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# EXPLORING THE MULTIFACETED LINK BETWEEN MOTIVATIONAL ANTECEDENTS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH THE LENS OF ENGAGEMENT

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#### Abstract

The workforce of any organization is its core asset, which is rare and non-imitable. If it is nurtured, harnessed and engage properly organization can reap a lot of benefits. Organizations operating in the telecom sector of Pakistan are operating in a highly competitive environment. The aim of this study is to empirically the relationship between HRM practices, motivating work designs and employee performance with employee engagement playing the role of the mediator. There are twenty five hundred employees of telecom sector who lives in a geographical area of Islamabad/Rawalpindi. A Cross-sectional data was collected telecom sector from companies operating in Islamabad/Rawalpindi (N = 237). A questionnaire based survey was administered in order to collect the required data. The study unveils that two motivational antecedents, *i.e.*, *HRM practices and work designs positively impacts the* employee performance and the relationship is also significant. Moreover, the study suggested that employee engagement partially mediated the relationship between HRM practices, work designs and employee performance, i.e., firms that devise HRM practices and flexible work designs to develop, increase or sustain the high level of engagement among their employees that ultimately positively impacts individual performances. Human resources managers should redesign the jobs at entry level, to provide employees with more accurate and timely feedback and also greater autonomy to employees. Secondly, high levels of engagement might be encouraged by implementing HRM investment and expectation enhancing practices. This research has focused the effects of engagement on individual job performance rather than overall performance of the organization which is unprecedented.

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, HRM practices, Motivation, Work designs, Employee performance.



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#### Introduction

It is an established fact that workforce plays a very critical role in achieving organizational goals and objectives. Organizations succeed due to interplay of several factors and one of the most critical factors in organization's successes is the performance of its human resource, which if utilized and engaged properly can became a vital factor in achieving competitive advantage over rival firms. It is the only resource which is non-imitable while all other resources including financial and physical resources can be acquired but it is human capital of an organization which competitors cannot imitate easily. Today's organizations implement a wide array of practices, methods, techniques, procedures and work designs to keep their workforce engaged and motivated so that they can perform effectively and to improve the performance of their individual employees. Many scholars insist that employee engagement can predict the financial performance, organizational success and employee outcome (Asif, 2021; Bates, 2004; Baumruk, 2004; Harter et al., 2002; Richman, 2006; Salman et al., 2023). As the same time, researchers noted that employee engagement is going to decrease and there is deepening disengagement among the employees (Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006).

Demerouti and Cropanzano (2010) highlighted that engagement leads to enhanced performance of the individual employees. These findings are also consistent with a number of different studies that arrived at the same conclusion that there exists a positive relationship between engagement and individual employee performance (Asghar et al., 2021; Halbesleben, 2010; Gruman & Saks, 2011; Salman et al., 2023). From the last decade, especially it has been found out and reported that employee engagement is on the decline and there is an increasing disengagement in the employees working in a diverse organizations (Asif, 2021; Richman, 2006). May et al., (2004) have said that "Employee engagement is very important for today's leaders to cultivate it in the employees given the fact that the disengagement is central to the problem of workers' lack of motivation and commitment". One of organizational resource that cultivates shared perceptions of engagement among employees in organization is the organization-wide use of motivational work designs (Campion et al., 1996).

Researchers have proposed a countless diverse list of HRM practices over the years; however, there is no consensus on what or which practice qualifies as an aspect of HRM. The relation among HRM practices and work associated outcomes is now become a growingly researched topic in the sphere of human resource management (Asif, 2021; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Truss et al., 1997; Salman et al., 2023). Human Resource Management practices in the organization serves to fulfill individual employee needs which further intensify favorable attitudes among employees, and thereafter bring improvements in performance related outcomes (Asghar et al., 2021; Asif, 2021; Edgar & Geare, 2005; Kuvaas, 2008; Salman et al., 2023). HRM practices such as employee empowerment, job redesign, performance appraisal, training and development and fair compensation are believed to improve performance. HRM is one of the important factors that are critical to business success. This is the era of intensified competition and boundary less world. To compete successfully and sustain growth any organization has to have a highly dedicated, engaged and motivated workforce.

#### **Objectives of the study**

This paper intends to investigate positive causal significant relationship between motivating work designs and employee engagement. There is need to examine the engagement construct from a



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different perspective, to examine this paper aims to investigate the positive causal relationship between motivating work designs and employee engagement. It argues for the need to:

- Examine the engagement construct from a novel perspective: This implies going beyond established understandings and exploring new facets of how employees engage with their work.
- Scrutinize the causal relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement: This highlights the importance of understanding how specific HR practices directly influence engagement levels.
- Analyze the impact of employee engagement on employee performance: This clarifies the intended focus on demonstrating how engaged employees perform better.

Furthermore, the study delves into the mediating role of employee engagement: This emphasizes the central role engagement plays in bridging the gap between motivating work designs, HRM practices, and employee performance. the significant causal relationship between HRM practices and employee engagement in the organization and to scrutinize the impact of employee engagement on employee performance. Moreover, the study explores the mediating role played by employee engagement between motivating work designs HRM practices and employee performance.

