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Unlocking Pre-Primary Teachers' Potential for Creativity through Job Crafting and Psychological Empowerment

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Abstract

In the present-day world, education is considered to be the key element of progress for any nation. Every stride towards progress demands efforts, and undoubtedly the educational institutions rely heavily on the efforts of the teachers. Ensuring the quality of students' education and research to meet the challenges of the current era are paramount goals. The current research aimed to study the relationship between job crafting, psychological empowerment and creativity among pre-primary teachers. The study encompassed a total sample of 250 pre-primary teachers from the public and private schools of Lahore, Pakistan. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient of Correlation Analysis, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis and Hayes PROCESS Mediation Analysis were applied to analyze the data through SPSS 26. The results of the study revealed a significant correlation among the variables. Results of regression analysis showed that job crafting (task and relational dimension), and psychological empowerment (meaning and impact dimension) were significant positive predictors of creativity. Furthermore, the mediation analysis showed that meaning significantly mediated the relationship between task crafting and creativity, as well as relational crafting and creativity. Similarly, impact was also found to be a significant mediator between relational crating and creativity. The findings of this research hold significant implications for both educators and policymakers of early childhood education. Confirming the crucial role of job crafting through the mediation of psychological empowerment in fostering creativity, this study underscores the necessity of integrating insights into the value, potential strategies, and effects of job crafting and psychological empowerment into teacher training programs.

Keywords: creativity, job crafting, pre-primary teachers, psychological empowerment, Pakistan

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Introduction

Teachers unquestionably constitute the paramount group of professionals pivotal in shaping the future of any nation (Crisci et al., 2019). Pakistans education system is governed by various statutory bodies, with the Higher Education Commission (HEC) playing a central role. However, a lack of communication between departments designing curricula for early and higher education leads to significant challenges for students transitioning to university. This communication gap results in deficiencies in students quantitative, analytical, writing, and language skills. To address this issue, early education policies need revision and equal emphasis to better prepare students for higher education. Education is one of the major factors in the rise and fall of nations (Awan et al., 2014). Pre-primary teachers' creativity and innovation are often valued and considered essential for the survival of the academic sanctity. Pre-primary education is constantly attempting to keep up with the new environmental needs and for developing creative minds for the future. As reported by Norouzpour and Pourmohammadi (2019), teachers are the basic building blocks of a successful educational system as they are responsible to foster, to nurture and to bring up the future of tomorrow.

Jeffrey (2006) declared teaching a creative act because every situation demands different responses from them, which is why teachers should be flexible. Moreover, Diana and Catone (2016) in their systematic review highlighted how important it is for teachers to clarify what creativity means to them. Globally, countries have been making efforts to inculcate creativity and researching what it takes for an employee to be creative. From Malaysia to China, Lithuania to Finland, they not only focus on employee\business creativity but also attempt to infuse creativity in other aspects of life (Gariboldi & Catellani, 2013). Situations demand high adaptability from teachers, recognized as very essential tool in numerous fields (George, 2007), especially in teaching. Creativity according to Amabile (1988), is referred to as an individual's or group's creation of new and valuable ideas. It is not just about who is more creative or how organizations deal and facilitate the creative employees; it more about how an employee takes actions to strengthen their creative process (Demerouti et al., 2015). Job crafting is frequently characterized by creativity, denoting the array of actions employees undertake within the workplace to customize their work tasks and environment. When linking it to the teaching profession, job

crafting would be defined as a transformative procedure used in teaching practices (Ghitulescu, 2007). Job crafting fosters psychological empowerment of teachers, (Siddiqui et al., 2017) enabling them to make decisions on their own, a phenomenon referred to as psychological empowerment (Kang et al., 2017).

