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EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF VIETNAMESE WORKERS IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

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Abstract

In the process of international economic integration, the issue of labor and employment plays an important, urgent, and long-term role in the sustainable development of the economy. Along with the process of national renovation, many solutions to solve labor and employment problems have been given attention by all levels and sectors to create momentum to promote economic development and political and social stability. However, limited labor quality is increasingly causing great pressure on the issue of employment creation for workers. The paper assesses the current situation of employment of workers, thereby proposing some solutions to contribute to improving the quality and effectiveness of employment of Vietnamese workers in the current context.

Keywords: Solutions, employment, workers, labor market, Vietnam...

1. Introduction

Over the years, the Party and State have always paid attention to leadership, direction, and orientation, creating many positive changes in ensuring sustainable employment, improving working conditions, and raising the living standards of workers. The Resolution of the 13th National Party Congress clearly defines the below contents in the section on National Development Orientation for the period 2021 – 2030: Caring for all people, ensuring labor, employment and income policies, implementing social welfare and social security well. Continuously improving the material and spiritual life of the people [1]. On that basis, Directive No. 16/CT-TTg dated June 14, 2021 of the Prime Minister on ensuring

sustainable employment, improving living standards, and improving working conditions for workers in all levels, sectors, and localities to focus on this work. Domestically, the advantages and disadvantages are also evident for an open economy that is increasingly participating in the global production and supply chain. Stable macro economy. The labor market shows signs of improvement. Average income of workers increased. Policies such as tax reduction and debt extension have helped businesses overcome difficulties and ensure the maintenance and promotion of production and business. However, the issue of employment, income, as well as ensuring the legitimate and legal rights and

benefits for laborers, ensuring that their benefits are proportional to their contributions to the economy, is always a topical issue.

2. Content

2.1. *Employment issues and employment security for workers*

2.1.1. *The labor market shows signs of prosperity but is not stable.*

According to the General Statistics Office, in the first 4 months of 2024, the whole country had 51.6 thousand newly registered enterprises, with a total registered capital of nearly 508 trillion VND, an increase of 3.4% in the number of enterprises and an increase of 9.3% in registered capital over the same period last year, especially the amount of foreign investment capital increased by 4.5% over the same period last year. The industrial production index in April 2024 is estimated to increase by 0.8% over the previous month and by 6.3% over the same period last year. The commodity market also becomes more vibrant due to increased demand for shopping, entertainment and recreation during the holidays. That has contributed to promoting domestic industrial production. Many businesses have orders until the end of the first quarter of 2024 [2].

Production lines are gradually coming into operation, which means that recruitment needs are gradually recovering. Industries with increased employment demand include food processing and production (up 1.8%); electrical equipment production (up 1.6%); and leather and related products production (up 1.6%). These are labor-intensive industries that declined in the 2020-2023 period. The above signals show that although the Vietnamese economy has still faced many difficulties and challenges, it has overcome them and been on the path to recovery, returning to the growth rate as before the Covid-19 pandemic. This is the basis for improving the employment, income and life of workers. In the first 4 months of 2024, the whole country had 353.8 thousand newly registered workers, an increase of 6.8% in the number of workers compared to the same period last year. The number of employed workers in this quarter also reached 51.3 million people, an increase of 174 thousand people (equivalent to 0.34%) compared to the first quarter of 2023 but a decrease of 127 thousand people (equivalent to 0.25%) compared to the fourth quarter of 2023. According to general assessment, the number of employed workers in the first quarter of this year has returned to normal growth trend.

