

**INTERNAL MARKETING ORIENTATION AND JOB SATISFACTION:
A MEDIATED MODEL OF EMPOWERMENT AND SUPERVISORY
SUPPORT**

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) and employee job satisfaction, with a specific focus on the mediating roles of employee empowerment and supervisory support within the context of Pakistan's service sector, particularly the telecommunications and internet service industries. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from employees across multiple firms and analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test both direct and indirect relationships among the constructs. The findings reveal that IMO has a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction, indicating that organizations that treat employees as internal customers experience higher levels of workforce satisfaction. Additionally, employee empowerment and supervisory support emerged as key mediating factors that strengthen the relationship between IMO and job satisfaction. The measurement and structural models demonstrated high reliability, validity, and predictive accuracy, confirming the robustness of the proposed framework. This research contributes to the growing body of literature on internal marketing by

extending its application to a developing economy and offers practical insights for managers seeking to enhance employee satisfaction through empowerment and supportive leadership.

Keywords: Internal Marketing Orientation, Employee Empowerment, Supervisory Support, Job Satisfaction, Service Sector, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and competitive organizational environments, traditional work structures, policies, and practices are being continuously redefined to adapt to evolving environmental, social, professional, and technological demands. Organizations now recognize that internal processes, including how employees are managed, supported, and empowered, are as critical as external strategies in sustaining competitive advantage. One such internal mechanism is Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO), which plays a significant role in enhancing employees' job satisfaction and, consequently, overall organizational effectiveness (Huang et al., 2023; Lings & Greenley, 2005).

Chen et al. (2006) define internal marketing as "all actions which a company performs in order to develop, motivate and train their employees in order to enhance the quality of services provided to customers." IMO focuses on treating employees as internal customers and ensuring their needs are met to foster service excellence (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000). Job satisfaction, on the other hand, refers to an employee's emotional response to their job, shaped by how well their expectations align with actual job experiences (Tadeka et al., 2005; Shiu & Yu, 2010; Judge et al., 2017).

With intensifying industrial competition, organizations are increasingly prioritizing employee empowerment and supervisory support as strategic tools to drive employee satisfaction and engagement (Lee et al., 2021; Boshoff & Allen, 2000). Empowered employees exhibit a greater sense of control, ownership, and commitment to their work, while supportive supervision

reinforces motivation, psychological safety, and job fulfillment (Kim & Fernandez, 2017; Deci et al., 2017).

Although the concept of market orientation has been extensively discussed (Narver & Slater, 1990; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), its internal dimension, Internal Marketing Orientation, has only recently gained attention. Scholars have variously referred to this concept using terms such as *market-driven*, *customer-oriented*, or *marketing-oriented*, with little consensus on definitions (Ahmed & Rafiq, 1995; Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000; Gounaris, 2008). However, there is a growing consensus that IMO plays a pivotal role in aligning employee interests with organizational goals, leading to improved service quality and satisfaction (Huang et al., 2023; Lings et al., 2022).

Early work by Berry et al. (1976) introduced the idea of internal marketing as a mechanism for improving employee satisfaction by addressing their needs and fostering organizational commitment. However, the mediating effects of employee empowerment and supervisory support on the relationship between IMO and job satisfaction remain underexplored, especially in non-Western and developing country contexts (Ali et al., 2022; Aslam & Frooghi, 2020). This gap in literature warrants further empirical investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to investigate the impact of Internal Marketing Orientation on employee job satisfaction, with a specific focus on the mediating roles of employee empowerment and supervisory support. By employing a regression analysis, the study seeks to provide empirical insights into how these mediating variables influence the strength and direction of the IMO-job satisfaction relationship.

Contribution and Significance

This study contributes to the limited body of empirical research on Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) within the service sector, particularly in the

context of Pakistan's telecom and internet service provider industry. For academic researchers, it offers a framework to better understand how internal marketing practices interact with employee psychological factors, such as empowerment and supervisory support, to influence job satisfaction. From a managerial perspective, the study provides actionable insights for telecom organizations on how strategic investment in internal marketing, employee empowerment, and supportive leadership can foster a more motivated, satisfied, and productive workforce. By addressing an underexplored sector and context, this research not only extends the theoretical scope of IMO but also informs evidence-based human resource and marketing practices in Pakistan's rapidly evolving service economy.

The following sections provide a comprehensive review of the literature on internal marketing, job satisfaction, empowerment, and supervisory support. The methodology section outlines the data collection and analysis procedures, followed by results, discussions, implications, and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO)

In the quest for sustainable competitive advantage, modern organizations must strategically realign their focus not only on external markets but also on internal dynamics. While firms traditionally concentrated on gaining an edge through operations, products, sales, or pricing strategies, the emphasis is increasingly shifting toward human capital as a vital driver of performance and differentiation (Kotler et al., 2021). In this context, Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) has emerged as a critical organizational philosophy. It emphasizes satisfying the needs of internal customers-employees, by aligning organizational practices, policies, and culture with employee expectations and aspirations (Lings & Greenley, 2005; Huang et al., 2023).

