

Employee voice enhances work performance via innovation

Thi Thuy Trang Nguyen

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
23D210042@mailsv.tmu.edu.vn

Anh Thu Phung

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
23D210087@mailsv.tmu.edu.vn

Dieu An Thi Nguyen

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
23D210084@mailsv.tmu.edu.vn

Huyen Trang Vu

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
23D210043@mailsv.tmu.edu.vn

Thi Nhu Thuy Nguyen

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
23D210040@mailsv.tmu.edu.vn

Thi Hien Le

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
hien.lt@tmu.edu.vn

Huy Hoang Doan*

Thuongmai University

79 Ho Tung Mau Street, Cau Giay District, Hanoi, 122868, Vietnam
hoang.dh@tmu.edu.vn

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract: In the rapidly evolving knowledge economy, proactive communication serves as a strategic information lifeline for organizational adaptability and performance. This study aims to examine the impact of employee voice behavior (EVB) on individual work performance (IWP) through the mediating mechanism of innovative work behavior (IWB) within the Vietnamese information technology (IT) sector. Utilizing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 284 full-time IT professionals in Vietnam and analyzed using partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The results confirm that EVB significantly enhances IWP, with all primary hypotheses supported at a high level of statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). Notably, EVB exerts a powerful positive influence on IWB ($\beta = 0.689$), which subsequently acts as a pivotal mediator ($\beta = 0.341$) that transforms proactive intellectual inputs into tangible performance outcomes. The study concludes that fostering a climate of open communication is essential for driving innovation, refuting the view that East Asian cultural values entirely stifle creativity. Practical implications suggest that IT organizations should cultivate psychological safety and institutionalize digital feedback mechanisms within agile frameworks to effectively convert employee insights into substantive technical improvements and sustainable competitive advantage.

Keywords: employee voice behavior; individual work performance; innovative work behavior

Employee voice meningkatkan kinerja kerja melalui inovasi

Abstrak: Dalam ekonomi berbasis pengetahuan yang berkembang pesat, komunikasi proaktif berfungsi sebagai jalur informasi strategis bagi adaptabilitas dan kinerja organisasi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh employee voice behavior (EVB) terhadap individual work performance (IWP) melalui mekanisme mediasi innovative work behavior (IWB) pada sektor teknologi informasi (TI) di Vietnam. Dengan menggunakan desain penelitian kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan dari 284 orang profesional IT penuh waktu di Vietnam dan dianalisis menggunakan partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa EVB secara signifikan meningkatkan IWP, dengan seluruh hipotesis utama didukung pada tingkat signifikansi statistik yang tinggi ($p < 0,001$). Secara khusus, EVB memberikan pengaruh positif yang kuat terhadap IWB ($\beta = 0,689$), yang selanjutnya berperan sebagai mediator kunci ($\beta = 0,341$) dalam mentransformasikan input intelektual proaktif menjadi hasil kinerja yang nyata. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penciptaan iklim komunikasi terbuka merupakan faktor esensial dalam mendorong inovasi, sekaligus membantah pandangan bahwa nilai-nilai budaya Asia Timur sepenuhnya menghambat kreativitas. Implikasi praktis menunjukkan bahwa organisasi IT perlu membangun psychological safety serta menginstitutionalisasi mekanisme umpan balik digital dalam kerangka kerja agile guna secara efektif mengonversi wawasan karyawan menjadi perbaikan teknis yang substantif dan keunggulan kompetitif yang berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: kinerja kerja individu; perilaku employee voice; perilaku kerja inovatif

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era, characterized by the explosion of the knowledge economy and the rapid advancements of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, human resource management (HRM) has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift. The focal point of organizations has transitioned from enforcing strict administrative compliance toward fostering employee proactivity and unlocking creative potential. Within this dynamic and fiercely competitive landscape, communication plays a strategically important role in ensuring organizational survival and adaptability. Employee voice behavior (EVB) has emerged as a strategic “information lifeline”, providing a critical mechanism through which individuals contribute to organizational improvement. Extensive international literature emphasizes that when employees break their silence to share specialized knowledge and practical experience, organizations can promptly identify errors, mitigate risks, and optimize long-term competitive advantages (Morrison, 2014).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) constitutes a fundamental theoretical framework across multiple social science disciplines, including management, social psychology, and anthropology, having been developed through numerous studies employing diverse methodological approaches. This theory conceptualizes social relationships as processes of exchanging tangible and intangible resources among individuals, governed by the principle of rewards and costs (Homans, 1961). Accordingly, individual behavior is influenced by the anticipated benefits that individuals expect to receive from social interactions (Cook & Rice, 2006). Blau (1964) posits that sustainable social relationships emerge when the rewards obtained exceed the costs incurred, while the norm of reciprocity plays a central role in maintaining these relationships (Gouldner, 1960).

Building upon these classical foundations, contemporary research in the digital age emphasizes that social exchange is particularly vital in task-oriented sectors like IT, where employees “repay” organizational trust by utilizing their specialized knowledge to proactively identify risks and optimize technical outcomes (Khan et al., 2023). In this context, employee voice behavior serves as a high-quality social exchange currency that bridges the gap between individual agency and organizational performance (Zhang et al., 2024). Within the organizational context, SET is employed to explain employee attitudes and voice behavior. When employees perceive that their contributions and efforts are recognized, they develop a sense of attachment and a desire to maintain long-term relationships with the organization, thereby fostering proactive work behaviors.

Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity represents one of the fundamental frameworks in creativity and innovation research. Creativity is understood as the process of generating ideas, products, or solutions that are “both novel and useful” for specific objectives. This theory posits that creativity results from the interaction among three core components, namely domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and intrinsic task motivation. Specifically, domain-relevant skills reflect an individual's knowledge and expertise; creativity-relevant skills pertain to flexible thinking and problem-solving abilities; while intrinsic motivation represents the internal drive to engage in creative activities (Amabile, 1983; Amabile, 1996). Among these three components, intrinsic motivation occupies a central role. The model subsequently expanded to incorporate the role of the social-organizational environment, demonstrating that factors, such as autonomy, recognition, and encouragement, can influence creativity through their effects on individual motivation (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Recent studies emphasize that a voice-encouraging environment serves as the primary channel for supplying the “intellectual raw materials”, including diverse perspectives and specialized expertise, necessary to activate the innovation cycle (Khan et al., 2023). In task-oriented sectors, like IT, fostering these cognitive inputs via proactive communication directly nourishes the internal components of creativity, allowing intellectual resources to be materialized into tangible technical improvements and superior performance outcomes (Tsameti et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024).

Employee voice behavior (EVB) is defined as the voluntary communication of ideas, suggestions, or concerns aimed at improving organizational functioning. In the contemporary knowledge economy, EVB has emerged as a strategic “information lifeline” essential for organizational survival and adaptability. A central characteristic of this behavior is its discretionary nature; it is not prescribed in formal job descriptions but relies entirely on individual choice to foster constructive change. Furthermore, EVB is inherently challenging as it signals that current practices may be suboptimal, which often entails personal risk for employees speaking up. According to the widely adopted typology by Liang et al. (2012), EVB comprises two complementary forms, promotive voice, which involves offering initiatives for improvement, and prohibitive voice, which focuses on identifying latent risks or harmful practices. Recent empirical evidence underscores that EVB serves as a pivotal intellectual input that activates the innovation cycle. Specifically, proactive communication stimulates creative thinking and knowledge sharing, enabling organizations to identify errors and mitigate risks promptly. Studies by Khan et al. (2023) and Zhang et al. (2024) confirm that EVB significantly triggers innovative work behavior, allowing intellectual resources to be materialized into tangible technical improvements and sustained competitive advantage.

Innovative work behavior (IWB) is a significant concept reflecting the extent of employee creativity and proactivity within organizations. Innovative ideas and behaviors of external contributors importantly affect the success of open innovation systems (Berchicci, 2013). At the individual level, IWB represents intentional efforts to generate positive changes in work through proposing and applying new ideas to processes, products, or services (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007). Innovative work behavior

encompasses four stages, idea exploration, idea generation, idea championing, and idea implementation (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Employees play an active role throughout the entire innovation process, from exploring and developing ideas to championing and implementing ideas into organizational practice (Kleysen & Street, 2001). Compared to creativity, IWB has a broader scope as it covers the entire innovation process and is more specific than behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behavior or extra-role behavior.

Individual work performance (IWP) is understood as the extent to which employees perform behaviors and tasks directly related to achieving organizational goals. According to Koopmans et al. (2014), IWP is a multidimensional construct comprising three main components, task performance, which reflects the degree of completion of core job tasks, contextual performance, which includes actions contributing to the overall organizational, social, and psychological environment in which employees perform their tasks, and counterproductive work behavior, which refers to behaviors that may undermine work effectiveness and negatively affect the organization. Employee work performance constitutes a critical component within organizations, directly impacting organizational success and development. In this study, IWP is conceptualized as a key outcome variable at the individual level, reflecting the extent to which employees translate their competencies, attitudes, and proactive behaviors into actual work effectiveness within the enterprise context.

However, within the specific context of the Vietnamese Information Technology (IT) industry, a sector defined by extremely high technical complexity and rapid innovation demands, a concerning paradox persists. Vietnam's IT workforce is notably young and highly educated, consisting primarily of Gen Z and Millennials, representing a “golden population” with rapid technological adaptability. Despite these professional advantages, the actual rate of proactive engagement remains considerably modest. Practical reports indicate that among a workforce exceeding 350,000 individuals, only approximately 35% of IT employees are willing to proactively propose initiatives or share ideas with their enterprises (Ministry of Science and Technology, 2025).

Rather than a culture of open communication, the tendency toward “psychological silence” has become prevalent within the Vietnamese IT sector. Internal surveys reveal that nearly 60% of IT employees admit to have remained silent despite detecting technical flaws or possessing ideas for process optimization. This phenomenon is largely attributed to the specific characteristics of work within the IT industry, which is typically highly structured, task-oriented, and technical in nature. Such an environment often encourages more individualistic working patterns, making the achievement of ideal and effective communication, including proactive voice behavior, significantly more challenging. This widespread silence leads to missed opportunities for innovation and diminishes the collective learning capacity that is essential for technology companies to thrive in the digital transformation era.

From an academic perspective, research on EVB reveals significant research gaps warranting further investigation. First, the vast majority of existing literature on voice behavior is Western-centric, rooted in environments that prioritize direct feedback. In high-tech sectors like IT, the highly technical and task-driven nature of the work may fundamentally alter the mechanisms through which voice behavior affects work outcomes. Second, most prior studies have examined EVB as an independent predictor directly impacting performance, lacking empirical evidence on internal transmission mechanisms. Although innovation is indisputably the lifeblood of the IT industry, there remains a scarcity of studies examining the mediating role of innovative work behavior (IWB) within an integrated three-dimensional model (EVB → IWB → IWP).

