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# Trend of using freelancers in the post-pandemic: role of corporate governance reform and digital orientation in the moderate of digital platform

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Hiring freelancers is considered one of the effective solutions to help businesses cut unnecessary costs but still achieve good operating results; especially in Vietnam and many other countries around the world are fighting COVID-19. This study examines factors that will affect the hiring freelancer intentions. This is one of the first practical studies, conducted with 339 respondents from the perspective of business managers in Vietnam. The study not only predicts trends in the businesses' freelancer hiring from the impact of COVID-19 but also makes recommendations for businesses to exploit the freelancer's demands in developing the sharing economy. The results show that businesses are really in high demand of freelancer hiring even though this may change the management structure like corporate governance reform and employee reduction or the enterprises' operation downsizing even. Some factors such as digital platforms, corporate governance reform, and digital orientation are also interested strongly by business managers; especially, there will be a strong investment in digital platform capability. These factors have a huge impact on the business's hiring freelancer intention in the development of sharing economy.

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**Keywords:** hiring freelancer intentions, corporate governance reform, digital platform, digital orientation, hiring freelancers.

## 1 Introduction

Nowadays, freelancers are really popular in organizations/businesses Jensen et al. (2021) not only in Vietnam but also in over the world. Businesses have been becoming accustomed to freelancers hiring for projects or work to reduce costs or even to restructure management systems. Purcell (1998) recorded that most businesses more using intelligently the input recruitment method for matching suitable jobs and thereby the unnecessary costs would be highly decreased, which the hiring freelancers solution was considered the most effective (Kazi et al., 2014). The term freelancer was formed from the meaning of "boundaryless worker" at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1970s (Tams and Arthur, 2010). The study of Kitching and Smallbone (2012) in the UK has shown that freelance was a kind of interesting job and was popular in SMEs; this topic was also rarely studied by scholars. So, studies on freelancer hiring are limited; especially, Vietnam and other nations in the world are dealing with COVID-19, so freelancer hiring is a real concern for many managers. Kazi et al. (2014) said that businesses and organizations are more interested in freelancers' hiring with skillful and expert resources; this would help them achieve efficiency and cost/benefits. The changes in organizational structures, technology, and new labor characteristics will be challenges and opportunities for businesses.

The freelancer hiring's topic has also interested scholars, typically the study of Kitching and Smallbone (2012), which was conducted to confirm that freelancers have been neglected by researchers despite the increasing number of freelancers and popularity; at the same time, to clearly distinguish between freelance work and small business. For an overall view of freelancers, it is necessary to mention the work of Kazi et al. (2014) who reviewed the freelancers about the origin, types, characteristics, definitions, the difference from traditional jobs even concluded the top 10 freelance countries and the top 10 hiring freelancer countries. A study on internet freelancers by Shevchuk et al. (2018) was finished for considering the value of work, job demands-resources model, which assessed the role of the work's value orientations with the freelancers' subjective well-being. Another typical case study related to freelance marketplaces was conducted by Haq et al. (2018), the study mainly deals with the determinants of the freelance labor market which decides client satisfaction. This is a quantitative study, taken from the client's perspective who specializes in web development services.

A recent study by Kazi et al. (2014) that quoted from a report of Elance (a portal platform for hiring portallancers with the most trusted) – revealed a rapid growth of reveal freelancers' hiring. It also showed that there were over 410,000 businesses and one million freelancers who joined the Elance community. And, there was the top 10 countries of freelancers, included: the United States, India, Ukraine, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Russia, Canada, Philippines, Romania and the last one is China.

COVID-19 is strongly affected Vietnamese businesses. There was 81 percent of Viet-

namese businesses were affected (decrease in revenue) by COVID-19 in April 2020. There was about 50 percent of SMEs that must be temporarily closed or forever; there were about 30 percent of firms that must be temporarily closed in social isolation time. Adapting to "the new situation", businesses need to make efforts to come up with specific solutions, such as: reviewing some activities on reforming management models and applying a digital platform to business activities or management systems; both these activities must be seriously considered and have an appropriate, long-term strategy.