## Literature Review

## Motivating Work Designs

The history and approaches leading to the work design can be traced back to the views that emerged at the time of the Industrial Revolution in the Great Britain. Adam Smith for the very first time coined the division of labor concept, in simple terms it means breaking down the more complex jobs into more simpler jobs, as a means to enhance performance of the employees. In 1835 Charles Babbage expanded on its view on the similar ideas, pointing out the advantages of such job simplification. A key principle to job simplification is that in which bulk of mental work is allocated to managers while workers perform only the manual works/tasks.

The literature is replete with evidence that the link between motivating work design and key outcomes such as employee motivation and performance (Asif, 2021; Humphrey et al., 2007; Salman et al., 2023). When employees perceive that their roles and the role of others as well in the organization provide them with control (autonomy), ownership of their work (task identity), opportunities to utilize wide range of skills and be creative (skill variety), opportunities to make a difference (task significance), and quality interactions with other members of the organization (feedback), they are likely to find the work more meaningful because they feel valuable, and they are more likely to sense that others as well in the organization feels useful and valuable (Humphrey et al., 2007).

Hackman and Oldham's (1976) one of the most famous scholar surpassed the two-factor theory and identified five prime job characteristics, such as, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. He further discussed that motivational work/job characteristics influences one's attitudinal and also behavioral outcomes by their impact on the three psychological states of individuals, namely, experienced responsibility, experienced meaningfulness and finally the knowledge about the results. It is expected that three critical psychological states mentioned is to mediate the relationship between work characteristics and the different work outcomes.



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Dodd and Ganster (1996) studied the two-sided relationship among, autonomy, feedback and variety by exploiting the job characteristics in a controlled environment. The job satisfaction is determined by a complex combination of jobs, work and personal characteristics of the employees at the workplace.

Adler and Kwon (2002) says the systems which employee reveal higher perception about, task significance, skill variety, autonomy and last but not least the feedback, they reported high level of satisfaction with their job and internal work motivation, which further leads to better performance outcomes.

Humphrey et al., (2007) conducted the very first meta-analysis test of the earlier originated Hackman and Oldham's (1976) job characteristics model. They developed a comprehensive work design model, based on extensive research, comprising of 219,625 participants and 259 studies and from PsycINFO from 1887–2004 and also from Web of Science ISI databases from 1970–2004. It has been found out that a mix of, social characteristics, motivational characteristics as well as work specific characteristics integrate 14 work design features which impacts the work related outcomes concerning one's behavior, attitude, role perception, and also well-being. In this comprehensive model, five motivational characteristics that were presented by Hackman and Oldhem's features of job characteristics and also some of the additional characteristics. Social characteristics consisted of the following characteristics, i.e., interdependence, feedback from others, interaction outside the organization, and social support.

Interdependence means how a particular job in an organization is dependent on the others work/job and other jobs (Hackman & Lawler, 1971). Feedback from other members of the organization means that other employees within the organization provide feedback and performance information to the employee i.e. their co-worker, peer or subordinate. It is both conceptually as well as practically quite different from the feedback from the job itself which focuses and is related or concerned broadly to interpersonal component of the feedback rather than the information about performance that is being derived directly from one's job/work. Social support can be expressed as the degree a job provides opportunities to the individual employee's for getting advice and assistance from their supervisors and coworkers (Karasek et al., 1998). It constitutes friendship opportunities in the job place area as well (Sims et al., 1976) and finally it is the interaction that takes place outside the organization boundaries as well, a particular job that requires an employee to communicate with the people (customers and suppliers) outside the organizational boundaries. This dimension puts light on the social component of one's work that creates a linkage between employee and the people who are not formal members of an organization whom the employee is working.

Social characteristics have been found to impact the attitudinal outcomes as well. The research on well-being has shown that interactions with others members at work place makes individual work more satisfying. Having a greater interaction with others members (greater interdependence or interactions outside the organizational boundaries) it creates challenging and complex job, the outcome of which is increased motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Gagne (2009) proposed that when psychological needs are met with the working environment it will influence employee motivation to share knowledge with other colleagues. However, Tsay et al., (2014) stated that quality of relationship between co-workers was negatively related to withholding knowledge from colleagues.



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H<sub>1</sub>: Motivating work design has a positive impact on employee performance.

## Relationship between Motivating Work Designs and Employee Performance

Research on work design has evolved toward a focus on how organizations can enrich employees' work to increase their motivation levels (Humphrey et al., 2007). The literature is replete with evidence that the link between motivating work design and key outcomes that includes employee performance and motivation (Humphrey et al., 2007). Job design includes demands of the work, control on one's job and social support that tend to leads to higher level of output (Love and Edwards, 2005). Lawler et al., (1995) said task autonomy and the related forms of employee contribution in the makeup of a task found to be effective in 90% of the Fortune companies, according to a survey. It is found out that if task autonomy is granted to the employees, it may potentially yield tremendous results and also high levels of satisfaction and also improved performance (Dwyer et al., 1992). In order to bring improvements in individual performance, feedback plays a very significant role in organizations setting (Elkins and Phillips, 2000). Feedback can have very positive results in the development of employees' attitudes and their conduct at workplace (Lam et al., 2002). Fried and Ferris (1987) summed up in their Meta analysis that job characteristic have a significant impact not just only on job performance but it also influences job satisfaction also as well. Certain jobs and certain sort of goal setting techniques can enhance and improve the level of performance of an employee and the design of the job can also increase not just the satisfaction in employees but quality of employees' performance also (Garg & Rastogi, 2006; Mushtaque et al., 2021).