Pakistani education system is structured into various levels including; primary, middle, high, graduate and post graduate levels (Ahmad et al., 2015). Pre-primary, nursery and Montessori have also been added among different levels of the education system in Pakistan. But the early childhood education program in Pakistan is currently undergoing huge challenges such as low learning standards, inadequate recognition of pre-primary stage, insufficient teacher training and classroom facilities (Shami, 2009). Early childhood education is not getting enough attention from the policy makers of the country, which further leads to untrained teachers both in the public and the private sector (Ahmad et al., 2015). Moreover, the report of World Bank (2019), reported that Pakistan learning poverty estimates at 75% compared to 58% in South Asia. Creativity is indispensable at every level of education but unfortunately, in the Pakistani educational system, creativity has been overlooked up to this point. It is crucial for the system to adopt and integrate the fundamental concept of creativity. Moreover, examining educational policy documents from different countries provides compelling evidence supporting the integration of creativity into the Pakistani curriculum and educational framework (Arooj et al., 2021). In Pakistan, evidence suggests that the existing primary education framework stifles childrens creative capacities. Hence, a transition from conventional teaching methods and passive learning approaches towards fostering creative teaching, nurturing creativity, and promoting creative learning is imperative (Nazir, 2020). Although researches have been conducted on students at various levels, including primary, secondary, higher secondary and university (Arshad & Rafique, 2016; Arooj et al., 2021; Ehtiyar & Baser, 2019) to investigate their job crafting behaviors, psychological empowerment and creativity, there is a lack of extensive literature examining the creativity of teachers in their professional role.

This research focuses on pre-primary teachers in Lahore, aiming to fill a gap in the literature. The academic sectors dynamics are distinct from those of other industries. Teachers are expected to handle demanding roles in teaching and curriculum development simultaneously, which puts

pressure on them to deliver high-quality work (Hoodbhoy, 2017). For research to be creative, faculty must have the autonomy and freedom to make necessary adjustments to their roles. Job crafting can be a highly effective tool for the psychological empowerment of pre-primary teachers, even when faced with challenging job demands (Tims et al., 2013). Hence, there is a need to investigate the impact of job crafting on teachers' creativity by mediating the role of psychological empowerment of pre-primary teachers in Pakistan. The findings would significantly contribute to the existing knowledge by exploring the impact of job crafting and psychological empowerment on the creativity of pre-primary teachers.

Research Objectives

- To analyze the effects of job crafting on creativity
- To explore the mediating role of psychological empowerment between job crafting and creativity.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Job Crafting and Creativity

Job crafting (JC) is to modify one's job demands and resources to better suit their preferences and needs (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011) and may positively correlate with employee creativity. Previous researchers have identified positively effective (Bakker et al., 2020; Hornung & Rousseau, 2007). This research suggests that employing job crafting approach is associated with better creative outcomes for employees. Both job crafting and creativity involve modifying and exploring ideas, but job crafting focuses on altering job characteristics (Wang et al., 2017) and symbolizes the formation of personal job boundaries (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), while creativity involves generating new and beneficial ideas for products, procedures, and processes within the workplace (Amabile, 1988; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Past empirical research and meta-analyses offer support for the connection between job crafting and creativity (Li et al., 2020). Hence, empirical and theoretical findings of this research strongly support a positive association between JC and creativity. As a result of the comprehensive discussion presented above, hypothesis formulated is:

H_1: Job crafting is positively related with creativity of pre-primary teachers.

Job Crafting and Psychological Empowerment

Job crafting involves employees engaging in proactive actions to adjust the cognitive, relational, and physical aspects of their work environment (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). It is a process through which individuals proactively align their personal traits with their tasks (Lazazzara et al., 2020). Psychological empowerment, serving as a motivational catalyst, encompasses four components: competence, meaning, self-determination, and impact. These factors reflect both personal and cognitive orientation and their interrelation (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment manifests when employees perceive a degree of autonomy in their professional spheres. It comprises cognitive perceptions influenced by the surrounding work context (Spreitzer, 1995).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), assert that the significance of work lies in the structural layout of the workplace, the social context, and the individual attributes within it. Consequently, psychological empowerment has the potential to shape the environment, leading to the enhancement of well-being through job crafting (Tims & Bakker, 2010). It serves as a means to achieve objectives conducive to psychological empowerment (Demerouti, 2014). At work, employees craft their jobs to add more meaning to their work by actively adjusting tasks and cognitive boundaries, which leads to increased empowerment (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Thus, JC outcomes are closely intertwined with PE. The likelihood is that task and cognitive crafting exhibit an inverse relationship with the four dimensions of psychological empowerment. Impact and self-determination revolve around exerting control, representing influence and autonomy within the workplace. On the other hand, meaning and competence are self-centered, symbolizing the link between ones work and valu es of a person (Glaser et al., 2015). Psychological empowerment has the capability to enhance employee creativity (Javed et al., 2017). Therefore, drawing from the aforementioned discussion, the hypothesis formulated is as:

H_2: Job crafting is positively related with psychological empowerment of pre-primary teachers.

