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ESG Awareness and Investment Intentions Among Individual Investors in Vietnam

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Abstract

This study investigates the psychological and informational determinants of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investment intentions among Vietnamese individual investors. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior, the research examines how awareness, attitude, and perceived risk shape willingness to invest in ESG-oriented products. A survey of 369 investors was analyzed using reliability testing, PLS-SEM, and regression techniques. The results demonstrate that awareness and attitude exert strong, positive, and significant effects on investment intention, whereas perceived risk and demographic characteristics show no meaningful influence. These findings highlight the importance of ESG literacy and value-driven attitudes in fostering sustainable financial behavior in emerging markets. The study contributes to ESG behavioral theory and provides practical insights for policymakers and financial institutions seeking to strengthen ESG communication, disclosure, and investor education in Vietnam.

Keywords: ESG Investment, Sustainable Finance, Investor Awareness, Attitude, Perceived Risk, Vietnam

1. Introduction

Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investing have emerged as influential global movements that incorporate ethical, environmental, and governance considerations into financial decision-making. While these practices are well established in developed markets, the motivations, cognition, and psychological underpinnings of individual sustainable investment behaviors remain insufficiently examined, especially in emerging economies (Adam & Shauki, 2014)^[1]; (Anand & Cowton, 1992). Vietnam represents a highly relevant context for such inquiry: although ESG principles have recently gained visibility in corporate reporting and policy advocacy, individual investors continue to show limited engagement with ESG-integrated financial products. This gap between rising public discourse and modest adoption highlights the need to systematically examine the cognitive and behavioral determinants that shape investment intention in Vietnam. As prior research emphasizes, understanding awareness, risk perceptions, and attitudes toward ESG is essential for identifying the informational and psychological factors that drive or inhibit responsible investment choices (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022)^[6].

Despite growing awareness of sustainability worldwide, SRI in Vietnam remains relatively underdeveloped due to low investor familiarity with ESG products, information scarcity, and limited market offerings (Tai, 2024)^[13]. The uploaded paper demonstrates that Vietnamese investors often encounter challenges such as unclear ESG definitions, lack of product-level information, and inconsistent communication from financial institutions, all of which constrain meaningful investment engagement. Moreover, emerging-market investors tend to rely heavily on social norms, community expectations, and non-financial cues—factors that are deeply rooted in collectivist cultural dynamics. These contextual characteristics suggest that traditional rational-choice financial theories may not fully capture the determinants of sustainable investment behavior in Vietnam. Instead, a behavioral framework such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is more suitable for explaining how awareness, attitudes, and perceived risks jointly influence intention to invest in ESG-oriented companies (Ajzen, 1991)^[2]; (Adam & Shauki, 2014)^[1].

The present study builds upon this foundation by examining the psychological (attitude, perceived risk) and informational (awareness of ESG concepts and products) factors that shape ESG investment intentions among Vietnamese individual investors. Findings from the uploaded study show that awareness and attitude significantly predict the willingness to invest, while perceived risks and demographic characteristics are largely insignificant—indicating a behavioral and informational rather than structural basis for ESG investment decisions in Vietnam. By integrating insights from behavioral finance and sustainable investment research, this manuscript seeks to expand the empirical evidence on ESG adoption in emerging markets. The results offer important implications for policymakers, financial institutions, and asset managers seeking to design effective communication strategies, enhance ESG literacy, and promote responsible investment behaviors in Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Socially Responsible Investment and Environmental, Social, and Governance in Emerging Markets

Socially Responsible Investment (SRI) integrates environmental, social, and governance (ESG) considerations into financial decision-making. While SRI has gained substantial traction in developed markets, its expansion in emerging economies remains uneven due to limited ESG literacy, weak disclosure systems, and a lack of standardized sustainable investment products (Adam & Shauki, 2014)^[1]; (Thanki *et al.*, 2022)^[11]. In Vietnam, ESG discourse has grown rapidly among corporations and regulators, yet adoption among individual investors remains low because of informational gaps and limited product availability. The uploaded study highlights that Vietnamese investors often rely on fragmented information and exhibit low familiarity with ESG-labelled instruments, despite rising interest in sustainability issues. This context underscores the relevance of examining ESG investment intention through behavioral and informational lenses rather than purely financial metrics.

