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Avoidance Job Crafting and Employee Innovative Behavior: A Moderated Mediation Analysis

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Abstract

Employees' innovative job behavior is any organization's most valuable and precious asset, especially in challenging situations. Recent global developments, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, have renewed interest in exploring employees' self-initiated actions to manage their own innovation behavior. Taking the job demand and resource perspective, this study examined how avoidance of job crafting links to employee innovative behavior through psychological capital having the boundary condition of employee empowerment. Based on the cross-sectional data collected from university staff and faculty, SmartPLS 4 was used to test the proposed hypotheses. Results show that avoidance of job crafting and psychological capital are positively related to employee innovative behavior. Employee empowerment moderated the relationship between avoidance of job crafting and psychological capital. This study suggests that reducing hindering work demands effectively manages employees' innovative behavior through psychological capital. Organizations must strive to engage and encourage employees to let them decide the aspects of work that enable them to perform in challenging situations. Organizations benefit significantly when employees proactively experiment with their roles and tasks to adjust their work demands. The result may be a boost in overall performance and the manifestation of well-being and long-term commitment, offering a hopeful outlook for the future.

Keywords: Avoidance job crafting; employee empowerment; employee innovative behavior; psychological capital.

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has been the most disruptive event in work history, affecting more than 2.7 billion workers worldwide and causing an estimated $3.5 trillion in labor income loss in 2020 (ILO, 2020). However, university employees, a testament to human resilience and adaptability, not only survived but also performed beyond expectations during the unprecedented pandemic years of Covid 19. They met the job demands and performed well despite the extraordinary job demands during COVID-19 (Qu & Yan, 2023). Having a secure job that empowered them to benefit consistently during that period may hold importance in overcoming the job demands. Scholars have argued that job crafting may have played a vital role in employee performance during stressful adverse conditions (Nagarajan et al., 2022).

Job crafting is a bottom-up strategy for job redesign (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Tims & Bakker, 2012) that involves employees proactively altering the physical, cognitive, or relational aspects of their work to better fit their preferences, abilities, and needs (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Petrou et al., 2012; Zang & Parker, 2019). Previous studies have shown that job crafting can positively affect employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction, engagement, performance, and well-being (Rafiq et al., 2023). However, not all types of job crafting are equally beneficial, and some may even have negative consequences depending on the context and the individual (Lopper, 2023; Schüler et al., 2023). One less explored type of job crafting is avoidance job crafting (AVJC), which involves reducing hindering job demands, such as workload, complexity, or emotional labor (Bruning & Campion, 2018).

One key employee outcome that may be affected by AVJC is employee innovative behavior (EIB), which refers to the generation, promotion, and implementation of new and valuable ideas in the workplace (Yuwanda et al., 2023). EIB is crucial for organizational survival and success, especially during times of crisis, when employees need to adapt and respond to changing demands and opportunities (Hussain & Wahab, 2021). However, the impact of AVJC on EIB is unclear and may depend on several factors, such as the personal resources and the contextual support that employees have (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Fong et al., 2020).

Further, AVJC has been associated with positive and negative outcomes, depending on the nature and level of the demands, the resources available, and the employee's personal characteristics (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand the boundary conditions and the mechanisms that influence the relationship between AVJC and employee outcomes, especially in challenging and uncertain situations, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there are quite a few studies on job crafting, there is still a lack of studies focusing solely on AVJC under specific conditions (Hu et al., 2020). Hence, the main objective of this study is to investigate the unique role of AVJC.

Therefore, using the lens of job crafting theory, we propose to investigate the role of psychological capital (PsyCap) and employee empowerment (EE) in mediating and moderating the relationship between AVJC and EIB. PsyCap is a personal resource

that reflects one's positive psychological state, consisting of four dimensions: self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Sweetman et al., 2011). EE is a contextual factor that reflects the degree of autonomy, involvement, and support employees receive from their organization (Kanjanakan et al., 2023). We hypothesize that AVJC will positively affect EIB when employees have high PsyCap and EE, as they can conserve their resources and focus on their core tasks while feeling confident, optimistic, hopeful, and resilient in the face of adversity. Conversely, AVJC will have a negative effect on EIB when employees have low PsyCap and low EE, as they will experience resource depletion and detachment from their work while feeling insecure, pessimistic, hopeless, and vulnerable in the face of uncertainty.

