



THE IMPACT OF TALENT MANAGEMENT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: THE
MEDIATING ROLE OF INNOVATION AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This study investigates the effect of talent management on organizational performance, examining innovation as a mediator and transformational leadership as a moderator. Drawing on the Resource-Based View, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory, the study proposes that systematic talent practices strengthen innovation capabilities and, consequently, organizational outcomes. Data were collected from 398 middle- and senior-level managers in Pakistani manufacturing firms through a structured questionnaire and analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling. The measurement model demonstrated satisfactory reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The structural results show that talent management positively influences innovation, while innovation has a strong positive effect on organizational performance. Innovation partially mediates the relationship between talent management and organizational performance. Transformational leadership also positively moderates the talent management–innovation relationship, indicating that supportive and inspiring leaders enhance the conversion of talent practices into innovative outcomes. The model explains substantial variance in innovation and organizational performance and demonstrates predictive relevance. These findings position talent management as a strategic organizational capability rather than solely an administrative human resource function. The study recommends integrating talent development, innovation systems, and transformational leadership practices to strengthen competitiveness and sustainable performance, particularly in manufacturing firms operating in emerging markets.

Keywords: Talent Management, Organizational Performance, Innovation, Transformational Leadership, Structural Equation Modelling

1. Introduction

Managing personnel has become an essential strategy for companies hoping to prosper over the long term in today's competitive marketplaces. Talent management is a collection of HR procedures that assist in identifying high-potential workers, fostering their growth, and coordinating their career trajectories with the objectives of the business (Veth et al., 2019). In a fast-paced, competitive environment, talent management is crucial for genuine innovation. In this context, innovation refers to a company's ability to create new products, improve processes, and come up with bold ideas. These developments give companies a durable growth advantage over time (Alzuod, 2024). Rarely does innovation occur by coincidence. It's important to surround yourself with positive and encouraging people. Good talent management enables workers to develop the



necessary skills, maintain motivation, and have the self-assurance to think creatively and adjust to shifting consumer demands and market situations (Alzuod, 2024).

Talent management plays a critical role in enhancing the overall performance of an organization, leading to its success. Talent management is an essential sustainable competitive advantage for any business as studies proved that organizations with efficient talent management systems demonstrate better financial performance and improved innovation (Niu et al., 2021). People management helps companies handle situations by promoting flexibility and quick action. It does this through employee development and thoughtful planning for the workforce. When people are prepared, organizations can adapt faster and make better decisions. This focus on people keeps the company strong when things get hard (Bindra et al., 2025).

AI-based hiring, individualised training and data-driven analytics are examples of advanced personnel management systems that are changing how businesses operate. This approach helps businesses satisfy labour demands and also encourages innovation, flexibility and continuous learning (Odugbesan et al., 2023). Technology is used not only for planning the future of the firm and its culture but also to improve performance of the company and its capacity for change within the industry when the latter changes. With such rapid pace of development in technology, this has become an important strategy for achieving competitiveness (Hussain & Asif, 2026; Kassotaki, 2016).

Transformational leadership enhances talent management because such leaders create an environment where workers can realize their true potential and contribute to innovation in the organization. Those who challenge and inspire their workers create a connection between talent management practices and innovation, especially when there is a transformation towards digitalization (Brahimaj et al., 2025). Some recent trends indicate that there is a considerable contribution of AI and automation towards employee engagement. At the same time, they provide managers with opportunities for creating dynamic and efficient teams (Deloitte, 2025). Overall, this demonstrates how the concept of talent management has evolved. It used to be an HR-related practice, but not anymore (Ahmed & Asif, 2026; Venkata Reddy, 2025).

With growth comes challenges such as talent shortages and organizational inflexibility. The role of talent management cannot be underestimated for addressing these challenges and fostering innovation. When the talent management initiatives are aligned with the strategic goals of an organization, it becomes agile, competitive, and sustainable (Ambarwati et al., 2025). Organizations are able to form teams that will be able to initiate the processes of social and technological change required for growth through talent management (Altindag & Gul, 2025).

