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## Encouraging Innovation Through Leadership: The Contribution of Strategic Leadership, HPWS, and Employee Voice

### Humaira Arzoo

PhD Scholar, University Institute of Management Sciences, PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan  
[humairaarzoo022@gmail.com](mailto:humairaarzoo022@gmail.com)

### Dr. Zia ur Rehman

Assistant Professor, University Institute of Management Sciences, PMAS Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Pakistan  
[zia.rehman@uaar.edu.pk](mailto:zia.rehman@uaar.edu.pk)

### Muhammad Aarsal Latif

Lecturer, Department of Management Science, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University (STMU), Islamabad, Pakistan  
[arsal\\_latif.fssh@stmu.edu.pk](mailto:arsal_latif.fssh@stmu.edu.pk)

### Dr. Maseeh Ullah

Assistant Professor, AUSOM (Tourism & Hospitality), Air University, Islamabad, Pakistan  
[maseehullah@au.edu.pk](mailto:maseehullah@au.edu.pk)

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to elucidate the connection among high-performance work systems, strategic leadership, and employees' innovative work behavior. This study further investigates the bridging role of employee voice in the association between high-performance work systems, strategic leadership, and employees' innovative work behavior. A quantitative research design was employed, and cross sectional data were gathered through survey questionnaires administered to middle-line and top management in the telecommunications sector across major cities in Pakistan. SPSS was utilized to analyze the respondents' feedback. The findings suggest that both strategic leadership and high-performance work systems are associated with a positive employee attitude that fosters innovative work behavior, with employee voice mediating these relationships. The present study advances existing works by linking previous research on strategic leadership and high-

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performance work systems, exploring how positive leadership styles and well-designed systems influence employee performance and promote innovative behavior. Organizations can leverage these findings to enhance employee and organizational outcomes, raising awareness among employers about their workplace behaviors and their impact on employees, as informed by social exchange theory.

**Keywords:** High performance work system (HPWS), Strategic Leadership (SL), Employee Voice(EV), Innovative work behavior(IWB),Social Exchange Theory

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## INTRODUCTION

An employee's innovative work behavior involves the crafting of new ideas, streamlining activities, and increasing interrelations (Shojaei & Siuki, 2014). In the contemporary era of competition, the achievement of business sustainability from employee participation in innovative work behavior (IWB) is important (Nassar & Faloye, 2015). Businesses can encourage innovation by offering appropriate working conditions, well-defined roles, and proper supervision. Employee voice helps in creating control, participation, innovation, and effort for strategic competitive domination. Such systems need to define innovative work behavior systematically to set specific goals and standards.

Social Exchange Theory claims that the social behaviour and interactions of individuals stem from an exchange process that is motivated by the capture of rewards and the avoidance of costs (Rana, et al., 2021; Khan, et al., 2021; Sarmad, 2016). This theory, advanced by George Homans in 1958, posits that people base their actions on past experiences and evaluate the outcomes of their behavior legally to shape future actions to be more beneficial and less costly. Social exchanges are positively or negatively reinforced. In organizational settings, however, reciprocity is paramount. People have a tendency to participate in exchanges that are likely to be favorable and shun those that are likely to be unfavorable (Shoaib, et al., 2024; Zainab, et al., 2023). Such norms of reciprocity differ depending on the kind of relationship in question. In the case of interactions that are short term or less personal, immediate and corresponding exchanges or repayment of a previously lent money or goods is anticipated. On the other hand, long term relationships allow for reciprocity that is more relaxed and can be postponed because the belief is that while the reciprocal exchanges do occur, the exchanges will eventually balance out over time (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Wan & Antonucci, 2016).

In the context of enhancing work performance, High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) and strategic leadership nurture an organizational culture where employees feel appreciated, engaged, and motivated to give back in the form of proactive behaviors such as innovative work behavior (IWB) and employee voice. Social Exchange Theory states employees view investment in their skill enhancement, participation in decision-making, and well-structured reward mechanisms as positive actions worthy of a reciprocated response (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Strategic leadership promotes the perception of an organizational exchange through a vision-driven environment, which along with psychological safety enables employees to take

risks and share ideas without facing retaliation (Xing et al., 2022). Hence, employees are able to engage in IWB by proposing and implementing creative solutions, which means giving valued opinions knowing they will constructively influence and meaningfully impact organizational outcomes. Consequently, such positive reciprocal behaviors that strategic leadership and HPWS foster, serve to boost innovations and continuous improvement within the firm (Shah, et al., 2025; Haq, et al., 2024; Noor, et al., 2024).

Among HPWS practices, training, rewards, staffing, and career development are posited as performance – improving activities (Obeidat et al., 2016; Raineri, 2017; Sun et al., 2007). Such activities enable the retention of talented employees who are innovative and satisfied with their jobs (Karatepe, 2013; Karatepe and Avci, 2017; Kloutsiniotis and Mihail, 2020). HPWS has been found to foster innovative performance through the maintenance of innovative climate (Mumford, 2000; Lin, 2011). It is these practices that can distinguish the thought of innovative performance from the human resources (Fındıklı et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2017; Al-Ajlouni, 2021; Rawabdeh & Nawafleh, 2019). Although HPWS has its effects on employee innovation within firms, I wanted to explore its relationship particularly in the telecom sector.