This study is significant in several ways. Firstly, the study's significance lies in its novel examination of how AVJC may impact EIB during adverse conditions. Secondly, we investigate EE's mediating and moderating roles in this relationship. It addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on the specific circumstances of AVJC as a single independent variable and exploring its effects on EIB. Thirdly, the study aims to contribute to job crafting theory and advance the understanding of AVJC as a predictor of employee outcomes. It also contributes to the literature on PsyCap and EE by examining their interactions with AVJC.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on job crafting, EIB, PsyCap, and EE and develops the theoretical framework and the study's hypotheses. Section 3 describes the research method and data collection. Section 4 presents the results and analysis. Section 5 discusses the implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development:

Avoidance Job Crafting and Employee Innovative Behavior

Employees engage in job crafting (JC) to improve their jobs; it includes changes made by employees to deal with task, relational, and cognitive aspects of their jobs that suit their skill sets, preferences, and interests (Holman et al., 2023). Scholars have also identified two main themes of JC: approach job crafting and avoidance job crafting (AVJC) (Lopper, 2023). Approach job crafting enriches and expands job boundaries while AVJC reduces and limits employees' job boundaries (Zhang & Parker, 2019) to generate positive outcomes. Employees engage in AVJC when they perceive the negative impacts of organizational activities by initiating changes to the work environment and conditions as a coping mechanism. Dubbelt et al. (2019) argue that AVJC helps employees to remain engaged with their work when job demands are adjusted by themselves. Therefore, job demands may not compromise performance under specific contexts. Furthermore, Bruning and Campion (2022) and Dash and Vohra (2020) argue that decreasing job demands may enable employees to use saved energy for creative and innovative purposes (Afsar et al., 2019). Lopper et al. (2023) call to study AVJC as a distinct construct separate from approach job crafting.

Our study measures AVJC (decreasing hindering job demands) by using the Tims et al. (2012) job crafting scale (JCS). Decreasing hindering job demands was also

labeled as AVJC by scholars (Fong et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2022). Decreasing and hindering job demands through minimizing energy consumption in a stressful situation is an example of AVJC (Liu, 2023). However, some characteristics and the workings of AVJC are still unclear in the scholarly work (Zhang & Parker, 2019).

There are two distinct groups of scholars regarding the outcomes related to AVJC. The first group of scholars treats AVJC as having a negative character (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019; Rudolph et al., 2017; Petrou et al., 2012), where decreasing and hindering job demands lead to negative results for the job crafter. However, AVJC can have dual roles, where different events enable or disable different levels and forms of JC (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Here, it should be kept in mind that the objective of the employee is always to conserve psychological energy for better, more positive results (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Considering that AVJC aims to evade and minimize stress by reducing elements of the job (Lazazzara et al., 2020), AVJC may have undertones of approach job crafting (Zhang & Parker, 2019, p. 7). Very few studies explore this positive side of AVJC (Hu et al., 2020). This leads us to the second group of scholars who focused on the positive effects due to AVJC. For example, scholars have found that hindering demands can be crafted by optimizing demands to make work more efficient (Costantini et al., 2019; Demerouti & Peeters, 2018). Hence, AVJC may act as a coping agent to protect employees from adverse outcomes by reducing undue high demands (Demerouti, 2014, p. 239; Tims & Bakker, 2010; Hu et al., 2020). It optimizes hindering job demands to avoid potential losses and restore person-job fit. As such, AVJC could help employees deal with stressors that may otherwise result in adverse outcomes (Hu et al., 2020).

Therefore, AVJC may have positive and negative outcomes depending on the purposes and ways it is used (Hu et al., 2020; Zhang & Parker, 2019), positively related to performance indicators (Petrou & Xanthopoulou, 2021). Hu et al., (2020) found positive outcomes of AVJC behaviors, which act like a coping strategy. Huang et al. (2022) posit that this aspect of AVJC is rarely studied in the education field. Some scholars have considered AVJC as proactive behavior because it reduces adverse outcomes at work (Bindl et al., 2019; Harju et al., 2021). Similarly, Maitha (2022) studied the positive impact of AVJC on managerial congruence.

Innovation is creating, introducing, and applying new ideas, products, services, and processes, whereas creativity is thinking of new ideas (Janssen, 2000). That novel idea must be different, and its implementation must result in positive outcomes for individuals and organizations (Amabile et al., 2016). Therefore, innovative behavior becomes the outcome of individual personal resources to improve work conditions (Tang et al., 2020).

EIB refers to producing, promoting, and implementing new and valuable ideas about an organization's products, applications, services, or procedures. It involves employees actively engaging in creative problem-solving, thinking outside the box, and taking the initiative to improve processes or develop new solutions (Dorner, 2012).