Psychological Empowerment and Creativity

When defining psychological empowerment Siddiqui et al. (2017) mentioned concepts of motivation, control & power. Whereas, Sprietzer (1995) described empowerment to be a psychological occurrence related

with intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy of the individual understanding. Empowerment encompasses the idea of decentralizing decision-making authority by entrusting team members with decision-making responsibilities and providing them with the necessary resources to make independent decisions (Barton & Barton, 2011). Creativity involves crafting novelty or bring solutions that effectively address the presented issue (Zhou & George, 2003). Employee creativity endeavors to uncover novel and original ideas through innovative approaches (Nuzul et al., 2020).

Creativity is like a unique task where employees break the usual rules and use their inner drive to come up with fresh ideas through psychological empowerment. When employees recognize their roles are meaningful and relevant at personal level, they put in extra effort to explore a problem from different angles (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Furthermore, when they feel capable and are provided with the necessary resources to carry out their work effectively, they experience a degree of autonomy beyond their job description. They can readily influence desired outcomes and are inclined to concentrate more attentively and persistently on generating ideas and finding solutions (Spreitzer, 1995; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Consequently, when employees experience psychological empowerment, they are more likely to exhibit greater creativity within the organization. This relationship between psychological empowerment and creativity is well supported by past literature (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). So, it is hypothesized that:

H_3: Psychological empowerment is positively related with creativity of pre-primary teachers.

Mediating role of Psychological Empowerment

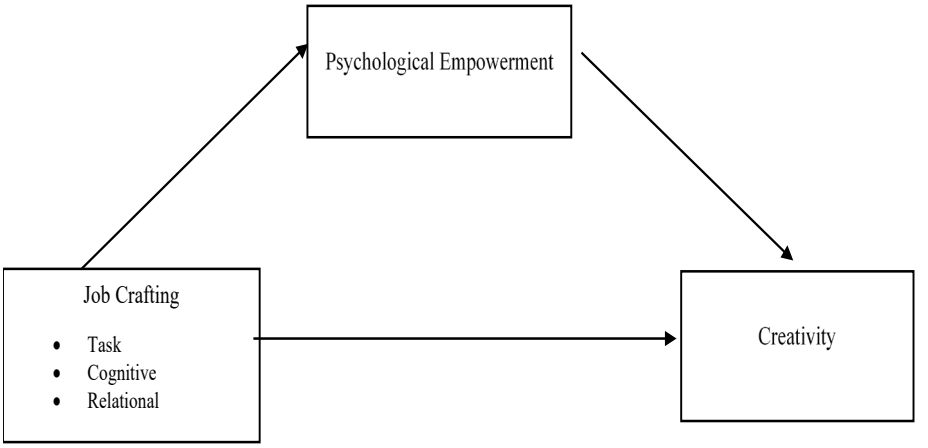
Expanding upon the frameworks of the job demands-resources model Demerouti et al. (2001), job crafting emerges as a proactive behavior aimed at acquiring resources, embracing challenges, mitigating demands, and optimizing workload requirements (Petrou et al., 2015). It is identified as a distinct type of proactive workplace conduct (Khan et al., 2022), through which workers consciously pursue job-related resources that enhance work performance. Job crafting not only expands cognitive resources but also fosters personal development. Gordon et al. (2015) discovered a correlation between enhancing resources and reducing demands with increased creativity. Hence, employees engaging in job crafting generate avenues for innovation and fosters innovative thought, facilitating the utilization of