A number of people and the unemployment rate have fallen to pre-pandemic levels. Specifically, the number of unemployed people of working-age in the first quarter of 2024 was about 1.05 million people, a decrease of 10.3 thousand people compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 5.4 thousand people compared to the same period last year. The unemployment rate among working-age people in the first quarter of 2024 was 2.24%, down 0.02% from the previous quarter and down 0.01% from the same period last year. This has been the lowest unemployment rate since the beginning of 2023 and has also been equivalent to the level observed in the Vietnamese labor market before the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.1.2. *Workers with informal employment account for a large proportion.*

Although the number of employed workers has returned to normal growth trends as before the Covid-19 pandemic, the rate of informal employment in the first quarter of 2024 was 64.8%, an increase of 0.2 percentage points over the same period last year. By

region, the informal labor rate in urban areas was 49.3%, up 0.1 percentage points compared to the fourth quarter of 2023 and up 0.3 percentage points compared to the same period last year; the informal labor rate in rural areas was 74.4%, unchanged from the previous quarter and up 0.6 percentage points compared to the same period last year. The number of informally employed workers doing unstable jobs still accounts for a large proportion, with more than three-fifths of the total number of employed workers in the country. The number of informally employed workers in the first quarter of 2024 reached 33.3 million people, an increase of 240.1 thousand workers over the same period last year. The main reason is the increase in the number of informal workers in the service sector. In fact, the pressure to cut labor from businesses during and after Covid-19 created a strong shift of labor from the industrial and construction sectors to the service sector, causing informal labor in the service sector to increase sharply [3].

The fact that informal workers still accounts for a large portion of the total workforce raises an urgent need for formalization and ensuring workers' rights in this sector.

2.1.3. *There are still many seasonal workers*

During the Lunar New Year holiday or other major holidays of the year, many businesses and production establishments often recruit additional temporary seasonal workers or work overtime to meet business needs before Tet. However, after the holiday ends, the number of working hours and workers usually decrease. As a result, the unemployment in the first quarter is often higher than in the previous quarter. The number of unemployed people of working age in the first quarter of 2024 was about 933,000 people, an increase of 26.4 thousand people compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 47.2 thousand people compared to the same period last year. The unemployment rate among working-age people in the first quarter of 2024 was 2.03%, up 0.05 percentage points over the previous quarter and up 0.09 percentage points over the same period last year, of which the urban area was 1.20%, lower than the rural area (2.58%).

2.1.4. *There are still a large amount of youth unemployment.*

The unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 in the first quarter of 2024 was 7.99%, up 0.37 percentage points over the previous quarter and up 0.38 percentage points over the same period last year. The unemployment rate of young people in urban areas was 10.18%, up 0.72 percentage points over the same period last year; it was 6.87% in rural areas, up 0.22 percentage points.

2.1.5. *Vocational training for workers in rural areas is still limited.*

In the first quarter of 2024, the rate of trained workers with degrees and certificates reached 27.8%. This rate is higher than the previous quarter and the same period last year by 0.2% and 1.4%, respectively. This reflects the efforts of the state and relevant organizations in improving the quality of human resources and promoting vocational training to meet the needs of an increasingly demanding labor market. However, in the first quarter of this year, Vietnam still had to face the reality that about 1.4 million young people aged 15 to 24 were unemployed and not participated in education or training. Most of them are young people in rural areas and tend to increase in this area. The main reason for this situation is the lack of facilities and resources for vocational training in rural areas. Many rural youth do not have enough economic conditions to access advanced or even basic training courses. That makes it

impossible for them to improve their professional skills to meet the requirements of increasingly high-level jobs.

2.2. Assessing the employment situation and ensuring employment for workers

2.2.1. Positive points in employment and employment security for workers

The labor force aged 15 and over in the second quarter of 2024 was 52.5 million people, an increase of 148.6 thousand people compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 217.3 thousand people compared to the same period last year. In the first 6 months of 2024, the labor force aged 15 and over reached nearly 52.5 million people, an increase of 196.6 thousand people over the same period last year [4].

The labor force rate in the second quarter of 2024 was 68.6%, an increase of 0.1 percentage points from the previous quarter.