The purpose of the research is to analyse the influence of people management on organizational effectiveness, where innovation acts as the main mediator. The term "talent management" can be defined as the acquisition of new competences. This notion is necessary for business organizations in order to achieve success in the modern technological environment using their personnel (Attar et al., 2025). Talent management is not an HR issue alone; it is central to creativity and organizational effectiveness. No matter how challenging the market environment is, innovative leaders are capable of forming exceptional teams. Teams that are willing to come up with new ideas and enhance their performance (Masa'deh et al., 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Talent Management

Talent management includes strategies for drawing in, choosing, nurturing, and keeping people who are critical to the long-term success of a business. This entails tackling issues like technical skill shortages, engineering and shop floor succession planning, and the quick development of capabilities for new Industry technologies in the manufacturing industry. Teams are assisted in gaining the flexible skills required for long-term progress and substantial innovation through organized training programs, employee rotation, and strong mentor-mentee relationships, and focused pay schemes (Kwon & Jang, 2022).

2.2 Talent Management and Innovation

The application of best practices in talent management (TM) is closely linked to innovation in company models, processes, and products, according to empirical data. These procedures make it easier for staff members to learn new material, develop self-assurance in their creative abilities, and encourage



knowledge exchange all of which are critical for coming up with original solutions (Alzuod, 2024; Shahzad et al., 2025). Initiatives like cross-functional training and the creation of research and development teams combine process and technology knowledge in the manufacturing industry to find practical answers (Appelbaum et al., 2000; Laursen & Salter, 2006).

2.3 Innovation and Organizational Performance

This research proves that innovations lead to better performance. Innovations in design allow businesses to enter new markets in production. Efficient processes mean speedier, higher-quality operations and cost savings. Those companies which combine innovation in new concepts and in existing operations always do best in the long run (Jimenez-Jimenez & Sanz-Valle, 2011).

2.4 Transformational Leadership as a Moderator

Transformational leaders promote innovation and risk taking. They establish clear objectives, challenge the way things have been done, work with individuals, and provide models of leadership. Several studies demonstrate that this leadership approach helps businesses maximize the benefits of talent management initiatives by promoting the development of genuine innovations. It reduces the fear of failing, provides funding for experimentation, and promotes teamwork on innovative ideas. These findings are supported by (Moray & Dias, 2025; SAYYAM et al., 2020).

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of the Study

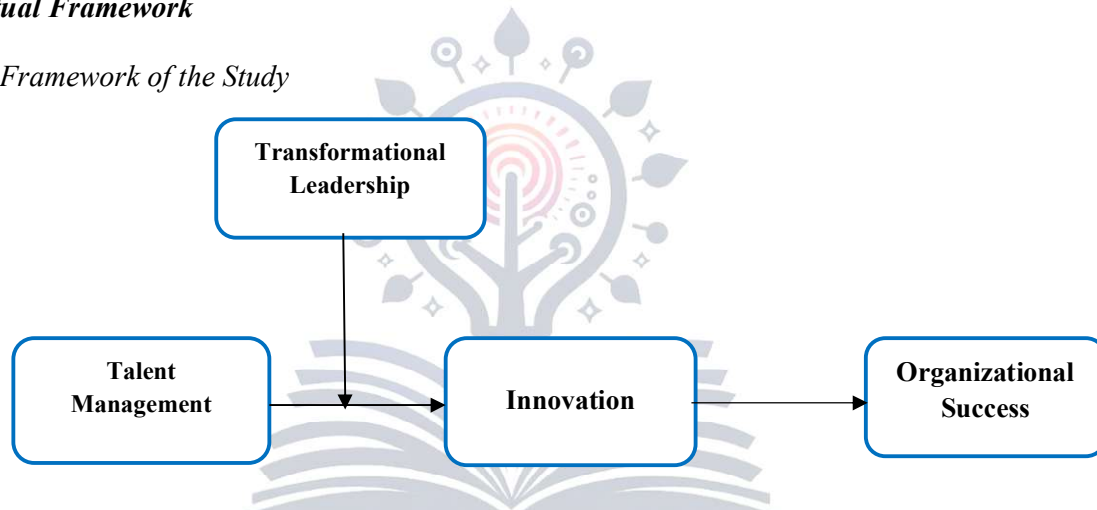


Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework showing the relationship between Talent Management, Innovation, Organizational Success, and Transformational Leadership. The framework depicts Talent Management as the independent variable, Innovation as the mediating variable, Organizational Success as the dependent variable, and Transformational Leadership as the moderating variable. The arrows indicate: (a) a direct path from Talent Management to Innovation, (b) a direct path from Innovation to Organizational Success, and (c) a moderating path from Transformational Leadership to the relationship between Talent Management and Innovation.