HPWS facilitates employee voice (Ashiru et al., 2022). Employee voice is the articulation of an organizational goal, which calls for a motivation to innovate. In a positive sense, employee voice is an out-of-role communication presenting concerns regarding the organization (Le Pine and Van Dyne, 1998). Employee innovation and performance fully depend upon HPWS (Obeidat, 2016). Regardless of the attention, HPWS's impact concerning employee voice is still important to be studied because it is recognized for the role of innovation (Rasheed et al., 2017; Miao et al., 2020). It signifies the contribution in the process of delegation and impacts organizational outcomes (Miao et al., 2020; Selvaraj and Joseph, 2020; Rasheed et al., 2017). In telecom, employee voice could serve as a mediator between HPWS, strategic leadership, and innovative work behavior, which is new to study (Ali, et al., 2023; Yasmin, et al., 2020). Allowing employees to control how they execute their work and participate in decision-making is beneficial for the employees and their employers (Kim et al., 2010). Strategic leader possesses vision, tasks, objectives and policies with which he directs the organization towards performance (Kim and Mauborgne, 2002). They achieve objectives by strategically aligning the organization to the employee (Zia-ud-Din et al., 2017) thus fostering heightened performance. Strategic leaders have much discretionary authority concerning the strategic choices made and the direction and future of the firm. Some scholars have studied the effect of strategic leaders on risk-taking behavior (Cortes and Hermann, 2021; Simsek et al., 2018), strategic change (Quigley and Hambrick 2012), and corporate social responsibility (Petrenko et al., 2016). Innovation, in particular, stands out as a primary result, especially from the perspective of executives and board members who have received the most attention. Innovative work behavior is a more complex concept defined as the creative performance of recognizing problems, developing ideas, and executing, and also acclaiming them (Khan et al., 2024). Companies need managers to devise new

strategies in products and behaviors for attaining a competitive edge. A firm's innovation is largely influenced by its executives' demographic attributes (Barker and Mueller 2002), and their cognitive features (Nadkarni and Chen 2014) also by their leadership style (Elenkov et al. 2005) and personality (Gerstner et al. 2013) as well as the dynamics of the top management team (Arzubiaga et al. 2018).

The assisted workplace and Management Trust Framework Support System greatly affect motivation toward innovation as well as an employee's intrinsic motivation (Hanif, et al., 2021; Hanif, Naveed & Rehman, 2020). Quite a number of private and public organizations, however, still do not give room or opportunity to employees to provide feedback which further contributes to low levels of productivity and satisfaction (Dwomoh, 2012). There is an improvement in the levels of productivity in a given organization when employees are given room to express themselves freely without the risk of facing punitive measures. Between strategic leadership and innovation, there still exists much more effort required in integrating the two concepts where innovation is focused on more in depth study. This research investigates the role of strategic leadership and high-performance work systems on innovative work behavior through employee voice as a mediator. The need for information technology and telecommunication services in Pakistan is growing at rates never experienced before as a result of the shift in the world economy which gives the country a competitive edge internationally. The telecommunication sector has enormously aided the economy of Pakistan. Without the innovation of valuable platforms for consumers, companies will not be able to survive in the competitive market.

This research looks into the effects of high-performance work systems and strategic leadership on the employee innovative work behavior in the telecommunications sector, analyzing employee voice as a mediating factor in the said relationships. Another study designed by (Mazrouei et al., 2023) focused on how strategic leaders influence IWB, it was noted that relevant mediators of strategic leadership traits and innovation were seldom studied (Feng, et al., 2023; Hafeez, et al., 2011). In an attempt to uncover mediators of top level management and firm level outcomes – the “black box” (Wowak et al. 2017). In this case, the employee voice is assumed to mediate strategic leadership, high performance work system and innovative work behavior. This research analyzes High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS) to investigate their impact on employee voice, cooperation, innovative behavior at work in the telecommunications industry, with a specific focus on the roles of HPWS, strategic leadership, and employee voice on innovative work behavior. Innovation is essential for business and its competitiveness as innovative firms are more productive and experience growth (Cortes & Herrmann, 2021). Competitive advantage can effectively be sustained through innovative performance (Umer & Richard, 2018), thus raising the level of research concerning what factors of innovation exist within firms. Innovation research not looking into knowledge diversity and working conditions is incomplete. This study contributes to the literature by investigating the interaction of HPWS and strategic leadership in impacting IWB and employee voice, considering the telecom sector—an ever agile

and innovative industry. By applying Social Exchange Theory in the frame, the research sheds new light on the role of organizational practices in stimulating employee innovation in volatile and dynamic contexts.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Innovative Work Behavior**

The term “Innovative Work Behavior” has been defined in the context of innovation different explicitly. In most of the studies, however, it is described as the application of new and useful ideas which can potentially be used by a company in a revenue-generating capacity. According to De Jong and Den Hartog (2010) and Scott and Bruce (1994) in their studies, employees’ innovative activities impact positively the innovation performance of a firm. Therefore, it makes sense that innovation driven firms and other such organizations need to consider their employees as vital resources because these employees are the ones who pose creative and innovative solutions for the survival of the firm. West (1990) defined work behavior innovations as the generation, promotion and realization of ideas within a workgroup for the benefit of performance on a role, the group, or the organization. Novel work behavior is often linked (or mistakenly paired) to creative behavior wherein it involves the formulation of new ideas (or creative behaviors). Aside from idea generation, **\*\*Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)\*\*** also entails recombination or important implementation that adds value to an organization’s business processes, services, or products (Shalley et al., 2004).

Janssen, (2000), have attempted to describe innovative work behavior in terms of three to four defining actions For this study, we will concentrate on three defining actions. As suggested, “idea generation” is one of them where employees provide solutions to business challenges, or enhance existing products and services by proposing innovative ideas. The second cluster of actions associated with idea generation is termed idea promotion. An employee in this category would promote or actively support previously proposed novel ideas related to the company’s products, services or even operations. As cited previously, the last group of behaviors are attempts of “idea implementation”. This encompasses actions aimed at actual operationalization of plans, which frequently involves developing a working version or a prototype that can be employed in an organization or presented to clients for evaluation (Asmawi and Rahim, 2015).