To address these gaps, the current study aims to analyze the impact of voice behavior on innovative behavior, while elucidating the “bridging” role of IWB in transforming proactive ideas into actual individual work performance (IWP) outcomes. Thereby, the study seeks to explain how the intellectual energy of IT professionals can be harnessed to generate genuine performance value for enterprises operating within the unique task-oriented framework of the industry. Accordingly, this study is guided by three primary research questions:

- RQ1: Does employee voice behavior (EVB) positively impact innovative work behavior (IWB) among IT employees in Vietnam?
- RQ2: Does innovative work behavior (IWB) positively impact on individual work performance (IWP) among IT employees in Vietnam?
- RQ3: Does employee voice behavior (EVB) positively impact on individual work performance (IWP) among IT employees in Vietnam?

- RQ4: Does innovative work behavior (IWB) play a critical mediating role in the causal relationship between employee voice behavior (EVB) and individual work performance (IWP) among IT employees in Vietnam?

This study pioneers the integration of Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity (ACTC) to construct an explanatory model for the EVB → IWB → IWP pathway. Drawing on SET, the study elucidates how employees “reciprocate” organizational recognition of their voice through enhanced performance efforts. Simultaneously, ACTC provides the rationale that an environment encouraging voice supplies essential “intellectual raw materials” (knowledge, skills, and diverse perspectives) necessary to activate the innovation cycle.

The findings provide a robust empirical foundation for managers within IT enterprises to recognize that employee voice is not merely a communication channel but a powerful strategic driver of innovation. The results underscore that organizations must cultivate a psychologically safe environment despite the highly technical and individualistic nature of the work. For technology companies aiming to compete in the era of agile and scrum methodologies, these insights are vital for transforming employee concerns into substantive technical improvements.

Employee voice behavior (EVB) is a proactive communication mechanism that enables workers to convey their knowledge, experiences, and personal observations to managers and colleagues. Numerous studies affirm that EVB serves as a starting point for organizational innovation by stimulating creativity, critical thinking, and knowledge sharing. Khan et al. (2023) identify a positive relationship between voice behavior and innovative work behavior, wherein employees propose improvement ideas that support both the exploration and application of novel solutions. Guzman & Espejo (2019) emphasize the crucial role of idea discussion in shaping and disseminating innovation, particularly when organizations possess abundant resources. Wang (2021) adds that in dynamic environments, proactively expressing opinions leads to higher levels of creativity and innovation performance. Beyond idea suggestion, voicing concerns about risks and errors also contributes significantly to innovation. Ayop & Ishak (2023) show that pointing out deficiencies enhances early problem detection capabilities, thereby fostering creative solutions. Nazir et al. (2020) assert that although forms of voice differ in purpose (constructive vs. prohibitive), both make substantial contributions to innovation by promoting corrective actions and process improvements. In a psychologically safe environment where opinions are received positively, employees exhibit stronger motivation to engage in innovative behaviors.

H₁: Employee voice behavior has a positive impact on innovative work behavior among IT employees in Vietnam.

Empirical research in human resource management consistently identifies innovative work behavior (IWB) as a decisive internal predictor of individual work performance (IWP). Situmorang et al. (2023) underscore that proactive innovation significantly enhances labor efficiency, as employees who continuously seek improvements and implement new ideas are better equipped to optimize workflows and elevate output quality. This positive correlation is substantiated across various professional contexts. Similarly, Mufti et al. (2019) highlight that innovation serves as a critical mechanism for translating person-environment fit into tangible results. In the high-velocity IT sector, IWB represents a core competency that directly generates organizational value by allowing employees to adapt to rapid technological shifts. Consequently, innovation is viewed not merely as a creative process but as a practical driver of professional effectiveness. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H₂: Innovative work behavior has a positive impact on individual work performance among IT employees in Vietnam.

Empirical studies by Song et al. (2019) confirm that employee voice behavior (EVB) has a significant positive relationship with individual job performance. When employees proactively engage in EVB, including both suggesting process improvements and warning about potential risks or errors, they demonstrate heightened responsibility and commitment to shared goals, thereby enhancing work motivation and task accuracy. According to Su et al. (2027), EVB also enables supervisors to attribute positive motives to employees, leading to higher performance evaluations due to their demonstrated contribution to the organization. Furthermore, Li et al. (2017) and Yang (2020) emphasize that EVB plays a crucial role in regulating collective behavior and preventing deviations, helping organizations minimize losses and maintain a safe and efficient work environment. However, Song et al. (2019) cautions that EVB yields optimal outcomes when expressed at moderate levels, maintaining an

appropriate frequency of voice allows employees to fully utilize their creativity without neglecting core task completion. In summary, EVB represents a unified behavioral competency that directly enhances work outcomes by simultaneously fostering improvement and safeguarding the organization.

H₃: Employee voice behavior has a positive impact on individual work performance among IT employees in Vietnam.

Innovative work behavior (IWB) is conceptualized as a key transmission mechanism that translates employees' intellectual resources and ideas into tangible organizational outcomes. Within the relationship between employee voice behavior (EVB) and individual work performance (IWP), IWB serves as a critical bridge that enables the realization of voice's value. Drawing on Amabile's (1996) Componential Theory of Creative Action (ACTC), employee voice provides diverse knowledge inputs and novel perspectives that initiate the creative process. Employees, who actively express their viewpoints, tend to engage more intensively in the stages of idea generation, mobilization, and implementation (Tsameti et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). Notably, Miao et al. (2020) found that even when employees voice concerns about errors, such behavior can still activate innovative processes if individuals reframe it as an opportunity for improvement and adaptation. Consequently, intellectual contributions transcend mere communication and become materialized into technological solutions or new work procedures. In the subsequent stage, innovation activities directly enhance individual work performance. Engaging in IWB enables employees to optimize workflows, mitigate the limitations of outdated practices, and adapt quickly to technological changes in the information technology sector. Prior empirical research consistently emphasizes that innovation is an intrinsic driver of performance, helping employees achieve higher-quality outcomes with fewer resources. In the absence of innovation, voice behaviors risk being suppressed or dismissed as mere complaints, thereby failing to translate into positive performance evaluations. Conversely, when voice is actualized through innovation, such as adopting new frameworks or automating processes, it generates sustainable value for the organization. Based on these theoretical and empirical arguments, this study proposes the following hypothesis.