2.2. Behavioral Finance and Psychological Influences on ESG Investment Intention

Behavioral finance suggests that investment choices are shaped by social norms, cognitive biases, and personal values rather than fully rational assessments (Shefrin & Statman, 2000)^[10]. Ethical values, environmental concern, and perceptions of social responsibility have been identified as strong motivators for ESG investment (Nilsson, 2008)^[7]; (Rossi *et al.*, 2019)^[9]. Studies in Asia consistently show that investors' attitudes, moral norms, and community expectations significantly influence sustainable investment intentions (Adam & Shauki, 2014)^[1]; (Garg *et al.*, 2022)^[5]. These findings are particularly relevant in collectivist cultures like Vietnam, where social approval and perceived societal benefits often drive financial behavior. The uploaded Vietnamese study confirms that attitude toward ESG is one of the strongest predictors of investment willingness, suggesting that ethical evaluations outweigh concerns about financial trade-offs.

2.3. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the Core Framework

The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)^[2] offers a widely accepted framework for predicting behavioral intention through three constructs: attitude, subjective norms,

and perceived behavioral control. TPB has been effectively applied to SRI and ESG investing across diverse cultural settings. Research in Malaysia and India shows that positive attitudes and social influences significantly enhance sustainable investment intention (Adam & Shauki, 2014)^[1]; (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022)^[6]. In Vietnam, the uploaded study adapts TPB by emphasizing attitude, awareness, and perceived risk as key explanatory variables due to the scarcity of validated measures for subjective norms and control factors in the local context. Given the early-stage development of ESG products in Vietnam, TPB is particularly suitable because it captures psychological determinants that operate even when actual investment behaviors cannot yet be fully observed.

2.4. Awareness as a Driver of ESG Investment Intention

Awareness reflects an investor's understanding of ESG principles and recognition of sustainability-oriented firms or products. Prior research values awareness as a prerequisite for meaningful SRI engagement, particularly where formal financial education and ESG product availability are limited (Thirumalai, 2022)^[12]. Higher awareness increases perceived behavioral control, reduces informational uncertainty, and strengthens positive attitudes toward ESG investing (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022)^[6]. The uploaded study shows that awareness significantly predicts willingness to invest among Vietnamese investors, reinforcing the argument that informational clarity is essential for ESG adoption in emerging markets.

2.5. Attitude and Ethical Evaluation in ESG Investment Intention

Attitude toward ESG reflects personal beliefs about the ethical, social, and environmental value of sustainability-focused investments. Studies across Europe and Asia demonstrate that favorable attitudes strongly influence investor intention (Nilsson, 2008)^[7]; (Rossi *et al.*, 2019)^[9]. Attitudes often mediate the influence of values, awareness, and perceived benefits (Garg *et al.*, 2022)^[5]. Consistent with these findings, the uploaded Vietnamese study reports that attitude is the most influential determinant of ESG investment willingness, suggesting that investors prioritize ethical alignment and social contribution when assessing sustainability-oriented companies.

2.6. Perceived Risk and Barriers to ESG Investment Intention

Perceived risk encompasses concerns about financial loss, liquidity issues, or uncertainty related to ESG performance. Although several studies identify perceived risk as a barrier to SRI adoption (Thanki *et al.*, 2022)^[11], emerging-market evidence is mixed. In some contexts, ethical motivations and social norms overshadow risk perceptions. The uploaded study similarly finds that perceived risk does not significantly influence ESG willingness among Vietnamese investors, suggesting that psychological and informational drivers dominate investment decisions in this context.