## HRM Practices

Individual performance is considered as an antecedent of overall organizational performance and therefore it is very much critical in broader scheme of things from an organization's perspective, and employee well-being has been considered one of the important outcomes highlighted in the studies which focus on the impact of HRM practices on workers (Guest, 2002). Employees working in an organization are likely to first perceive differently to HRM practices and then react to an organization's HRM practices in numerous ways (Asif et al., 2019; Den Hartog et al., 2004). So therefore, any sort of HRM strategy and practices which are implemented by the firms can be interpreted differently by the employees (Asif, 2021; Hsien-Yu, 2020; Kuvaas, 2008).

This is the era of high competitiveness and globalization. To be competitive any organization has to have highly dedicated and motivated employees. Any worker or employee to be highly dedicated and motivated needs to be taken care of. This has put a lot of strain on the present day HRM systems. Wood (1999) and Guest (2002) has stressed upon the fact that a highly engaged, competent and committed workforce is a prerequisite for the best and effective implementation of business strategy and objectives. Huselid (1995) says that the effectiveness of the employees very much depends on the impact of HRM practices on the respective behavior of the workforce. Wright et al., (2003) says that an employee would apply discretionary efforts, in case if proper management system in the organization is in place and is supported by the compensation systems linked with the performance management system.

Considering the social exchange view of the employee and firm relationship, HRM practices can be categorized on two dimensions which are: (1) those practices that focus on the organization's



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expectations from the employees (HRM expectation-enhancing practices) and (2) those that enhance the employees expected outcomes and rewards (HR inducements and investments) (Shaw et al., 2009). When both expectation-enhancing practices and HRM inducements are high, the employee and organization relationship shifts away from a short-term, economic based exchange of employee contributions and moves towards a long term monetary rewards and an open-ended relationship in which both employees and the organization commit to invest in one another's future growth and development (Hsien-Yu, 2020; Blau, 1986).

More specifically, formal performance appraisals and merit-based compensation provide clarity and increase consistency regarding performance expectations the firm has for its employees (Batt & Colvin, 2011). Job security and equity of pay are those HRM inducements and investments that gives a clear message to the employees that the organization is committed towards them, their well-being, values and stability, and it is investing in their long term career development and career growth (Shaw et al., 1998). These HRM practices increase shared perceptions of psychological safety by establishing organizational norms, increasing trust and consistency, and reducing uncertainty and unpredictability, which provides clarity regarding organization workforce past performance and also future expectations (Guest & Conway, 2002).

In addition to the primary impact on psychological safety, HRM practices at the same time influences shared perceptions of meaningfulness and psychological availability. These practices signal to employees that the organization is investing in them and is also willing to provide them useful information about areas in which employees can perform better and obtain additional and higher rewards which leads to increased shared meaningfulness among employees as they feel valued and appreciated by the organization (Tsui et al., 1997), especially when the performance appraisal process is widely viewed by employees as being respectful and as providing positive feedback about their job (Renn & Vandenberg, 1995).

Bailey (1993) contended that human capital of an organization is more than often "underutilized" and not exploited to its maximum potential because employees often tend to perform below their full potential and that organization's tries to elicit discretionary efforts from the employees.

Compensation plays some key and important roles in organizations. It includes passing a signal to the employees about their worth, attracting potential candidates and retaining the existing ones. Any organization compensation practices and policies are indispensible to its success (Gomez et al., 2010). It is found in the literature that Human Resource Management practices, as compensation and performance appraisals are used by the organizations to influence employee performance by expressing increased expectations from the employees (Batt & Colvin, 2011; Hsien-Yu, 2020).

As defined by Batt and Colvin (2011) "Performance-enhancing practices are those short term incentives which are designed by the organization for the purpose to respond to immediate competitive pressures to bring improvements in the level of individual performance". From the point of view of the compensation policies and practices, these incentives can be taken as short term plans that ties individual pays with the performance of the employee, for example, individual bonuses, commission pays, pay raises, and different incentive pays and further more incentive plans usually produces higher performance outcomes (Chien et al., 2010).