### **Strategic leadership and Innovative work behavior**

IWB is greatly influenced through strategic leadership (Alshahrani et al, .2025). Strategic leadership is one of the most significant notion because of the role and functions of leaders relative to the organization’s vision, goals, and strategies (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). A strategic leader is capable not only of formulating long-term plans, but also of altering those plans as necessary due to changes in the outside environment. Some of the strategic leadership traits are foresight, innovation, sound decision-making, change management, and talent management (Ireland & Hitt, 2005). Research indicates that strategic leadership positively influences organizational performance (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Through expedient strategic decision

making and resource allocation, leaders are able to not only guide an organization through change, but also make it more competitive (Ahmad, et al., 2021; Ali, et al., 2020; Ahmad, 2018). The linkage between strategic leadership and employee actions is increasingly gaining focus from researchers. Strategic Leadership and Employee Creativity: Strategic leadership emphasizes creativity within an organization because such creativity is important in establishing and maintaining a competitive edge within the marketplace (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Strategic leadership enhances creativity by changing the organizational culture, providing the required resources, and putting the right policies in place. One path for strategic leaders to foster innovation is by empowering personnel to take necessary actions and improving the surrounding conditions for creative actions. Strategic leadership is a key driver for fostering innovative behavior among employees. Multiple leadership styles—paternalistic, inclusive, transformational, empowering, digital, and visionary—employ various strategies, such as LMX, psychological safety, job crafting, and work engagement, to boost creativity. In today's dynamic business environment, organizations need to enhance these leadership qualities to better foster innovative work behavior and improve overall organizational performance.

H1: Strategic leadership positively affects Innovative Work Behavior.

#### **High-Performance Work System and Innovative Work Behavior**

It has been noted that high-performance work systems (HPWS) substantially impact innovative work behavior (IWB) of employees via different methods. With Social Capital Theory as the basis, HPWS influences IWB directly and indirectly through social capital and knowledge-sharing behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Creativity as a form of IWB has been observed to function as a mediator between HPWS and IWB in SMEs (Do & Shipton, 2019). There are several gaps with the assessment of the impact of HPWS on IWB. Even though HPWS is generally beneficial, its impact is not that straightforward, and other factors such as learning goal orientation and psychological safety can moderate the relationship (Do & Shipton, 2019; Miao et al., 2020). While HPWS is effective in enabling knowledge sharing, enhancing social capital, and fostering an environment conducive to creativity, there are numerous organizational and individual factors that can offset its effectiveness in promoting IWB (Caniëls & Veld, 2019). In any case, HPWS assist greatly in nurturing IWB within organizations. Further investigations into these factors and their interplay could greatly contribute to understanding the HPWS-IWB dynamics across various settings (Kayani, et al., 2023; Khan, et al., 2021).

It has been documented that the use of HPWS enhances IWB, yet this is influenced, in part, by individual factors. It is known that personality traits and other individual aspects affect the workings of HPWS on IWB. Two such traits are conscientiousness and openness to experience, which seem to interact with organizational tenure in affecting IWB. Woods et al. (2018) observed that highly conscientious employees tend to be less innovative with longer tenure while employees high in openness to experience tend to generate more ideas as tenure increases (Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024; Khan, haq & Naseer, 2022).

H2: High-Performance Work System positively affects Innovative Work Behavior.

## **Employee Voice**

Employee voice, a crucial aspect of organizational communication, has been extensively studied across various disciplines, revealing its multifaceted nature and significant impact on workplace dynamics (Mowbray et al., 2015). Recent research has highlighted the importance of organizational conditions that promote employee voice, including participation in decision-making, consultation, information sharing, and formal policies regulating employees' freedom of speech (Mazzei et al., 2025). Research indicates that the innovative work behavior of employees is positively influenced by employee voice, as workers who feel that their contributions matter are more inclined to suggest and put into practice ideas that enhance the organization (Chen et al. 2020). In contradistinction, within HPWS and strategic leadership cultivated contexts, where employees are supported, employee voice becomes an accelerant of innovation and helps sustain the environment of trust and continuous improvement. (LMX) (Liang & Yeh, 2020). The rapport among paternalistic management and advanced work conduct is mediated by LMX and employee voice, with different dimensions of leadership having varying effects (Nazir et al., 2021). Organizations are increasingly recognizing the need to address barriers to voice, as demonstrated by a case study in an academic medical center that implemented a structured intervention program to encourage voice (Dixon-Woods et al., 2019). As the notion of employee contribution continues to evolve, researchers are developing more nuanced classifications of voice behavior, considering dimensions such as change beneficiary, approach, and time orientation (Chou & Barron, 2016; Kim et al., 2023).

### **Strategic leadership and employee voice**

It has already been documented that strategic leadership has the greatest influence on employee voice behavior (Kuo et al., 2021). Moving from Hosseini and Ferreira's study (2023), as a type of strategic leadership, ethical leadership can nurture an environment that facilitates innovation, ideas, and concerns by encouraging employees to speak up (Ali, et al., 2021; Muhammad, et al., 2020; Farooq, et al., 2019). Strategic leadership enhances trust and openness within the workplace, which increases employee voice and yields organizational benefits (Prakasha, et al., 2024). Due to its multidisciplinary nature, emerging strategic leadership research, especially in regards to inclusiveness, has demonstrated positive impacts on promotive and prohibitive voice behaviors (Qi & Liu, 2017; Qi et al., 2023). Silence is no longer golden in this approach (Ali, et al., 2023; Yasmin, et al., 2020). In addition, digital leadership, a relatively new area, has been found to foster employee voice behaviors through empowerment and work engagement (Yang et al., 2024). In an interesting turn of events, there is a gap within the relationship between strategic leadership and employee voice, wherein organizational justice perceptions subvert the positive effects of inclusive leadership on employee voice (Qi et al., 2023). Different forms of strategic leadership, arguing from ethical, paternalistic, inclusive to digital leadership, have impacted employee voice behavior.

