Research Article

The Impact of Workplace Inequality on Job Crafting: Moderating Role of Work Social Support and Workplace Resilience in Mitigating the Effect of Psychological Stress: An Analysis of Academia

*1Sana Mukhtar | 2Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim

*1PhD Scholar, Institute of Business Administration Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology, Pakistan
Email: sanamukhtar617@gmail.com
2Institute of Business Administration Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering & Information Technology, Pakistan

Correspondence
Sana Mukhtar
Email: sanamukhtar617@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how workplace inequality effect job crafting of Academia of South Punjab, Pakistan: exploring the mediation role of psychological stress and moderating role of work social support and workplace resilience. The primary method for gathering data in this study was a survey questionnaire, utilizing a quantitative research approach. The targeted population for this research comprised the 470 employees (faculty) in the academia of South Punjab, Pakistan. As per the research, workplace inequality effects job crafting. Moreover, the study has revealed that psychological stress plays a mediating role between job crafting and workplace inequality. In addition to this study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the role of work social support and resilience as moderator. This study delves into intricate dynamics of workplace inequality, and analyzes the impact of workplace inequality by examining the role of psychological stress. The negative impacts of inequality are exacerbated by psychological stress, which causes disengagement and reduces desire for proactive efforts such as job crafting. The purpose of this research is to examine how workplace inequality effect job crafting in academics of South Punjab, Pakistan, using psychological stress as the mediator, while work social support and workplace resilience as moderators. With regard to the academia, which is a self-governing field with various duties and ranks, it is obvious that the risk of workplace disparities is quite high due to the differences in decision making, resource or scope, and acknowledgement. This research aims to investigate the complicated linkages between workplace inequality on job crafting in an academic setting. By researching how employees negotiate and redefine their positions in the face of perceived disparities and unequal treatment with employees at their workplaces. This study hopes to find ways that improve employee well-being, create equity, and drive organizational efficiency. The study's findings are expected to provide useful insights for academia and practitioners, as well as concrete suggestions on how to establish inclusive cultures in which employees can thrive and excel. Moreover, this research highlights the importance of addressing workplace inequality and establishing supportive working atmosphere in order to enhance job crafting. The research provides a full structure for understanding and dealing with the different consequences of inequality in organizational settings, with a focus on psychological stress as mediator, and work social support, and workplace resilience as moderating role.

KEYWORDS

Workplace Inequality, Psychological Stress, Job Crafting, Work Social Support, Workplace Resilience

1 | INTRODUCTION

The employees are central to the operation and development of any organization hence have a significant input in the organization's future. The ability they possess such as performance, creativity and adaptability have a close relationship with goal achievement within organizations (Turyadi et al., 2023). However, there is much more about leveraging the role of these newcomers other than the standard job design that is offered in the literature. This is

where what is called job crafting comes handy(Lee, 2023).

Employee driven customization is a way through which their needs or their personal dreams and goals are connected to the organizational goals (Magistretti et al., 2023). By using the job crafting, the employees might decide where they would like to apply efforts in order to make maximal contribution. For relational crafting, they construct accurate social relationship at the workplace so as to promote interconnection and group work (Lin & Meng, 2024). Last but not the least, in cognitive crafting, they able to view their work as a part of the organization's larger vision and get a feeling of ownership. But job crafting is not just an employee centric concept in general; it is a managerial tool for the organizations. When job descriptions match skills and interests, employee is more productive, creative, and eager to work. This alignment results in increase in productivity and quality of performance that in turn delivers the organizational objectives. Furthermore, those who build their jobs also experience higher levels of psychological capital and this characterizes many aspects of work throughout today's dynamic organizations (Lin & Meng, 2024). Inequality has become one of the complex issues facing organizations in the present-day world and more so in the academies given that the principles of workplace fairness and equity are crucial fundamental freedoms in determining employee behaviors and results (Owunna et al., 2024). A common characteristic of inequality is to be recognized in terms of access to opportunities; diffusion of resources; visibility, and recognition in working places, which is quite challenging to those who wish to exercise for deeper potential (Benson et al., 2024). Of course, such dichotomies are especially magnified in academia, which is an independent sector of industry, but one that frequently experiences bias, job crafting, and lack of resources (Acker, 2006). These conditions not only damage the trust and morale but also create increase psychological stress among the faculty members which have organizational implications and adverse effects on health and efficiency of the faculty members (Greenberg, 2004). This paper assumes that psychological stress is a mediator that escalates the negative impact of workplace inequality on job crafting. When people experience high levels of stress, their thinking and emotional abilities to be proactive in their job activities such as job crafting, the activities through which employees redesign how they see their jobs, their relationships and the nature of their work to suit their potential and interest (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Self-initiated forms of job design enable creativity, satisfaction and flexibility at the workplace; however, stress arising from inequality hinders employees' capacity to undertake job crafting (Petrou, Roberson & Morgeson, 2012).