skills for developing new work processes creatively (Rudolph et al., 2017). Job crafting, as proactive behavior, encompasses manipulation of resources, with psychological empowerment being a crucial job resource that enhances employees motivat ion, confidence, and sense of control over their work environment (Spreitzer, 1995). In this context, job crafting can be seen as a precursor to psychological empowerment because employees' involvement in crafting their roles bring sense of empowerment in them (Tims et al. 2013), and psychologically empowered employees are more likely to produce creative alternatives (Gilson & Shalley, 2004) that eventually improve their performance at work. Therefore, this literature supports an interacting role of psychological empowerment. It resulted in formulating the hypothesis as:

H_4: Psychological Empowerment mediates the positive relationship between job crafting (task, cognitive and relational) and creativity.

Figure 1

Research Model



Methodology

Data Collection and Sample

The current study employed a quantitative descriptive approach, utilizing survey methodology for data collection. Through cross-sectional design data was taken from pre-primary teachers working in both government and private sectors of Lahore for research purposes. Roscoe's

(1975) criteria for determining sample size have been widely adopted in recent decades. Roscoe proposed that a sample size exceeding 30 but remaining below 500 is appropriate for most behavioral studies, whereas a sample size surpassing 500 could increase the risk of Type II error (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, the total sample consisted of 250 female teachers randomly selected from 20 schools in both the private and government sectors of Lahore. Before contacting the teachers, the Principal/Vice Principal were briefed about the research then the survey questionnaires were distributed among the teachers. Participants were assured about the factors like confidentiality, their right of withdrawal, and their right to contact the researchers.

Measures

Information regarding participants' age, gender, education and years of employment was collected. To assess job crafting, a scale consisting of 15 items developed by Slemp and Brodrick (2013) was utilized. This scale evaluates three dimensions of crafting: physical, cognitive, and relational, with five items dedicated to each dimension (Leana et al., 2009). The psychological empowerment of pre-primary teachers was evaluated using the instrument devised by Spreitzer (1995) specifically designed for this purpose. This instrument comprises 12 items designed to measure four cognitive dimensions: meaning, self-determinism, impact, and competence, with three items specified for each dimension. The scale which measured creativity of pre-primary teachers was a 13-item scale created by George and Zhou (2001).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were examined before testing the data for reliability, correlation, and regression. Table I presents the descriptive statistics for the study. Since the study has a cross-sectional design, we tested for common method variance (CMV) using Harman Single Factor and found 16.58% pertaining to the absence of CMV.

Results

Table 1 shows sample of the study was between age range of 21 to 60 which was divided into four categories 21- 30(55.6%), 31-40(34.0%), 41-50(8.4%) and 51-60(2.0%). The teachers were working in either the private sector (80.4%) or Government sector (19.6%). The level of education was

Bachelor's (38.4%) and Masters (61.6%). The years of employment was divided into five categories 1-5years (57.2%), 6-10 years (32.4%), 11-15years (5.25%), 16-20years (2.0%) and 21-25years (3.2%).

Table 1

Demographics(N=250)

Variable	*N*	*%*
Age		
21-30yrs	139	55.6
31-40yrs	85	34.0
41-50yrs	21	8.4
51-60yrs	5	2.0
Education		
Bachelors	96	38.4
Masters/M.Phil	154	61.6
Years of Experience		
1-5yrs	143	57.2
6-10yrs	81	32.4
11-15yrs	13	5.2
16-20yrs	5	2.0
21-25yrs	8	3.2
Nature of Job		
Private	201	80.4
Government	49	19.6

Table 2 represents descriptive statistics, including the mean, standard deviation and correlation coefficient. Results in correlation matrix reveal that all the variables used in research are interrelated. The first type of crafting; task crafting has a weak positive correlation with creativity (r = .25, p<.01). Similarly, the second type of crafting; cognitive crafting has weak positive correlation with creativity (r = .21, p<.01), as does relational crafting (r = .26, p<.01). Similarly, task crafting shows a weak positive correlation with PE (r = .25, p<.01), While cognitive crafting also displays a weak positive correlation with creativity (r = .21, p<.01). Lastly, relational crafting has a weak positive correlation with PE (r = .31, p<.01). PE has a weak positive correlation with creativity (r = .37, p<.01). Moreover, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was measured to check the reliability of the scales along with types and dimensions. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was satisfactory for all the scales, ranging from .63 to .85.