**H3: Strategic leadership positively affects employee voice**

### **High performance work system and employee voice**

Recent literature on employee voice in particular and organizational outcomes in general has examined high-performance work systems (HPWS). It is argued that HPWS could positively impact EV, which in turn aids managerial innovation and performance (Badru et al., 2024). HPWS practices aim at improving employees' capability, motivation, and opportunity to engage in organizational activities at various levels in the hierarchy, thereby fostering voice behavior (Mowbray et al., 2021). There is evidence that HPWS positively drives both styles of employee power of speech – favorable and restraining– and acts as a partial mediator between the two in the context of employee innovative behavior (Miao et al., 2020). There is, however, some contradicting primary research that suggests the link between HPWS and employee voice is more complex than expected (Ashiru et al., 2022). The capacity of HPWS to enhance voice behavior may depend on factors like psychological safety that moderate the connection amid HPWS and promotive opinion (Miao et al., 2020). All in all, although there is a wide agreement that HPWS impacts employee voice, the systems' impacts are influenced by intricate processes and precise interactions. As suggested by previous literature (Shahzad et al., 2019; Mowbray et al., 2020).

**H4: High performance work system positively affects employee voice**

#### **Employee voice and innovative work behavior**

Research has established antecedents of Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) and there exists a positive relationship between “Employee Voice” (EV) and organizational metrics such as creativity and innovation (Zhou and George 2001). While these outcomes are regarded as proxies of IWB, they do not capture the full essence of the multidimensional concept of IWB. Recent literature review did not encounter research specifically evaluating EV as an antecedent of IWB. Haq, Bilal, and Qureshi (2020) nonetheless, research analyzing the IWB and its other similar behaviors seemed to yield coherent results. Chen et al (2020) studied the relationship between voice and creativity and reported that employees were more willing to voice concerns under ethical leadership. Selvaraj and Joseph (2020) noted that EV had a positive relationship with innovation environment with stronger impact for those employees who had good rapport with supervisors and trust in senior management. Guzman and Espejo (2019) studied promotive voice and management innovation and reported a positive relationship while highlighting this connection strengthens when there is a perception of low will to silence discussions. Chen et al(2020) studied voice and innovative behaviors at different organizational levels while Ng and Feldman (2012) demonstrated the positive influence of employee voice on organizational creativity and innovation performance.

**H5: Employee voice positively affects innovative work behavior**

#### **Mediation of Employee Voice among Strategic Leadership and Innovative work behavior.**

Research has examined employee voice's mediating role between strategic leadership and innovative work behavior (Ng and Feldman, 2012). Ethical leadership positively influences employee voice, enhancing innovative behavior through psychological empowerment and innovative climate (Nazir et al., 2021). Employee voice mediates between strategic leadership and innovative behavior, influenced by

leadership style, organizational climate, and employee empowerment. Future research could examine other leadership styles' impact on this process (Alobeidli et al., 2024; Cai et al., 2018; Jada et al., 2019).

The connection between SL and IWB has received attention in organizational studies with employee voice being proposed as a possible mediator in this connection. Social exchange theory helps explain these interactions. It has been shown that strategic leadership has a positive effect on worker voice behavior and subsequently on innovative work behavior (IWB). A study on protective leadership, which falls under strategic leadership, discovered that LMX and employee voice acted as a serial mediators of the former moral leadership and innovative work behavior relationship (Nazir et al., 2021). A study on inclusive leadership demonstrated that psychological empowerment acts as a moderator between LMX and voice making the relationship positive with role clarity enhancing this indirect relationship (Jiang et al., 2022). This captures some of the dynamics that govern the phenomena of employee voice and consequently innovative behavior (Sultana, Ahmed, & Imran, 2024; Khan, haq & Naseer, 2022). Recent work shows that an employee's voice behavior mediates the impact of strategic leadership on innovative work behavior. Leaders who nurture a culture of open communication and active participation are more likely to be innovative themselves. This correlates with social exchange theory as employees offered support and openness by their leaders are likely to respond with appreciation through voice and innovation. One should not overlook other factors like psychological empowerment and role clarity that might affect the relationship (Jiang et al., 2022; Nazir et al., 2021).

**H6:** Employee voice significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and innovative work behavior.

**Employee Voice mediates the relationship between HPWS and Innovative work behavior.**

High-performance work systems (HPWS) have been shown to positively influence employee innovative behavior through various mechanisms. One such mechanism is employee voice, which acts as a mediator between HPWS and innovative work behavior. SET offers a theoretical foundation for accepting this affiliation, suggesting that when organizations invest in HPWS, employees reciprocate with increased voice behaviors and innovation (Miao et al., 2020). Research has established that HPWS can foster both participative and restrictive voice behaviors among employees. Advocative voice contains advising enhancements and new philosophies, while restrictive voice emphasizes on expressing concerns about harmful practices. This mediation effect highlights the importance of creating setting where workers feel contented articulating their thoughts and worries, leading to increased innovation. Interestingly, the relationship between HPWS, employee voice, and groundbreaking behavior is not uniform across all contexts. Psychological safety has been found to moderate the connection between HPWS and EV, as well as the bridging role of EV between HPWS and worker innovative behavior (Miao et al., 2020). This suggests that organizations should not only implement HPWS but also foster a psychologically safe environment to maximize the benefits of staff

involvement and novelty. The literature supports the intervening part of employee voice in the association among HPWS and IWB. By implementing HPWS, organizations can encourage workers participation. This results to increased advanced behavior. Future research could explore additional background issues that may impact this affiliation and examine the long-term effects of HPWS on EV and innovation.