H₄: Innovative work behavior mediates the causal relationship between employee voice behavior and individual work performance.

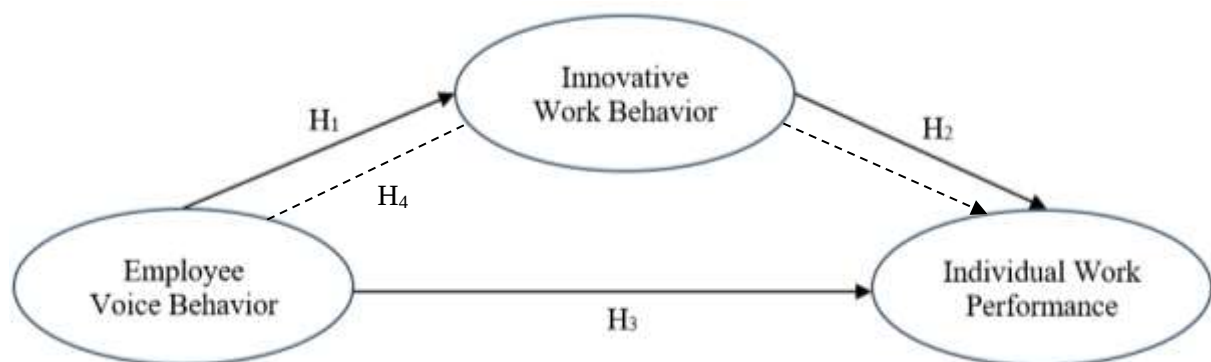


Figure 1. Research model

Source: Review of literature (2026)

METHOD

This study adopts a rigorous quantitative research design to evaluate the structural causal linkages between employee voice behavior, innovation, and performance within the specialized context of the Vietnamese Information Technology (IT) sector. The target population is comprised of full-time professionals currently employed in IT enterprises across Vietnam. To ensure that the data captured high-quality organizational insights, a specific purposive criterion was applied; participants were required to have a minimum tenure of one year at their current firm. This tenure threshold is critical because both voice and innovative behaviors are socially embedded processes that require a baseline level of organizational familiarity and established interpersonal trust to manifest.

The determination of the sample size followed the “10-times rule” proposed by Marcoulides & Saunders (2006). For a PLS-SEM model with a maximum of ten structural paths directed toward any

latent construct, a minimum of 91 valid responses is statistically sufficient to maintain representativeness and reliability. To enhance the precision of the findings and accommodate potential data cleaning, the authors established an ambitious target of 350 samples. The data collection followed a systematic three-stage procedure to ensure transparency and validity as suggested by the experts. First, the authors identified potential respondents through professional networks, including LinkedIn, Zalo, and internal IT communities. The invitation letter explained the study's academic purpose and guaranteed total anonymity. Second, a snowballing mechanism was employed, where initial contacts in major IT hubs assisted in distributing the survey link (hosted on Google Forms) to their qualified peer networks. Third, out of the 302 responses collected during the five-month survey period (September 2025 - February 2026). A total of 284 valid responses were retained after a rigorous cleaning process to exclude straight-lining patterns, yielding a robust 94.04% achievement rate.

All theoretical constructs were operationalized using validated scales adapted from reputable international literature, ensuring high content and construct validity. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To enhance transparency, specific sample items from the research instruments are stated. The independent variable, employee voice behavior (EVB), was measured using the 10-item scale developed by Liang et al. (2012). This scale captures the duality of voice, including promotive aspects (e.g. "proactively suggesting new projects which are profitable for the organization") and prohibitive aspects (e.g. "speaking up honestly about problems that might cause serious loss to the work unit"). The mediating variable, innovative work behavior (IWB), was assessed through a 9-item scale from Janssen (2000). This scale effectively captures the sequential phases of the innovation cycle, idea generation (e.g. "creating new ideas for difficult issues"), idea promotion (e.g. "mobilizing support for innovative ideas"), and idea realization (e.g. "transforming innovative ideas into useful applications"). Finally, the dependent variable, individual work performance (IWP), was operationalized via a 17-item instrument developed by Koopmans et al. (2012). This scale provides a multi-dimensional evaluation covering task performance (e.g. "i managed to plan my work so that it was done on time"), contextual performance, and the mitigation of counterproductive work behaviors.

Data analysis was conducted using a synergistic approach involving SPSS 20 for descriptive statistics and SmartPLS 3 for partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was selected as the primary analytical tool due to its robustness in handling non-normal data distributions, a common trait in organizational behavior studies, and its superior performance in exploratory research involving complex mediation pathways. The analysis followed a rigorous two-stage procedure as recommended by Hair et al. (2022). In the first stage (measurement model evaluation), the authors assessed indicator reliability through outer loadings (threshold > 0.70), internal consistency through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) (threshold > 0.70), and convergent validity via average variance extracted (AVE) (threshold > 0.50). Discriminant validity was rigorously verified using two complementary methods, the Fornell-Larcker criterion (comparing the square root of AVE to correlations) and the more modern heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio, with a conservative required threshold of less than 0.90. In the second stage (structural model evaluation), the hypothesized causal relationships were tested using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 sub-samples to determine the significance of path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values. The model's predictive quality was further scrutinized using the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect sizes (f^2), and the Q^2 value for predictive relevance. Multi-collinearity was also monitored through the variance inflation factor (VIF), ensuring that all values remained below the threshold of 5.0 to guarantee the integrity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis of the research, the sample comprising 284 information technology (IT) professionals currently working in Vietnam. Regarding gender distribution, the sample recorded a relative balance between 129 males (45.4%) and 132 females (46.5%), while the remaining 8.1% identified as other genders. This finding reflects the increasingly robust trend of female workforce attraction in the technical field within the Vietnamese market. Concerning age structure, the data reveals