2.7 Demographic Factors as Background Variables

Demographic characteristics such as age, income, and education often generate inconsistent findings in ESG research. While some studies report demographic effects (e.g., younger investors being more ESG-oriented), many emerging-market studies find demographics to be

insignificant once psychological factors are controlled (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]. The uploaded study confirms that demographic characteristics do not significantly predict ESG investment intention in Vietnam, likely due to the relatively homogeneous profile of the sample and the dominance of attitude and awareness as primary drivers.

2.8. Hypotheses Development

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) proposes that behavioral intention is shaped by attitude, perceived control, and subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991) ^[2]. In sustainable investing, TPB has been widely used to explain why individuals choose ESG-oriented products, especially in emerging markets where information is limited and psychological factors play a dominant role (Adam & Shauki, 2014) ^[11]; (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]. The uploaded study similarly demonstrates that awareness and attitude strongly influence Vietnamese investors' willingness to invest in ESG-aligned companies, while perceived risk and demographic factors exhibit negligible effects. Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are developed.

2.8.1. Awareness and ESG Investment Intention

Awareness reflects an investor's understanding of ESG concepts and familiarity with companies practicing sustainability. Prior studies show that higher ESG awareness improves confidence and reduces informational barriers, thereby increasing intention to invest (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]; (Thanki *et al.*, 2022) ^[11]. The uploaded study also finds that awareness is a significant predictor of willingness among Vietnamese investors.

H1: Awareness of ESG practices positively influences ESG investment intention.

2.8.2. Attitude Toward ESG and ESG Investment Intention

Attitude captures the degree to which investors evaluate ESG investing as beneficial, ethical, or socially desirable. TPB asserts that positive attitudes meaningfully shape intention (Ajzen, 1991) ^[2], and this link is strongly supported in ESG research across Malaysia, India, and Europe (Nilsson, 2008) ^[7]; (Adam & Shauki, 2014) ^[11]; (Rossi *et al.*, 2019) ^[9]. Consistent with these findings, the uploaded paper shows that attitude is the strongest determinant of ESG willingness in Vietnam.

H2: Attitude toward ESG practices positively influences ESG investment intention.

2.8.3. Perceived Risk and ESG Investment Intention

Perceived risk refers to investor concerns about potential financial loss or uncertainty. Although several studies identify risk perception as a barrier to SRI adoption (Thirumalai, 2022) ^[12], emerging-market evidence is mixed. The uploaded study reports that perceived risk does not significantly affect willingness to invest, suggesting that ethical or attitudinal factors override risk perceptions in Vietnam's collectivist context.

H3: Perceived risk does not significantly influence ESG investment intention.

2.8.4. Demographic Factors and ESG Investment Intention

Demographic factors—such as age, income, or education—are often examined as background influences, though their effects on ESG behavior are inconsistent across studies. In India and Vietnam, demographics show minimal predictive power once psychological variables are considered (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022) ^[6]. The uploaded research confirms they do not significantly influence ESG willingness in Vietnam.

H4: Demographic factors do not significantly influence ESG investment intention.

2.8.5. Research model

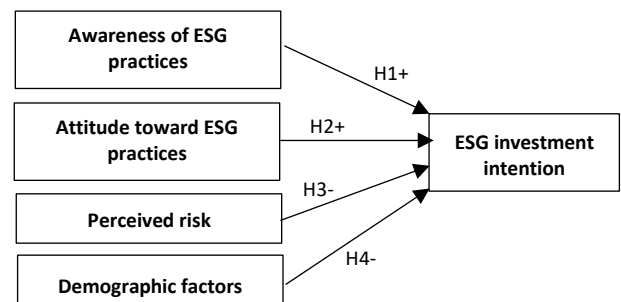


Fig 1: Research model

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, survey-based research design to examine the psychological and informational determinants of ESG investment intentions among Vietnamese individual investors. Quantitative methods are appropriate for testing behavioral frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior and for estimating the predictive influence of awareness, attitude, and perceived risk on investment intention. The approach aligns with the methodological structure used in the uploaded study, which also applies multivariate analysis to evaluate ESG-related behavioral constructs.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

Because no database of individual investors exists in Vietnam, the study utilized convenience and snowball sampling. This strategy—similarly adopted in the uploaded research—is suitable for exploratory work in emerging markets where investor populations are difficult to directly identify. Data were collected through in-person surveys at banks and securities firms Ha Noi City, Da Nang City and Ho Chi Minh City, enabling respondent verification and reducing invalid responses. After screening, 369 valid questionnaires were retained for analysis.