The ability or combination of traits that permits one to effectively adjust to difficult situations is known as resilience (Gilmore et al., 2014). Workplace Resilience requires both risk and promotive elements; for instance, stress is a risk factor for depression, but coping mechanisms are promotive factors that help mitigate the detrimental effects of stress (Zimmerman et al., 2013). Through this variable, workplace resilience, therefore, means the capability of employees and organizations to manage stress, hardships, or difficult situations at the workplace and continue to be productive with lesser detriment to the health of the workers. Hence resilience at the workplace is essential in managing psychological demands while boosting job crafting. If number of faculty members get unequal treatment recognizing them preferential treatments or receiving isolation at work or opportunities director, they would likely to become disempowering and thus withdraw, reducing their ability for innovative ideas and personal growth (Bakker et al., 2020). Work social support is especially important in moderating the impact of inequality and psychological stress at the workplace. Support from peers, supervisors and other institutions is an important form of aid that offers employees with emotional and instrumental aid to enable them to overcome different obstacles, release stress and regain their confidence in their positions (Halbesleben, 2006). Such support empowers the members of the academic staff to cope better with inequality, adapt, and practice anticipatory job crafting. This research has great relevance for tackling intense issues, such as workplace inequality, psychological stress, and job redesign on the academic workforce. The study ultimately aims to provide practical insights for academic institutions to create policies and actions encouraging fairness, expand social support networks, and increase employee resilience, thereby improving performance, creativity, and institutional success.

1.1| Research Significance

Academia is essential for tackling social issues, advocating for fairness, and improving organizational effectiveness. Studying inequality can assist in recognizing strategies and guidelines to promote employee welfare, talent development, legal and ethical issues, creativity and innovation, career progression, and employee involvement. Organizations can reduce these through avoiding inequality and creating a positive environment at workplaces. This not only increases satisfaction but also helps to engage the employee more in their job, thus promoting positive job crafting and improved work output. Workplace Inequality is a significant and enduring addressing this issue is crucial for enhancing employee well-being, promoting organizational effectiveness, and achieving social justice and

equality goals. Businesses should create a fair work environment and employees should develop coping mechanisms. Further research is needed to understand its impact on different sectors and regions. The study investigates the role of organizational procedures in perpetuating inequality and its persistence in various organizations and fields. The goal of the study is to find out whether job crafting and workplace inequality affect employee performance among university staff in Pakistan. The research also seeks to investigate how work social support and workplace resilience could moderate things. It looks at how these elements could serve to lessen the negative consequences of workplace inequality thus allowing employees to manage problems, keep motivation, and participate in efficiency in their working environment. Creating inclusive environments promotes creativity and flexibility, whereas obstacles to progress can impede specific demographics. Comprehending the correlation among workplace inequality, job crafting, and employee engagement can assist organizations in implementing specific interventions to enhance retention rates and nurture a positive work atmosphere. In general, it is crucial to research workplace inequality in order to progress understanding, advocate for fairness and inclusion, and improve employee performance that will ultimately boost the organizational effectiveness and well-being.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Building on prior research, this study seeks to delve deeper into this essential problem, emphasizing its importance in boosting job crafting, advancing organizational performance, and creating fairness and equity. Organizations must prioritize equitable working policies, while people should focus on developing effective techniques for adapting and thriving in challenging environments. The linkage between distributive injustice, procedural injustice, and organizational performance can be argued with the support of COR theory (Hobfoll, 2014). According to this theory, injustices, inequalities and unequal treatment can elevate the sense of loss. On sense of loss, the employees can indulge in coping mechanisms and will tend to restrict their resources in terms of poor execution of their duties; in shape of conflicts and absenteeism (Lam et al.,2002). Resiliency theory provides a conceptual framework for considering a strengths-based approach to understanding employee development and informing intervention design (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Zimmerman & Brenner, 2010). Resiliency theory supplies the conceptual scaffolding for studying and understanding why some employees seems productive inspite of risk exposure. Basically, this theory tries to focus on positive context and bounce back from adversity, stress, or challenge, by persons, communities, organizations, or systems Addressing workplace inequality requires a multidimensional approach, and this research aims to uncover the pathways through which systemic disparities influence individual and institutional success. Numerous factors, including those related to the individual, the workplace, the company, and the environment, can affect an employee's performance. These components might be helpful or harmful, according to the author. Employee performance can improve when favorable factors are present, but it can also drop when negative situations are present (Jung et al., 2021). Recent research highlights the crucial role of employees in achieving organizational goals, as they contribute to the success and growth of the organization through their various tasks and responsibilities. Unfair treatment, and self-biasness diminish job crafting by discouraging workers and reducing their self-esteem, autonomy levels and organizational commitment. When employees are treated in an unfair, unequitable manner regarding rewards, assignments, or choices – they feel they are not respected.

Creativity in employees at workplace is defined as work specific idea generating capacity, innovative thinking, or ways of working in unique manner in order to solve work related problems. It is only possible where employees are given the liberty, tools, and encouragement to work beyond the organizational architectures(Hughes et al., 2018). Self-directed job redesign is viewed as critical to the stimulation of extra-role creativity because it gives employees autonomy in the process of designing or changing jobs (Berg et al., 2010). In other words, organizational members can be encouraged to manage the task boundaries in a way that allows them to focus on meaningful interaction and effective self-organization that flows from the redefinition of their roles in a way that reflects expressed interests and aspirations, all of which supports creativity at work. Whenever employees practice job crafting, the result is formation of ways to work on things that provoke their interest and creativity (Von Krogh et al., 2012). On the other hand, when employees have stressors such as structural characteristics, lack of client interaction, or discrimination at the workplace, the job-bending process or job crafting becomes limited. This lack of flexibility also kills creativity since people cannot try or come up with different methods of doing their tasks. But job crafting and creativity are two sides of the same coin—job crafting is the enabler that drives the employee's ability to innovate, transform, and introduce novelty to the job. Promoting job crafting makes not only individual creativity flourish but also the organization development and competitiveness (Nandram, 2015).
Therefore, we propose that

Hypothesis 1: Workplace inequality will have a significant negative effect on Job Crafting.