a markedly youthful labor force, with 141 respondents under 25 years old, representing the highest proportion at 49.6%. This is followed by the 25-to-34 age group with 71 individuals (25%), meaning that nearly 75% of the research sample belongs to Generation Z and Millennials. The educational attainment of the survey respondents reflects the high degree of professional specialization within the industry, as 205 participants held a university bachelor's degree (72.2%) and 50 held postgraduate degrees (17.6%), ensuring a strong capacity for comprehending and evaluating organizational issues in depth. Finally, with respect to job position and tenure, the majority of survey participants held staff roles, with 211 individuals (74.3%), while the management team accounted for 25.7%, corresponding to 73 individuals. Notably, up to 75.7% of the research samples had worked at their current organization for less than three years, a characteristic that indicates flexible career mobility and high competitiveness within the current IT labor market.

The statistical results for the latent variables in the research model indicate that IT employees hold positive perceptions of workplace behaviors. Employee voice behavior (EVB), examined as an integrated unidimensional construct, recorded a mean value of 3.69. Further analysis of the component observed variables revealed that constructive behaviors, such as proposing process improvements, achieved higher scores (mean = 3.79) compared to more critical aspects or the expression of dissenting opinions (mean = 3.64), suggesting a certain degree of employee hesitation regarding potential work-relationship risks. Regarding innovative work behavior (IWB), the mean value reached 3.73, of which activities related to seeking new working methods or advanced technical tools were recorded at the highest level, 3.84. However, the ability to persuade colleagues to support creative ideas emerged as the most constrained area, with a mean value of only 3.61. Concurrently, individual work performance (IWP) achieved the highest mean value of 3.74. IT personnel placed particular emphasis on maintaining and updating professional skills, with scores ranging from 3.86 to 3.89. All observed variables recorded standard deviations below 1.1. This low level of variation confirms that the perspectives of respondents within the research sample, regarding voice, innovation, and performance, are relatively homogeneous, providing a stable and reliable data foundation for subsequent PLS-SEM structural model analysis.

To assess the reliability and convergent validity of the measurement scales, this study employed four key statistical indicators, factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). These indices were computed based on empirical survey data and compared against widely recognized academic thresholds to ensure the rigor of the measurement model. According to the criteria established by Hair et al. (2022), factor loadings should ideally exceed the 0.70 threshold, ensuring that the latent construct explains more than 50% of the indicator's variance, thereby demonstrating strong convergence between the indicator and its underlying theoretical structure. Most indicators for employee voice behavior (EVB), innovative work behavior (IWB), and individual work performance (IWP) met this criterion, with loadings ranging from 0.679 to 0.774. Although the tenth item of EVB (EVB10) recorded a loading of 0.618, slightly below the ideal threshold, it was retained to preserve content validity, as the overall construct's AVE and CR remained well above acceptable limits. Additionally, to optimize the measurement model and enhance one-dimensionality, several items with weak loadings were systematically removed during the refinement process.

Internal consistency reliability was robustly confirmed, as both Cronbach's alpha and CR values for all constructs surpassed the recommended threshold of 0.70. Specifically, EVB recorded an alpha of 0.834 and CR of 0.870, while IWB and IWP demonstrated CR values of 0.862 and 0.850, respectively. Furthermore, convergent validity was convincingly established, as all AVE values exceeded the 0.50 requirement proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981). The AVE scores ranged from 0.506 (EVB) to 0.555 (IWB), indicating that each latent variable explains at least half of its indicators' variance. These results collectively affirm the psychometric adequacy of the measurement model, prior to further structural equation modeling analyses.

Table 1. Discriminant validity results (Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria)

	EVB	IWB	IWP
EVB	0.712	0.836	0.778
IWB	0.689	0.745	0.876
IWP	0.630	0.694	0.729

Source: Processed data (2026)

To rigorously ensure that each theoretical concept in the study remains empirically distinct from others, discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. As systematically presented in Table 1, the square root of the AVE for employee voice behavior is 0.712, innovative work behavior is 0.745, and individual work performance is 0.729, were consistently higher than all another correlation coefficients, thereby satisfying this stringent criterion. Complementing this approach, the HTMT ratio was examined to provide a more rigorous and sensitive assessment. All HTMT values remained below the conservative threshold of 0.90, as recommended in contemporary methodological literature. The highest observed HTMT ratio was 0.876 between IWB and IWP, which falls acceptably below the cutoff. Collectively, these combined results furnish strong evidence of discriminant validity, confirming that EVB, IWB, and IWP are statistically unique, non-overlapping constructs and appropriately specified for subsequent structural analysis and hypothesis testing.