**H7:** Employee voice significantly mediates the relationship between HPWS and innovative work behavior.

**Conceptual Framework**

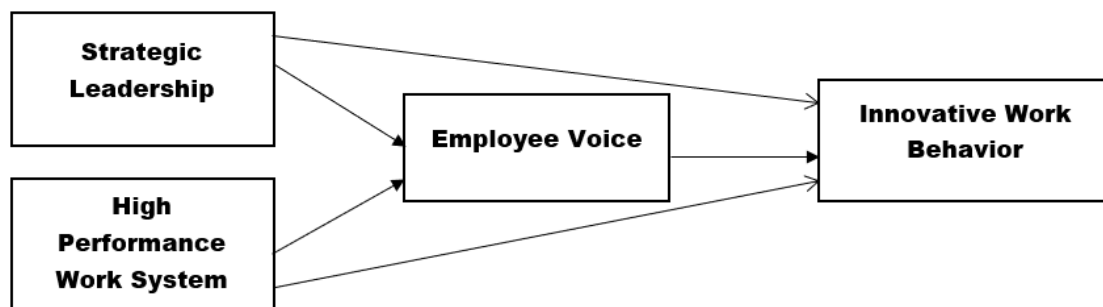


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

**METHODOLOGY**

This research adopts a deductive approach, aiming at verifying theory and using a quantitative method of research. The relationship among strategic leadership, high performance work system, and innovative work behavior in the telecom sector was analyzed using the cause-and-effect model through deductive reasoning. This research also analyzes the mediating role of employee voice in the relationship of SL, HPWS, and IWB. A research philosophy that relies on observable data, known as the positivist approach, is employed in this study. In this study, data was gathered using a self-administered structured questionnaire from employees of the telecommunication sector in five major cities of Pakistan (Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, and Multan) through purposive sampling. The respondents selected were middle and upper-level employees of the telecom sector in Pakistan, and out of the total usable responses, 247 (70%) were utilized through quantitative research methodology. The data analysis includes regression, correlation and descriptive. Correlation analysis was done to determine the relationship among the variables’ magnitude. The result are represented in the tables that follow.

**Demographics of Respondents**

**Table 1: Demographic analysis**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	154	63.4
Female	93	36.6
<b>Experience</b>		
1-5	29	11.7
6-10	110	44.5

	11-15	44	17.8
	16-20	36	14.6
	21-25	21	8.5
	26-30	7	2.8
<b>Age</b>			
	20-25	29	11.7
	26-30	115	46.6
	31-35	42	17.0
	36-40	29	11.7
	41-45	19	7.8
	46-50	13	5.2
<b>Marital status</b>			
	Single	139	56.3
	Married	108	43.7
<b>Income</b>			
	25000-45000	59	23.9
	46000-65000	98	39.7
	66000-85000	67	27.1
	86000 and above	23	9.3
<b>Education</b>			
	Intermediate	58	23.9
	Graduation	156	64.2
	Masters	29	11.9

Table 1 depicts the information of employees who partake in this study. This research includes a total of 247 employees. The majority of respondents skewed towards being male, and those in the 26-30 age bracket, unmarried, with an income between 46000 to 65000 and graduates were the most dominant respondents.

#### Reliability Analysis

Table 2 depicts the alpha reliability of variables. All variables possessed Cronbach's alpha at a threshold level of 0.70 or more. Also, strategic leadership ( $\alpha=0.878$ ), high performance work system ( $\alpha=0.921$ ), employee voice ( $\alpha=0.883$ ), and innovative work behavior ( $\alpha=0.739$ ) confirmed with their respective alpha reliability values.

**Table 2: Reliability Analysis**

	No of items	Alpha reliability
SL	21	0.878
HPWS	18	0.921
EV	08	0.883
IWB	09	0.739

Note: SL=Strategic leadership, HPWS=High Performance work system, EV=Employee voice, IWB= Innovative work behavior

#### Descriptive statistics:

Table 3 displays the main variable of the study in terms of its normality and

descriptiveness along with their respective Skewness and Kurtosis values. The strategic leadership value carried mean and standard deviation value of (M=3.48, STD=0.51) while high performance work system (M=3.50, STD=0.35) employee voice (M=3.62, STD=0.36) and innovative work behavior (M=3.78, STD=0.39). In addition to that, the mean value range from the lower 3.48(strategic leadership) to the upper range of 3.72(employee voice). The standard deviation value range from 0.34(high performance work system) to 0.31(innovative work behavior). According to George (2011), the data considered normally distributed for the Skewness and Kurtosis values fall within the +/-2 range.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics**

	Mean(M)	Std Deviation (STD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
SL	3.478	0.513	-0.897	0.853
HPWS	3.5079	0.347	-1.621	1.023
EV	3.7221	0.359	-1.201	1.858
IWB	3.7169	0.391	-1.633	1.726

Note: SL=Strategic leadership, HPWS=High Performance work system, EV=Employee voice, IWB= Innovative work behavior

**Correlation analysis**

In order to assess the relationships among variables in this study, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed through SPSS. The values of the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of the main constructs of the study are given in the table below. All relationships between the aforementioned constructs are significant and are within the correlation level accepted. The results show that both SL (strategic leadership) and HPWS (high-performance work system) positively contribute to IWB(innovative work behavior) SL (strategic leadership) HPWS (high-performance work system) where  $r=0.384^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $(r=0.331^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01)$ . SL and HPWS also positively correlate to EV (Employee Voice) where  $(r=0.340^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01)$ ,  $(r=0.427^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01)$ . Furthermore EV significantly positively correlates to other variables with IWB where  $(r=0.369^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01)$ .