2.1 | Mediating Role of Psychological Stress

Focusing on the contributing reasons to inequalities, their consequences for employee well-being, and the general success of companies, this paper offers a thorough overview of current research on workplace inequality. The aim is to emphasize important conclusions, provide a theoretical basis for comprehending workplace inequality, and point out gaps in the present research. Favoritism and bias in a particular culture may foster machinist workplace environments that produce discrimination, stress and conflict. Maintenance of efforts towards work improvements with an aim of advancing in one's job might lead to considerable psychological pressure (Csata et al., 2024). The emotional, mental, and behavioral reactions a person has to a perceived disparity between the demands made of them and their capacity to meet those demands are collectively referred to as psychological stress (Chang et al., 2004). This research is important as it examines, especially via its influence on job crafting, the effects of workplace inequality on employee productivity and well-being. Although studies have shown how bad workplace inequality is for general employee morale, few studies have looked at its particular consequences on productivity-related behaviors, particularly considering psychological stress as mediators. The emphasis of this research on how workplace inequality will impact on job crafting that will provide insightful analysis for companies trying to create more inclusive and effective working environments. Although, Inequality at the workplace does not only cause high levels of psychological distress and anxiety, but also impacts on their performance and productivity of the organization and stressed employees may also lack motivation, have poor working relationships with other staff, and struggle to have positive customer relations. Furthermore, high levels of stress negatively affect innovation as it limits the employees' tendency to take risks while seeking to come up with new ideas (Sahay et al., 2022). Thus, it is important for organizations to intervene and tackle these factors to prevent adverse workplace conditions for employees. Therefore, we propose that

Hypothesis 2: Workplace inequality will have significant positive relationship with psychological stress.

Unequal treatment with employees and differential human treatment makes a difference when it comes to the creativity. Employees rates are impacted when they are treated unfairly within an organization, for instance, being granted different opportunities or recognition as well as differential access to resources, productivity motivation, and confidence will therefore be down. This feeling makes them lack motivation to pursue changes in how they design their work or position themselves in a way that reflects the skills and goals, which is a part of job crafting. The lack of fairness also means that the employees do not have the motivation to make new ideas on their own, they do not feel involved in the process of creation of the products. In job crafting activities employees change the content of their work description to fit their abilities and values. By deployment of this approach job satisfaction and engagement can rise with a new outlook and restructuring of tasks at work. It typically involves three main dimensions: task selection and social interaction transformation of cognitive elements. Job crafting is a proactive, self-initiated process where employees actively modify their work to align with their objectives, aspirations, and talents, aiming for job purpose, pleasant work, mental well-being, and improved performance (Thai et al., 2023). One approach to overcoming this is job crafting, which refers to employees frequently changing their tasks, work relationships, and perspectives in ways that can help align their jobs with their strengths, values, and passions (Zhang & Parker, 2019). But when the inequality comes with psychological stress for employees, their energies move away from personal growth and creativity to managing emotional and mental fatigue. Stress drains cognitive resources necessary for innovation, planning and problem-solving, which means employees are less able to recognize opportunities to reshape their roles in constructive ways (Qian et al., 2024). Inequality at the workplace is a significant foster which brings psychological stress among and impact of all these problems not only demotivates individuals, but also slows down organizational productivity and creativity(Grant & Shandell, 2022). It is therefore crucial for organizations to fight workplace injustice in an effort to reduce psychological strain, improve organizational climate and encourage workers to adaptively construct their positions for more interest and commitment (Neuman, 2004).Therefore, we propose that

Hypothesis 3: Psychological stress will significantly mediate the relationship between workplace inequality and job crafting.

2.2 | Moderating Role of Work Social Support and Workplace Resilience

Organizational Social Support is support offered to employees by their peers, subordinates, and the place of work. Psychologically, it assists in saving time, minimizing stress, boosting general morale, and performing better. These are supportive interventions that can be emotional, instrumental, informational, appraisal, or recognition. Our assumption is consistent with the buffering hypothesis of social support (Cohen & Wills, Thomas AshbyStress, Social Support, 1985) and COR theory Hobfoll, (2011). Buffering hypothesis of social support states that social support can weaken the negative effect of occupational stress. Organizational work support or social support is the encouragement and support that an individual receives from other members in the workplace, management and the rest of the firm(Sykes, 2015). This support can be invaluable during stressful periods and relieves the adverse consequences by improving the level of wellbeing and mental performance (Bono et al., 2013).

Social support" from peers, managers or the organization mitigates the effect of workplace stress associated with inequality. Employees who feel mistreated may endure higher stress levels due to feelings of irritation, isolation or disinterest; but with on-the-job support, those problems are reduced with an increase in resilience for workers. Positive collegial relationships and empathetic leaders offer workers the affirmation and encouragement they need to weather challenges during times of crisis stemming from inequity. All emotional support (reducing a sense of alienation) affords empowerment through a sense of belonging and common aim, whilst informational support —for example, directing how to handle challenging conditions accordingly— allows workers to overcome organizational barriers, thereby enhancing their contribution. Scholars have investigated the moderating effect of social support on the occupational stress and its outcomes negative effect of occupational stressors (Duffy et al., 2002; Hobman et al., 2009); they have found that social support weakens the negative effect of workplace stressors on employees. Our assumption is consistent with the buffering hypothesis of social support (Cohen and Wills, 1985) and COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989). Buffering hypothesis of social support states that social support can weaken the negative effect of occupational stress.

Hypothesis 4: The relationship between workplace inequality and psychological stress will be moderated by work social support.