2.6 Hypotheses

H1: Talent Management positively affects Innovation.

H2: Innovation positively affects Organizational Performance.

H3: Innovation mediates the relationship between Talent Management and Organizational Performance.

H4: Transformational Leadership positively moderates the relationship between Talent Management and Innovation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and Data Collection

Middle and senior level managers working in Pakistani manufacturing companies (textile, food & beverage, automotive parts, and chemicals) provided information between March and August 2025. Industry



associations and professional networks disseminated a structured questionnaire. 398 valid questionnaires made up the final sample after incomplete responses were eliminated (effective response rate = 68%).

Table 1*Research Methodology*

Aspect	Details
Research Design	Quantitative, cross-sectional
Population & Context	Middle and senior level managers in manufacturing firms in Pakistan
Industry Sectors	Textile, food & beverage, automotive parts, pharmaceuticals, chemicals
Data Collection Period	March – August 2025
Sampling Method	Convenience sampling via professional networks and industry associations
Initial Distributed	~585 questionnaires
Usable Responses	398 (effective response rate = 68%)
Data Collection Tool	Structured questionnaire (English), 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree)
Control Variables	Firm size, firm age, industry type, ownership structure

Table 1 presents the overall research methodology, including the research design, population, industry sectors, and data collection period. It shows that the study used a quantitative cross-sectional design and collected data from middle and senior managers in Pakistani manufacturing firms. The table also reports that 398 usable responses were obtained from approximately 585 distributed questionnaires, yielding an effective response rate of 68%. These details establish the empirical basis and scope of the study.

Table 2*Measurement of Constructs*

Construct	No. of Items	Source / Adaptation	Sample Item Example	Cronbach's α
Talent Management (TM)	9	Collings & Mellahi (2009); Hughes & Rog (2021)	"We systematically identify high potential employees."	0.928
Innovation (INNOV)	8	Calantone et al. (2002); Wang & Ahmed (2023)	"Our firm frequently introduces new products/services."	0.941
Transformational Leadership (TL)	20	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ 5X), Bass & Avolio (1995)	"The leader talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished."	0.974
Organizational Performance (OP)	7	Delaney & Huselid (2024) - perceptual measures	"Compared to competitors, our profitability is higher."	0.927

Table 2 lists the four main constructs measured in this study: talent management, innovation, transformational leadership, and organizational performance. It shows the number of items used for each construct, the source or adaptation of the measurement scale, and an example item. The Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.927 to 0.974, indicating excellent internal consistency reliability. This table confirms that the instruments used to measure the study variables were robust and appropriate for further analysis.

Table 3*Analytical Approach*

Element	Specification
Primary Software	SmartPLS
Analytical Technique	Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM)



Rationale for PLS-SEM	Suitable for complex models with mediation and moderation; robust with non-normal data; appropriate for theory development in emerging market contexts (Hair et al., 2024)
Bootstrapping	5,000 resamples, two-tailed, bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals
Assessment Criteria	Indicator loadings > 0.70, AVE > 0.50, CR > 0.70, HTMT < 0.85, VIF < 3, R ² , Q ² , f ² , significance of indirect and conditional indirect effects

Table 3 outlines the analytical strategy employed to test the hypothesized relationships. It identifies SmartPLS and PLS-SEM as the primary software and analytical technique, respectively. The table also explains why PLS-SEM is appropriate for this study, particularly because the model includes mediation and moderation and uses non-normal data. Finally, it specifies the bootstrapping procedure and assessment criteria used to evaluate the measurement and structural models.