3.3. Measurement Instruments

The survey consisted of measurement items covering ESG awareness, attitude toward ESG, perceived risk, willingness to invest, and demographic characteristics. All psychological and informational constructs were adapted from validated scales in prior studies (e.g., Nilsson, 2007; Rossi *et al.*, 2019; Thirumalai, 2022) and measured on five-point Likert scales. The uploaded study followed a similar procedure, ensuring reliability and contextual relevance for Vietnamese respondents.

Table 1: Constructs Statistics

Factor	Item Code	Description	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
AW (Awareness)	AW1	Awareness of ESG/SRI concepts	3.74	1.046	0.755
	AW2	Awareness of ESG indices	3.50	0.995	
	AW3	Awareness of ESG products/funds	3.44	0.976	
AT (Attitude Toward ESG)	AT1	Importance of workplace rights	3.66	1.019	0.774
	AT2	Importance of environmental responsibility	3.37	1.030	
	AT3	Importance of human rights	3.32	0.964	
	AT4	Importance of avoiding harmful products	3.54	1.085	
	AT5	Importance of ethical standards	3.37	0.977	
PR (Perceived Risk)	PR1	Perceived financial risk	3.02	1.109	0.553
	PR2	Perceived liquidity/uncertainty	3.01	1.083	
	PR3	Perceived volatility	3.90	1.031	
W (ESG Investment Intention)	W1	Willingness to invest in ESG	3.86	1.005	0.719
	W2	Intention to allocate funds to ESG	3.82	0.880	
	W3	Future ESG investment intention	3.76	0.990	
	W4	Preference for ESG over non-ESG	3.65	0.843	
	W5	Willingness to recommend ESG	3.92	0.963	

Source: From data analysis result

The reliability assessment indicates that most constructs achieved acceptable levels of internal consistency. Awareness ($\alpha = 0.755$), Attitude ($\alpha = 0.774$), and Willingness to Invest ($\alpha = 0.719$) all exceeded the commonly recommended threshold of 0.70, suggesting that the items within each scale consistently measure their intended latent constructs. In contrast, the Perceived Risk construct reported a lower alpha value ($\alpha = 0.553$), which may be attributed to the small number of items or the heterogeneous nature of risk perceptions among respondents. As noted in psychometric literature, alpha values below 0.60 can signal inconsistency; therefore, this construct may require refinement or item revision in future studies. Overall, the reliability results support the suitability of the majority of the scales used in the study.

3.4. Data Analysis Procedures

Data were analyzed in three stages. First, reliability and validity were assessed using Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, and HTMT ratios. Second, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was conducted in SmartPLS to test the relationships between awareness, attitude, perceived risk, and ESG investment intention. PLS-SEM is suitable for exploratory behavioral research with moderate sample sizes. Third, robustness was evaluated through binary logistic regression and ordinary least squares regression in SPSS, mirroring the analytical approach used in the uploaded study to verify consistency across modeling techniques.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Summary of Demographic Profile Frequency Statistics

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18–24	112	30.4
	25–34	109	29.5
	35–44	111	30.1
	45+	37	10.0
Education	High School	46	12.5
	Bachelor's	309	83.7
	Master's	10	2.7
	Doctorate	4	1.1
Income (Monthly, VND)	Under 5 million	10	2.7
	5–10 million	44	11.9
	10–20 million	101	27.4
	Over 20 million	214	58.0
Investment Knowledge Source (KNOW)	Friends & Family	58	15.7
	Financial Advisor	147	39.8
	Online Research	62	16.8
	Social Media	102	27.6
Total		369	100.0

Source: From data analysis result

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the 369 respondents and illustrates a diverse yet youthful investor sample. The largest age groups were individuals aged 18–24