The purpose of this paper is to find out and evaluate which components/factors will affect the hiring freelancer's intentions. Especially, we seek to achieve two following aims: (1). To forecast the Vietnamese businesses' need for freelancers using in the COVID-19 pandemic. (2). To make recommendations for Vietnamese businesses to exploit the freelancer using's need for developing the sharing economy.

## **2 Literature review**

### **2.1 Freelancer**

In recent years, the number of freelancers has increased in both quantity and quality and has attracted interest from business managers and researchers (Mathisen, 2017; Haq et al., 2018). The term "freelancer" is simply understood as workers in charge of the type of work that does not have a long-term commitment and does not work full-time (Mathisen, 2017; Walters et al., 2006; Van Laan, 2012), and they sell their services to many different employers and firms. Whether they are highly specialized or technically complex, the service they usually provide is information, knowledge, or skill (Ayoobzadeh, 2022). Similarly, Baitenizov et al. (2019) also said that they are highly qualified independent experts working on projects with less cost than official employees, who independently provide/sell services. And freelancer is considered an individual self-employment activity. Thus, freelancers can be known as workers who use their advanced knowledge/skills/expertise to provide or sell their services to multiple employers/businesses through technology information and electronic communication, often in charge of short-term projects and not committed to sticking.

### **2.2 Hiring intention**

Intention reflects someone's overall motivation or commitment to performing a behavior, which is the precondition of the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Research on intention helps predict the behavior of individuals in an organizational environment. Concerning organizational behavior, decisions can be predicted through managers' intentions. According to the view of management theory (Stewardship Theory), the behavior of the business is greatly influenced by the manager's point of view, including behavioral intentions. Davis et al. (1997) argued that a manager is someone who will make decisions and actions to protect and maximize shareholder wealth through the company's operations. Management theory acknowledges the importance of structures that delegate authority to managers and provide maximum autonomy, based on trust (Donaldson and Davis,

1991). At that time, the decision-making process of the enterprise is almost identical to the personal decision-making of the manager, when the manager identifies the personal goals with the goals of the enterprise.

In this study, to forecast the future trend of enterprises using freelancers, the intention to hire freelancers of business managers is used as an indicator. Accordingly, the intention to hire a freelancer reflects their overall motivation in terms of dimension and intensity toward the issue. The decision to appoint a Freelancer to undertake a certain job task is a logical consequence of a predetermined perceived intention. This may stem from decisions regarding human resource utilization often following a planning process, allowing managers to have plenty of time to assess business needs when implementing reform and compare methods to select the best solution, regarding the use or non-use of freelancers.

The recruitment intention is a construct that reflects an individual's affective behavior as a result of perceived and affective feelings toward an object, individual, or event (Robbins et al., 2013). Hiring intention like every other intention involves the impact of three predictors: (1) attitude (positive or negative assessment of the outcome); (2) subjective norm (i.e. social pressure to perform or refrain from a behavior); (3) PBC (i.e. the ability to perform the behavior) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2011). In this study, three predictors of intention to use freelance were adjusted to fit the context and scope of the study where digital platform represents the ability to perform. Having good digital platforms can facilitate the application of methods to search, evaluate and use Freelancer (sharing economy applications). The Digital orientation factor describes an aspect of managers' attitudes towards digital issues, closely related to the usefulness of sharing economy applications in the field of human resource supply. Finally, Cooperative governance reform reflects subjective norms. The assessment of the reform of the management system is the driving force as well as the pressure for managers to adapt and find corresponding strategic and operational solutions. This search process can lead businesses to Freelancer solutions in organizational reform.

### **2.3 Digital platform**

The digital platform is a broad concept with many implications. Therefore, depending on the goal and approach, each researcher makes different judgments about this concept. From the overview of Asadullah et al. (2018), two main approaches to this concept include a technical point of view and a non-technical point of view. The technical perspective refers to the technical elements and processes that interact to form a digital platform (Asadullah et al., 2018). In contrast, the non-technical point of view focuses on presenting digital platforms as a trade/market network that allows connection and helps stakeholders transact with each other at many levels (B2B, B2C, C2C) (Asadullah et al., 2018).