4. Results and Analysis

This section presents the empirical findings obtained from the PLS-SEM analysis. It first evaluates the reliability and validity of the measurement model, followed by an assessment of the structural relationships and the testing of the proposed hypotheses. The analysis then examines the mediating role of innovation and the moderating influence of transformational leadership, including the conditional indirect effects at different leadership levels. Finally, the section reports the model's explanatory power and predictive relevance for innovation and organizational performance.

Table 4

Measurement Model Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (pc)	AVE	HTMT
Talent Management (TM)	0.928	0.940	0.63	0.812
Innovation (INNOV)	0.941	0.951	0.71	0.847
Transformational Leadership (TL)	0.974	0.976	0.78	0.769
Organizational Performance (OP)	0.927	0.941	0.66	0.834

Note. All indicator loadings exceeded 0.70, the Fornell-Larcker criterion satisfied, and HTMT < 0.85, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 4 reports the assessment of the measurement model, including reliability and validity indicators for each construct. All constructs demonstrate high Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, indicating strong internal consistency. The average variance extracted values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.50, supporting convergent validity. The HTMT values are below 0.85, confirming discriminant validity among the constructs.

Table 5

Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	f ² (effect size)	Decision
H1	TM → Innovation	0.396	5.832	0.000	0.169 (medium)	Supported
H2	Innovation → OP	0.639	12.451	0.000	0.625 (large)	Supported
H4	TM × TL → Innovation	0.099	2.104	0.036	0.041 (small)	Supported

Table 5 presents the structural model results and hypothesis testing outcomes. It shows that talent management has a significant positive effect on innovation, supporting H1. Innovation also has a strong positive effect on organizational performance, supporting H2. Additionally, the interaction between talent management and transformational leadership significantly predicts innovation, supporting H4.

**Table 6***Mediation and Moderated Mediation Results*

Path / Effect	Coefficient / Indirect Effect	Bootstrapped 95% CI	Significance
Direct effect TM → OP	0.214	[0.118, 0.309]	Significant
Indirect effect TM → Innovation → OP (H3)	0.253	[0.179, 0.338]	Significant
Total effect TM → OP	0.467	[0.379, 0.561]	Significant
Index of Moderated Mediation	0.063	[0.008, 0.129]	Significant

Table 6 reports the mediation and moderated mediation results. The direct effect of talent management on organizational performance is significant, and the indirect effect through innovation is also significant, supporting H3. The total effect is stronger than the direct effect alone, indicating partial mediation. The index of moderated mediation is significant, suggesting that transformational leadership moderates the indirect effect of talent management on organizational performance through innovation.

Table 7*Conditional Indirect Effects at Different Levels of Transformational Leadership*

Level of TL	Indirect Effect (TM → Innov → OP)	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Low TL (−1 SD)	0.181	0.112	0.267
Mean TL	0.253	0.179	0.338
High TL (+1 SD)	0.325	0.231	0.441

Table 7 displays the conditional indirect effects of talent management on organizational performance through innovation at different levels of transformational leadership. At low levels of transformational leadership, the indirect effect is 0.181 and remains significant. At mean and high levels, the indirect effect increases to 0.253 and 0.325, respectively. This pattern indicates that the mediating role of innovation becomes stronger when transformational leadership is higher.

Table 8*Variance Explained and Predictive Relevance*

Endogenous Construct	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ² (predict)
Innovation	0.586	0.584	0.412
Organizational Performance	0.730	0.729	0.481

Table 8 shows the variance explained and predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs. The model explains 58.6% of the variance in innovation and 73.0% of the variance in organizational performance. The Q² values are greater than zero, indicating acceptable predictive relevance. These results suggest that the proposed model has strong explanatory and predictive power.

5. Discussion

This study examines how talent management enhances organisational performance by emphasising the critical roles of innovation and transformational leadership. Based on the Resource Based View (RBV), the findings demonstrate that investment in human capital yields rare, valuable, and distinctive resources (Hidayah, 2025). These resources develop into dynamic capabilities that give companies a long-term competitive advantage, particularly those related to innovation. The study provides more information than previous studies that simply examined the direct relationship between TM and OP by demonstrating that innovation mediates a significant portion of TM's impact on performance (Rubio-Andrés et al., 2026).