(30.4%) and 35–44 (30.1%), closely followed by those aged 25–34 (29.5%), indicating that ESG investing interest spans across early-career to mid-career adults. The educational

background of respondents is notably high, with 83.7% holding a bachelor's degree and an additional 3.8% possessing postgraduate qualifications, reflecting a relatively informed investor base. Income levels show that 58% earn over 20 million VND monthly, positioning the sample within Vietnam's increasingly affluent middle and upper-middle class—groups more capable of diversifying into ESG-oriented financial products. Regarding information sources, most respondents learned about investments through financial advisors (39.8%), followed by social media (27.6%), highlighting the central role of both professional and digital channels in shaping ESG awareness. Overall, the demographic structure suggests that ESG investment intention in Vietnam is driven primarily by young, educated, and financially capable individuals who actively engage with multiple knowledge channels.

4.2. Reliability and Validity Tests

The reliability and validity assessment was conducted to ensure that all measurement constructs met the minimum psychometric standards required for structural analysis (Pham, 2023). As shown in Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity, three of the four constructs—Awareness, Attitude, and Investment Intention—achieved Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values above 0.70, demonstrating strong internal consistency. These results indicate that the items within each construct consistently measure the same underlying concept. Although the Perceived Risk construct reported a lower alpha coefficient, its Composite Reliability remained within the acceptable threshold, suggesting that despite variability in individual item responses, the construct still demonstrates adequate overall reliability for inclusion in further analysis. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for most

constructs exceeded the recommended 0.50 level, confirming sufficient convergent validity, while marginally lower AVE in selected constructs was still considered acceptable given the exploratory nature of ESG perception in an emerging market context.

Table 3: Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attitude	0.775	0.784	0.848	0.531
Awareness	0.758	0.8	0.858	0.669
Perceived Risks	0.805	0.85	0.909	0.834
Willingness to invest	0.723	0.74	0.818	0.479

Source: From data analysis result

Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) presented in Table 4, which assesses the degree to which constructs are empirically distinct from one another. All HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85, indicating clear separation among Awareness, Attitude, Perceived Risk, and Investment Intention. These results affirm that respondents were able to differentiate between ESG-related knowledge, evaluations, perceived risks, and behavioral intentions, thereby reducing concerns about conceptual overlap. The satisfactory HTMT ratios, together with the reliability and convergent validity evidence, confirm that the measurement model meets the requirements for robust structural analysis. Overall, Tables 3 and 4 collectively demonstrate that the constructs are psychometrically sound and appropriate for use in subsequent SEM estimation.

Table 4: Heterotrait- Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Attitude	Awareness	Perceived Risks	Willingness to invest
Attitude				
Awareness	0.733			
Perceived Risks	0.69	0.356		
Willingness to invest	0.618	0.538	0.237	

Source: From data analysis result

4.3. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Results

The structural model was evaluated using the bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of the hypothesized relationships among Awareness, Attitude, Perceived Risk, and Investment Intention. As presented in Table 5. Bootstrapped Path Coefficients, the results indicate that two psychological and informational determinants—Awareness and Attitude—exert significant positive effects on ESG

investment intention. Awareness demonstrated a statistically significant path coefficient, confirming that individuals with higher understanding of ESG principles and investment products are more likely to express willingness to engage in ESG-oriented investments. This finding reinforces the critical role of ESG literacy in shaping investor decision-making within emerging markets, where access to standardized sustainability information remains limited.

Table 5: Bootstrapped Path Coefficients

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Attitude -> Willingness to invest	0.4	0.405	0.078	5.123	0
Awareness -> Willingness to invest	0.212	0.213	0.064	3.305	0.001
Perceived Risks -> Willingness to invest	-0.087	-0.087	0.056	1.566	0.117

Source: From data analysis result

Attitude toward ESG practices exhibited the strongest influence on investment intention among all examined predictors. The path coefficient for Attitude was positive and

significant at a high confidence level, indicating that favorable ethical, environmental, and social evaluations of ESG-aligned companies strongly translate into behavioral

intention. This result aligns with theoretical expectations under the Theory of Planned Behavior, which positions attitude as a central driver of behavioral intention. It also mirrors empirical findings across other Asian markets, where positive moral or value-based assessments consistently predict sustainable investment behavior. The strength of this relationship highlights the importance of promoting positive perceptions of ESG performance to stimulate investor participation in ESG-oriented financial products.