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H<sub>2</sub>: HRM practices have a positive impact on employee performance

## **Relationship between HRM Practices and Employee Performance**

Employee performance is highlighted as one of the key and vital outcome variables in the HRM research literature (Hsien-Yu, 2020; Ramsay et al., 2000; Wright and Haggerty, 2005; Guest, 2011). A linkage between HRM practices and employee outcomes as well as organizational outcomes are well researched, high performance work systems, a set of human resource management practices and policies thought to deliver employees with greater levels of skills, motivation, communication as well as discretion, which results in lower employee absenteeism and turnover. A study done by Wright et al., (2003) which was conducted among fifty business units, this study highlighted that numerous HRM practices are related significantly to the operational outcomes of performance. Guest (2002) is of the view that the impact of certain HRM practices on the performance of the employee totally depends upon the employee's response to these practices, so the impact will move in a direction of the perception of HRM practices by the employee. Q + **P** + **P** 

## **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement was a popular concept in industry during the period 1999-2005 where it was extensively discussed among managers, consultants, and policy makers. Academicians became interested in the concept to a large extent in 2006. A number of different studies extended the concept of employee engagement to job engagement, work engagement, and organization engagement (Welch, 2011). Schaufeli and Salanova (2007) says that engagement is a pivotal element for organizations given that in today's rapid changing environment they face many challenges they face. Macey et al., (2009) further emphasized that organizations can reap a lot of competitive advantages through fostering employee engagement. Many scholars have praised employee engagement as the utmost driver of one's behavior, attitudes and ultimately their performance and it is also a key driver for organizational performance and retention, productivity and financial performance (Baumruk, 2004; Hsien-Yu, 2020; Richman, 2006).

Employee engagement is vital affecting organizational innovation, performance, effectiveness and also competitiveness (Welch, 2011). With increasing interest and attraction in the field of employee engagement, researchers are now investing their lot of energy on the key drives of the engagement. Macey et al., (2009) have studied a sample of 65 firms in cross industrial analysis of different industries; it was found out that top 25% of organizations on an engagement index had a greater profitability. Employee engagement is a critical tool to help every organization to strive and to gain competitive advantage over the rival firms. People are one of the most critical factor that cannot be imitated easily by the competitors.

The same notion is also been emphasized by Baumruk (2004), that employee engagement is considered to be the one of the most powerful element in measuring a company's vigor. Employee engagement is a motivational and work-related state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by dedication and absorption in one's job and towards one's job (Asif, 2019; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Engaged employees have towering level of energies and they tend to be are very enthusiastic about their respective jobs and are often fully engulfed in their job roles (Asif et al., 2019; Macey and Schneider,



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2008; May et al., 2004). Social environment of an organization helps in defining what is considered to be good and interesting in the organizational working environment thus influencing employees potential to experience enjoyment at workplace rather than considering it a burden upon themselves (Gersick et al., 2000). It be can be said that common antecedents of engagement in the research are founded in which to be included, job characteristics (feedback and social support), and leadership (Christian et al., 2011). According to Xiao and Duan (2014), employee engagement has five dimensions, idendity, commitment, loyality, intative and effectiveness. Moreover, Liu (2016) discussed that employee engagement is a combination of composed of five dimensions: vigor, absorption, organizational identity, pleasant harmony and dedication.

Macey and Schneider (2008) noted that there are several definitions of the construct of employee engagement elaborated in the literature, one thing is common in all those elaborations of the concept that employee engagement is desirable among firms, Moreover it has an organizational purpose, and it has both psychological as well as behavioral facets in it i.e it involves "enthusiasm, energy and a focused effort towards one's work". Harter et al., (2002) in their words defines employee engagement as "the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm about one's work".

In 1990 Kahn coined the concept of employee engagement, giving his most famous definition. Kahn stated that there are three psychological engagement conditions which are necessary for an employee to be rightly and highly engaged. These three psychological conditions are meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness can be defined as a value of the work goals that is judged in relation to an individual's own ideals and standards (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; May, 2004; Renn and Vandenberg, 1995). Secondly psychological safety can be defined as 'a feeling to employ one's self without any fear of any negative consequences (Kahn, 1990). Employees feel secure and safe when they perceive that they will not have to bear any negative consequences for expressing their true selves (what actually they are) at the workplace. Lastly Psychological availability can be defined as an individual's belief that he has the physical, emotional and cognitive resources to engage the his/her self at workplace and job roles, given the fact that individuals are also engaged in many other life activities that are outside the organizational boundaries (Kahn, 1990).

H<sub>3</sub>: Motivating work design has a positive impact employee engagement

## Relationship between Work Designs and Employee Engagement

In the literature, it is found out that one of organizational resource that ignites the engagement in an organization is the use of motivational work designs (Campion et al., 1996). Academician as well as practitioner studies have emphasized that the design of work impacts the engagement level of the individuals (Humphrey et al., 2007). It has also been found in studying work designs that work/job features such as job autonomy, task significance, task variety and feedback are positively related to the employee engagement, this notion is discussed a wide range of research papers/work (Christian et al., 2011). The above mentioned features have also been found out in other studies as well that elaborates work design to be associated with motivation (Fried & Ferris, 1987). For instance, when employees find their work, mind numbing, not interesting and undemanding, this state leads to psychological distress and disengagement among employees (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).



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H<sub>4</sub>: HRM practices have a positive impact on employee engagement

#### Relationship between HRM Practices and Employee Engagement

Maslach et al., (2001) suggests that lack of rewards to employees and lack of recognition at workplace leads to burnout, where as appropriate recognition for good performance and rewards are pivotal for engagement. Sun and Bunchapattanasakd (2019) discussed that when employees are treated fairly within their organizations, then as a result employees develop positive attitudes towards their respective organizations whereas HRM practices that are perceived by the employees to be unfair and unjust, have been found to result in the employees negative feeling and they feel betrayed thus as a result they become less engaged (Schappe, 1996).