According to stakeholder theory, the network of relationships with objects can influence the decision-making process of managers Freeman (1984) to create wealth for all subjects equally and without bias. Therefore, the mission of a digital platform must also be built to satisfy the above philosophies. Therefore, the study does not approach

the concept of digital platforms from a technical or non-technical perspective but focuses on the ability to connect relevant objects. We are interested in the extent and breadth of objects that an enterprise's digital platform can facilitate and enable it to link to the system. Some views are quite similar to the approach of the case study such as Tan et al. (2015): "a commercial network of suppliers, producers, intermediaries, customers... that are held together through formal contracting and/or mutual dependency"; De Lomana et al. (2019) "The digital platforms include online businesses that regulate the commercial communication between two different parties for mutual benefits"; "multisided platform... exists wherever a company brings together two or more distinct groups of customers (sides) that need each other in some way, and where the company builds an infrastructure (platform) that creates value by reducing distribution, transaction, and search costs incurred when these groups interact with one another" (Pagani, 2013). An enterprise operating in the current context cannot be separated from its relationship with stakeholders.

The solidity of technology platforms can help managers make favorable management decisions and take advantage of more external resources (Helfat and Raubitschek, 2018). With this approach, the digital platform becomes the base for firms to take advantage of the sharing economy platforms Sutherland and Jarrahi (2018), which were also developed based on digital technology. One possible consequence is that managers have more options for HR strategies and tactics, towards the intention of using Freelance.

Originating in the 1940s and spreading rapidly since the 1970s, temporary, short-term and in-demand jobs have become part of the labor market (Kalleberg, 2011). At this time, employees can accept jobs when appropriate and vice versa, companies can flexibly adjust their personnel structure when there are unexpected needs or fluctuating production needs. In recent times, technological developments have led to a more dynamic and developed segment of the freelancer labor market (Healy et al., 2017). At the same time, Asadullah et al. (2018) consider a digital platform as a network that connects stakeholders so that they can transact for the common good. According to stakeholder theory, freelancers are also one of the stakeholders of the company. Thus, it can be doubted that digital platforms help businesses better connect with freelancers when the need arises, facilitating the increase in intention to use this human resource.

With that argument, the corresponding hypothesis about this relationship is proposed as follows:

H1: The better the firm's digital platform, the higher the firm's freelancer hiring intention.

## **2.4 Cooperative governance reform (CGR)**

The term Corporate Governance is popular from business scholars to managers over the world - it appeared in the 17th century (Frentrop, 2003; Morck, 2007). Corporate Governance is mainly approached in the economic field and it was widely used by American businessmen in the 1960s (Mees, 2015). CGR is the re-establishment of the boards of directors, company management, and policies for enhancing the performances and standards of directors and senior management Mees (2015), which was prevalent in

the 1980s and supported by the stakeholder theory. The CGR was the restructuring of the management's system, structure, and main functions of the company (Eells, 1960). CGR's well-known for the re-establishment of shareholder democracy, the annual general meetings, the investors' relations, the board of directors, the management's system and even policies.

In essence, corporate governance is closely related to ownership structure Shleifer and Vishny (1997), which governs the decision and selection of executive representatives. Amihud and Lev (1981) asserted the influence of ownership on corporate strategy. Research by Bethel and Liebeskind (1993) also shows that corporate restructuring is strongly related to the structure and change of ownership.

In the context of the economy being heavily influenced and negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, many businesses were forced to restructure in all aspects (Khatib and Nour, 2021). These changes can shift the firm's strategies as stated by (Amihud and Lev, 1981). This raises doubts as to whether the restructuring of enterprises, reforming the management system will change functional-level strategies such as human resource strategies. Including taking advantage of freelancer labor as a temporary source of human resources to cut costs while ensuring efficiency (Kazi et al., 2014; Chauradia and Galande, 2015).