The number of employed workers in the second quarter of 2024 reached more than 51.4 million people, an increase of 126.6 thousand people, equivalent to an increase of 0.25% over the previous quarter and an increase of 217.4 thousand people, equivalent to an increase of 0.42% over the same period last year. Vietnam has still been in the golden population structure period with an abundant and annually increasing working-age population. This is an advantage for supplementing the labor force, including employed workers.

In the first 6 months of 2024, the number of employed workers reached 51.4 million people, an increase of 195.7 thousand people (equivalent to an increase of 0.38%) compared to the first 6 months of 2023.

The rate of Vietnamese workers with degrees and certificates in the second quarter of 2024 reached 28.1%, an increase of 0.3 percentage points compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 1.3 percentage points compared to the same period last year. Our country, like many other countries, is undergoing rapid economic development and industrialization, and the demand for highly qualified and skilled human resources is increasing. Therefore, awareness of the need to maintain and develop skills through continuous learning is emphasized by businesses and employees. Vietnam has focused on improving the quality of education and expanding educational infrastructure to provide learning opportunities for more workers. This facilitates workers to continue learning and improving their qualifications after entering the workforce.

The average monthly income of workers in the second quarter of 2024 was 7.5 million VND, an increase of 490 thousand VND over the same period last year. Compared to the same period last year, the average monthly income growth rate of workers in the second quarter of 2024 (reaching 7%) was 1.3 times higher than the average income growth rate in the second quarter of 2023 (reaching 5.4%).

In the second quarter of 2024, the average monthly income of workers increased in most economic sectors compared to the same period last year. Some industries recorded a fairly high average income growth rate such as: Water supply, waste management and treatment activities were 9.1 million VND, up 17.4%, equivalent to an increase of 1.3 million VND; electricity, gas, hot water and steam production and distribution were 11.2 million VND, up 15.2%, equivalent to an increase of 1.5 million VND; mining was 11.3 million VND, up 12.5%, equivalent to an increase of 1.3

million VND; finance, banking and insurance activities were 12.4 million VND, up 10.6%, equivalent to an increase of 1.2 million VND; real estate business activities were 11.2 million VND, up 6.9%, equivalent to an increase of 721 thousand VND.

In the first 6 months of 2024, the average monthly income of workers was 7.5 million VND, up 7.4%, equivalent to an increase of 519 thousand VND compared to the same period in 2023. Workers in some economic sectors had average income growth rates which was better than the same period last year: The steam, hot water, gas, electricity distribution and production industry was 11.2 million VND, up 13.9%, equivalent to an increase of 1.4 million VND; the water supply, waste management and treatment industry was 9.0 million VND, up 12.3%, equivalent to an increase of 981 thousand VND; the finance, banking and insurance industry was 12.7 million VND, up 11.7%, equivalent to an increase of 1.3 million VND; the real estate business industry was 11.7 million VND, up 11.1%, equivalent to an increase of 1.2 million VND; the mining industry was 11.0 million VND, up 8.5%, equivalent to an increase of 866 thousand VND.

2.2.2. Limitations in employment and employment security for workers

The quality of labor supply are still shortcomings and limitations, not meeting the labor's demand of a modern, flexible, sustainable and integrated labor market (about more than 70% of workers have not received primary training or higher), reflecting a major challenge that the Vietnamese labor market is facing. This not only shows the need to improve the quality of human resources but also the urgency to expand training opportunities and professional qualifications to meet the increasing demands of the modern economy.

The labor market has not seen much improvement in labor quality as the number of informal workers doing precarious and unstable jobs still accounts for a large proportion, about more than three-fifths of the total number of employed workers in the country. The total number of informally employed workers (including workers in agricultural, forestry and fishery households) in the second quarter of 2024 was 33.5 million people, accounting for 65.2% of the total number of employed workers and an increase of 271.7 thousand people compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 210.3 thousand people compared to the same period last year. In the first 6 months of 2024, the number of informal workers was 33.4 million people, the rate of informal workers was 65%, an increase of 0.2 percentage points over the same period in 2023. Although the socio-economic situation has improved and the number of employed workers has increased compared to the same period last year, the rate of informal employment has still been quite high. This shows that the labor market has gradually recovered but has not sustainable yet.