The concept of internal marketing originated in the late 20th century, evolving from debates on marketing systems within organizations. It reflects a significant shift from the traditional view of marketing as an outward-focused function to a more integrated internal-external perspective (Gounaris, 2008). The underlying assumption is that the quality of customer service and external performance is directly tied to the satisfaction and motivation of internal employees (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; George, 1990). In other words, satisfied employees are more inclined to deliver high-quality service, demonstrate innovation in their roles, and maintain strong organizational commitment-factors that serve as key determinants of long-term organizational success.

Historical Foundations and Evolution

The roots of internal marketing can be traced back to Berry et al. (1976), who first proposed that employees should be treated as internal customers and their roles as internal products. This foundational idea was reinforced by George (1977), Thompson et al. (1978), and Murray (1979), establishing the framework for integrating human resource strategies with marketing principles. Sasser and Arbeit (1976) also contributed to the early theoretical development by emphasizing the alignment of employee and organizational goals to enhance service delivery. Later, Berry (1981) refined the definition of internal marketing as “viewing employees as internal customers and jobs as internal products,” aiming to create organizational alignment and employee satisfaction.

By the 1990s, internal marketing was widely acknowledged as a strategic tool for enhancing service quality, improving organizational culture, and fostering internal communication (Rafiq & Ahmed, 2000; Grönroos, 1981). According to George and Grönroos (1989), the central goal of internal marketing is to cultivate motivated, customer-focused, and loyal employees by communicating organizational goals, aligning roles with employee needs, and

fostering a culture of engagement and empowerment. This approach goes beyond conventional HR practices by integrating marketing techniques such as segmentation, targeting, and satisfaction measurement within internal communication and development strategies (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003).

Core Tenets and Strategic Value

At its core, internal marketing revolves around three primary elements: attracting, developing, and retaining a skilled and motivated workforce. Berry and Parasuraman (1991) emphasized that “internal marketing is the tactic of shaping job-products to fit human needs,” suggesting that organizational roles and tasks must be designed in a way that fulfills employee expectations while also advancing organizational objectives. This requires a deliberate strategy of aligning employee experiences with organizational vision, facilitating training and development, recognizing employee contributions, and creating meaningful work environments (Lings et al., 2022; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993).

A fundamental assumption of Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) is that employee satisfaction precedes customer satisfaction. George (1977) emphasized that organizations aiming to deliver superior customer experiences must first address the needs and motivations of their own employees. In service-oriented industries, where performance and customer interaction rely heavily on human behavior, employees play a pivotal role in shaping customer perceptions and organizational success. This is particularly relevant in sectors such as telecommunications, banking, education, and healthcare, where the quality of employee-customer interactions directly influences customer loyalty, brand image, and overall competitiveness (Kim & Fernandez, 2017; Huang et al., 2023).

IMO in Contemporary Business Contexts

In today's knowledge-driven, service-intensive, and digitally transforming markets, the relevance of IMO has increased substantially. Firms are now expected to promote not only customer centricity but also employee-centric

cultures that support continuous learning, psychological safety, and inclusion (Deci et al., 2017; Ali et al., 2022). This shift is also driven by generational changes in the workforce, where younger employees prioritize meaningful work, autonomy, and supportive organizational climates over traditional incentives (Choudhury et al., 2022). IMO, therefore, offers a robust framework for addressing these new expectations through targeted internal communication, recognition systems, and leadership practices.

Moreover, internal marketing is no longer seen as merely a tool for employee satisfaction but as a strategic enabler of change, innovation, and organizational resilience. Organizations with strong internal marketing orientation tend to exhibit higher levels of employee engagement, adaptability, and agility—traits that are essential for navigating volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments (Nguyen et al., 2024). In sum, Internal Marketing Orientation has evolved from a conceptual framework rooted in service marketing literature into a strategic imperative for modern organizations. It emphasizes that treating employees as internal customers is not only ethically sound but also essential for organizational success. By integrating IMO into core strategic planning and HR practices, firms can build more resilient, innovative, and customer-focused cultures. The continuing relevance of IMO calls for deeper exploration of how internal empowerment mechanisms—such as employee empowerment and supervisory support, mediate its impact on employee job satisfaction, especially in developing economies like Pakistan.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is widely regarded as a critical indicator of employee well-being and an essential determinant of organizational effectiveness and sustainability (Culbertson, 2009; Korunka et al., 2003). It reflects the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs and work environments. In organizational behavior literature, job satisfaction has

consistently been associated with outcomes such as employee retention, performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and reduced turnover intentions (Spector, 1997; Judge et al., 2017).

Spector (1997) defines job satisfaction as “the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs,” encompassing emotional reactions, cognitive evaluations, and behavioral tendencies related to one’s occupational experiences. This perspective positions job satisfaction as a multidimensional construct influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic job characteristics. These include factors such as workplace motivation, compensation, leadership style, interpersonal relationships, recognition, work-life balance, and the organizational climate (Igalens & Roussel, 1999; Kuo et al., 2007; Brewer et al., 2008; Ahsan et al., 2009).