Dynamic Capabilities Theory can help us understand this topic better. To remain competitive, organisations must continuously identify opportunities, implement strategic plans, and reallocate resources in rapidly evolving, technologically complex industries like manufacturing. The findings make it clear that talent



management matters. It builds skills, gets people sharing what they know, and boosts creative confidence. That's what leads to better processes and new products (Dukhaykh & Alangri, 2026).

Transformational leadership plays a very crucial role in the area of contingency-based leadership and HR management. Leaders who promote new ideas, inspire, and motivate people on an individual basis give them the space they require and provide for their needs. This makes talent management become innovation (Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005). Therefore, talent management success depends on the leaders. In manufacturing organizations that have inflexible hierarchical structures, transformational leadership is very important in nurturing creativity (Alias et al., 2023).

The model of moderated mediation takes a holistic approach to study the situation. The model does not simply show whether talent management is effective or not; it also specifies when and how talent management can be useful, especially in the under-researched regions like emerging markets. This is exactly what the academics were asking for.

5.1 Practical Implications

These findings provide managers with specific actions which they can undertake to help people realize their potential and improve their performance. Talent management is not simply about administrative activities conducted by the HR department (Azkha Rinaldhy, 2021). This approach is strategic. Managers need to adopt integrated strategies involving succession planning, staffing rotation, training programs, and talent identification in order to foster creativity. In manufacturing settings, creativity often occurs when technical, operational, and quality control units collaborate (Meyers et al., 2020).

This issue is important enough to not treat the processes of managing talents separately from it. Organizations should combine the two by establishing research and development and improvement teams, taking into account innovation while evaluating performance and rewarding people, and assessing results of generating new ideas. Thus, talent management will not be an isolated initiative of Human Resources (Ganguly et al., 2020).

Third, the importance of developing leaders cannot be overstated. This research demonstrates the importance of transformational leadership. Training programs can be organized for middle-level and senior managers so that they become transformational leaders through setting an innovation vision, supporting their subordinates, challenging the existing situation, and shielding innovation initiatives from business pressures. Transformational leadership in emerging economies, which tend to be more controlling, could make a big contribution to talent management (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

In conclusion, it is important to mention that the three concepts discussed are interrelated and thus require a holistic approach to be adopted by firms. HR dashboards and performance management can help organizations measure the entire value chain from talent management to innovations and performance to organizational results taking into consideration leadership climate as one of the important elements. For policy makers and stakeholders in regions with talent shortages, the promotion of TM and leadership development can increase competitiveness in the sectors.

6. Limitations

There are certain limitations associated with this study. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study makes it possible for the researchers to establish correlations, but not causations. Moreover, the cross-sectional design does not allow for tracking changes in performance and creativity of employees due to talent management over time. In addition, perceptual measures were used in this study, which is quite typical for HR studies, although the bias associated with self-reporting about the performance of one's organization is rather significant.

7. Directions for Future Research

The future research in this area is quite evident. To cite an example, longitudinal or multivariate research can help to determine and investigate any possible causal relationship. The use of objective measures along with surveys, such as measures of financial performance and the number of patents, would contribute to the credibility of the research. There needs to be an investigation into the differences in results based on



the country and type of industry. It will also be important to analyse developed and developing countries or different industries.

The model can be further enhanced through the inclusion of additional variables. The moderating variables that may apply to this model include learning orientation, digital maturity, and high-performance work system. On the other hand, the mediating variables that may apply in this model include employee engagement and knowledge sharing. Researching the TM in individual level, team level, and organizational level will help understand its unique operation at each of these levels.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the results have proved that talent management plays an important role in enhancing the performance of manufacturing companies and is mainly responsible for increasing the level of innovation. In addition to that, the relationship between talent management and innovation can be increased with the help of transformational leadership. This research provides the evidence of how people can enhance innovation through investing in people.

The results show that TM is a dynamic competency and not merely an HR function. Provided there are effective leaders, companies are able to cope with digital transformation and global supply chain interruptions. Researchers will have the chance to analyse TM in relation to different organizational levels through these findings. The practice of TM is about aligning innovation and leadership development for future competitiveness. In the world of talent, the organizations that nurture talent will thrive.

Author's Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were guaranteed throughout the research process.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The authors are committed to transparency and will provide detailed methodological information and analysis protocols upon request.

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