Job crafting refers to the act of creating, redesigning and negotiating the job boundaries in order to match the employee's preferences, strength and passion. Job restructuring is a process that entails changing the number, nature, or area of job activities. It is extremely essential to the productivity and success of any organization since it improves employees' commitment, efficiency, morale, creativity and retention(Demerouti, 2014). An increasing amount of research indicates that resilience may be a key protective factor against the detrimental impacts of psychological stress on job crafting. Employees with high resilience levels engaged in more job creative behaviors even in the face of high job demands, moderating the link between job demands and job crafting.

According to (Southwick et al., 2017) for instance, discovered that resilience moderated the connection and workers with high resilience levels were more capable of managing psychological stress, which in turn enabled them to participate in more job-crafting activities and, eventually, report greater levels of their performance of the workers. Job crafting is therefore the process by which employees modify the contents of their jobs or the relationships between them and their colleagues and/or the organization so as to optimize their utility to the employees doing them and to the organization that offers them. It is autonomous in nature, that people can self-describe, meaning that they take the initiative to organize their job roles, which promotes job satisfaction, motivation and commitment. Job crafting means that employees can redesign their jobs and it is best since it fosters ownership besides helping individuals and organizations and achieve more (Demerouti, 2014).

Hypothesis 5: The relationship between psychological stress and job crafting will be moderated by workplace resilience.
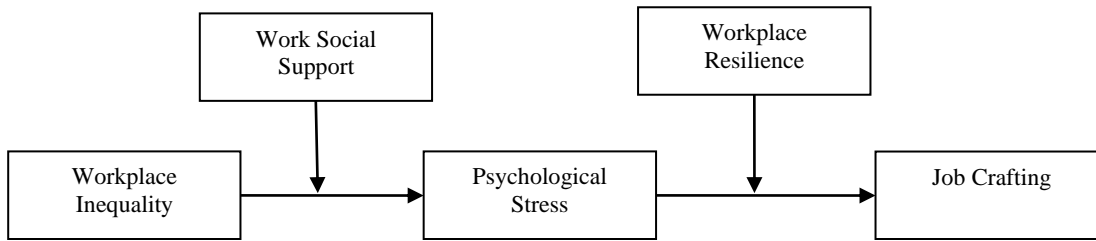
```
┌──────────────────┐                    ┌──────────────────┐
│   Work Social    │                    │    Workplace     │
│     Support      │                    │    Resilience    │
└────────┬─────────┘                    └────────┬─────────┘
         │                                       │
         ▼                                       ▼
┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐    ┌──────────────┐
│  Workplace   │───▶│ Psychological│───▶│ Job Crafting │
│  Inequality  │    │    Stress    │    │              │
└──────────────┘    └──────────────┘    └──────────────┘
```

Figure 1: Workplace Inequality Model

3 | METHODS

Any study must have a research design since it specifies the procedure and methods for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. The research design addressing the relationship between workplace inequality on job crafting must be carefully considered in order to meet the study's objectives and produce valid and reliable data. This study will be a one-time, quantitative study. The information would be gathered from Academia from Souh Punjab, Pakistan. Due to the autonomous sector i.e universities, the level for workplace inequality and insecurity is much higher in the autonomous sector than any other sector.This research has taken job crafting as a dependent variable and workplace inequality as an independent variable. Independent variable: This study uses an indepnedent variable is a workplace inequality and in this study uses 7 items placed on 5-ponit Likert scale used for mesuring independent variable. Dependent variable: this study uses job crafting as a dependent variable and this study uses 5 itmes placed on 5-point likert scale used for measuring dependent variable. Mediating variable: This resaerch uses psychological stress as mediating variable already used by (Schuetz, 2008) on 5-ponit Likert scale. Moderating variables: This study used work social support uses 5 items on 5-point Likert scale and workplace resilience uses 10 items on 5-point Likert scale as moderators. For measuring these variables have shown in the table below:

Table 1
Questionnaire Details

Sr. No.	Variables	Sources	Items
O1	Work place Inequality	Roscigno et al., (2023)	7
02	Psychological Stress	(Schuetz, 2008)	14
03	Job Crafting	(Eguchi et al., 2016)	5
04	Work Social Support	(Yousaf et al., 2020)	6
05	Workplace Resilience	(Connor & Davidson, 2003)	10

4 | RESULTS

Table 2 explain demographic data of our respondents in terms of gender, education, age, Demographic Analysis (N=470)
Table 2
Demographic of Participants

Demographics	Category	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender	Male	327	(70%)
	Female	143	(30%)
Education	MPhil	319	(68%)
	Doctorate	151	(32%)
	15-30	248	(53%)
Age (In years)	31-45	177	(38%)
	46-60	39	(8%)
	Above 60	6	(1%)
Job Experience	1-5	124	(26%)
(In years)	6-10	152	(32%)

11-15	138	(29%)	
16-20	40	(9%)	
Above 20	16	(3%)	

4.1 | Validity and Reliability

All of the variables included in the analysis have high levels of internal consistency, as shown by Cronbach's alpha values which are far above the 0.70 threshold range that supports the reliability of the construct. Convergent validity was established since all factor loadings were larger than 0.5 (Amirrudin et al., 2021). All individual factor loadings were greater than 0.6, significant at < .01. In terms of construct validity, the AVE values of WPI, PD and EP are above than 0.5. All square roots of AVEs are higher than their corresponding correlation outcomes hence, discriminant validity was proven (Fornell, C., & Larcker, 1981). The study's results provide credence to the reliability and accuracy of the measuring tool used. It was also determined that the inter-variable correlations were much less than the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct(Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). These results provide credence to the reliability and validity of the instruments used in the research; table 2