From the perspective of managers' perception, the reform of the management system is the driving force and pressure for managers to adapt and find strategic solutions, including the leanness of human resources by sharing economy system. This search can lead a business to a Freelancer solution that corresponds to a newly reformed system. In the view of the Stakeholder theory, managers must serve the interests of the whole related to the business, including suppliers, employees, and business partners (Freeman, 1984). Therefore, in the face of pressure to reform the organization and ensure the interests of stakeholders before the impact of the pandemic, managers can choose to maintain the human resource system or reduce the number of full-time employees, increase the use of freelancers. The study establishes hypothesis H2:

H2: The higher the CGR level, the higher the firm's freelancer hiring intention

Moreover, CGR also changes the strategic structure of the organization (Amihud and Lev, 1981). This shift will entail changes in the focus of resources and capabilities. Under the influence of the crisis caused by the pandemic, Jensen et al. (2021) argued that firms tend to downsize and optimize their systems. The use of digital platforms is known as the solution. This may cause firms to invest heavily in digital systems during this period. Many studies including Purbasari et al. (2021) and Floetgen et al. (2021) emphasized that digital platforms help businesses can endure and adapt by taking advantage of new opportunities, engaging with transformative activities to withstand exogenous shocks, thereby becoming resilient against future interruptions. Thus, we argue and believe that CGR can affect the status quo of digital platforms. A hypothesis is established:

H3: The higher the CGR level, the better the firm's digital platform.

## **2.5 Digital orientation**

Quinton et al. (2018) stated that digital orientation has not been focused on and clari-

fied by researchers like other firms' orientations (learning orientation, market orientation, business orientation...). However, when the activity orientation is established, the elements that make up the digital orientation are gradually revealed. To elevate the role of digital orientation in decision-making and how businesses choose to guide and structure business operations in a rapidly changing, complex, and uncertain marketplace (Byrne et al., 2017). In essence, digital orientation is the application of digital practices through activation, using advanced technologies (Quinton et al., 2018; De Lomana et al., 2019), and implementing digital processes in firms' activities of enterprises ((Yousaf et al., 2021). Thereby, achieving the goal of enhancing enterprise value creation and achieving competitive advantage (Mancini, 2021; Yousaf et al., 2021). In addition, Digital orientation is seen as a strategic orientation that plays a proactive role in supporting innovation (Beutel et al., 2019).

Kindermann et al. (2021) argued that digital transformation accelerates the process of closely combining strategic factors. The strategic alignment model (SAM) Henderson and Venkatraman (1999) also reaffirmed the concept of digital transformation that requires the integration of internal and external factors, as well as organizational and technological factors of strategy. This model proposed four components to fully explain the unique characteristics of digital transformation and its application. Accordingly, four characteristics of digital transformation are digital technology scope (external/ technological); digital capabilities (internal/ organizational); digital ecosystem coordination (external/ organizational); digital architecture configuration (internal/ technological) (De Lomana et al., 2019).

When the board approaches digital orientation, they tend to integrate internal, external, organizational and technological factors in strategies (Kindermann et al., 2021). Accordingly, a corporate strategy often has four characteristics of digital orientation in business operations (Kindermann et al., 2021). With digital capabilities such as data generation, connection of advanced technology equipment (Hess et al., 2020). De Lomana et al. (2019) argue that this competency is closely linked with employee skills. In the context of Vietnam, SMEs account for 98% (of which, micro-enterprises account for 66.84%), it is difficult to have human resources with skills when implementing digital orientation. Through the use of freelancer resources, enterprises can leverage their skills to make the most of their digital capabilities. Kazi et al. (2014) said that small businesses lack the resources to hire permanent employees to carry out short-term projects or need high expertise such as high-tech fields. They can outsource individual professionals (freelancers) on a temporary contract basis which gives the company a cost-benefit and can get the services of a skilled freelancer. Despite minimizing the costs while still achieving efficiency and taking full advantage of capabilities such as data generation, connecting advanced technologies in business strategy, is what every leader is aiming for (Chauradia and Galande, 2015). Therefore, it is questionable that digital orientation will increase the intention to use the freelancer workforce in business management.

H4: The higher the digital orientation level, the higher the firm's freelancer hiring intention.