**Table 4: Correlation analysis**

	Exp	Age	incom e	Educatio n	SL	HPW S	EV	IW B
Experienc e	1							
Age	0.181*	1						
Income	0.038	0.128*	1					
Education	0.023*	0.163	0.146	1				
SL	0.034	0.018	0.028	0.069	1			
HPWS	-0.043	-0.067	0.048	-0.112	0.349*	1		
EV	0.023	-	0.063	-0.093	0.340*	0.427*	1	

		0.020			*	*		
IWB	-0.053	-	0.080	-0.011	0.384*	0.331*	0.369*	1
		0.057			*	*	*	

Note: SL=Strategic leadership, HPWS=High Performance work system, EV=Employee voice, IWB= Innovative work behavior, \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Regression analysis

#### Relationship of SL and HPWS with IWB:

Table 5 contains the values obtained from the initial calculation where SL and System HPWS were regressed on Innovative Work Behavior IWB. The findings (refer to table 5) reveal that SL ( $\beta = 0.143$ ,  $t = 4.643$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and HPWS ( $\beta = 0.145$ ,  $t = 3.371$ ,  $p < 0.010$ ) both have positive and statistically significant regressive impacts on IWB which confirms H1 and H2 of the analysis. From the R square result, it can be seen that SL and HPWS jointly account for 23.4 percent of the variation in IWB.

**Table 5: Regression analysis of SL and HPWS with IWB**

	B	t-value	p-value	R square
(Constant)	2.053	6.607	0.000	0.234
SL	0.143	4.643	0.001	
HPWS	0.145	3.371	0.010	

#### Relationship of SL and HPWS with EV

As seen in Table 6, it displays the outcome for the second step where SL (strategic leadership) and HPWS (high performance work system) were regressed on EV (Employee voice). The outcome of table 6 indicates SL ( $\beta=0.209$ ,  $t=3.656$ ,  $p<0.010$ ) and also HPWS ( $\beta=0.212$ ,  $t=5.737$ ,  $P<0.001$ ) respectively confirm that indeed EV was influenced which substantiate H3 and H4 of the study decisively. The R square value indicates that SL and HPWS undertake to explain 18.30 percent of the variation in EV to substantiate hypothesis. The results SL and HPWS have a significant effect on the outcome.

**Table 6: Regression analysis of SL and HPWS with EV**

	B	t-value	p-value	R square
(Constant)	2.178	8.244	0.000	0.183
SL	0.209	3.656	0.010	
HPWS	0.212	5.737	0.001	

#### Relationship EV with IWB:

According to Table 7, the SL and HPWS R square value accounts for an 18.5 percent variation in EV. In the third step to test hypothesis 5 (refer to table 7), EV (Employee voice) was regressed on HPWS (High performance work system) and the results were below. So as per the results of the table, voice of employee has a positive and significant relationship with innovative work behavior ( $\beta =0.545$ ,  $t=3.140$ ,  $p<0.010$ ), thus supporting H 5 of the study.

**Table 7: Regression analysis of EV with IWB**

	B	t-value	p-value	R square
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(COnstant)	2.198	8.242	0.000	0.185
EV	0.545	3.140	0.010	

**Mediating role of EV:**

The results on Table 8 illustrate the mediating influence of Employee voice. The results on table 8 show that the direct impact of SL and HPWS on IWB is also significant ( $\beta = 0.053$ ,  $t=3.489$ ,  $p<0.000$ ), ( $\beta = 0.287$ ,  $t=3.102$ ,  $p<0.003$ ) and so is the indirect impact of SL and HPWS on IWB through (Employee voice) was also significant ( $\beta = 0.228$ ,  $t=3.349$ ,  $p<0.000$ ). This shows that Employee voice is a partial mediator in the linkage between strategic leadership and innovative work behavior and high performance work system and innovative work behavior. So to this extent, it is favorable to the H6 and H7. In addition, the R square shows the amount of variance in innovative work behavior which is explained by the two constructs is 28.6% with employee voice being the moderator where both strategic leadership and high performance work system interact.

**Table 8: Mediation analysis**

	B	t-value	p-value	R square
(Constant)	1.343	4.976	0.000	0.286
SL	0.053	3.489	0.000	
HPWS	0.287	3.102	0.003	
EV	0.228	3.349	0.000	

**Mediation role of Employee voice between SL and IWB**

Table 9 illustrates that both SL significantly affect IWB and EV (SL influences IWB,  $\beta =0.278$ ,  $t=5.23$ ; SL influences EV,  $\beta =0.15$ ,  $t=3.59$ ) and EV influences IWB ( $\beta =0.28$ ,  $t=4.12$ ) as well. To assess the mediation effect of EV between SL and IWB, the PROCESS technique was applied through SPSS. The analysis output showed that the effect of SL on IWB is both direct and indirect was significant ( $\beta =0.15$ ,  $t=4.85$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), ( $\beta =0.195$ ,  $p < 0.00$ ). The finding indicates EV has a partial mediating role in SL-IWB relationship. Also, the outcome of Normal theory test revealed ( $\beta =0.195$ ,  $p< 0.00$ ,  $z=3.765$ ), with bootstrap method at 95% confidence interval (LL=0.145, UL=0.195) indicates EV partially mediates the SL and IWB relationship. The R square value indicates that SL accounts for 12% of the variance in IWB when EV is considered.