Table 3
Validity and Reliability

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	Factor Loading
WPI	0.84	WPI1	0.87
		WPI2	0.86
		WPI3	0.81
		WPI4	0.79
		WPI5	0.75
		WPI6	0.70
		WPI7	0.72
PS	0.87	PS1	0.80
		PS2	0.89
		PS3	0.72
		PS4	0.67
		PS5	0.77
		PS6	0.81
		PS7	0.65
		PS8	0.74
		PS9	0.78
		PS10	0.68
JC	0.82	JC1	0.84
		JC2	0.82
		JC3	0.71
		JC4	0.78
		JC5	0.76
WPR	0.76	WPR1	0.77
		WPR2	0.77
		WPR3	0.78
		WPR4	0.76
		WPR5	0.73
		WPR6	0.64
		WPR7	0.66
		WPR8	0.87
		WPR9	0.84

		WPR10	0.72
		WSS1	0.70
		WSS2	0.75
		WSS3	0.69
WSS	0.82	WSS4	0.86
		WSS5	0.69
		WSS6	0.78

WPI= Workplace Inequality; PS= Psychological Stress; JC= Job Crafting; WPR= Workplace Resilience; WSS= Work Social Support

Based on the information, it appears that all of the scales used in the study had good to excellent levels of internal consistency reliability. The workplace inequality (WPI) had the highest reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .84, indicating that the items on this scale were highly correlated with one another and consistently measured the same construct. The psychological stress (PS) also had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .87, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. The job Crafting (JC) also had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. The workplace resilience (WPR) also had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. The work social support (WSS) also had a high level of reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .82, indicating that the items on this scale were also consistently measuring the same construct. In addition to providing information about the reliability of the scales, the factor loadings indicate the degree to which each item is associated with the underlying construct being measured by the scale. It appears that all of the items had good factor loadings, indicating that they were measuring the intended constructs. Overall, the reliability and validity of the scales used in this study suggest that the data collected is likely to be reliable and valid, which strengthens the conclusions. Calculated AVE (average extracted variance) is shown in Table-3. The AVE readings are all above the threshold of 0.50. According to (Hew & Syed A. Kadir, 2017) employing the Fornell-Larcker rule that all square roots of AVEs should be greater than their corresponding correlation values demonstrates discriminant validity. The construct's dependability has also been confirmed by attaining Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability ratings above 0.70. Strong convergent validity of the measurement model was found in this investigation, as shown by the high AVE values. High Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability ratings further suggest that the model's constructs are trustworthy and consistent.

Table 4
Discriminant validity, Convergent validity, and R-square of JC

Variables	JC	WPI	PS	AVE	CR	R
JC	.783			.614	.888	.59
WPI	.412	.788		.624	.919	
PS	.223	.089	.754	.569	.929	

Diagonal values are the sq-root of AVE; PS=Psychological Stress WPI= Workplace Inequality JC=Job Crafting; AVE= Average Variance Explained; CR=Composite Reliability.

In Table-3, the AVE values of WPI, PS and JC are acceptable as they are greater than 0.5. The composite reliability is greater than 0.6 and the construct's convergent validity is acceptable. According to the research of Anderson and Gerbing (1988), convergent and discriminant validity were used in the development of the path analysis. The present investigation used structural equation modeling to quantify AMOS values. This research differs from others in that it relied on structural regression to test its assumptions. SEM's main benefit is that it can correct measurement errors inside a statistical framework, which is something that multiple regressions can't achieve.

Table 5
Model Fit

Model	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	CFI	NFI
Default model	.069	1.911	.923	.912
Independence Model	.268	31.226	.000	.000

AMOS's primary goal is to assess how well a given structural equation model fits the data (SEM). In structural

equation modeling (SEM), model fit is used to determine whether or not the hypothesized model adequately explains the data. Many fit indices, such as CMIN/DF, CFI, NFI, and RMSEA, were used to evaluate the quality of the model fit, as shown in Table 4. According to Kline (1998), a satisfactory match between the hypothesized structural model and the actual data is achieved when the CMIN/DF number is less than 3. Both the CFI (0.923) and NFI (0.912) values are above the threshold of 0.90, indicating an excellent match. The RMSEA value of 0.069 shows good fitness of model; table 4.

4.2 | Path Analysis

In structural equation modeling (SEM), a statistical metric called the route coefficient indirect impact is used to evaluate the indirect link that exists between two variables. It provides a numerical measure of the degree to which one or more intermediate variables moderate the influence of a single independent variable on a single dependent variable. Researchers are able to identify the degree and relevance of these indirect effects by evaluating the path coefficients, which provides them with significant insights into the underlying mechanisms and processes at play.

Table 6
Mediation Path Analysis

Hypothesis	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
PS→JC	.229	.041	5.589	***
WPI→JC	.094	.034	2.799	.005
WPI→PS	.211	.040	5.327	***

*Note: *** significant at 0.001*

The table shows the estimates, standard errors (S.E.), critical ratios (C.R.), and p-values for the paths between the variables, table 5. The paths show the relationships between the predictor variables (WPI, PS) and the outcome variable (JC). The estimates represent the strength and direction of the relationship, while the standard errors and critical ratios provide information about the statistical significance of the estimates. For the first hypothesis (H1), the path between workplace inequality and job crafting has a significant relationship (β=.094, p=0.005). This suggests that there is a significant negative relationship between workplace inequality and job crafting. For the second hypothesis (H2), the path between workplace inequality and psychological stress has significant relationship (β=.211, p=.001). This suggests that there is a significant relationship between workplace inequality and psychological stress. For the third hypothesis (H3), the path between psychological stress and job crafting has a significant negative relationship (β=.229, p<.001). This suggests that there is a significant negative relationship between psychological stress and job crafting. Overall, the results of the path analysis support all hypotheses, suggesting that workplace inequality and psychological stress affect job crafting. All paths from Workplace Inequality to Psychological stress, Workplace Inequality to Job Crafting and Psychological Stress to job Crafting are found significant, hence all hypotheses are fully supported and partial mediation model is found.