De Lomana et al. (2019) emphasizes that "the digital platforms are initiated through the digital orientation". The digital platform is the technical element and interactive



process that helps connect stakeholders to transact at many levels Asadullah et al. (2018) based on common interests (Mathmann et al., 2017). With the digital architecture configuration characteristic of digital orientation, it implies structural changes and processes related to digital (Hess et al., 2020). Thus, from a technical point of view, digital orientation is considered the source of the use of digital platforms. Even digital orientation and digital platforms are geared towards relevant audiences. At the same time, Kraus et al. (2019) said that when businesses move towards a digital orientation, they are also willing to invest more in assets to develop and take full advantage of the benefits of digital platforms. Jones-Evans and Klofsten (2016) also agree with this view, affirming that the willingness to use online digital platforms allows businesses to benefit from them and create business advantages. From there, it is necessary to further evaluate the hypothesis that digital-oriented company leaders will tend to have better access to digital platforms.

H5: The higher the digital orientation level, the better the firm's digital platform.

The Resource-Based View theory provides a framework to explain the relationships between a firm's digital platform, corporate governance reform, digital orientation, and their impacts on the firm's freelancer hiring intention and the quality of its digital platform. The RBV theory suggests that a firm's unique resources and capabilities are sources of competitive advantage. This theory can support and explain the relationships between the variables.

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Sample and data collection**

To test the hypotheses and solve the research problem, we collected data of Vietnamese firms, using a survey. The suitable survey object for data collection was identified as management and firms owners.

We developed the questionnaire based on literature review, relevant case studies. The questions in the survey were selected and synthesized from studies that approach research concepts (CGR, digital orientation, digital platform, and freelancer hiring intention) similar to the approach of this study. Questions that did not fit the Vietnamese research context were also removed. The original English scales were Vietnameseized and refined through expert interviews and pilot surveys with small sample size. Due to the characteristics of the survey respondents are managers and business owners, it is difficult for them to arrange a time for group discussion. So we conducted a separate interview with three subjects to adjust the scale. Consensus experts supported the research and participated in the interviews provided many comments on the language, grammar, and formulation of the questions. The completed questionnaire was used to survey with a small sample size (about 30 subjects) to recheck feedback on semantic issues before carrying out the official data collection.

The completed questionnaire is set up with online survey tools. Due to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in Vietnam, the Government's policy of limiting direct contact has made the online survey a perfect solution. We send an online questionnaire

form to each eligible survey object through Mobile Instant Messengers and social media tools. We were also supported by business associations and other connectivity entities to reach out to the study's respondents. At the end of the survey period, we obtained 339 responses. The online survey tool was set up to ensure that every important question was answered, and most of the questions have been refined, so 339 respondents as satisfactory (no missing information, no answers with out-of-range values). According to Hair Jr et al. (2021), if the Maximum Likelihood estimation method is used, the minimum sample size should range from 100 to 150. Additionally, sample sizes for the estimation method used in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) have three categories: small sample  $\leq 100$ , medium sample 100–200, and large sample  $\geq 200$ . Therefore, a sample size of 399 meets the necessary standard.

### **3.2 Measurements**

The factor measurement scales are designed on a 5-point Likert, showing the agreement degree of respondents about the statements corresponding to each criterion. The CGR scales were inherited and adapted from Solomon et al. (2002), removing components that are not suitable for the context of the Vietnamese economy. Digital Orientation is measured by the scale developed by Khin and Ho (2018). The scale of Cenamor et al. (2019) was selected to measure digital platform. For the Freelance hiring intention, we inherit the scale from Piramanayagam and Seal (2020). Because each scale was designed for other research purposes in another socio-economic context, every scale have to go through the process of translation and adjustment as described.

## **4 Results**

According to the descriptive statistics results, the perception about freelance hiring intention of firms is above average. The question "Our organization prefers to hire freelancers if getting a chance." has a median at 4. This result shows the fact that using freelancers is the trend and choice of Vietnamese firms.

Regarding the digital platform of firms, statistics' results show that businesses are confident with the existing digital platform they own. All items have a median of 4 and mode at 5. This fact is a favorable basis for Vietnamese businesses to anticipate and take advantage of digital transformation trends and use new digital applications in the future.