The difficult business situation, with an average of 18,400 businesses withdrawing from the market in the first 6 months of the year, is the main reason for the increase in the unemployment rate this quarter. The number of unemployed people of working age in the second quarter of 2024 was about 1.08 million people, an increase of 24.2 thousand people compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 4.2 thousand people compared to the same period last year. The working-age unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2024 was 2.29%, up 0.05 percentage points from the previous quarter and down 0.01 percentage points from the same period last year. In the first 6 months of 2024, the whole country had about 1.06 million unemployed people of working age,

an increase of 4.8 thousand people over the same period last year. The unemployment rate among working-age people in the first 6 months of 2024 was 2.27%, unchanged from the same period last year.

The underemployment rate among the age group in the second quarter of 2024 increased compared to the previous quarter and remained unchanged compared to the same period last year. In the second quarter of 2024, production and business activities of many industries and fields have improved but have still been facing difficulties. Enterprises are facing low and unstable domestic and international market demand, input material prices are higher than output goods prices, difficulties in accessing capital, etc., which have affected the unemployment situation of workers. Specifically, the number of unemployed people of working age in the second quarter of 2024 was about 948,000 people, an increase of 15,000 people compared to the previous quarter and an increase of 7,300 people compared to the same period last year. The unemployment rate among working-age people this quarter was 2.06%, up 0.03 percentage points from the previous quarter and unchanged from the same period last year, of which the unemployment rate in urban areas was 1.53%, lower than that in rural areas (2.41%). In the first 6 months of 2024, unemployment tended to increase, the number of unemployed people in the age group was 940.5 thousand people, an increase of 27.3 thousand people over the same period last year. The unemployment rate of working-age laborers in the first 6 months of 2024 was 2.05%, an increase of 0.05 percentage points over the same period last year. The unemployment rate in urban areas is lower than that in rural areas (1.37% and 2.49% respectively).

Compared to the previous quarter and the same period last year, the unemployment rate of young people (aged 15-24) increased. In the second quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 remained high at 8.01%, up 0.02 percentage points from the previous quarter and up 0.6 percentage points from the same period last year. The unemployment rate of young people in urban areas is 10.19%, 3.33 percentage points higher than that in rural areas. Compared to the previous quarter, this rate increased in urban areas (up 0.01 percentage points) and decreased in rural areas (down 0.01 percentage points). Compared to the unemployment rate of working age, the unemployment rate of youth is always high and more than 3 times higher because this is a young force, with a higher demand for jobs and forced to look for jobs. Besides, young people are often equipped with good knowledge and high qualifications, so they have more opportunities to choose the job they want rather than doing temporary, low-income jobs. The unemployment rate of young people in urban areas is 10.19%; it is 6.86% in rural areas. The youth unemployment rate (aged 15-24) in the first 6 months of 2024 was 8%, an increase of 0.49 percentage points over the same period last year. Of which, the unemployment rate of young people in urban areas was 10.18%, an increase of 0.65 percentage points; it was 6.87% in rural areas, an increase of 0.4 percentage points.

2.3. Solutions to improve the effectiveness of employment of Vietnamese workers in the current context

The period 2021 - 2030 is a new breakthrough development period for Vietnam, especially in the context of the 4.0 Industrial Revolution taking place at a rapid pace, developing the digital economy, and increasingly deeper international integration. This context also poses requirements for innovation and improvement of human resource quality. Accordingly, people need to develop

synchronously in “mind - intelligence - skills - physical strength - happy life”, master a number of new technologies, create a foundation so that science - technology truly become a key driving force, create a breakthrough in labor productivity, transform the growth model to in-depth development, thereby ensuring the country's rapid and sustainable development in the new period.