**Table 9: Results for mediation role of Employee voice**

Direct and indirect effect						
Dependent: IWB(Y), Independent: SL(X), Mediator: EV(M)						
Total effect and direct effect		$\beta$	SE	p	t	R <sup>2</sup>
Part1:	Outcome	0.15	0.01	.000	3.59	0.05
EV(effect of X on M)						
SL						
Part2:	Outcome	IWB $\beta$	SE	p	t	R <sup>2</sup>
	(effect of M and X on Y)	0.28	0.04	0.01	4.12	
	EV	0.15		0.01	4.85	0.12

SL						
Part3: Outcome	IWB	$\beta$	SE	p	T	
(total effect model) SL						0.124
		0.278	0.04	0.00	5.23	
<b>indirect effect</b>						
Normal theory/Sobel test		$\beta$	SE	P	Z	
SL→ EV→ IWB		0.195	0.024	0.00	3.765	
<b>indirect effect (Bootstrap method)</b>						
Bootstrapping	Indirect effects	LLCI	at95%	ULCI	At95%	
SL→ EV→ IWB		0.195	.0142		0.145	

Note: N=247, 2,000-bootstrapping sample size, LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval confidence interval, ULCI=Upper Limit Confidence Interval, DEPV=Dependent variable INDV= Independent variables, MEDIV=Mediating variable SL=Strategic leadership, IWB= Innovative work behavior, EV=Employee voice.

#### Mediation role of employee voice between HPWS and IWB

From Table 10, we can infer that HPWS deeply affects both IWB and EV as in results show ( $\beta=0.31$ ,  $t=6.23$ ) and ( $\beta=0.34$ ,  $t=6.97$ ) respectively. Also, EV has lof a significant impact on IWB ( $\beta=.22$ ,  $t=3.53$ ). The mediating effect of EV on the relationship between HPWS and IWB was tested using the PROCESS tool in SPSS. The analysis showed that HPWS had a significant direct effect on IWB ( $\beta =0.25$ ,  $p<0.00$ ), and an indirect effect of HPWS through EV with ( $\beta=0.132$ ,  $p<0.00$ ). Thus, the result indicates that EV partially mediates the relationship between HPWS and IWB. Moreover, EV also partially mediates the relationship between HPWS and IWB supported by the Normal Theory Test ( $\beta=0.132$ ,  $p<0.00$ ) and Bootstrapping Method at 95% Confidence Interval (LL=0.132, UL=0.257). The value of R square shows that 12% of IWB is explained by HPWS in the presence of EV.

**Table 10: Results for mediation role of employee voice**

Direct and indirect effect						
Dependent: IWB(Y), Independent: HPWS(X), Mediator: EV(M)						
Total effect and direct effect		$\beta$	SE	p	t	R <sup>2</sup>
Part1: Outcome (effect of X on M)	EV	0.34	0.03	0.001	6.97	0.15
SL						
Part2: Outcome (effect of M and X on Y)	IWB	$\beta$	SE	p	t	R <sup>2</sup>
		0.22	0.04	0.00	3.53	
	EV	0.25		0.00	3.23	0.12
HPWS						
Part3: Outcome (total effect model)	IWB	$\beta$	SE	p	t	
		0.31	0.02	0.01	6.23	0.41

HPWS					
<b>indirect effect</b>					
Normal theory/Sobel test	$\beta$	SE	P	Z	
HPWS→ EV→ IWB	0.132	0.03	0.00	3.708	
<b>indirect effect (Bootstrap method)</b>					
Bootstrapping	Indirect effects	LLCI at95%		ULCI At95%	
HPWS→ EV→ IWB	.0132	.0232		0.257	

Note: N=247, 2,000-bootstrapping sample size, LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval confidence interval, ULCI=Upper Limit Confidence Interval, DEPV=Dependent variable INDV= Independent variables, MEDIV=Mediating variable, IWB = innovative work behavior, HPWS=High performance work system, EV=Employee voice.

Hypothesis	Remarks
H1: Strategic leadership positively affects Innovative Work Behavior.	Accepted
H2: High-Performance Work System positively affects Innovative Work Behavior.	Accepted
H3:Strategic leadership positively affects employee voice	Accepted
H4: High performance work system positively affects employee voice	Accepted
H5: Employee voice positively affects innovative work behavior	Accepted
H6: Employee voice significantly mediates the relationship between strategic leadership and innovative work behavior.	Accepted
H7: Employee voice significantly mediates the relationship between HPWS and innovative work behavior.	Accepted

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research fills a gap under Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) concerning organizational novelty and performance in the telecom sector by examining the sequel of HPWS and SL on innovation via voice behavior. The outcome of this research confirms that hypothesis H1 was validated, which states that strategic leadership has a profound impact on enhancing innovative work behavior (IWB) on employees within the telecom sector. Strategic leaders not only set a powerful vision, but also ensure that organizational resources are provided towards the goals of innovation as well as nurturing an atmosphere that promotes risk-taking and creativity. Such leadership creates a nurturing climate where employees can confidently try out and implement novel ideas. The continuation of this study hypothesis H1 supports findings from other recent investigations that strategic leadership is one of the prime drivers of innovation for employees in highly complex and competitive telecommunication markets (Elrehail et al., 2023). Khan et al. (2024)

posited that strategic leaders facilitate IWB by providing autonomy, fostering psychological safety, and reinforcing learning behaviors. These findings suggest that leaders enhance trust and participation, which is very critical for risk-taking innovation (Alshahrani, et al., 2024). These results further highlight the need for strategic investment by telecommunications corporations in leadership training on vision articulation, empowerment, and innovation-oriented decision making.

The findings of this research confirm H2 that telecommunication employees' Innovative Work Behavior (IWB) is positively impacted by High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS). With regard to selective staffing and extensive training, merit-based reward systems, and participation in decision making, HPWS practices give employees the motivation and skills, as well as the leeway to devise and implement plans, and the autonomy to execute those ideas. This supports the AMO model which says that with the presence of enabling HR policies, employees will exhibit innovative behavior. This is further corroborated by other studies: HPWS enhances innovations and creativity of employees through empowering them psychologically and knowledge sharing (Karim and Basit., 2024; Rasheed et al., 2024). In addition, studies show that under the influence of HPWS, an organization's culture is enhanced by risk-taking, innovation, and proactive problem-solving, which are essential in fast-evolving industries such as telecom (Koo et al., 2023). Therefore, HPWS are more than just operational guidelines; they are tools for strategic innovation that enable telecom firms in volatile markets to gain competitive advantage.