For the CGR perceptions, analysis results prove that all items have a median of 4. Also, 3 of the 7 items have a mode of 5. Corresponding to the items asking about democracy reforms, investor relations, and accounting function. Which are the most important reforms of the governance system. So we can confirm that the changes in the corporate governance in Vietnamese firms is a strong wave on a large scale. This result is very consistent with the fact that the negative effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have forced businesses to change to find ways to adapt and survive the economic circumstances.

The results on digital orientation also show a corresponding shift. The statistical indicators such as mean, median, and mode prove that firms are highly oriented towards

digitalize issues. In the pandemic, with the government's policy on providing technology and communication infrastructure, Vietnamese firms can successfully digitalize.

The confirmatory factor analysis technique (CFA) was used to evaluate the measurement model. The measurement model is suitable for the collected data. Indicate  $\chi^2/df = 3.676$  ( $\chi^2 = 602.829$ ;  $df = 164$ ), according to Hu and Bentler (1999), this value is acceptable. According to Bentler and Bonett (1980), if CFI is higher than 0.9 then the research model is suitable. In this case, the result shows that the CFI is 0.952 so that the model meets the appropriate criteria for the evaluation. Moreover, other Model fit measurement indicators such as IFI = 0.952; TLI = 0.945 all at a good state. The SRMR is good either ( $0.052 < 0.08$ ). In short, the Model fit measurement meets the requirements. That is the basis for the next step of the analysis progress.

Reliability, discriminant validity, and convergent validity are all satisfactory. All composite reliability (CR) are all higher than 0.7; Reliability was confirmed and ranged from 0.73 to 0.86, indicating that the structure used in this study is reliable. All Average variance extracted (AVE) values are higher than 0.5; maximum share variance (MSV) always smaller average variance extracted (AVE); and all square root of AVE (SQRAVE) higher than all inter-construct correlations. From that result, the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to simultaneously test all the proposed hypotheses, from H1 to H5. The model fit of SEM has been confirmed by indicates within the acceptable and good state. Therefore, the test results are consistent and reliable (Table 1).

Table 1: Structural Equation Modeling

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
CR	→	DF	0.174	0.053	3.286	0.001
DO	→	DF	0.726	0.049	14.889	***
DF	→	FL	0.302	0.100	3.017	0.003
CR	→	FL	0.392	0.086	4.549	***
DO	→	FL	-0.034	0.106	-0.324	0.746

Source: Own research

The test results show that the digital platform positively affects the freelance hiring intention with an estimate of 0.302 and  $p = 0.003 < 0.05$ . This quantitative evidence supports the acceptance of hypothesis H1.

For the effect of CGR and digital orientation on freelance hiring intention, statistical results only confirm that the influence of CGR is significant, the influence of digital orientation is not confirmed. Specifically, the relationship between CGR and freelance hiring intention has an Estimate = 0.392; p-value is close to 0, so we can accept the hypothesis H2. In contrast, the influence of digital orientation on the freelance hiring intention has a very low level of significance ( $p = 0.746$ ), so hypothesis H4 is rejected.

Hypotheses about the influence of CGR on digital platforms (H3) is accepted because it has a very low p significance level ( $p = 0.001$ ), confirming that the estimated = 0.174 of the influence from CGR to digital platform is significant. Similar to hypothesis H5, the influence of digital orientation on digital platforms is accepted (at a significance level close to zero and estimate =0.726).

Bootstrapping technique was implemented to solve the limitation of stability of the analysis results. The study was carried out with a sample size of 339 observations, which met the standards of the analytical techniques was used. However, with the overall study being Vietnamese enterprises, the sample accounted for a low proportion. The study uses the repeated sampling method to form a new research sample with a size of 1,000 from the original, recalculates the estimates of the relationships between factors in the research model. Bootstrap results in Table 8 showing that the normalized estimates of SEM with the official sample size and the Bootstrap have no significant difference, confirming the convergence of the impact.