The telecom and internet service provider sector, in particular, faces growing pressure to sustain employee satisfaction amid intense competition, high service demands, rapid technological change, and limited opportunities for autonomy. In this dynamic environment, internal organizational practices that acknowledge and support employees’ psychological and emotional needs have become increasingly essential. Among these, Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) has demonstrated strong potential. IMO emphasizes treating employees as internal customers and addressing their expectations with the same seriousness as external clients, thereby enhancing motivation, morale, and overall job satisfaction (Lings & Greenley, 2005; Iliopoulos & Priporas, 2011).

According to Iliopoulos and Priporas (2011), the essence of internal marketing is to regard employees as internal customers and their job roles as internal products. This conceptual shift acknowledges the fundamental role employees play in service quality, operational excellence, and customer satisfaction. Especially in service-oriented and production-intensive firms, where employee performance directly affects output and customer experience,

the internal satisfaction of employees becomes a key driver of organizational success.

Empirical studies across various contexts confirm a strong positive relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction (Gounaris, 2008; Lings et al., 2022). When organizations communicate effectively with employees, invest in their development, provide clear role expectations, and cultivate an inclusive organizational culture, employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of satisfaction and commitment (Huang et al., 2023). This relationship remains significant regardless of the specific business function (e.g., operations, sales, HR), indicating the strategic cross-functionality of IMO.

However, much of the existing literature has been concentrated in developed Western contexts, with limited empirical investigation in developing economies such as Pakistan. In such environments, organizational structures are often bureaucratic, hierarchical, and centralized, with employees facing job insecurity, heavy workloads, limited growth opportunities, and weak institutional support systems (Aslam & Frooghi, 2020; Ali et al., 2022). These factors create a pressing need for internal marketing strategies that are tailored to local conditions and sensitive to employees' psychosocial and economic realities.

In Pakistan's telecom and internet service provider sector, where employees often encounter high performance demands, job-related stress, and limited participative opportunities, the relevance of Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) becomes particularly pronounced. By fostering open communication, recognizing employee contributions, providing developmental support, and responding effectively to internal needs, IMO can serve as a strategic mechanism to enhance employee morale, engagement, and satisfaction. Despite its growing importance, empirical research on IMO within Pakistan's telecom industry remains scarce. Therefore, this study seeks

to address this gap by examining the impact of Internal Marketing Orientation on employee job satisfaction among telecom and internet service provider organizations in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment has emerged as a pivotal concept in contemporary human resource management and organizational behavior. Rooted in participative management theories, empowerment refers to the process through which organizations delegate authority, grant autonomy, and encourage employee involvement in decision-making (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Empowerment practices enable employees to take ownership of their tasks, improve problem-solving capabilities, and contribute to innovation and performance. In doing so, they foster a more engaged, motivated, and satisfied workforce (Spreitzer, 1995; Seibert et al., 2004).

Although empowerment practices have been extensively discussed in management literature, their application and empirical investigation have remained relatively limited within the service sector, particularly in knowledge-intensive and technology-driven industries such as telecommunications. Unlike the manufacturing sector, where empowerment techniques such as participative teams, quality circles, and continuous improvement programs have long been adopted (Lawler et al., 1989), telecom and internet service provider organizations often operate within hierarchical and target-oriented structures that restrict employee autonomy and decision-making. This limited implementation constrains our understanding of how empowerment functions in customer-facing, people-centered service environments, such as telecom services, where employees' psychological states, discretion, and responsiveness directly influence service quality and customer satisfaction.

Theoretically, employee empowerment encompasses various dimensions and forms. According to Bowen and Lawler (1992), empowerment

can range from basic involvement (such as consultation and idea sharing) to full decision-making authority. However, as Barry (1993) and Lashley (1997) caution, empowerment is not a one-size-fits-all concept; its form, intensity, and purpose vary depending on managerial intent and organizational context. For example, some organizations may claim to empower employees through participation in meetings or improvement suggestions, yet withhold real authority to make decisions, resulting in symbolic or superficial empowerment.

Despite these variations, a consistent stream of research supports the notion that genuine empowerment, where employees are trusted, given autonomy, and supported, leads to higher job satisfaction, increased organizational commitment, and improved psychological well-being (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Hui et al., 2004; Kim & Fernandez, 2017). Empowered employees are more likely to view their work as meaningful and aligned with personal and organizational goals, which enhances intrinsic motivation and satisfaction.

From a strategic perspective, scholars such as Piore and Sabel (1983) advocate for flattened organizational structures where unnecessary managerial layers are removed, allowing employees to act as knowledgeable, self-directed contributors. This perspective treats employees as valuable assets capable of shaping operational outcomes when granted adequate decision-making power. In such contexts, empowerment acts not only as a motivational tool but also as a catalyst for competitive advantage, innovation, and agility. In relation to Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO), empowerment plays a critical role. IMO emphasizes treating employees as internal customers and aligning organizational practices to meet their needs and expectations (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Lings & Greenley, 2005). Empowerment complements IMO by enabling employees to translate internal satisfaction into performance, innovation, and better service delivery. When empowerment is present, internal marketing practices such as clear communication, recognition, and

training are more likely to have a positive and lasting effect on job satisfaction. In contrast, in rigid, hierarchical environments where employees lack autonomy, even well-intended IMO efforts may yield limited outcomes.