According to the first hypothesis, all study variables exhibit positive correlation e.g., Job Crafting, Psychological Empowerment and Creativity.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics & Correlation Analysis

		M	*SD*	2	3	4	5
1	Task crafting scale	20.58	4.61	.58**	.30**	.24**	.25**
2	Cognitive crafting scale	19.56	4.96	-	.44**	.21**	.21**
3	Relational crafting scale	17.65	5.29		-	.31**	.26**
4	Psychological Empowerment scale	66.90	8.20			-	.37**
5	Creativity scale	49.26	5.78				-

Note. ***p*<.01.

Regression Analyses

The table 3 shows multiple linear regression was conducted on three dimensions of job crafting as independent variables and creativity as the dependent variable. The R^2 value shows that the predictor variables explained 10% variance in the outcome variable with F (3,246) = 8.80, p<.001. The results clearly state that out of three main types of crafting only two predict creativity. Task crafting positively predicts creativity (β = .18, p<.001), the relational crafting also positively predicts creativity (β = .18, p<.001) and lastly the cognitive crafting does not predict creativity (β = .02, p >.05).

Table 3

Multiple Linear Regression of Task, Cognitive and Relational Crafting as Predictors of Creativity as Dependent Variable (N = 250)

Model	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	40.12	1.89		21.23	.000	[36.39,43.84]
Task	.254	.101	.18	2.52	.012	[.056,.053]
Cognitive	.024	.100	.02	.24	.808	[-.172,.220]
Relational	.214	.080	.18	2.68	.008	[.057,.371]
R^2	.10					

The table 4 shows multiple linear regression was conducted on task, cognitive, & relation crafting (IV) and psychological empowerment (DV). The R^2 value shows that independent variables account for 18% of the variance in outcome variable with *F (3,246) = 9.40, p<.001.* The results clearly state that out of three main types of crafting only two predict the creativity, task crafting positively predicts creativity (β = .27, *p<.001)*, the relational crafting also positively predicts creativity (β = .18, *p<.05)* and lastly the cognitive crafting does not predict creativity (β = .04, *p >.05).*

Table 4

Multiple Linear Regression of Task, Cognitive and Relational Crafting as Predictors of Psychological Empowerment (N = 250)

Model	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*P*	*95% CI*
Constant	55.61	2.5		21.90	.000	[11.25,14.22]
Task	.45	.13	.27	3.41	.000	[.18,.70]
Cognitive	.06	.11	.04	.53	.598	[-.09,.03]
Relational	.20	.15	.18	2.34	.0.02	[.05,.37]
R^2	.18					

The table 5 shows simple linear regression was conducted on psychological empowerment (IV) and creativity (DV). R^2 value is 14% which means variance in the outcome variable with F (3,246) = 8.80, *p*<.001. It clearly states that psychological empowerment positively predicts the creativity (β = .37, *p*<.001).

Table 5

Simple Linear Regression of Psychological Empowerment as Predictor of Creativity (N = 250)

Model	*B*	*SE*	β	*t*	*p*	*95% CI*
Constant	30.34	3.01		10.08	.000	[24.41,36.27]
PE	.28	.05	.37	6.33	000	[0.19,0.37]
R^2	.14					

Mediation Analyses

Mediation analyses were done on PROCESS MACRO (version 4.2). Hayes (2008) bootstrapping method (with 5000 bootstrap samples and bias-corrected confidence intervals (BC confidence level=95)) was used by selecting Model 4.