Table 2: Bootstrapping

	Parameter	SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias
CR	→ DF	0.087	0.002	0.175	0.001	0.003
DO	→ DF	0.076	0.002	0.723	-0.003	0.002
DF	→ FL	0.107	0.002	0.292	-0.009	0.003
CR	→ FL	0.120	0.003	0.399	0.007	0.004
DO	→ FL	0.110	0.002	-0.029	0.005	0.003

Source: Own research

In summary, SEM provides evidence to confirm 4 out of 5 proposed research hypotheses, including H1, H2, H3, and H5. Affirming the positive influence of CGR and digital platform on freelance hiring intention, in which the influence of CGR is stronger than the digital platform on this defending factor ( $0.392 > 0.302$ ); confirming the positive influence of CGR and digital orientation on digital platforms, in which the effect of digital orientation is higher than CGR ( $0.726 > 0.174$ ).

## 5 Discussion

The good technology platforms have increased the managers' freelancer intention which was confirmed by this study (H1). Although there aren't studies that specifically confirm this relationship, these results are also in the same direction as Scholz (2014). This author argued that technology platforms could promote real sharing and allow freelancers to exchange their labor with businesses. Helfat and Raubitschek (2018) also added about the relationship between the digital platform and the sharing economy, which proved that the digital platform can help businesses to take advantage of external

resources including human resources – its freelancers. Obviously, businesses with a good technology background will help them to have a good connection with stakeholders to achieve the business goals.

The study accepted the hypothesis regarding the relationship between CGR and the freelancer hiring's intentions (H2). Chauradia and Galande (2015), who said that businesses would use freelancers during of economic downturn because these objects would only work for a short-term project and that businesses would pay for a lower cost than hiring long-term resources. In addition, when the projects are completed, the company can terminate the contract without renewing anymore which will help the businesses not only to have a good maintain the human capital but also can use these resources flexibly (George and Chattopadhyay, 2005; citealpchauradia2015freelance). Besides that, the difficult contexts of economic crises and pandemics are seen as agents to change the relationship between corporate governance and the labor market (Țircă et al., 2021). The epidemic also caused businesses to restructure Khatib and Nour (2021), which makes a re-establishment of the businesses' management and owners also becoming a common trend.

The research results confirmed the argument that CGR affected digital platforms (H3). It's not only that, the impact's levels are also very high ( $\beta = 0.726$ ). While most studies confirmed that the influence of information technology on management, so to reason and provide evidence for proving the opposite direction's relationship that will be a great contribution to the theoretical basis. The information technology is inherently used as an effective management tool of businesses, because the information technology is used as a driving force to promote the decision-making process of corporate governance (Elizabeth Abraham, 2012). This view is widely agreed and accepted. Incorporating information technology into all aspects of corporate governance will significantly improve governance (Cheng and Gong, 2012). With some utilities that will support the decision-making by information such as collection, calculation, storage, and communication; the information technology can also help operators and stakeholders to make good decisions. This showed that information technology is an important platform in establishing management systems and also making digital technology an important capability of businesses. As Elizabeth Abraham (2012) pointed out, information technology is proposed as a catalyst in really empowering executives and stakeholders to jointly improve the corporate governance structure. Sharing the same opinion, Cheng and Gong (2012) also stated that: once using the information technology to enhance the work efficiency, businesses can also improve their corporate governance structure, establish financial information for enhancing financial oversight and help managers to make strategic management decisions. As to analyze in the research results, the reform issues in democracy, investor relations, and accounting function are the items that the most received attention; there are the most changes of the reform status in Vietnamese businesses. This target compatibility makes managers more inclined to invest more in digital resources.

The study's results rejected hypothesis H4. So, the study did not confirm the relationship between digital orientation and the hiring freelancer's intentions. This can be explained by two following reasons:

(1) The trend of comprehensive cooperation between businesses and technology providers: One of the characteristics of digital orientation is digital ecosystem coordination (external/organizational). The feature is the tight integration between customers and digital suppliers De Lomana et al. (2019). Accordingly, the digital orientation of businesses will have a close link with technology partners. At this time, the digital suppliers will provide a comprehensive technology solution, which makes it easy for businesses to manipulate and interact closely with customers (McAfee and Brynjolfsson, 2017). And also at the same time, the work pressure on the current human resources is reduced and there will be no need to increase the amount of human resources.