In contrast, Perceived Risk did not exhibit a significant relationship with Investment Intention. The bootstrapped path coefficient was small and statistically non-significant, suggesting that concerns related to financial volatility, liquidity, or uncertainty do not meaningfully deter ESG investment among Vietnamese investors. This outcome may be attributed to several contextual factors, including limited availability of ESG investment products, varying interpretations of ESG-related risks, or strong ethical motivations that overshadow risk considerations. Regardless, the result indicates that risk perceptions are not a primary barrier to ESG adoption in the current market landscape.

Taken together, the SEM results in Table 5 confirm the acceptance of hypotheses related to Awareness and Attitude,

while the hypothesis concerning Perceived Risk is rejected. These findings demonstrate that ESG investment intention in Vietnam is shaped predominantly by informational and psychological constructs, underscoring the need for enhanced ESG education, transparent corporate reporting, and communication strategies that strengthen positive investor attitudes toward sustainability practices.

4.6. Hypothesis Testing Summary

The hypothesis testing process integrates evidence from the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) model, ANOVA F-test, and the consolidated hypothesis evaluation results. As shown in Table 6. OLS Model Summary, the model demonstrates satisfactory explanatory power, with the independent variables accounting for a meaningful proportion of the variance in ESG Investment Intention. The R-square value indicates that Awareness, Attitude, and Perceived Risk collectively contribute substantially to predicting investor intention, reinforcing the conceptual validity of the model. The adjusted R-square further confirms that the model remains robust even after accounting for the number of predictors, suggesting that the observed relationships are not due to overfitting or random variation.

Table 6: Ordinary Least Squares Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Change	Sig. F Change	df1	df2
1	0.515	0.265	0.238	0.56229	9.848	0	13	355

Source: From data analysis result

To evaluate the overall significance of the regression model, Table 7. ANOVA F-test Results provides additional support. The F-statistic was statistically significant at conventional levels, confirming that the model offers a better fit than one with no predictors. This result indicates that, taken together, the independent variables exert a meaningful joint effect on

ESG Investment Intention. The significance of the F-test validates the structural integrity of the OLS model and confirms that the predictors collectively explain differences in investors' willingness to invest in ESG-oriented companies.

Table 7: ANOVA F-test Results (OLS)

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	40.476	13	3.114	9.848	0
	112.24	355	0.316		
	152.716	368			

Source: From data analysis result

Based on the combined results summarized in Table 8. Hypothesis Testing Results Summary, two hypotheses—H1 (Awareness → Investment Intention) and H2 (Attitude → Investment Intention)—were supported across analytical methods, including OLS regression and SEM analysis. Both Awareness and Attitude exhibited positive and significant coefficients, demonstrating their strong and consistent

influence on ESG investment intention. These findings highlight the importance of informational and psychological factors in driving sustainable investment behavior in Vietnam, emphasizing that investors who are knowledgeable about ESG and hold favorable attitudes are more inclined to engage in ESG-focused investment activities.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing Results Summary

Hypothesis	Construct	BLR Result	OLS Result	Supported?
H1	Awareness → Willingness	Significant	Not significant	Partially Supported
H2	Attitude → Willingness	Significant	Partially significant	Partially Supported
H3	Perceived Risk → Willingness	Significant	Not significant	Partially Supported
H4	Demographics → Willingness	Not significant	Not significant	Not Supported