Figure 2

Mediation Model of Task Crafting, Psychological Empowerment and Creativity

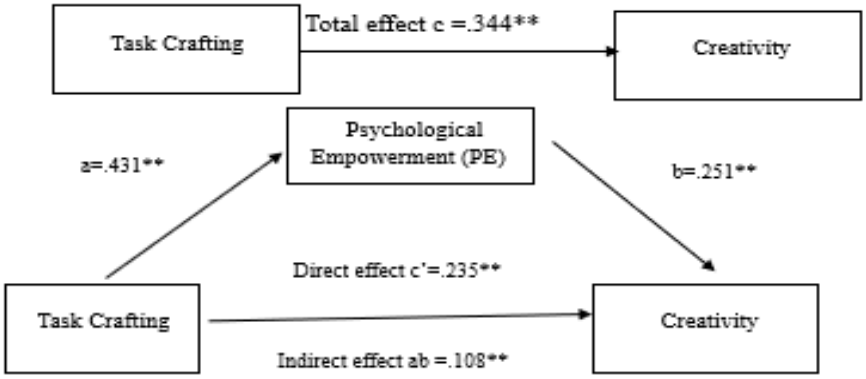


Table 6 illustrates that task crafting was a significant predictor of creativity (p<.001) and psychological empowerment (p<.001). PE, as a whole mediates the relationship between task crafting and creativity(p<.001). The total effect was also significant (β = .344, p=.000, CI 95% (LL=.180, UL=.507)). The results are in accordance with the theoretical model employed and hypothesis, indicating that PE strengthens the positive relationship between task crafting and creativity. It can be deduced from these results that PE processes as an internal mechanism leading to the increase in creativity of pre-primary teacher if they are engaging in task crafting behaviors. The direct (c'), indirect (ab) and total effect (c+a*b) are shown in figure 2.

Table 6

Mediating Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Task Crafting and Creativity (N =250)

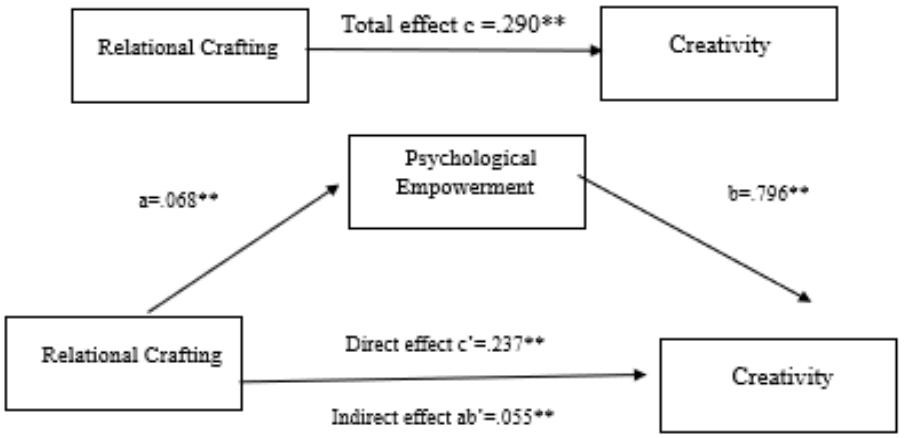
Variable/Effect	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*P*	95%CI	
					LL	UL
Task-CS	.344	.083	4.144	.000	.018	.507
Task-PE	.431	.110	3.93	.000	.216	.648
PE-CS	.251	.045	5.53	.000	.161	.340
Task-PE-CS	.235	.080	2.91	.003	.076	.394

Variable/Effect	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*P*	95%CI LL	95%CI UL
Effects						
Direct	.235	.080	2.91	.003	.076	.394
Indirect	.108	.035			.047	.183
Total	.344	.083	4.144	.000	.180	.507

Note. CS = Creativity Scale; PE = psychological empowerment. Based on 5000 bootstraps samples.

Figure 3

Mediation Model of Relational Crafting, Psychological Empowerment and Creativity



The table 7 shows that relational crafting is a significant predictor of creativity (p<.001) and also significant predict PE (p<.01). PE, as a whole mediates the relation between relational crafting and creativity(p<.001). Total effect was also significant *(β = .290, p=.000, CI 95% (LL=.148, UL=.433)*). The results are in accordance with our theoretical model and hypothesis and shows that PE strengthens the positive relationship between relational crafting and creativity. It can be deduced from these results that PE processes as an internal mechanism leading to the increase in creativity of pre-primary teacher if they are engaging in relational crafting behaviors. The direct (c'), indirect (ab) and total effect (c+a*b) are shown in figure 2.