(2) There is a fear of using short-term personnel in the businesses' strategically important activities: Kazi et al. (2014) asserted that freelancers do not like to work daily and participate in meetings. Freelancers do not trust long-term jobs (traditional jobs). As a result, they become an elusive labor group and it's difficult to manage. Business managers, especially SME managers, who do not have experience in using these human resources; will not tend to be interested in hiring a freelancer and instead of pursuing the business' digital orientation - digital strategy.

The hypothesis H5 is accepted. The research results confirmed that there is a positive relationship between digital orientation and digital platforms. It also has a high impact on digital platforms from the digital orientation. This conclusion is almost consistent with many previous studies. Typically, Yousaf et al. (2021), affirmed that digital orientation plays an important role in the digital platforms' use. When the management boards have a digital orientation, it means they are willing to increase investment and develop digital technologies in business activities for helping well grasp opportunities and potentials from digital platforms. The research of Kraus et al. (2019); Jones-Evans and Klofsten (2016) also added evidence to confirm that digital orientation positively affects digital platforms. In fact, many businesses have been successful in their business operations by taking advantage of the potential of digital platforms. Particularly, businesses oriented to digital transformation, which are often good in preparing and used digital platforms better.

## 6 Conclusion

### 6.1 Conclusion & Recommendations

Businesses are really in need of increased freelancer's resources in the future. Due to the pandemic's negative impact, businesses have had to change the way of operation. These changes could become from downsizing the operations' scale, the number of employees' reducing or even the reducing of the jobs in need which be solved. However, to ensure the reduction of work size, reduce the number of employees but still do not affect work results and professionalism, businesses look for solutions of using freelancer's resources. This will be a professional, skilled, and experienced workforce that can handle the job requirements well but is not bound by the long-term labor's responsibilities with the parties. Managers won't be needed in paying fixed costs for this type of worker but only

by project or by contract. This can be seen as the principal reason for the enterprises' solution. This demands' increasing will the opportunity for technology companies to provide the sharing economy platforms for connecting in supplying and demanding in this sector.

However, these platforms should orient to a group of highly skilled, experienced, and technical resources because this human resources group could only meet the businesses' demands in times of crisis, downsizing, or restructuring of the management system. Most Vietnamese businesses are undergoing major changes in terms of governance structure and corporate restructuring. These changes are concentrated in democracy, investor relations, and accounting functions. The Innovations in democracy or investor relations are also an opportunity for technology companies to develop and provide corresponding technology services and management tools to support businesses that pursuing this reformed orientation. On the other hand, general corporate restructuring also requires the skills and experience of experts in many fields; especially, in the field of management and operation. The accounting system is also an aspect of adjustment. Some sharing economy platforms may also accelerate the ability's exploitation to connect businesses' demands with this group of experts that will create a high-quality workforce of freelancers. That once again reaffirms the demands for freelancer's quality that the platforms provide, which explains for the increasing of freelancer using's demands in businesses.

The businesses' current digital platforms are highly appreciated, which is also the premise for digital tools of the sharing economy in general as well as the freelancer platform that will be easily accepted and connected to the business's technology system. The nature of CGR is to change the management system and adjust the strategy. The COVID-19's negative impacts are great opportunities for businesses to change their orientation, business strategies in general, and their digital strategies, which creating a clearly orientation in digital technology applications for businesses.

## **6.2 Limitations and Future research**

Despite achieving success and addressing the research objectives, answering the research questions posed, the study still has limitations that need to be completed by further studies on this topic. - Limitation on sampling method. Future research should re-test the research model with a more representative sampling method such as probability sampling such as stratification, norm, etc. - The characteristics of the enterprise (size, type, capital structure...) can affect the degree and direction of the relationship. - Research is conducted to collect data in a specific time, it is not possible to assess the change and development of the research problem over time. Future research can collect data over time to compare and identify changes in the business. - The study proves the hypotheses with a quantitative approach, based on survey data with 339 observations. Future studies may conduct in-depth interviews with corporate management to shed light on this aspect.

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