Table 7
Results

Hypothesis	Results
H1	Approved
H2	Approved
H3	Approved

Further, results showed that work place resilience (β=.12, p=0.003) has significant moderating effect on the relationship between workplace inequality and job crafting and work social support (β=.23, p=0.001) has significant moderating effect on the relationship between workplace inequality and psychological stress from Table 7.

Table 8

Moderating Effects of WPR and WSS

Hypotheses	Path	β	SE	CR	p
H4	WPIxWPR →ZJC	.12	.041	2.923	.003
H5	WPIxWSS →ZPS	.23	.063	2.214	.001

Note: *** significant at p < .001
WPI=Workplace Inequality; PS=Psychological Stress; WPR= Workplace Resilience; WSS= Work Social Support

Table 9
Moderation Results

Hypothesis	Paths	Results
H4	WPIxWPR →ZJC	Approved
H5	WPIxWSS →ZPS	Approved

5 | DISCUSSIONS

This section synthesises the main findings and discusses these in relation to the objectives of the study in response to the research questions. It aims at the aforementioned factors especially analyzing the effect of workplace inequality on job crafting of acdemia of South Punjab, Pakistan. It provides thorough analysis of the direct hypothesis evalusted in the study and includes both dependent and independent variables. The above results shows that all of the hypothesis were validated that indicates substantial relationships between constructs being studied. The results showed that workplace inequality have significant negative effect job crafting. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) proposed that employees can shape their jobs by changing task-related aspects, modifying relational aspects, and changing their own cognitions. Several studies presented several definitions of work crafting, but Tims and Bakker's (2010) is the most frequently accepted. According to Petrou et al. (2012), employees use job creating tactics to make their jobs healthier. Research on job crafting has primarily focused on its impact on psychological health. According to Schuler, Binnewies, and Bürkner (2019), employees who design their employment benefit from a demanding work environment that fosters growth and learning, leading to enhanced well-being (Huyghebaert-Zouaghi et al., 2021). Organizations need to undertake job crafting in order to enhance employee commitment, gratification and performance. However, when employees experience inequality, for example in terms of received organizational resources, appreciation, promotional chances or networks, their capacity and willingness for job crafting is drastically reduced(Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022). In addition, inequality-produced stress and it reduced the employee's motivation and self-esteem.

This study clearly showed and proved that workplace inequality has significant positive relationship with psychological stress. This sense of unfairness creates psychological stress, in the form of emotional frustration, anxiety, and stress. This kind of strain is a mental blockade, which will restrict an employee's capacity to adopt job crafting successfully. It is also proved by the analysis that psychological stress significantly mediates the relationship between workplace inequality and job crafting. Organizational injustice in the workplace, especially in universities, plays a role that affects job crafting process , which is the deliberate actions and activities carried out by employees to change and modify or redesign the job based on their skills, values, and preferences they hold (Wang et al., 2015). This study thus fills a gap and clearly showed that an organization that fosters a culture of support within the team and encourages inclusion helps diminish the adverse impact of inequality and stress. It is through managers and leaders that mechanisms for peer support, mentorship programs and open feedback systems are put into place. In adverse situations, having employees who are resilient, productive, and can be a supportive presence for others is one of the greatest strengths. Therefore, work social support is a necessary component in improving the well-being and equity of the workplace (Yousaf et al., 2020). So, the next hypothesis, the relationship between workplace inequality and psychological stress will be moderated by work social support is also proved.

Still, the negative effects of inequality are greatly reduced by excellent work social support and personal resilience. Social support—embodied in mentoring, collegial support, and supportive leadership—offers psychological safety and practical aid, therefore buffering the negative impacts of stress and prejudice and allowing individuals to participate in meaningful job making despite systematic disparities. Resilience not only helps workers to be more adaptable and consistent in the face of difficulty but also encourages ongoing involvement and job innovation even under unfair circumstances. The, self-directing aspect of job crafting could be significantly affected by unfair

treatment in organizations such as inequity or lack of equal opportunities. Those experiencing inequity may lack confidence in what they are doing or changes to make in their workplace leading to low employee morale and motivation. When employees are lonely and have no prospects for promotion anxiety increases and is added to negative working environment (Yin et al., 2023).

Resilience can make an individual easily recover from, or adjust to, all the change and misfortune one experiences day by day and is about your actual ability to maintain a balanced health state (Shumba, 2010) . As such, resilience is key to health and well-being in the face of adversity (Ray, 2004) . Resilient people have adaptive cognitive coping styles, with solutions focused on problem-solving (Shumba, 2010) . the analysis showed and proved that the relationship between psychological stress and job crafting will be moderated by workplace resilience. They might feel powerless, thinking that any attempts to shape their jobs will necessarily be undermined by the same inequitable conditions in which their stress originates. In effect, when suffering from stress individuals tend to interpret change negatively, leading to passivity towards their work overall, causing withdrawal, dissatisfaction, and preventing further job crafting. Others will sow the seeds of avoidance, refuse to talk to colleagues and create a vicious cycle. This research shows that stressful working conditions, as a mediator, will reveal the impact which workplace inequalities have placed on the people's psychological health. Stress affects cognitive abilities, creativity and motivation and subsequently their ability to redesign their roles and successfully deal with the stressors. To leverage these points for calling for applications that address interventions for stress and its adverse consequences, academic institutions must unravel this mediation. Work social support and resilience come out clearly as vital intermediate variables in this study, which provides avenues through which the negative effects of inequality and stress can be offset. Contract and encouragement expected from co-workers and supervisors offer a feeling of inclusion and motivation to deal with unfairness leading to perspectives of continued relevance within the work place. Likewise, resilience prepares the workers in that they remain in a position to be productive even if their working conditions are not quite favorable through the help of resilience. These insights raise awareness of the significance of promoting organizational culture that is constructive for the staff members' health and that improves the organizational outcomes. This paper therefore recommends that organizations reinforce equity, support structures, and resilience in order to make employees able to engage in job crafting for personal and organizational benefits. This discussion supports the essential concept of fair and organizational practices in the establishment of institution's stability and successes in a more challenging and growing Economy.