Furthermore, Hui et al. (2004) demonstrated that empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between organizational practices and job satisfaction. Organizations that actively empower their employees tend to report higher levels of satisfaction, engagement, and commitment compared to those that maintain rigid, centralized decision-making structures. In the context of the telecom and internet service provider sector, where employees frequently face dynamic customer demands, rapid technological change, and high-performance expectations, empowerment enables greater flexibility, responsiveness, and ownership of work. By granting employees autonomy and participative authority, organizations in this sector can enhance both individual motivation and collective effectiveness, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction and service quality.

Supervisory Support

Supervisory support is a well-established determinant of employee well-being, job satisfaction, and workplace effectiveness. Within the framework of Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO), supervisory support is considered a critical organizational mechanism that facilitates the successful transmission of internal marketing practices to frontline employees (George, 1990; Lings & Greenley, 2005). As IMO aims to treat employees as internal customers and respond to their needs, the role of supervisors becomes essential in interpreting, reinforcing, and enacting these internal marketing initiatives on a day-to-day basis.

Supervisory support refers to the degree to which supervisors provide their subordinates with emotional backing, instrumental help, constructive feedback, and professional guidance (House & Aditya, 1997; Eisenberger et al., 2002). Effective supervisors act not only as task coordinators but also as

mentors and advocates for their teams. They ensure that employees are well-informed, appropriately resourced, psychologically safe, and meaningfully engaged in their roles. As Kur (1995) posits, supervisory support involves short to medium-term interactions that influence individual and team performance through frequent communication, problem-solving, and mutual trust.

From an internal marketing perspective, supervisory support is instrumental in ensuring that the “internal exchange” between the organization and its employees operates effectively (Band, 1988; George, 1990). Before focusing on external customer relationships, internal interactions must foster mutual commitment, motivation, and clarity. Supervisors serve as the key bridge in this internal exchange, translating strategic intent into actionable behavior, communicating organizational policies, listening to employee concerns, and reinforcing desired work behaviors (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Connaughton & Daly, 2004).

Moreover, research indicates that the quality of the supervisor-subordinate relationship directly influences employee perceptions of fairness, empowerment, and inclusion, all of which are known to affect job satisfaction (Liden & Graen, 1980; Liden et al., 1982). In high-quality relationships, employees report greater access to resources, trust in leadership, and openness to organizational changes, factors that amplify the positive effects of IMO practices such as recognition, development, and internal communication (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001; Chiang & Hsieh, 2012).

Effective supervisory support also enhances employees’ psychological safety, the belief that one can voice concerns or take risks without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 1999). When employees feel supported, they are more likely to embrace organizational initiatives, commit to organizational goals, and display higher levels of engagement. In contrast, in low-support environments, internal marketing efforts often fail to reach their

full potential due to gaps in communication, trust, and reinforcement. This dynamic is especially salient in hierarchical, centralized organizations common in developing countries like Pakistan, where supervisory relationships can either mediate or magnify structural barriers to satisfaction (Ali et al., 2022).

Supervisory support also plays a mediating role between IMO and job satisfaction. In work environments where supervisors provide frequent feedback, emotional reassurance, and involvement in decisions, employees are more likely to internalize the organization's commitment to their well-being (Liden et al., 1993). This, in turn, strengthens the link between internal marketing and job satisfaction. Conversely, where supervisory support is perceived as lacking or authoritarian, internal marketing efforts may appear insincere or misaligned, weakening their impact on satisfaction levels.

While the direct effects of employee empowerment on job satisfaction are well documented, its mediating role in the relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) and employee satisfaction remains relatively underexplored, particularly within developing economies such as Pakistan (Khalid & Ahmed, 2023). In the Pakistani telecom and internet service provider sector, employees often work in fast-paced, target-driven, and technology-intensive environments characterized by hierarchical management structures, high job pressure, and limited decision-making autonomy (Nawaz et al., 2024). Within such contexts, empowerment may serve as a critical psychological mechanism that enhances employees' sense of control, belonging, and competence, thereby strengthening the positive influence of IMO on job satisfaction (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2015). When employees perceive higher empowerment, they are more likely to internalize organizational values, show proactive behavior, and respond more positively to internal marketing initiatives, leading to improved motivation, commitment, and satisfaction (Bhatnagar, 2020).

Similarly, despite the recognized importance of supervisory support in promoting employee well-being, its mediating role in the IMO-job satisfaction relationship has received limited empirical attention, especially in non-Western service settings (Saeed et al., 2023). In Pakistan's telecom sector, where rigid supervisory hierarchies and performance pressures prevail, the effectiveness of IMO largely depends on the quality of supervisory relationships and communication (Ali & Ahmad, 2022). Supportive supervisors act as conduits of internal marketing practices by translating organizational goals into employee-centered guidance, recognition, and feedback, thereby fostering trust and engagement (Eisenberger et al., 2020). Therefore, this study examines both empowerment and supervisory support as contextual mediators that may amplify the positive effects of Internal Marketing Orientation on employee job satisfaction in the telecom and internet service provider sector of Islamabad, Pakistan.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the understanding that employees' perceptions of being valued, supported, and empowered are central to their overall job satisfaction. These perceptions are shaped by how organizations treat employees as "internal customers," a key principle of Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Lings & Greenley, 2005). IMO emphasizes fostering internal trust, communication, recognition, and development, which in turn enhance employee attitudes and satisfaction.