Table 2. Structural model results and hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path	Path coefficient	T-value	P-value	95% CI (LL-UL)	Result
H ₁	EVB→IWB	0.689	15.797	0.000	(0.589-0.762)	Supported
H ₂	IWB→IWP	0.495	3.642	0.000	(0.346-0.632)	Supported
H ₃	EVB→IWP	0.289	6.639	0.000	(0.130-0.439)	Supported
H ₄ (indirect)	EVB→IWB→IWP	0.341	7.062	0.000	(0.244-0.433)	Supported

Source: Processed data (2026)

Table 3. Model fit and predictive power

	VIF			F ²			R ²	Adjusted R ²	Q ²
	EVB	IWB	IWP	EVB	IWB	IWP			
EVB	1.000	1.904		0.904	0.093				
IWB			1.904			0.271	0.475	0.473	0.466
IWP							0.526	0.522	0.386

Source: Processed data (2026)

After establishing the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the study proceeded to the structural model analysis phase to test the hypothesized relationships among Employee Voice Behavior (EVB), Innovative Work Behavior (IWB), and Individual Work Performance (IWP). This procedure was conducted using the bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resampling iterations to assess the statistical significance of the path coefficients. Prior to hypothesis testing, multicollinearity was examined using the inner variance inflation factor (Inner VIF). The results presented in Table 3 indicate that Inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.904, substantially below the conservative threshold of 5.0, confirming the absence of multicollinearity among the predictor constructs in the model.

The structural model testing results, presented in Table 2, reveal that all three direct effect hypotheses were supported at a statistical significance level of $p < 0.001$. Specifically, employee voice behavior (EVB) exhibited the strongest positive impact on innovative work behavior (IWB), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.689$ ($t = 15.797$, $p = 0.000$, $CI = 0.589-0.762$), thereby supporting hypothesis H₁. This finding demonstrates that employees' willingness to share ideas and voice concerns serves as a critical antecedent that activates improvement activities within IT enterprises. Two hypotheses, H₂ and H₃, were also accepted, as the data recorded a positive effect of IWB on IWP ($\beta = 0.495$, $t = 3.642$, $p = 0.000$) and a direct effect of EVB on IWP ($\beta = 0.289$, $t = 6.639$, $p = 0.000$). These results indicate that beyond fostering innovation, voice behavior itself enhances employees' sense of responsibility and direct effort toward task performance, consistent with the principles of Social Exchange Theory (SET). Regarding effect sizes (f^2), EVB played a pivotal role in explaining IWB ($f^2 = 0.904$, large effect size), while IWB contributed significantly to performance improvement ($f^2 = 0.271$, medium effect size).

A key highlight of the research model is the examination of the mediating role of innovative work behavior (IWB) in the relationship between EVB and IWP. The indirect effect analysis (hypothesis of H₄) yielded a coefficient of $\beta = 0.341$ ($t = 7.062$, $p = 0.000$, $CI = 0.244-0.433$), indicating strong support for hypothesis H₄. This empirical evidence confirms that innovative work behavior serves as an essential

mediating mechanism that transforms intellectual resources and informational inputs from employee voice into tangible and quantifiable performance outcomes. In the IT industry context, where innovation is vital for survival, encouraging employee voice only delivers optimal performance value when organizations facilitate the realization of those ideas through substantive technical improvement actions. Given that the direct effect (H_3) remained statistically significant, IWB is identified as playing a partial mediating role in the value chain from voice to performance.

Regarding the explanatory power of the model, the coefficients of determination (R^2) indicate that the independent variables explained 47.3% of the variance in innovative work behavior and 52.2% of the variance in individual work performance. According to the criteria proposed by Hair et al. (2022), this represents a moderate to substantial level of explanatory power in organizational behavior research. Furthermore, the Q^2 values for IWB (0.466) and IWP (0.386) were both greater than zero, confirming that the model possesses satisfactory out-of-sample predictive relevance for the dependent variables.

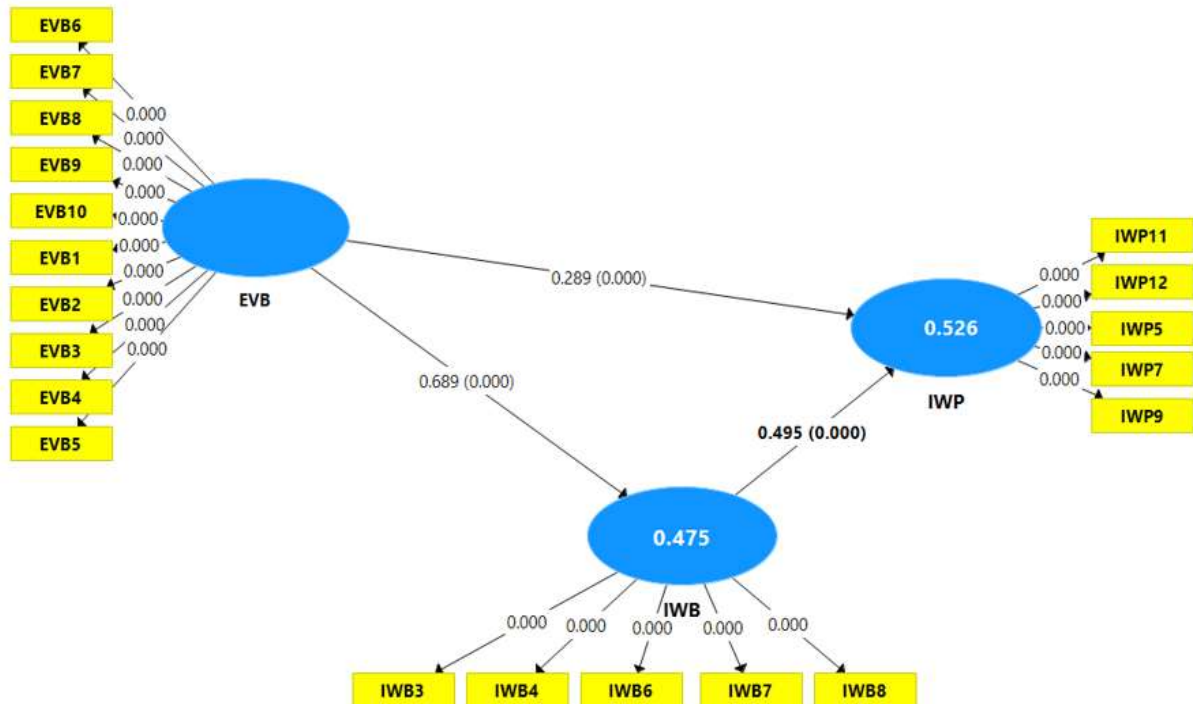


Figure 2. Factor loadings
Source: Processed data (2026)