Table 7
Mediating Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Relational Crafting and Creativity (N =250)

Variable/Effect	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95% CI	
					LL	UL
Relational-CS	.290	.072	4.020	.000	.148	.433
Relational-PE	.068	.030	2.27	.024	.009	.127
PE-CS	.80	.144	5.54	.000	.513	1.08
Relational-PE-CS	.237	.070	3.42	.000	.100	.372
Effects						
Direct	.237	.070	3.42	.000	.100 .372	
Indirect	.055	.027			.009 .112	
Total	.290	.072	4.020	.000	.148	.433

Note. CS = Creativity Scale; M = Meaning, I = Impact and R = Relational crafting. Based on 5000 bootstraps samples.

Discussion

One of the major pillars of human society is education, and many scholars and experts believe that teachers are the architects of this pillar. The current rate of literacy in Pakistan is around 62.3% which suggests that around 90 million people in the country don't know how to read or write (Irfan et al. 2022). Memon (2007) highlighted various challenges plaguing the Pakistani education sector, including inadequate financial issues, low efficiency level, poor management, supervision and teaching. Zhao and Ko (2018) conducted research and concluded that increase in the salaries was not significantly related to the teacher's commitment to the institution but the incentives that meet the psychological needs positively influenced teacher retention. Moreover, studies indicate that employees empowered within their roles tend to stay more committed to the organization (Conradie & Klerk, 2019).

After correlation, multiple linear regression analysis was computed which further extended to mediation analysis. The first study hypothesis posited that three dimensions of job crafting would be significant predictors of creativity. Regression analysis indicated that job crafting (specifically

task and relational crafting) explained 10% of the variance in creativity by job crafting with both dimensions positively predicting creativity (see Table 3). This finding is also supported by the work of Tian et al. (2021) who found that job crafting is positively related to creativity of the employees by increasing the work engagement. These findings were also supported by the study of Madjar and Shalley (2008) that suggested that the individual will display high level of creativity when they have well defined goals and ability to switch between tasks. Additionally, the study conducted by Li et al. (2020) also supports the finding and stated that the employees who are proactive utilize task, cognitive and relational crafting to improve creative performance.

The second hypothesis aimed to predict the relationship between job crafting (task, cognitive, & relational) and psychological empowerment. The multiple regression analysis results showed 18% variance among variables (see table 4). Task and relational crafting only predicted psychological empowerment. This suggests the task crafting positively effects psychological empowerment. Task crafting emerged as the strongest predictor, with a beta coefficient of .45 ($p < .001$), indicating that with the task modification, employees tend to experience greater levels of empowerment. Individual feel empowered by adjusting the parameters of their tasks with his personal characteristics (Tims et al., 2013). Consequently, JC allows employees to exercise autonomy in their roles, and decision-making regarding task performance and making these experiences more meaningful (Siddiqui et al., 2017). Moreover, job crafting not only fosters motivation but also cultivates a sense of empowerment among employees (Tims et al., 2013). Past researches also supported strong positive correlation between job crafting, and psychological empowerment (Coehoorn, 2017; Miller, 2015).

Cognitive crafting did not predict either of the variables, namely psychological empowerment or creativity. The reason can be pre-primary teachers primarily engaging in task and relational crafting to enhance their PE and creative performance at work. Cognitive crafting as a job crafting activity remains controversial (Niessen et al., 2016). Tims and Bakker (2010) argue that cognitive crafting resembles avoidance coping, as individuals dont truly reshape their jobs but rather shift their perspective on work conditions that dont align with their needs, abilities, and preferences.

Relational crafting behavior involves proactively adjusting social dynamics at work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton 2001). Scholars emphasize the importance of relational job designs (Parker et al., 2010), with a particular focus on relational job crafting (Laurence, 2010), which involves self-initiated actions by which employees adjust their social surroundings. So, it can be inferred that job roles are closely linked to interpersonal relationships and interactions. Building a friendly work setting where everyone benefits from their relationships can boost employees intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm for their tasks (Bakker, 2011). This notion supports the findings of current study, indicating that when teachers engage in relational crafting, they experience intrinsic motivation and empowerment in their jobs. This, in turn, enhances creativity in their performance.