6 | CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This research offers important information on the impact of workplace inequality on job crafting based on psychological stress as both mediator and work social support and resilience as the moderators. They underscore the interactions between organizational features with special emphasis to human dimensions and virtuous work behaviors especially in the Academia. The general approach to tackling inequality at the workplace is not just a question of ethical consideration but rather a question of how the organization gets its employees to create, perform optimally and stay committed to the organization. If done in a proper manner the psychological stress and inequality can be reduced by understanding the structural and cultural dimensions of inequality and addressing them, along with creating satisfactory support systems, and implementing the measures on resilience. They will thus help employees to seek job crafting and meaningfully play a significant role for organizational achievement. This research opens the door to further investigations and real remedial techniques that should serve as a call to organizations not only pursuing excellence but equity and wellness as essential features of organizational sustainability. The research conclusion will be useful for academic institutions and organizational management and decision-makers. Having acknowledged how workplace inequality hurt job crafting and employee creativity, and the performance of the employees. There is no single best solution for improving the knowledge management, but leadership and management should encourage environments for mentoring, peer-supported initiatives, and using other methods of communication within the organization. With regard to this, the positive relationship between workplace inequality and psychological stress can be moderated by work social support. This show how crucial it is to have supportive workplaces in academic institutions to ensure that organizations are equal in offering their services to the employees and retreats and support from peers and supervisors are appropriate measures used to prevent the negative impacts of inequality on organizational climate on the health of the employees. Effective training courses that would help equip the employees with resilience and other abilities to face inequality and stress would also be effective in guaranteeing the optimum and continued contribution of the employees to the achievement of the goals of the organization. These measures can enhance not only the result

7 | RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Although this study unveils important understanding enhancing the impact of workplace inequality on psychological stress, job crafting and the mediating effect work social support and resilience, this study however, has some limitations. Firstly, quantitative study is context bound to Academia in South Punjab, and therefore findings cannot be generalized to other sectors or areas. The peculiarities of cultures and organizations in this part of the world may not reflect the variety of problems and approaches across various settings for academics or other professions. Second, the employment of self-report data can lead to a response bias because participants may be aiming to give the ideals or may not be able to remember events correctly. This study can be extended in the following ways in future research; other variables may also mediate the relationship above like organizational justice and job satisfaction while other moderator variables include leadership styles and organizational culture. In addressing to the above highlighted areas, future studies can help provide a better coverage to understanding equity, wellbeing and proactive behavior at workplace. Despite the contributions made by this study in understanding the association between workplace inequality, psychological stress and job crafting, this study has some limitations. First, the research is restricted to the academia, and the population of the study is limited to the faculty members in South Punjab; therefore, it might be difficult to generalize the conclusion drawn in the present study to other industries, other geographical regions, or even other diverse organizational setting. Other future research could include the extend of the conceptual model and include other moderator variables like emotional intelligence, perceived organizational justice or leadership styles so as to gain a deeper understanding of how such variables affect inequality and job crafting. Lastly, this research addresses the individual level of analysis while overlooking the organizational level effects. Some of the future research could be aimed at exploring the effects of workplace inequality and subsequent job crafting on organizational performance, innovation and culture. In this respect, it is possible to improve theory building in the future investigations and provide practical recommendations for promoting equity, positive psychological characteristics, and preventive actions in everyday workplaces and other spheres of people's activity.

REFERENCES

Amirrudin, M., Nasution, K., & Supahar, S. (2021). Effect of variability on Cronbach alpha reliability in research practice. *Jurnal Matematika, Statistika Dan Komputasi*, *17*(2), 223–230.

Benson, R., Duffy, B., Hesketh, R., & Hewlett, K. (2024). Attitudes to inequalities. *Oxford Open Economics*, *3*(Supplement_1), i39–i63.

Berg, J. M., Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2010). Perceiving and responding to challenges in job crafting at different ranks: When proactivity requires adaptivity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31*(2-3), 158–186.

Bono, J. E., Glomb, T. M., Shen, W., Kim, E., & Koch, A. J. (2013). Building positive resources: Effects of positive events and positive reflection on work stress and health. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(6), 1601–1627.

Chang, V. Y., Palesh, O., Caldwell, R., Glasgow, N., Abramson, M., Luskin, F., Gill, M., Burke, A., & Koopman, C. (2004). The effects of a mindfulness-based stress reduction program on stress, mindfulness self-efficacy, and positive states of mind. *Stress and Health*, *20*(3), 141–147. https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.1011

Cohen, S., & Wills, Thomas AshbyStress, Social Support, and the B. H. (1985). Stress, Social Support, and the Buffering Hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, *98*(2), 310–357. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.310

Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new Resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety*, *18*(2), 76–82. https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113

Csata, Z., Péti, M., Compton, B., Liu, A. H., & Sándor, Z. (2024). The income effects of minority co-ethnic employment: the case of Hungarians in central and Eastern Europe. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–23.