First, completing the legal framework, reviewing and amending the legal regulations, meeting the needs of developing the labor market in the right direction, focusing on key areas, including: Enhancing the publicity and transparency of market participants. Continuing to internalize and specify labor standards in accordance with Vietnam's conditions and international standards (International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, new generation free trade agreements) that Vietnam has committed to and ratified. Promoting international cooperation, strengthen linkages between domestic and foreign labor markets. Researching, proposing to issue and amending policies to limit unemployment and improve labor quality, including: (i) supplement and perfect proactive policies to prevent unemployment; (ii) policies to support vocational training through vocational training cards for workers; (iii) regulate professional standards and conditions to ensure effective implementation of vocational training activities at enterprises. Planning and investing in the development of a modern system of local employment service centers to meet the requirements of flexible and effective labor market development, acting as a focal point for labor market information, coordinating, supporting and managing the labor market in the area. Arranging and reorganizing the network of vocational training institutions; building and proposing the regional linkage models in training and human resource supply; building regional centers and national centers for high-quality vocational training and practice in key economic regions to increase the effectiveness of human resource supply and training; promoting the digital transformation in human resource supply, training, administration, labor market operation and remove difficulties to create conditions for workers to access information about the labor market, participate in vocational training and job transaction activities, and for employers to easily access labor supply...[5].

Second, focusing on accelerating the development of a system of indicators to assess the development of the labor market, employment and income; perfecting the labor market information system as a basis for connecting labor supply and demand to ensure labor supply in accordance with the needs of enterprises, promptly providing information on the labor market to support, advise and introduce jobs to workers as required, and at the same time help orient the training of highly skilled human resources based on the actual needs of the labor market. Supporting the development of labor market information systems, connecting labor supply and demand. Accordingly, perfecting the labor market information system as a basis for connecting labor supply and demand. Besides, building and deploying solutions to digitize and update data information on workers; storing and managing data centrally at provincial, regional and central levels; having connections and share with population databases, business registration, and social insurance. Upgrading infrastructure and equipment to collect, store data, analyze and forecast labor supply and demand to serve the requirements of management, analysis, sharing and publication of information on the labor market. Designing career orientation programs with diverse subjects, content and forms, flexible locations and train staff to participate in organizing career orientation for students. Reviewing and

evaluating the existing facilities of the employment service center to determine investment needs to ensure the organization of professional, modern and effective connection between labor supply and demand.

Third, restoring and stabilizing the labor market. Closely following reality, proactively and flexibly managing human resources, closely coordinating labor market development policies with other markets to maintain macroeconomic stability, ensuring major balances of the economy, including labor supply and demand. Urgently reviewing and evaluating human resource needs in each industry, field, and region to promptly connect and supply labor. Especially, assessing the human resource needs of foreign investors who have projects and are researching investment in Vietnam. Reviewing, evaluating, reorganizing, and investing in improving the capacity of the vocational training and education system, especially training high-quality human resources; and vocational skills assessment organizations. Developing high-quality training facilities; investing in upgrading 03 schools and add high-quality center functions to form 03 national centers for high-quality training and practice in Hanoi, Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City and regional training and practice centers that play a core and leading role in organizing training of high-quality human resources, new professions, future skills, organizing training and replicating the training programs transferred from developed countries...

Fourth, promoting sustainable employment creation and efficient use of the workforce. Increasing investment and developing economic sectors to create many sustainable employment; innovating the economic growth model associated with sustainable development towards improving quality, creating many new employments with high productivity and quality. Increasing investment in resources for programs and projects to create more sustainable employment, especially high-productivity employment; researching and proposing policies to support the recruitment and use of specific labor groups, disadvantaged laborers, laborers from poor households, near-poor households, newly escaped-poverty households, laborers living in poor districts, especially disadvantaged communes in coastal and island areas to participate in the labor market and have sustainable employment. Timely removing difficulties and obstacles to increase the effectiveness of vocational training, create employment for young people completing military service, police service, and young volunteers completing their tasks...