The conceptual foundation of this study draws on three interrelated theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). SET posits that reciprocal exchanges between employees and organizations, such as fair treatment and support, foster positive attitudes like satisfaction and commitment. SDT highlights autonomy, competence, and relatedness as psychological needs that drive

intrinsic motivation, which can be strengthened through empowerment and supportive supervision. LMX Theory emphasizes the importance of high-quality relationships between leaders and subordinates, fostering trust, respect, and loyalty, all of which contribute to job satisfaction. Collectively, these theories explain how internal marketing enhances employee satisfaction and how empowerment and supervisory support mediate this relationship by influencing employees' perceptions of autonomy, fairness, and support within the organizational environment.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model integrates Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO), Employee Empowerment, Supervisory Support, and Job Satisfaction to explain how internal organizational practices influence employee outcomes. It illustrates both the direct impact of IMO on job satisfaction and the mediating and moderating roles of empowerment and supervisory support within the organizational context of Pakistan's telecom and internet service sector.

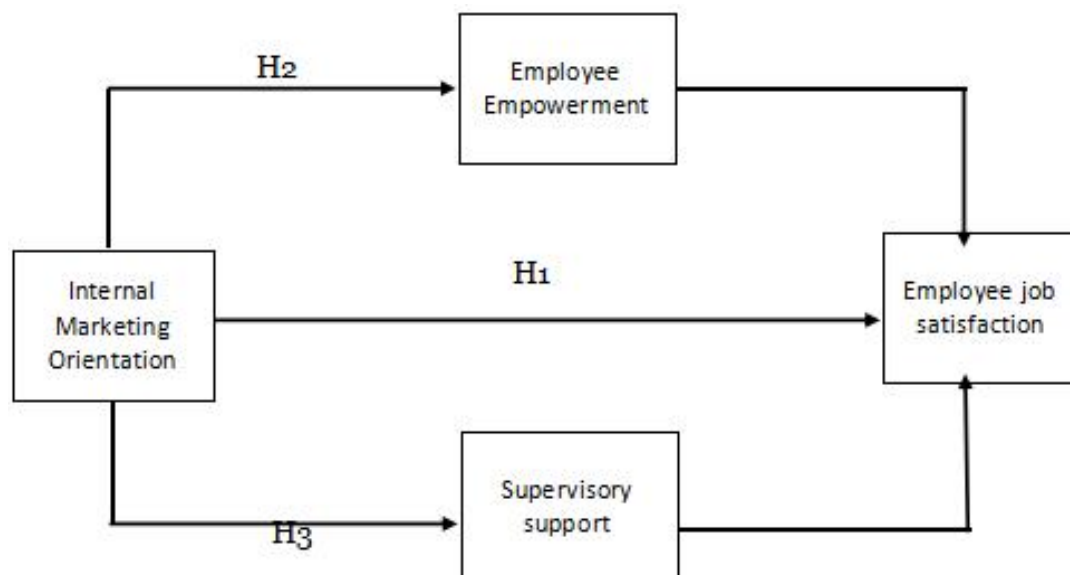


FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Hypotheses Development

Based on the theoretical framework and review of prior research, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₁: Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction.

H₂: Employee empowerment strengthens the relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) and employee job satisfaction.

H₃: Supervisory support strengthens the relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) and employee job satisfaction.

Empirical Application

Building upon the theoretical foundations and literature discussed above, this study empirically examines the proposed relationships within the context of the telecom and internet service provider sector in Islamabad, Pakistan. The research model integrates Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) as the independent variable, employee job satisfaction as the dependent variable, and supervisory support and employee empowerment as mediating variables. To test these relationships, a quantitative research design is adopted, utilizing data collected from employees working in telecom organizations. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis is employed to assess both the direct and interaction effects among the study variables.

The empirical investigation seeks to extend the IMO-job satisfaction literature to an under-researched service context in a developing economy. By providing evidence-based insights, the study aims to guide managers in the telecom and internet service sectors on how internal marketing initiatives, coupled with supervisory support and empowerment practices, can enhance employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational research design to examine the relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO)

and employee job satisfaction, with employee empowerment and supervisory support as mediating variables. While the variables under consideration, particularly in this configuration, have been extensively studied in Western contexts, there is a notable gap in empirical research within Pakistan's telecom and Internet service sectors, which this study seeks to fill.

The correlational design is appropriate because the primary objective is to examine associations among naturally occurring variables rather than manipulating them. The research was conducted in a non-contrived setting, with minimal researcher interference in the organizational workflow, thus qualifying as a field study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The unit of analysis for this investigation is the individual employee. Data was collected at a single point in time, making this a cross-sectional study.

Population and Sampling

The target population consisted of employees working in telecom and internet service provider companies in Islamabad, Pakistan. These organizations were selected because of their significant contribution to Pakistan's GDP, digital infrastructure, and employment generation.