Discussion

This study empirically explored the structural causal linkages among employee voice behavior (EVB), innovative work behavior (IWB), and individual work performance (IWP) within the context of the Vietnamese Information Technology (IT) industry. The results of the structural model analysis revealed that all four principal hypotheses were supported at high levels of statistical significance ($p < 0.001$). These findings not only provide novel insights into the behavioral mechanisms operating within technical organizations but also illuminate how intellectual resources are transformed into tangible performance outcomes within a distinctive East Asian cultural setting.

The empirical findings from the model testing reveal that hypothesis of H_1 , which proposes a positive effect of employee voice behavior (EVB) on innovative work behavior (IWB), is the most prominent. With a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.689$ ($t = 15.797$, $p = 0.000$), this relationship constitutes the strongest within the model, demonstrating that when employees willingly share their ideas, they establish a crucial foundation for driving improvements within information technology enterprises. Voice facilitates the transmission of practical knowledge while stimulating critical and creative thinking; a result entirely consistent with previous discoveries reported by Khan et al. (2023), Wang (2021), Ayop & Ishak (2023), and Nazir et al. (2020). Nevertheless, within the Vietnamese cultural context, which is characterized by high power distance and collectivism, the inherently challenging nature of voice makes employees reluctant to disrupt group harmony or to be perceived as disrespectful toward superiors,

consequently leading to a tendency toward silence. Despite this obstacle, EVB fundamentally emphasizes contribution to collective good, a core Eastern value. Therefore, IT firms should actively cultivate psychological safety to help employees overcome individual fears and transform voice into a genuine driver of innovation.

The testing results show that hypothesis of H_2 is strongly supported with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.495$ ($p < 0.001$). This confirms that innovative work behavior (IWB) is not merely simple creativity but also a direct driver for enhancing task performance efficiency. This finding is consistent with the studies of Situmorang et al. (2023) and Mufti et al. (2019). However, a prominent novelty of this research lies in establishing the role of IWB within the specific context of the Vietnamese IT industry. In an East Asian environment characterized by “psychological silence” and “conflict avoidance”, IWB serves as an adaptive mechanism, helping employees overcome cultural barriers to optimize technical processes and handle complex issues. In the practical IT sector, which faces immense pressure from project deadlines and rapid technological changes, personnel who dare to experiment with new solutions achieve superior performance compared to those who strictly adhere to obsolete procedures. This demonstrates that an innovative spirit is a vital factor for transforming individual resources into concrete work outcomes.

The experimental results confirm that hypothesis of H_3 is supported, showing that employee voice behavior (EVB) has a positive effect on individual work performance (IWP), with $\beta = 0.289$ ($p = 0.000$). This finding is consistent with existing theoretical frameworks, reinforcing the view of Song (2019) that employee voice behavior has a positive and significant relationship with job performance. EVB serves as a proactive communication mechanism that helps detect errors early, reduce risks, and enhance task efficiency. It also demonstrates that employee voice behavior increases organizational commitment, sense of responsibility, and individual productivity. In the Vietnamese IT industry, characterized by rapid change and highly competitive pressure, EVB supports process optimization through knowledge sharing and technical risk warnings, helping teams master workflows, reduce system errors, and shorten development cycles. Although statistically significant, the effect size $f^2 = 0.093$ is only small, implying that merely expressing opinions does not create a major breakthrough. EVB only maximizes its value when the organization receives and realizes it through innovative work behavior (IWB), with a strong effect size $f^2 = 0.904$ from EVB to IWB, thereby indirectly sustaining continuous improvement in IWP.

The research results indicate that hypothesis of H_4 is strongly supported, confirming that innovative work behavior (IWB) plays a pivotal mediating role in the relationship between employee voice behavior (EVB) and job performance, with an impact coefficient of 0.341. This finding mirrors the works of Tsameti et al. (2023) and Zhang et al. (2024), demonstrating that proactive ideas or feedback only generate practical value when they are transformed into specific innovative actions. Viewed through the lenses of Amabile’s Componential Theory of Creativity (ACTC) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), innovative behavior serves as the vital bridge helping employees materialize their proactivity into tangible work results. Particularly within the Vietnamese cultural context, characterized by high power distance and collectivism, innovative behavior enables IT personnel to overcome psychological barriers, such as conflict avoidance. This process transforms feedback regarding inadequacies, which might otherwise cause hesitation due to the risk of damaging interpersonal relationships or organizational order, into safe and effective solutions for process improvement, thereby sustainably optimizing individual performance.

