as a supporting component within broader strategies for retention and job satisfaction. This divergence suggests the need for clearer mapping of where and how motivational strategies are integrated into an organization's strategic roadmap—not merely at the level of normative rhetoric, but as actionable managerial levers. The results of this systematic literature review offer significant contributions not only to the development of motivation theory in contemporary contexts but also to strategic management practices for navigating organizational challenges in the VUCA era. The synthesis of 25 selected articles broadens the conceptual horizon by framing employee motivation as a dynamic, context-sensitive phenomenon, shaped by the overall strategic architecture of the organization.

Theoretically, this study enriches the academic discourse by demonstrating that classical theories of motivation—such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and Expectancy Theory—remain relevant, yet must be recontextualized within the complexities of VUCA. For instance, Majumder *et al.* (2024) show that motivator factors (such as recognition and achievement) have a more substantial impact than hygiene factors in unstable work environments. This finding suggests the need for a shift from compliance-based strategies toward approaches that foster intrinsic engagement and personal fulfillment. Thus, the main theoretical contribution of this study is to advocate for a reframing of established motivation theories to better align with the realities of disruptive and adaptive organizational ecosystems. Moreover, the integration of literature in this review generates a conceptual framework that reinforces the role of motivation as both a mediating and moderating variable in the relationship between leadership, organizational culture, and continuous learning, with individual and collective performance outcomes. Studies by Hakim *et al.* (2024) and Pangaribuan *et al.* (2020) suggest that motivation is not only a result of organizational strategy but also a transformative mechanism bridging strategy with performance outcomes. This insight lays the groundwork for developing multi-level theoretical frameworks that explain the dual role of motivation in VUCA organizational dynamics. In addition, Shet (2024) emphasizes the importance of developing VUCA-ready competency frameworks, rooted in agile mindsets and motivation as an internal force for navigating uncertainty.

Practically, this review yields important implications for organizational leaders, HR managers, and policy designers across both public and private sectors. First, organizations must redesign their HR strategies to prioritize not only productivity and efficiency but also psychological stability and employee empowerment. Findings by Dobre (2023) and Ongalo & Tari (2025) confirm that strategies centered on empowerment, recognition, and continuous learning are more effective in fostering loyalty and sustainable performance under the pressure of change. Second, organizations should develop strategic HR policies that are adaptive to digital disruption and work transformation. This includes implementing coaching practices, agile leadership, and strengthening organizational cultures that support participatory decision-making and decentralized authority (Minciu *et al.*, 2025; Wibowo *et al.*, 2023). Such strategies not only boost motivation but also enhance organizational resilience in the face of global crises and uncertainty. Third, it is critical for managers to understand that motivation is not a homogeneous construct. Effective motivation strategies must account for generational, cultural, and individual value differences. Studies by Panait (2020) and Varma (2023) underscore the effectiveness of non-financial motivational strategies—such as social recognition and meaningful job design—in maintaining employee engagement, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z. Fourth, the findings of this study also provide a strategic foundation for the education and training sector to develop leadership and HR management curricula that are more responsive to the VUCA environment. Such curricula should include modules on resilience-based leadership, organizational agility, and strategic motivation planning.

## CONCLUSION

Thematic analysis of the literature reveals two principal findings. First, the factors influencing employee motivation in the VUCA era suggest that motivation can no longer be understood solely through the lens of material needs or economic incentives. Instead, motivation in this era is predominantly shaped by psychological and organizational dimensions, including: (1) job expectations and self-actualization; (2) agile and transformational leadership styles; (3) inclusive organizational cultures that are responsive to change; (4) organizational learning practices and the development of adaptive competencies; and (5) coaching-based interventions and intrinsic motivation theories such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Work motivation is no longer a static or purely individual phenomenon but rather the outcome of a dynamic interaction between organizational systems and employees' psychological readiness to navigate uncertainty. Second,

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organizational strategies aimed at enhancing employee motivation in the VUCA context demonstrate that organizations which succeed in maintaining employee performance are those that implement strategic approaches grounded in empowerment, recognition, and flexible work systems. These strategies include: (1) designing adaptive organizational structures with fair and transparent incentive systems; (2) strengthening values-based work cultures aligned with a shared vision; (3) adopting motivational theories into retention and human capital development policies; and (4) integrating coaching strategies, continuous training, and autonomy in work design as tools to foster emotional engagement. Collectively, these strategies highlight that human-centric and learning-driven approaches are more effective in addressing organizational complexity than rigid, bureaucratic structures.

## LIMITATION AND IMPLICATION

This study is subject to several limitations, including geographical and sectoral bias, the predominance of qualitative approaches, and the limited integration of classical motivational theories with contemporary frameworks. In light of these limitations, future research is encouraged to (1) further explore the relationship between motivation and organizational effectiveness in industries significantly affected by digital disruption, such as fintech, edtech, and automated manufacturing; (2) develop longitudinal quantitative research designs to capture motivation dynamics over extended periods and to identify patterns of change across different phases of organizational crises; (3) construct integrative conceptual frameworks that unify psychological, systemic, and structural approaches to understanding motivation within complex organizational settings; and (4) investigate the role of technology—such as the use of AI, digital platforms, and remote leadership—in mediating the relationship between organizational strategies and employee motivation.

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# EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION IN THE VUCA ERA (VOLATILITY, UNCERTAINTY, COMPLEXITY, AMBIGUITY): A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF DETERMINING FACTORS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

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