Using Morgan and Rao's (2003) sample size determination formula, a sample size of 325 was deemed appropriate for a population of approximately 650 employees. The sampling frame included employees at all hierarchical levels, managerial and non-managerial, across diverse departments such as accounting, human resources, operations, R&D, customer service, and marketing.

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants based on their relevance to the research context (Ishaq et al., 2013). Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained.

Data Collection and Analysis Method

Data was gathered using a self-administered structured questionnaire, which was physically distributed among selected employees. The questionnaire was

accompanied by an informed consent form ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, and ethical compliance. Respondents were assured that their data would be used exclusively for academic purposes.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

- **Demographics:** gender, age, marital status, and employment status.
- **Constructs:** IMO, supervisory support, employee empowerment, and job satisfaction, measured using validated scales discussed below.

Measures and Instrumentation

All constructs were measured using 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. In this study, SPSS 27 version and SmartPLS 3.0 version was used for data analysis.

Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO)

IMO was measured using a 10-item scale adapted from Davis (2005), originally developed to assess internal marketing strategies within service organizations. Items included statements such as “The organization markets its products to employees” and “The organization recognizes employees as internal customers.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this study was $\alpha = 0.939$, indicating excellent reliability.

Employee Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured using a 5 items subset from the Measure of Job Satisfaction (MJS) developed by Hinds et al. (1998). Items included “I find real enjoyment in my job” and “I am fairly well satisfied with my job.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this construct was $\alpha = 0.70$, confirming acceptable internal consistency.

Supervisory Support

Supervisory support was assessed using an 8 item scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986), with sample items such as “My supervisor considers my goals and values.” This scale achieved a Cronbach’s alpha of $\alpha = 0.782$ in this study.

Employee Empowerment

Employee empowerment was measured using a 5 item scale developed by Hayes (1994). One example is “I do not have to get management’s approval before I handle customer problems.” The Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was $\alpha = 0.784$.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Demographics

A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed among employees from telecommunications and internet service provider companies in Islamabad, Pakistan. Completed and usable responses were received from 325 respondents, resulting in a response rate of approximately 92.86%, which is considered very respectable for a survey-based research exercise in organizational settings.

From the demographics, we see primarily a younger workforce, with more than three-quarters (75.3%) aged between 20 and 40 years. The sample does provide some gender balance, although there is a stronger male presence at 64.6%. Slightly more than half of the respondents were married (52.3%), while the majority of the participants were in non-managerial positions (63.1%), indicating that the workforce is more operational than strategic. Moreover, a considerable portion of respondents (60%) had more than three years of organizational tenure, which basically adds to the reliability of their responses about internal marketing practices and job satisfaction.

The demographic information provides a diverse and relevant sample to study the effects of Internal Marketing Orientation with employee empowerment and supervisory support acting as mediators.

Table 1: *Demographic of the Respondents*

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
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Gender	Male	210	64.6%
	Female	115	35.4%
Age	20–30 years	135	41.5%
	31–40 years	110	33.8%
	41–50 years	60	18.5%
	Above 50 years	20	6.2%
Marital Status	Single	155	47.7%
	Married	170	52.3%
Employment Status	Managerial	120	36.9%
	Non-managerial	205	63.1%
Job Tenure	Less than 1 year	50	15.4%
	1–3 years	100	30.8%
	4–6 years	95	29.2%
	More than 6 years	80	24.6%

Measurement Model Results

Individual item loadings were evaluated, together with composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), maximum shared variance (MSV), and average shared variance (ASV), in the measurement model evaluation in terms of reliability and validity. All of the item loadings from one dimension exceed the minimum loading of 0.70 establishing sufficient indicator reliability, according to Hair et al. (2020). Construct CR ranges from 0.795 to 0.932, which passes the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency. In the same sense, all constructs have their AVE values above the minimum threshold of 0.50, which affirms convergent validity (Afthanorhan, 2013). Discriminant validity was satisfied as the AVE values of

each construct were greater than the respective MSV and ASV (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020).

Table 2: Measurement Model Results

Construct		Item Code	Loading	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO)		IMO1	0.781	0.932	0.628	0.452	0.376
		IMO2	0.766				
		IMO3	0.788				
		IMO4	0.801				
		IMO5	0.845				
		IMO6	0.861				
		IMO7	0.832				
		IMO8	0.792				
		IMO9	0.872				
		IMO10	0.813				
Job Satisfaction		JS1	0.709	0.812	0.534	0.339	0.295
		JS2	0.722				
		JS3	0.745				
		JS4	0.803				
		JS5	0.739				
Employee Empowerment		EE1	0.718	0.795	0.567	0.388	0.311
		EE2	0.731				
		EE3	0.846				
		EE4	0.754				
		EE5	0.726				
Supervisory Support		SS1	0.702	0.821	0.553	0.409	0.336