The most novel aspect of this study is its incorporation of cultural factors to explain how employee voice leads to innovative behavior and improved job performance. In Vietnam, two major cultural characteristics, collectivism (valuing the group over the individual) and respect for hierarchy (reluctance to confront superiors), are often seen as barriers that prevent employees from being proactive. In such an environment, employees tend to avoid conflict, withhold dissenting opinions, and choose silence to protect relationships and avoid negative evaluation. However, the study's findings show that East Asian culture does not entirely stifle creativity as commonly believed. On the contrary, if companies actively remove these barriers by creating a psychologically safe work environment, employees' willingness to speak up can drive innovation even more strongly than in Western contexts. In a dynamic, young IT environment, it is precisely the team spirit that facilitates smoother idea implementation. Once an idea is voiced and accepted, the whole team collaborates and supports each other to turn that idea into reality. This contrasts with individualistic Western countries, where an idea is sometimes evaluated solely on technical merits, lacking the collective effort of colleagues. Therefore, in Vietnam, the “common good”

spirit can act as an “accelerator”, helping transform individual proposals into collective action more quickly and smoothly.

In summary, this study provides empirical evidence to refute the view that East Asian culture is always detrimental to creativity. Instead, when managed well through fostering psychological safety, recognition, and clear feedback, these very cultural characteristics become a solid “launching pad” for turning employee voice into outstanding work outcomes. This offers a fresh and more balanced perspective on how culture influences the way employees work in organizations.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study offers profound and comprehensive contributions to both theoretical and practical dimensions, particularly within the unique context of Vietnam's information technology (IT) sector. The research provides a robust theoretical advancement by successfully constructing and validating an integrated three-dimensional model (EVB → IWB → IWP). Moving beyond existing literature that often treats voice as an isolated predictor, this study explicitly highlights the “pivotal transmission mechanism” of innovative behavior. By synthesizing Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Amabile's Componential Theory of Creativity (ACTC), the findings prove that employee voice does not automatically translate into performance; rather, it requires the activation of an innovation cycle to materialize intellectual inputs into tangible outcomes. This confirms a new theoretical “value chain” in technical environments, where proactive expression (EVB) acts as the catalyst and innovation (IWB) serves as the indispensable engine driving individual performance (IWP) to its peak. Furthermore, the study enriches global knowledge by demonstrating that in task-oriented and structured industries, fostering “intellectual raw materials” through voice is the only sustainable way to bypass mechanical compliance and achieve high-level professional effectiveness.

The findings provide an empirical foundation enabling IT firm managers to recognize employee voice as a strategic driver, facilitating early error detection, risk mitigation, and competitive advantage optimization. The study resolves the paradox of widespread silence in Vietnam's IT sector, where a highly skilled young workforce hesitates to report technical flaws due to psychological safety deficits. It offers specific guidelines to transform proactive ideas into tangible innovations, particularly vital for agile and scrum, adopting enterprises. Consequently, organizations can fully harness employees' intellectual energy, boosting individual productivity and organizational adaptability in the digital transformation era.

The research confirms that employee voice behavior (EVB) drives innovative work behavior (IWB) and enhances individual work performance (IWP). However, “psychological silence” persists in Vietnamese IT firms due to high power distance culture and relational risks. The authors propose three solutions. First, build psychological safety to remove cultural barriers. IT companies must overcome the East Asian “fear of conflict” by creating a climate where voice is valued and protected. According to Social Exchange Theory, employees share ideas only when they trust the organization will respond positively, not punish them. Second, institutionalize and digitize opinion collection. In agile and scrum environments, firms should integrate voice into team meetings and reviews. Digital platforms for transparent feedback strengthen trust and provide knowledge to fuel innovation based on ACTC theory. Third, integrate voice into performance management. Managers should include proactive contribution in rewards and evaluations. Formal recognition shows appreciation and motivates employees to turn creative ideas into real innovation, ultimately boosting productivity and competitive advantage for technology enterprises.

The research findings confirm that innovative work behavior (IWB) plays a key role, both directly impacting performance and serving as a mediating mechanism that transforms contributions from employee voice behavior (EVB) into concrete work outcomes. In a fast-paced technology environment, promoting IWB is not only a solution for enhancing productivity but also a survival strategy for IT companies to maintain competitive advantage. The key solution groups include the following. First, firms should create psychological safety for technical experimentation. Due to the influence of high power distance culture and risk aversion, IT employees in Vietnam tend toward “psychological silence” rather than proposing disruptive changes. Therefore, organizations need to build an environment that allows employees to proactively experiment with new programming frameworks, automation tools, or

system architectures without excessive pressure about the risk of technical failure. Second, firms should establish mechanisms to turn ideas into practical solutions. Companies need to institutionalize the reception and evaluation of technology initiatives through cross functional teams involving developers, testers, and project managers. Integrating innovation activities into agile work cycles, such as agile or scrum, will help ideas from employee voice be quickly validated through pilot programs and integrated into official operating processes. Third, firms should foster a culture of open technical exchange and professional critique. Since EVB, which includes both improvement suggestions and risk warnings, is an important precursor that activates IWB, IT managers need to encourage employees to candidly raise issues regarding security, performance, or quality code. When employees see that their input leads to tangible technical changes, their creative motivation increases, thereby directly optimizing product quality and project output performance.

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample of 284 IT professionals is primarily composed of young individuals with low tenure and high education levels, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other industries or broader demographics. Future research should employ probability sampling across diverse sectors to enhance representativeness. Second, while the current model establishes a robust link between voice and innovation, the highly technical nature of IT work suggests that future research should examine the “task complexity” or “technological uncertainty” as potential boundary conditions that may influence the efficiency of this transmission mechanism. Third, the reliance on self-reported quantitative data might introduce subjective bias. Combining quantitative approaches with qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could refine measurement scales and provide deeper contextual insights. Finally, as the current data is cross-sectional, longitudinal studies are encouraged to better evaluate causal relationships and behavioral changes over time.

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