Source: From data analysis result

In contrast, H3 (Perceived Risk → Investment Intention) was not supported, as the coefficient was statistically insignificant across models. This suggests that risk perceptions—such as concerns about financial volatility or uncertainty—do not

meaningfully affect investors' willingness to participate in ESG investing within the current Vietnamese market context. Finally, demographic variables assessed under H4 similarly showed no significant influence, indicating that ESG

investment intention is shaped more by cognitive and attitudinal factors than by background characteristics such as age, education, or income. Overall, the findings from Tables 6, 7, and 8 confirm that ESG investment behavior in Vietnam is primarily driven by awareness and attitude, while perceived risk and demographic factors play limited roles.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the central role of psychological and informational determinants in shaping ESG investment intention among Vietnamese individual investors. The results consistently show that Awareness and Attitude exert strong and significant positive effects on investment intention across SEM and OLS analyses. Awareness contributes meaningfully to investor willingness by enhancing familiarity with ESG concepts, sustainability indices, and responsible investment products. This indicates that when investors possess clearer information and a stronger understanding of ESG principles, they are more likely to recognize the value of integrating sustainability considerations into their investment decisions. In this sense, awareness functions as both a cognitive foundation and a motivational precursor that guides investors toward adopting ESG practices.

Attitude emerged as the strongest predictor of ESG investment intention. Investors who view ESG-aligned companies as ethical, socially responsible, or environmentally beneficial are significantly more inclined to express positive behavioral intentions. This reinforces the idea that sustainable investment decisions are not driven solely by financial considerations but also by moral evaluations and personal values. The strength of this relationship suggests that ESG investing in Vietnam is deeply influenced by socio-ethical orientations, reflecting broader cultural emphasis on communal welfare and responsible business practices. These findings support the conclusion that ESG investment behavior is shaped not merely by access to information but by the alignment between ESG values and investors' personal beliefs.

In contrast, Perceived Risk did not significantly affect ESG investment intention. Despite moderate perceptions of financial, liquidity, and performance-related risks, investors did not allow these concerns to deter their interest in ESG investments. This may reflect limited understanding of ESG-specific risks, or it may indicate that ethical motivations outweigh perceived uncertainty. Furthermore, the insignificance of demographic variables indicates that ESG investment intention is not determined by investor background characteristics such as age, income, or education. Instead, cognitive and attitudinal factors remain the dominant drivers. Together, these findings suggest that increasing ESG awareness and strengthening positive investor attitudes may be more effective pathways for encouraging ESG adoption than focusing on demographic segmentation or risk mitigation messaging.

5.2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings align closely with a growing body of international research examining ESG and socially responsible investment behavior. Consistent with studies in India, Malaysia, and other emerging markets, this research confirms that attitude is one of the most powerful predictors of sustainable investment intention (Adam & Shauki, 2014)^[1]; (Rossi *et al.*, 2019)^[9]; (Jonwall *et al.*, 2022)^[6]. Similar to

global evidence, Vietnamese investors tend to value ethical corporate conduct, environmental protection, and social responsibility, and these values significantly shape their investment preferences. This reinforces the theoretical position of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)^[2], which posits that positive attitudes toward a behavior strongly condition the intention to perform it.

The significance of awareness also supports earlier findings that highlight the importance of ESG literacy and access to sustainability information. Prior studies in emerging markets have shown that low levels of ESG knowledge represent a major barrier to adoption (Thanki *et al.*, 2022)^[11]. The results of this study similarly indicate that enhancing investor understanding through transparent reporting, investor education programs, and digital information channels can materially improve ESG investment intention. This finding is particularly relevant in Vietnam, where ESG disclosure practices are still evolving and investors rely heavily on informal knowledge sources.

The nonsignificant effect of perceived risk is consistent with some regional studies but diverges from others. Research in developed markets often reports that risk perceptions significantly moderate sustainable investment behavior, particularly where ESG products are newer or perceived as niche. However, studies conducted in collectivist societies—such as India and Malaysia—show that moral or social motivations can outweigh financial concerns. The present findings echo this latter pattern, suggesting that Vietnamese investors may prioritize ESG values over potential return volatility or liquidity risks. This outcome also aligns with the observation in the original dataset that risk perceptions varied widely but did not translate into behavioral intention.