Demerouti, E. (2014). Design your own job through job crafting. *European Psychologist*.

Eguchi, H., Shimazu, A., Bakker, A. B., Tims, M., Kamiyama, K., Hara, Y., Namba, K., Inoue, A., Ono, M., & Kawakami, N. (2016). Validation of the Japanese version of the job crafting scale. *Journal of Occupational Health*, *58*(3), 231–240. https://doi.org/10.1539/JOH.15-0173-OA

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*, 39–50.

Gabriel, K. P., & Aguinis, H. (2022). How to prevent and combat employee burnout and create healthier workplaces during crises and beyond. *Business Horizons*, *65*(2), 183–192.

Gilmore, L., Campbell, M., Shochet, I., Garland, R., Smyth, T., Roberts, C., & West, D. (2014). *Promoting Resilience in Children with Intellectual Disability: A Randomized Controlled Trial in Australian Schools*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4939-0542-3_16

Grant, A. M., & Shandell, M. S. (2022). Social motivation at work: The organizational psychology of effort for,

against, and with others. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *73*(1), 301–326.

Hew, T.-S., & Syed A. Kadir, S. L. (2017). Applying channel expansion and self-determination theory in predicting use behaviour of cloud-based VLE. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, *36*(9), 875–896.

Hughes, D. J., Lee, A., Tian, A. W., Newman, A., & Legood, A. (2018). Leadership, creativity, and innovation: A critical review and practical recommendations. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *29*(5), 549–569.

Huyghebaert-Zouaghi, T., Berjot, S., Cougot, B., & Gillet, N. (2021). Psychological and relational conditions for job crafting to occur. *Stress and Health*, *37*(3), 516–527.

Jung, H. S., Song, M. K., & Yoon, H. H. (2021). *The Effects of Workplace Loneliness on Work Engagement and Organizational Commitment : Moderating Roles of Leader-Member Exchange and Coworker Exchange*.

Lee, M.-S. (2023). *Fostering companionship: transforming human resource practices toward relational employment*.

Lin, X., & Meng, L. (2024). Why do employees craft their jobs: a qualitative analysis of job crafting motives from actor and observer perspectives. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *39*(2), 162–184.

Magistretti, S., Dell'Era, C., Cautela, C., & Kotlar, J. (2023). Design thinking for organizational innovation at PepsiCo. *California Management Review*, *65*(3), 5–26.

Nandram, S. S. (2015). Organizational innovation by integrating simplification. *Cham: Springer International Publishing*.

Neuman, J. H. (2004). Injustice, stress, and aggression in organizations. *The Dark Side of Organizational Behavior*, *1*, 62–102.

Qian, S., Zhang, X., & Liu, J. (2024). Impacts of work-related rumination on employee's innovative performance: based on the conservation of resources theory. *Baltic Journal of Management*, *19*(4), 435–454.

Sahay, S., Gigliotti, R. A., & Dwyer, M. (2022). Role conflict, job crafting, stress and resilience among nurses during COVID-19. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, *30*(3), 234–243.

Schuetz, C. G. (2008). Using neuroimaging to predict relapse to smoking: role of possible moderators and mediators. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research*, *17 Suppl 1*(3), S78–S82. https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr

Southwick, F. S., Martini, B. L., Charney, D. S., & Southwick, S. M. (2017). *Leadership and Resilience. August*, 315–333. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-31036-7_18

Sürücü, L., & Maslakci, A. (2020). Validity and reliability in quantitative research. *Business & Management Studies: An International Journal*, *8*(3), 2694–2726.

Sykes, T. A. (2015). Support structures and their impacts on employee outcomes. *MIS Quarterly*, *39*(2), 473–496.

Thai, K. P., To, A. T., Tran, T. S., & Ho, T. T. H. (2023). How Job Crafting Transmits the Impact of Perceived Organizational Support and Autonomy on Work Engagement. *TEM Journal*, *12*(1).

Turyadi, I., Zulkifli, Z., Tawil, M. R., Ali, H., & Sadikin, A. (2023). The role of digital leadership in organizations to improve employee performance and business success. *Jurnal Ekonomi*, *12*(02), 1671–1677.

Von Krogh, G., Nonaka, I., & Rechsteiner, L. (2012). Leadership in organizational knowledge creation: A review and framework. *Journal of Management Studies*, *49*(1), 240–277.

Wang, H., Lu, C., & Siu, O. (2015). Job insecurity and job performance: The moderating role of organizational justice and the mediating role of work engagement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *100*(4), 1249.

Yin, J., Ji, Y., & Ni, Y. (2023). Anxious hotel employees in China: Engaged or exhausted? Multiple effects of workplace anxiety. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *114*, 103577.

Yousaf, S., Rasheed, M. I., Hameed, Z., & Luqman, A. (2020). Occupational stress and its outcomes: the role of work-social support in the hospitality industry. *Personnel Review*, *49*(3), 755–773. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-11-2018-0478

Zhang, F., & Parker, S. K. (2019). Reorienting job crafting research: A hierarchical structure of job crafting concepts and integrative review. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *40*(2), 126–146.

Zimmerman, M. A., Stoddard, S. A., Eisman, A. B., Caldwell, C. H., Aiyer, S. M., & Miller, A. (2013). Adolescent Resilience: Promotive Factors That Inform Prevention. *Child Development Perspectives*, *7*(4), 215–220. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12042