#### **Employee Performance**

Employee performance is very vital in organizational context irrespective of the fact that employees are directly dealing with the customers or not. Employee performance is the outcomes achieved by the individual and accomplishments made by him at his work. Performance refers to keeping up with the set plans while keeping in mind the results. Performance evaluation and review is the heart of any performance management system (Cardy, 2004). The performance of an individual or an organization depends heavily on a bundle of organizational practices, its policies, the HR systems it employs and work design features of an organization. The 21st Century working environment vigorously relies upon on innovation, subsequently creating pressure on both the organization and the employees regarding productivity and performance (Asghar et al., 2021; Wuryani, et al., 2021).

Employee performance indicates the financial or non-financial outcome of an employee that has a direct link with the performance of the overall organization and its success. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) have termed performance of an employee how well he/she perform their job overall, including but not only limiting to the required and non-required tasks are derived from one's job. According to Dess and Robinson (1984) they are of the opinion that using multiple methods for measuring performance that are both objective as well as subjective would yield more reliable results for the performance. Several studies have shown that an important way to bring improvements in performance of the employees is by focus on fostering employee engagement. In the context of Job Demands – Resources Model (JDR) underlying theory, work engagement positively impacts individual's job performance and the employees who are engaged they tend to perform well (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

Numerous studies conducted shows that work engagement is positively related with higher in role and extra role performance (Bakker et al., 2004; Demerouti & Cropanzano, 2010; Schaufeli et al., 2006), indicating the fact that engaged employees are willing to "go an extra mile" during their work roles (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007). In- role job performance or task performance refers to all of those activities that are related to employees' formal job role requirements (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). In-role job performance assesses managerial behaviors that are part of employee formal job description (Williams and Anderson, 1991). Task performance is defined as "the effectiveness with which job holder performs different activities and tasks with in a formal job description that contributes to firm's technical core directly or by implementing a part of its technological process (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993).

H<sub>5</sub>: Employee engagements have a positive impact on employee performance.



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## Relationship between Employee Engagement and Employee Performance

Research suggested that presence of higher levels of employee engagement enhances the job performance, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior, as well as productivity, discretionary efforts, and employee commitment and customer service (Holbeche & Springett, 2003; Richman, 2006; Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Rich et al., 2010; Bakker & Leiter, 2010; Christian et al., 2011).

Job and organization engagement are significantly positively related to organizational commitment, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior, and it is found out that it is negatively related to intention to quit/ turnover intentions (Saks, 2006). Employee engagement is quite a unique, dynamic and a distinct construct that is constituted up of emotional, cognitive and behavioral components of individual and they are associated with employee's role performance (Saks, 2006). High levels of work engagement has been found in the literature to be linked with improved in-role performance (Salanova et al., 2005), as well as extra-role behavior (Bakker et al., 2004).

It is further found in the literature that engagement negatively impacts turnover and also intention to quit (Schaufeli & Bakker 2004; Hakanen et al., 2006). Furthermore a number of other variables like job characteristics, leadership, and dispositional characteristics have been found also influence motivational characteristics in order to significantly influence one's job performance (Barrick et al. 1993; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kanfer, 1990). It has been found out that engaged employees tend to perform better than the employees who have been found to be less engaged because of the reason that they are more inclined towards and are immersed in their respective work roles. Employee engagement is been found also to be a major driver to innovative work behavior (Manzoor & Asghar, 2022; Slatten & Mehmetoglu, 2011).

## Employee Engagement as a Mediator

It has been found out in the existing literature that engaged employees are always willing and prepared to exert and go an extra effort in order achieve the challenging goals set by their respective organizations, they can efficiently handle their goals and they are provided with the necessary resources, thus are ready to engage in additional in-roles and extra-roles behavior (Salanova et al., 2005; Schaufeli et al., 2006; Rich et al., 2010; Christian et al., 2011). Macey and Schneider (2008) framework in this regard is quite useful for couple of reasons. First of all, it offers a clear cut description of engagement's nomological network. It is quite a useful framework which specifies employee's engagement's conceptual overlapping with other job attitudes. Secondly, in this specified framework of the above mentioned authors, it specifies engagement as a mediating variable which is situated among its antecedents and the outcomes. The notion is further confirmed in a review of the literature, it has been elaborated the employee engagement construct plays the role mediator between in its antecedents and outcome (Yalabik et al., 2013).

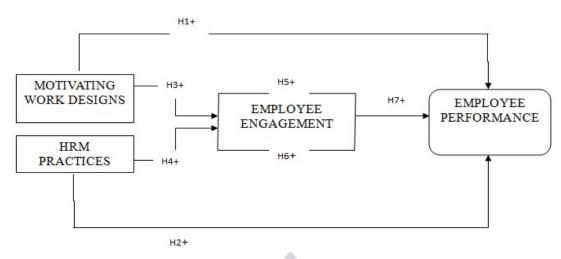
H<sub>6</sub>: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between motivating work designs and employee performance.