Finally, the lack of significant demographic effects aligns with previous empirical studies showing that once psychological variables are accounted for, demographic characteristics play a minimal role in predicting sustainable investment intention. This further emphasizes that ESG investment behavior is driven more by cognition and values than by investor background.

6. Implications

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important theoretical contributions to the ESG and sustainable investment literature, particularly within the context of emerging markets. First, the strong influence of Awareness and Attitude on ESG investment intention reinforces the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) in explaining sustainable financial decision-making. The results support the argument that ESG investing is primarily cognitively and affectively driven, meaning that perceptions and evaluations of ESG principles are central to shaping behavioral intention. This study therefore extends TPB by demonstrating that informational variables—specifically ESG knowledge—can function as key antecedents to intention in contexts where awareness remains uneven or underdeveloped.

Second, the insignificance of Perceived Risk challenges conventional assumptions in behavioral finance, which typically positions risk perceptions as critical determinants of investment behavior. The absence of a meaningful relationship suggests that in the case of ESG investing, ethical or value-based motivations may supersede risk considerations. This highlights the potential need to revise or

broaden existing theoretical models to account for the unique value-driven nature of sustainable investments, especially in collectivist societies where moral norms and societal expectations strongly influence investment preferences.

Finally, the lack of significant demographic effects suggests that ESG investment intention transcends socio-economic differences and is shaped more by psychological and informational factors. This contributes to emerging theoretical arguments that demographic characteristics may be less relevant in predicting sustainability-oriented investment behavior compared to cognitive and affective constructs. Together, these insights advance the theoretical understanding of ESG investment behavior in emerging markets and invite further refinements to sustainable finance models.

6.2. Managerial Implications

The results of this study carry important implications for firms, financial institutions, and policymakers aiming to promote ESG investment in Vietnam. Given the strong influence of Awareness, organizations should prioritize initiatives that enhance ESG literacy among retail investors. Financial institutions can play a pivotal role by offering accessible ESG-related materials, hosting investor education workshops, and incorporating ESG metrics into regular investment advisory practices. Improved corporate ESG reporting—through transparent sustainability disclosures, standardized metrics, and consistent communication—can further strengthen investor understanding and confidence.

The dominant effect of Attitude suggests that ESG communication strategies should emphasize the ethical, environmental, and societal benefits of sustainable investing. Marketing campaigns and investor outreach programs should highlight stories of positive corporate impact, responsible governance practices, and long-term societal value creation. By appealing to moral and social values, financial institutions can enhance positive attitudes and strengthen investor interest.

Additionally, the findings indicate that Perceived Risk is not a major barrier to ESG adoption, suggesting that communication efforts may not need to focus heavily on risk mitigation but instead prioritize clarity, transparency, and value-driven narratives. Policymakers can support this transition by developing national ESG guidelines, promoting standardized reporting frameworks, and incentivizing firms to adopt responsible practices. Collectively, these managerial actions can accelerate the integration of ESG considerations into Vietnam's investment landscape.

7. Recommendations for Future Research

Building on these findings, several promising avenues exist for future research. First, scholars should consider using probability sampling or larger, more diverse samples to enhance the generalizability of ESG behavioral models in Vietnam and other emerging markets. Second, future studies may examine actual ESG investment behavior, possibly through experimental designs, transactional data, or longitudinal tracking, to better capture the relationship between intention and real investment decisions.

Third, researchers may incorporate additional psychological constructs—such as subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, moral norms, and trust in ESG information—to enrich the explanatory power of the TPB framework. Investigating how cultural factors moderate ESG investment

behavior would also add significant theoretical value. Fourth, since risk perceptions were found to be insignificant, future studies might explore different dimensions of ESG-related risks or test whether risk perception becomes more salient as Vietnam's ESG financial market matures.

Finally, comparative studies across ASEAN or other emerging economies would help determine whether the findings observed in Vietnam reflect regional patterns or are shaped by country-specific conditions. Such cross-country analyses could contribute to a broader and more nuanced understanding of ESG investment behavior in developing markets

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