Furthermore, another regression analysis was conducted to verify the third hypothesis, which posited that psychological empowerment predicts creativity among the pre-primary teachers. The analysis revealed a 17% variance among the variables (see table 5). Previous literature also supports this finding and concluded that psychological empowerment has significant relation and is also a significant predictor of creativity (Ghani et al., 2009). Empowerment fosters employees willingness to contribute to common tasks through diverse means (Spreitzer, 1995). According to Ambad et al. (2021), empowered employees exhibit heightened responsibility, exert additional effort, and demonstrate increased creativity in their roles, thereby enhancing their overall job performance. Moreover, workers with higher levels of PE tend to be more engaged in their tasks, produce innovative ideas, and adeptly solve problems (Duan et al., 2018).

The fourth study hypothesis aimed to explore the mediating role of PE. The first matrix for the mediation analysis investigated the role of PE task between task crafting and creativity. Results revealed that all paths in mediation analysis were significant, indicating that PE mediated between task crafting and creativity. The study conducted by Liden et al. (2000) concluded that the PE mediates between job characteristics and ones commitment to the organization. Another study corroborates this finding, indicating psychological empowerment significantly predict creativity in the workplace (Sangar & Rangnekar, 2016). Another study asserts that PE and JC mediate in the relationship between servant leadership and the innovative behaviors exhibited by employees. (Khan et al., 2022).

Another matrix for the mediation analysis was between relational crafting and creativity which is mediated by psychological empowerment. The findings based on regression analysis approved that PE mediates between relational crafting and creativity. Lee and Nie (2014) study on teachers of Singapore, concluded that psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between teachers' perception of the supervisors' empowering behaviors and outcomes related to work. Expanding relational networks within the workplace fosters a conducive work environment, facilitating goal attainment and task accomplishment (Bakker et al., 2012). As previously discussed, relational job crafting yields more favorable outcomes and contributes to improved work results rather than deterioration. In relational resources, relational job crafting identified as central point (Rofcanin et al., 2019), are also anticipated to serve as external motivators in psychologically empowering teachers in their work settings. This intrinsic motivation in terms of psychological empowerment brings about positive emotions in teachers and enables them to accumulate various physical, social, and intellectual resources to enhance their performance at work (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009; Luthans & Youssef, 2007), ultimately fostering creativity and innovation.

Limitations and Future Directions

Certainly, every study has its limitations, and acknowledging them is crucial for improving future research. In the present study, one of the limitations is regarding the sample size of the research, which was relatively small. Increasing the sample size would enhance the quality of analyses and results. Another limitation was that the data was gathered more from the private sector than the government sector. It is equally important to gather data from the government sector, to enable meaningful comparisons regarding classroom facilities, provision of teachers and work performance. Since education in the government sector severs the major population of our country, including data from this sector would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teacher creativity.

Implications

Indeed, despite its limitations, this study holds significant implications for the education sector in Pakistan. Pakistan is among third world countries where social and economic challenges are of serious concern but a better future is a hope through the quality education and progress. As it was

discussed above, survival is only possible through knowledge and technology-based progress. To stop the practice of rote learning (learning with no understanding) and encouraging digital learning is all possible by equipping teachers at early school level with effective tools and trainings so they work creatively in their domains. Institutions should make such policies, and update their teachers with new technologies and current trends through trainings and workshops that would eventually make them resourceful.

Conclusion

This study highlights the impact of job crafting on the creativity of pre-primary teachers. Utilizing a cross-sectional research design, we discovered that job crafting enhances creativity through psychological empowerment. Our findings suggest that job crafting is an effective strategy for fostering creativity and can serve as a compensatory mechanism in demanding work environments. The results emphasize the importance for researchers and practitioners to recognize the positive role of job crafting in academia to improve teacher performance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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