Fifth, focusing on implementing solutions to streamline and improve the quality of human resources to meet the requirements of the labor market. Urgently deploying conditions to ensure effective streaming and connectivity in the national education system to promote a learning society and lifelong learning in the community. Synchronously investing in facilities, equipment and conditions to ensure quality for high-quality vocational education institutions, reaching the level of ASEAN-4 and G20 countries. Piloting and deploying a number of new training models, especially training in industries and occupations that meet the requirements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution; overcoming difficulties and obstacles, completing the training pilot; promoting the replication of effective transfer programs from developed countries; effectively deploying the training models at enterprises. Continuing to invest in training to improve workers' skills to improve the quality of human resources... Investing in developing a system connecting labor supply and demand, labor supply and

demand forecasting, and a labor market information system with the key task of building a modern, synchronous national labor database that is connected and shared with the national database on population, business registration, and social insurance.

Sixth, it is necessary to pay attention to the movement of labor and employment according to geography and locality, ensuring a reasonable distribution of labor and employment nationwide; having a mechanism to encourage and support labor movement, support weak areas; promoting the linkage of labor markets among regions in the country, forming a mechanism to automatically connect supply and demand between domestic and foreign markets. Creating employment in rural and mountainous areas so that people can work in their hometown with a stable income, so that workers do not have to leave their hometown. Implementing the housing support policies for workers and laborers in industrial parks and large cities. In this regard, the Government held a Conference on social housing with the goal of building at least 1 million social housing units for workers and low-income people by 2030.

Seventh, comprehensively innovating the vocational training and education system in an open, flexible and effective direction to improve the quality of education and training, to improve the quality of human resources, take advantage of the golden population opportunity, serve the economic restructuring process, and meet the industrialization and modernization of the country in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Promote the mobilization of resources for investment in human resource development. Focus on training foreign language skills, discipline, order... to integrate with the world labor market.

Eighth, raising awareness of the labor market, complying with the laws of the socialist-oriented market economy, considering labor as a special commodity to have appropriate mechanisms and policies. Continuing to perfect institutions, synchronize and unify legal policies so that the labor market develops in a flexible, modern, complete, sustainable, effective, and internationally integrated direction, in order to completely liberate productivity, focus on developing the skilled labor, and promote sustainable and high-income job creation. Continuing to internalize and specify labor standards in accordance with Vietnam's conditions and international standards (International Labor Organization conventions, new generation free trade agreements) that Vietnam has committed to and ratified. Promoting international cooperation, strengthen connection between domestic and foreign labor markets. Developing the labor market information system, employment service center system, employment service enterprises, vocational education system and social security net.

3. Conclusion

After more than 35 years of national innovation, the Vietnamese labor market has developed in both scale and quality, gradually becoming modern, sustainable and internationally integrated. The system of institutions and labor market policies has been perfected; the relationship between labor supply and demand has increased; the quality of employment has been increasingly improved...Grasping thoroughly the viewpoints, goals, tasks and solutions on developing a flexible, modern, effective, sustainable and integrated labor market has been in the Party's Documents and Resolutions, and the Resolutions of the National Assembly; implementing the comprehensive and sustainable labor market development has been in a modern and effective direction that is

suitable to the characteristics of each region and locality as the basis and driving force for the country's socio-economic development; in which, implementing the breakthrough solutions on human resource development, having strong investment in people, focusing on developing high-quality human resources, attracting and employing talents, effectively utilizing the golden population structure, proactively adapting to the trend of population aging and being ready for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This context also poses requirements for innovation and improvement of human resource quality. Accordingly, people need to develop synchronously in terms of “mind - intelligence - skills - physical strength - happy life”, master a number of new technologies, create a foundation for science and technology to truly become a key driving force, create a breakthrough in labor productivity, transform the growth model to in-depth development, ensuring the country's rapid and sustainable development in the new period.

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