SS2	0.738
SS3	0.776
SS4	0.752
SS5	0.865
SS6	0.781
SS7	0.729
SS8	0.758

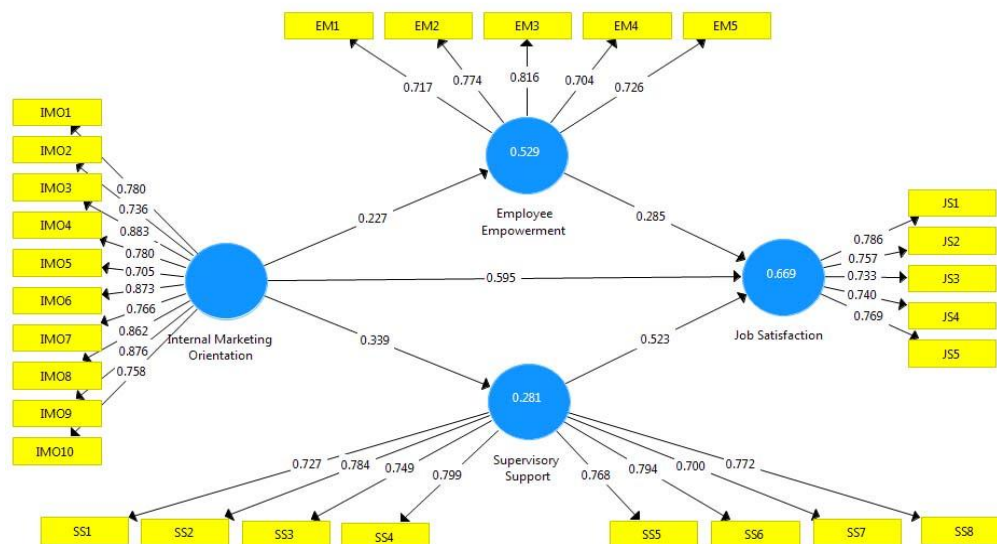


FIGURE 2: MEASUREMENT MODEL RESULTS

Structural Model

Direct and Mediation Relationships

The direct path coefficients and the mediation analysis results between the key constructs are presented in Table 4. All hypothesized relationships were very significant ($t\text{-value} > 1.96$ and $p < 0.005$), affirming the validity of the theoretical model (Winship & Zhuo, 2020). Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) has a significant positive direct effect on employee job satisfaction. Further, both Employee Empowerment and Supervisory Support partially mediate this relationship. There were significant indirect effects of IMO toward job satisfaction through these two mediators from the mediation

analysis using bootstrapping with 5,000 samples, further showing that they play a crucial role in having the impact of internal market strategies on employee satisfaction.

Table 3: *Direct Effects*

Path	SE	T-Value	P-Value
Internal Marketing Orientation → Job Satisfaction	0.029	3.995	0.000
Internal Marketing Orientation → Employee Empowerment	0.025	14.706	0.000
Employee Empowerment → Job Satisfaction	0.027	6.825	0.000
Internal Marketing Orientation → Supervisory Support	0.028	10.105	0.000
Supervisory Support → Job Satisfaction	0.030	5.068	0.000

Table 4: Indirect (Mediation) Effects

Mediation Path	SE	T-Value	P-Value
Internal Marketing Orientation → Employee Empowerment → Job Satisfaction	0.007	10.142	0.002
Internal Marketing Orientation → Supervisory Support → Job Satisfaction	0.006	7.667	0.001

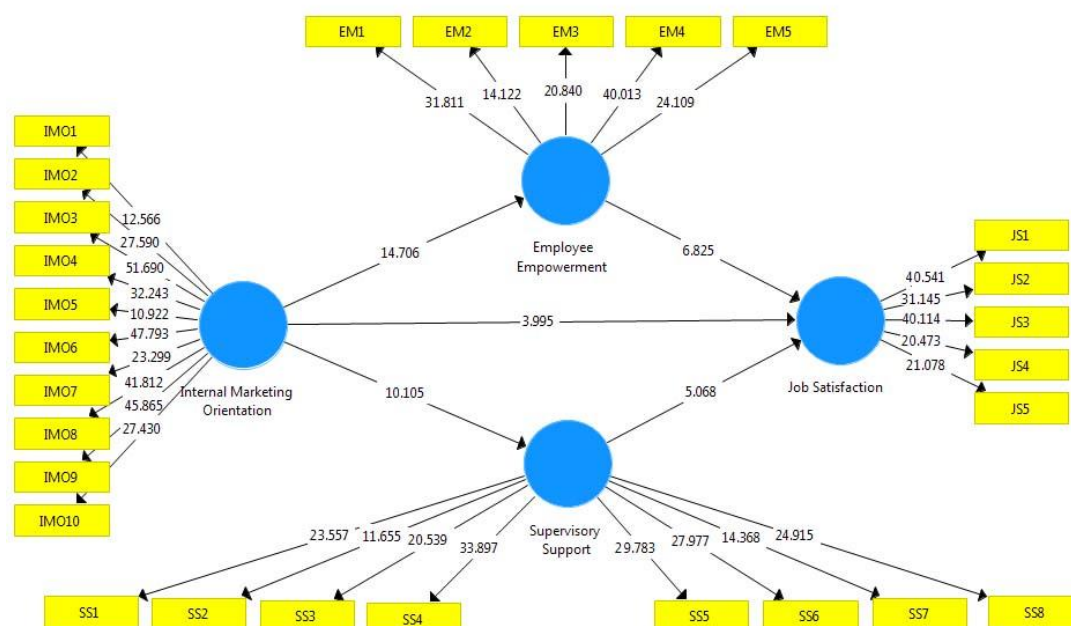


FIGURE 3: STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS

HTMT and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

The HTMT criterion for testing discriminant validity showed that all values were below the strict cutoff of 0.85, indicating that the constructs are conceptually distinct and do not suffer from multicollinearity (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). This finding implies that Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO), Employee Empowerment, Supervisory Support, and Job Satisfaction were different aspects of the organization's dynamics considered