The results of the study indicate that Hypothesis H3 and H4 are proved suggests that both (SL) and (HPWS) have an effect on (IWB), indicating the significance of both extensive leadership and effective human resource policy on innovation in the telecommunications sector. Strategic leaders at HPWS have a clear vision and set the enabling conditions through which employees are motivated to innovate. In addition, HPWS empowers employees with the necessary skills and incentives, thereby fueling innovation. The synergistic effect of SL and HPWS results in the creation of a conducive environment which motivates employees to innovate and harness their potential. This is in line with Jia et al. (2023) who argue that SL fosters an innovative organizational climate with HPWS serving as structures that support innovation at the individual level, or micro-innovation. Kocamaz (2022) explain that the combination of SL approaches and strategically defined HR frameworks enhanced IWB, especially in fast-paced dynamic knowledge-intensive sectors like telecommunications. These findings suggest that to maintain and strengthen innovation, telecommunication firms need to embed the development of strategic leadership into the design and execution of high-performance human resource systems.

As proven in the H5, the employee voice greatly enhances innovative work behavior (IWB), thus, construing the open communication and participation as cornerstones of individual level innovation within the organization. Employees, when offered a safe and supportive work environment, tend to express their concerns and ideas which motivate them to partake in proactive behaviors such as idea generation, experimentation, and implementation. This supports the emerging view of the

employee voice as an innovative psychological and structural device, fostering innovation through the empowerment of employees (Azevedo et al., 2021; Rasheed et al., 2023). Moreover, voice behavior enhances employees sense of ownership and commitment which further increases the employee motivation to innovate (Ajmal et al., 2025). Studies also show that environments which promote voice are trust and psychologically safer which are some of the fundamental requirements needed to encourage risk-taking and creative problem-solving (Jin, et al., 2022; Han, et al., 2022). This means that telecom firms looking to promote innovation must create policies that listen to, act upon, and value employee input, transforming voice into a source of continuous improvement and innovation.

The results of the study indicated that H6 and H7 has been confirmed that employee voice mediates the linkage between strategic leadership and high-performance work systems (HPWS) with innovative work behavior (IWB) underscores the importance of employee participation in actualizing organizational resources and leadership into innovation. This finding implies that although strategic leadership alongside HPWS establishes the employee-driven innovation framework, it is only activated by the employees' voice, which is the active expression of concepts, opinions, and worries by the employees that is commonly frameworks of innovative behaviors. Strategic leaders nurture a safe environment for dialogue to foster climate where employees feel free to provide creativity and problem-solving suggestions (Neuenfeldt & Sulíková, 2024). In the same manner, HPWS motivates employees through granting them autonomy, training, and participation in decision making, therefore further increasing their propensity to suggest new ideas (Al-Ajlouni, 2021; Afsar & Umrani, 2023). New studies have further validated this comprehensive perspective, revealing that employee voice serves as an actionable mediating mechanism through which HR and leadership relations drive innovation (Rasheed et al., 2023; Li et al., 2022). Such results highlight the need for telecom companies to devise holistic frameworks where organizational support from leadership and structured HR systems are integrated with responsive and validating mechanisms aligned with employee feedback to unlock innovation potential throughout the workforce.

### **Practical implications**

The telecom industry must create a distinct resource base that will provide it a competitive edge based on innovation. This study demonstrates how strategic leadership and HPWS adoption can create a distinct pool of employee voice behaviors that can encourage more creative activity from staff members. This information can be used by telecom management to prioritize areas of investment, such human resources, in order to foster more creative behavior from their staff. The results also corroborate the linkages between HRM, voice, and innovation both theoretically and empirically. The telecom industry should also be aware that while voice behaviors aid in the creation and marketing of novel goods, they have to be founded on scholarly decisions, which necessitate ongoing training and progress for staff members. Prior studies have attempted to examine voice habits from the standpoint of organizational citizenship and have primarily linked them to extra-role behaviors. Nonetheless, this

study offers a solid framework for the telecom industry to apply HRM procedures to formally build and exploit voice habits in order to raise employee innovation. Additionally, this conclusion is crucial for academics to reconsider the idea that voice behavior is additional in roles.

### **Limitations and Future Recommendation**

The present study illustrated that strategic leadership is vital for shaping employees' innovative work behaviors and for fostering employee voice that, in turn, enhances productivity and irrespective feeling of control. However, there are some limitations to this work. One of the limitations is this research investigates the influence of strategic leaders and HPWS on IWB of employees which has been verified using a sample of respondents, from the Top and Middle Level Managers of the telecom sector in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad in Pakistan. More research can be done in other cities to determine the scope of SL and HPWS in the entire country. It is recommended that future studies apply a longitudinal design or increase the sample size to explore this issue. Future studies could add more intervening and controlling variables to further explore the similar HRM-performance link. From now on, research work studies should not emphasis solely on explanations for "revealing the black box," nevertheless need to address other strategic concerns for voice behaviors and innovation. The impact of strategic leadership and high-performance work system can be investigated in other industries.

### **Conclusion**

The study underscores the significant impact of strategic leadership and high-performance work systems (HPWS) on fostering innovative work behavior (IWB) within the telecom sector. Strategic leaders show a vital part in shaping a vision-driven culture that encourages experimentation and calculated risk-taking, while HPWS creates an empowering environment through practices like training, performance management, and participative decision-making. Together, these elements create fertile ground for innovation. However, this relationship is further strengthened through the mediating role of employee voice, which operates as a channel for employees to share ideas, concerns, and suggestions. When personnel sense heard and appreciated, more probably to engage in behaviors that drive innovation, making employee voice a pivotal link between leadership, HR practices, and innovation.

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