H<sub>7</sub>: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between HRM practices and employee performance.





## Figure 1 Theoretical Framework



## **Research Methodology**

This research is empirical in nature and hypothesis testing is used to describe the impact of HRM practices and motivating work designs on individual employee performance with the mediating role played by employee engagement variable.

## **Population & Sampling**

Population of the study was the employees from telecom sector of Pakistan. The sample size of the study included workers of Telecom industry from Islamabad/Rawalpindi. The sampling strategy used for this study is convenience sampling technique.

## Unit of analysis

Unit of analysis for this particular study is individuals that include the employees of telecom sector of Pakistan.

## Data Collection

Structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was distributed to the employees of telecom sector (warid, zong, ufone, telenor, & mobilink) in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. A total of 300 questionnaires were distributed in all the companies related to Telecom Sector in Islamabad/Rawalpindi. The questionnaire was filled by employees of all levels and, of different age groups and gender. In return, a positive response rate was seen in the form of 237 filled questionnaires, which makes 79% of the response rate.

## Table 1

#### Measurement

Variable	Туре	Items	Adaptive Form
Motivating Work Designs	Independent	10	Morgeson and Murphy's (2006)
HRM practices	Independent	10	(Datta et al. 2005; Messersmith et al., 2011)
Employee Engagement	Mediating	06	Rich et al. (2010)
Employee Performance	Dependent	06	(Williams and Andreson, 1991; Perry et al. 2011).



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Data Analysis and Results

# Reliability Analysis

# Table 2

Reliability

Description	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
HRM practices	0.898	10
Work Design	0.817	10
Employee Engagement	0.773	06
Employee Performance	0.857	06

In the case of HRM practices Cronbach alpha for ten items is (.898) that shows items are internally consistent. Work designs has ten items with Cronbach alpha of (.817). Employee Engagement has six items and Cronbach alpha is (.773). Employee performance is internally consistent also and Cronbach alpha is (.857). Whereas table 2 exhibits that all the values of all items are ranged between 0.70 and 0.90, hence it is determined that the collected data is reliable for further statistical analysis.

## Demographic Analysis

## Table 3

Demographics

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	184	77.6
	Female	53	22.4
Age	25-30 years	52	21.9
	31-35 years	-88	37.1
	36-40 years	64	27
	Above 40 years	33	13.9
Qualification	Bachelors	61	25.7
	Masters	76	32.1
	MS/M.Phil	37	15.6
	Others	63	26.6
Experience	1-3 years	59	24.9
	4-6 years	81	34.2
	7-10 years	54	22.8
	Above 10 years	43	18.1

The very first column in the Table 3 shows the age of all respondents. Highest number of respondents fell in the 31-35 years age group that makes 37.1 percent. The next column shows the gender of the respondents. Male respondents dominate this column with nearly 77.6% of the total, while the number of female respondents was only 22.4%. The next column in shows the respective qualification of all the respondents. The respondents which have done bachelors are 61 respondents which makes 25.7 % of the total while 76 respondents have masters degrees elaborates the working



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experience. 24.9 % of the respondent belonged to the first category i.e. in the bracket of 1-3 years, while the others 34.2% had 4-6 years, 22.8% had 7-10 years working experience while the remaining 18% have job experience of above 10 years.

## Descriptive Analysis

# Table 4

Descriptive Analysis

	S.D	Skewness	Kurtosis
HRM Practices	0.82	-0.89	1.81
Motivating Work Designs	0.77	-0.99	0.729
Employee Engagement	0.79	-0.17	1.11
Employee Performance	0.83	-0.64	1.24

The range of skewness and kurtosis is between -1 and1, and -3 and +3 respectively. So it can be interpreted that the available data in the above given table is normal and also satisfying the assumptions of regression analysis.

Correlation Analysis	***	1111 +		
Table 5				
Correlation Analysis	⇒_ lo V	28		
Correlations (N=239)	, R	$\mathcal{D}$		
Variables	HRM	WD	EE	EP
HRMP	1		,	
MWD	701**			
EE	.657**	.604**	1	
EP	.808**	.624**	.698**	1
**n<0.05_*n<0.01				

\*\*p<0.05, \*p<0.01

This correlation tables shows that all the variables are correlated positively at significance level 0.05. HRM practices and employee performance is strongly positively co-related (r = .808). Similarly motivating work designs and employee performance is also positively associated (r = .624), further more HRM practices, motivating work designs and employee engagement are positively co-related (r = .701, r = .657, r = .604). Employee engagement and employee performance is positively co-related (r = .698).

## **Regression Analysis**

## Table 6

Regression Analysis (Step: 1)										
Steps	IVs	DV	R2	В	F-test	Sig.	t-stat	Sig.		
1	MWD	EmpPer	.659	.122	226.49	0.00	2.13	0.034		
	HRMP			.734			13.61	0.00		



**Hypothesis 1:** Work designs have a positive impact on employee performance. Hypothesis is accepted, R square (0.659), T (2.13) with significant value of 0.034.

**Hypothesis 2:** HRM practices have a significant and positive impact on employee performance. Hypothesis is accepted, as it is indicated in the above table, R square (0.659), T (13.61) with significance value of 0.00.