in this study. Further evidence for discriminant validity was provided by the Fornell-Larcker criterion, as the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct exceeded the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The measurement model results are on the continuum between two dependent latent variables that are robustly anchored for structural model testing, thereby inspiring confidence in the analyses of the model (Hair et al., 2019). Mediation studies place a premium on the establishment of discriminant validity to prevent an overlap of constructs and consequently some biasing of path estimates (Kline, 2023).

Table 5: HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio) Table

Construct	IMO	EE	SS	JS
Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO)	1			
Employee Empowerment (EE)	0.65	1		
Supervisory Support (SS)	0.60	0.58	1	
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.55	0.53	0.50	1

Table 6: Fornell-Larcker Criterion Table

Construct	IMO	EE	SS	JS
Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO)	0.72			
Employee Empowerment (EE)	0.58	0.70		
Supervisory Support (SS)	0.55	0.53	0.75	
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.50	0.52	0.48	0.68

Effect Size (F²) and Predictive Relevance (Q²)

The F² analysis results indicated a medium-sized effect (F² = 0.213) of Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) on Employee Empowerment and a small to-medium effect on Supervisory Support. This means that IMO helps considerably in enhancing these mediators, thereby enhancing their significance for organizational processes (Cohen, 2016). The predictive relevance (Q²) for Employee Empowerment (0.321), Supervisory Support (0.298), and Job Satisfaction (0.287) was all above the threshold of 0,

suggesting the model is highly accurate and relevant in its predictions (Hair et al., 2019). The joint reading of the results pinpoints the decisive influence of IMO upon key employee outcomes and also serves to attest the success of the model in exploring job satisfaction through empowerment and support.

Table 7: *Effect Size (F²)*

Path	F² Value	Effect Size
IMO → Employee Empowerment	0.120	Medium
IMO → Supervisory Support	0.095	Small to Medium

Table 8: *Predictive Relevance (Q²)*

Construct	Q² Value	Interpretation
Employee Empowerment	0.321	Large predictive relevance
Supervisory Support	0.298	Large predictive relevance
Job Satisfaction	0.287	Large predictive relevance

FINDINGS

The findings of the study indicate that Internal Marketing Orientation has a strong and positive influence on employee job satisfaction. Employees who perceived higher levels of internal marketing practices reported greater satisfaction with their jobs. The results further show that Internal Marketing Orientation also enhances employee empowerment and supervisory support within organizations.

Both employee empowerment and supervisory support were found to significantly contribute to job satisfaction and to partially mediate the relationship between Internal Marketing Orientation and job satisfaction. This suggests that when employees feel empowered and supported by their supervisors, the positive impact of internal marketing practices on their satisfaction is strengthened. Overall, the model demonstrated strong reliability, validity, and predictive relevance, confirming that internal

marketing strategies play a central role in improving key employee outcomes within the organization.

Theoretical Implications

This study advances theory in several ways. First, it extends the Internal Marketing Orientation framework to the underexplored telecom sector of a developing economy, demonstrating its robustness across contexts. Second, by integrating Social Exchange Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and Leader–Member Exchange Theory, it highlights the psychological and relational mechanisms through which IMO enhances job satisfaction. Third, it empirically confirms that empowerment and supervisory support not only mediate but also strengthen the IMO-satisfaction link, underscoring the importance of employee-centric and relational constructs in strategic HR and marketing research.

Practical Implications

For practitioners in Pakistan’s telecom and internet service provider industry, the findings offer several actionable insights. First, organizations should institutionalize internal marketing practices that promote transparent communication, recognition, and employee development. Second, managerial focus should shift toward empowering employees, granting autonomy, trust, and participation in decision-making, to boost morale and engagement. Third, supervisory training programs should emphasize supportive leadership behaviors that foster trust, feedback, and psychological safety. By doing so, telecom firms can enhance both employee satisfaction and customer service quality, achieving sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly demanding market.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Internal Marketing Orientation (IMO) significantly enhances employee job satisfaction within Pakistan’s telecom and internet service provider sector, both directly and indirectly through empowerment and supervisory support. The results confirm that empowered and supported employees are more likely to perceive internal marketing initiatives as genuine,

respond with higher motivation, and contribute more positively to organizational goals. These findings enrich both theoretical understanding and managerial practice by emphasizing that the effectiveness of internal marketing depends not only on organizational systems but also on the relational and psychological climate within which employees operate. Ultimately, fostering empowerment and supportive supervision represents a strategic pathway for telecom organizations seeking to sustain a satisfied, motivated, and high-performing workforce in an evolving digital landscape.

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