## Table 7

Regression Analysis (Step: 2)

Steps	IVs	DV	R2	В	<b>F-test</b>	Sig.	t-stat	Sig.
2	MWD	EmpEng	.472	.289	104.44	0.00	4.24	0.00
	HRMP			.439			6.88	0.00

**Hypothesis 3:** Work designs have a significant and positive impact on employee engagement. The value of R square (.472) and T (4.24), and with significance value of 0.00, so as a result the hypothesis is accepted.

**Hypothesis 4:** HRM practices have a significant and positive impact on employee engagement, proved by the value of T (6.88) and with significance value of 0.00. So as a result the hypothesis is accepted.

#### Table 8 Regression Analysis (Step: 3) $R^2$ В Hypothesis t-test F-test Sig Sig H5: Employee engagement has a positive impact on 0.487 0.734 14.93 223.1 0.0 employee performance 0.00 4 0

**Hypothesis 5:** Employee engagement has a positive impact on employee performance. Hypothesis is accepted, R square (0.487), T (14.93) with significant value of 0.00.

## Table 8

Regression Analysis (Step: 3)

		Steps	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	f	t	ß	Sig
Assumption-1	HRM	EP	0.653	0.651	441.78	21.01	0.81	0.00
Assumption-2	HRM	EE	0.431	0.249	178.01	13.34	0.629	0.00
Assumption-3	EE	EP	0.487	0.485	223.14	14.93	0.698	0.00
Assumption-4	HRMP	EP	0.653	0.651	441.78	21.01	0.814	0.00
	EE	0.702	0.700	275.69	6.22	0.31	0.00	

## Step 1

First hypothesis describe that HRM practices has positive impact on employee performance. The above table shows that value of R square is 0.653. This shows that there is 65.3 % variation in the employee performance is being explained by HRM practices. HRM practices is regressed on the



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dependent variable which is employee performance (HRM and EP) was also significant (b = .841, t = 21.019, p < 0.05). It shows that work design has a significant effect on the employee performance.

## Step 2

Next hypothesis describe that HRM practices has positive impact on employee engagement. The above table shows that value of R square is 0.431. This shows that 43.1 % variation in the employee engagement is being explained by HRM practices. HRM practices is regressed on the mediating variable which is employee engagement (HRM and EE) was also significant (b = .629, t = 13.342, p < 0.05). It shows that HRM practices have a significant effect on the employee engagement.

## Step 3

The above table demonstrates the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance. The beta value ( $\beta = 0.734$ ) is statistically significant at p = 0.000 (i.e. p < 0.05). Furthermore, the *t*-value = 14.93 and significant at p = 0.000 (i.e. p < 0.05). The R square result ( $R^2 = 0.487$ ) divulge that the employee engagement has accounted for 48.7 % variation in employee performance. Thus we accept the hypothesis i.e. employee engagement has a positive causal relationship with employee performance.

#### Step 4

In the final step HRM practices and Employee engagement have been collectively taken and its impact on employee performance is analyzed, Values of  $R^2$  are 0.653 and 0.702, which shows the mediation effect of the variables on employee's performance and value of t is (6.22) confirms that there is positive relation between the two variables and dependent variable. From the above results it can be safely concluded that employee engagement mediates between HRM practices and employee performance.

#### Table 9

	IV	DV	R <sup>2</sup>	Adj-R <sup>2</sup>	f	t	ß	Sig
Assumption-1	MWD	EP	0.389	0.387	149.88	12.24	0.671	0.00
Assumption-2	MWD	EE	0.365	0.362	134.82	11.61	0.617	0.00
Assumption-3	EE	EP	0.487	0.485	223.14	14.93	0.698	0.00
Assumption-4	MWD	EP	0.389	0.387	149.88	12.24	0.67	0.00
		EE	0.552	0.548	143.98	9.20	0.532	0.00

From the above table the value of R square is (.389) which shows that there is 38.9 percent variation in employee performance is being explained by motivating work designs. In the second step the impact of motivating work designs on employee engagement was analyzed. Motivating work designs was regressed with employee engagement. Results show that 36.5 percent variation employee engagement is being explained by motivating work designs. In the third step effect of employee engagement on employee performance was analyzed. Result implies that 48.7 percent variation in employee performance is being explained by motivating work designs and employee engagement. Beta has decreased from (.671) to (.532) and motivating work designs is significant.



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#### Discussion

The correlation and regression analysis confirms that HRM practices and Employee performance are positively and significantly correlated. This means that when the management the private telecom sector implements different HRM practices and specifically HRM investment and expectation enhancing practice measures, the performance of the employees will get better and employees will inform in a more effective manner. The current findings are aligned with the findings of previous studies carried out by different scholars. Employee performance has been highlighted as one of the key outcome variables in HRM research literature.

The empirical analysis further elaborates that motivating work designs and employee performance are significantly and positively interrelated. The implementation and use of motivating work designs in the telecom sector has lead to performance improvements of the individual's. Providing employees with autonomy, giving them feedback about their performance, providing employees the opportunities to use a different set of skill, the opportunities to make a difference (task significance), and quality interactions with other organizational members (feedback), employees are likely to find their work more meaningful because they feel valuable and they are likely to sense that others as well in the organization feels useful and valuable (Humphrey et al., 2007).

The performance of an individual depends heavily on all organizational policies, practices, and design features of an organization (Anitha, 2014; Asif, 2021). When organizations (a) systematically design entry-level jobs to enrich and enlarge work, (b) implement HRM investments and expectationenhancing practices, they maximize collective employee engagement, which generates increased performance (Barrick et al., 2015).

The results of the regression analysis indicate that the independent variables identified to influence employee engagement and do have a significant impact in determining the engagement of the employees. The t-values in Table 4 and 5 implies HRM practices and motivating work are influential and have impact on employee engagement as they are statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance. The value of  $R^2$  also suggest that 43.1 percent variation in employee engagement is being explained by HRM practices and 36.5 percent is being explained by motivation work designs.

The study also emphasizes the critical role of employee engagement and the study also identifies various aspects that have a significant effect on it. It also shows that there is a strong significant relationship between employee engagement and employee performance. Key determinants of employee engagement which can be nurtured and harnessed by the managers and employers in order to provide an amicable environment for the employees to become positively engaged. Also the company has to invest in attractive compensation programs. Employees are also motivated by various compensation techniques which are at the same time fair, as a part of HRM investments and expectation-enhancing practices. The outcomes of the study support the argument that HRM investments and expectation-enhancing practices are linked to high level of job performance. These HR practices focus on employee engagement, designing flexible job designs. Assigning different tasks is a developmental technique that is used so that work force gain new experience and learn new skills. In this manner such practices enhances task identity and skill variety of individual in a particular position with a certain role. This technique is also proved to enhance the motivation and job performance level of employees.



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employee engagement plays a positive mediating role between HRM practices, motivating work designs and employee performance.

## Managerial Implications

The finding highlights the need for the organizations operating in telecom sector to manage the development of their own internal capabilities to enhance employee engagement in order to gain competitive advantage over rival firms. It is suggested that a highly engaged workforce is not something that exists automatically without the strategic and deliberate manipulation of management of organizational resources, processes and policies to foster and enrich the emergence and sustainability of employee engagement. Firstly, jobs that are held by employees, specially the jobs at entry level, jobs/work may be redesigned to provide employees with more accurate and timely feedback and also greater autonomy to employees. In addition variety of tasks they do and significance in their tasks might help in igniting internal motivation which leads to engagement and positive performance outcomes. Secondly, high levels of engagement might be encouraged by implementing HRM investment and expectation enhancing practices and then rewarded by connecting and bridging all organization members formal performance appraisals integrated with compensation and other reward decisions so that that high performers feel that they are fairly rewarded for their efforts and organization value their efforts and is willing to invest in them and at the same time lower performers receive feedback regarding areas for improvement and betterment.

## Limitations and future research

This study has following limitations:

- Due to financial constraints cross industrial analysis cannot be conducted only telecom sector has been targeted for the purpose of data collection.
- Only two motivational antecedents are taken into consideration other motivational antecedents that can influence employee engagement are not considered in this study because it would require a lot more time for the analysis.
- The sample size was chosen with the help of non probability sampling technique, and it was on convenient bases, therefore, the sample size was too small and is not representative of the whole population.

The current further suggests that there are other variables also that can impact the relationships between HRM practices, motivating work designs, and employee engagement and employee performance. Other variables that can be considered as antecedents of employee engagement that include various HRM practices like training and development, recruitment and selection, and performance management etc.

It is further suggested that current study analyzed employee engagement at individual level analysis, future research is suggested to test the employee engagement construct from multi-level perspective, i.e., at the organizational level analysis. The scholars can also include organizational structures that could be another aspect to study for future research.



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#### Conclusion

This study focused on theoretically explaining the under observation variables and empirically tested the relationship. It was noticed that motivating work designs has a positive relationship with engagement and also employee performance. When employee are given autonomy, provided with feedback about their performance, exposed to opportunities in which they can utilize variety of skills and when employees perceive that their tasks are important and are of significance for the organization as a whole it predicts a higher work engagement in the employees. One of organizational resource that cultivates the perceptions of engagement in an organization is the wide use of motivational work designs (Campion et al., 1996). The literature is replete with evidence that the link between motivating work design and key outcomes such as employee performance and motivation (Asif, 2021; Humphrey et al., 2007; Salman et al., 2023).

Maslach et al., (2001) have suggested that the lack of rewards, recognition and fair compensation leads to burnout and dissatisfaction with one's job, appropriate rewards, recognition and fair and just compensation policies are critical for engagement. The findings are consistent with the previous researches. The results and findings of the current study concluded that HRM practices foster engagement in employees and they invest themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally in their job roles. Therefore, HRM practices can enhance employee engagement which will ultimately impact positively the performance the employee and they will able to perform more effectively. Firm leaders and managers must utilize multiple actions at the firm level rather than relying on any single practice in order to maximize both the level of employee engagement and the performance benefits that will result from it.

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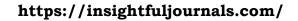
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