This behavior is crucial for organizations, leading to innovation and growth (Muhamad et al., 2023). Employees may suggest new ideas, experiment with new approaches, find solutions to complex problems, and adapt to changes in the work environment (Günday et al., 2011). This makes EIB a critical aspect of individual and organizational success.

Employee-driven innovation gained interest in the 1980s (West & Farr, 1990). EIB has become integral to organizational success in today's dynamic and challenging environments (Scott & Bruce, 1994). EIB is a non-routine task in the work environment, which makes it a discretionary extra-role behavior beyond the job description (Almazrouei et al., 2023). Its emphasis on improvement makes it essential for the organization's effective operations (Fuller et al., 2006). Acknowledging this, researchers have focused on EIB in diverse organizational contexts (Parker et al., 2006; Unsworth & Clegg, 2010). However, it is not solely about applying innovative behaviors; it also encompasses employee behaviors directed at producing novel work processes, products, and services (Yuan & Woodman, 2010).

Furthermore, from a contextual perspective, EIB has emerged as a critical factor in all knowledge-intensive societies (Egan et al., 2017). These competitive societies are increasingly investing in the higher education sector to nurture their innovative capabilities. Within higher education, the role of faculty is paramount in the knowledge-creation process (Blaskova et al., 2014).

Covid-19 has reemphasized the importance of EIB for employees and organizations (Lee & Trimi, 2021). All the work based on physical interactions had to be stopped, or standard operating procedures that were too restrictive were implemented to ensure safety. The pandemic has prompted significant changes, such as observing social distancing, minimizing interactions, and adhering to safety protocols. A proactive approach was the best way to respond to the situation. Employees relied on innovative actions to cope with the unprecedented situation. They adapted processes to minimize interactions with students and colleagues while still meeting targets and ensured smooth operations while maintaining social distancing (Winter et al., 2021). Employees were working through challenges where the future was still uncertain.

Initially, the only solution seemed to involve increased use of technology (Chesbrough, 2019). Implementing this looked like a straightforward solution, but the resulting changes forced employees to be innovative (Nembhard et al., 2020). In essence, the changes brought about by COVID-19 added to the pressure on employees to practice innovation. This may have led to finding an intricate balance of job crafting and innovation. This new situation called for facilitation and support, empowering employees to proactively shape their job roles through job crafting (Ouibibi et al., 2022). Consequently, this fostered an environment where employees were more inclined to exhibit innovative work behavior (Yu & Liu, 2021). The increasing integration of technology into teaching forced faculty members to embrace these advancements (Frey & Osborne, 2017).

Optimizing working routines and procedures through AVJC may positively influence EIB (Kilik & Gok, 2023). Thus enabling individuals to liberate their limited

energy and mental resources. Doing so can redirect their focus toward important tasks or challenges (Bruning & Campion, 2018). This shift in attention allocation potentially affords individuals more time and cognitive resources to engage in proactive behaviors and explore exploratory endeavors. Consequently, AVJC may facilitate the cultivation of a proactive mindset, empowering individuals to embrace challenges and pursue opportunities for growth and development with renewed vigor and efficiency (Sun et al., 2020).

H1: AVJC has a positive direct relationship with EIB.

Mediating Role of Psychological Capital between Avoidance Job Crafting and Innovative Behavior

The critical role of PsyCap in studying employee behavior has been explored in the literature (Slåtten et al., 2020), whereas Baig et al. (2019) have urged the development of PsyCap in employees. Neves et al. (2020), while exploring organizational boundary conditions, argued that empowerment is a vital factor that predicts employee behavioral intentions, while support and psychological capital play a pivotal role in introducing behaviors that encourage employees to practice new ideas. In this regard, the influence of psychological capital is exciting because it boosts personal strengths, giving ownership to the employees for their actions (Sweetman et al., 2011). Along these lines, various scholars have established a well-explored direct impact of PsyCap on EIB (Alshebami, 2021; Ullah et al., 2023).

Scholars have investigated the role of PsyCap as a mediator in recent research endeavors (Li et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2018). In a comprehensive review by Ravikumar (2023), a call was made to explore PsyCap as a predictor of positive outcomes, particularly as a moderator or mediator. Hence, PsyCap role in positive outcomes has been investigated extensively (Sarwar et al., 2021; Wen & Jantan, 2023). There is an established relationship between job crafting and PsyCap in literature (García-Merino et al., 2023; Sesen & Ertan, 2020; Uen et al., 2021). Additionally, Kinnunen et al. (2011) and Sarwar et al. (2021) found that PsyCap mediated the influence of job demands and resources on various outcomes. Vogt et al. (2016) established that job crafting helps build personal resources such as PsyCap. Furthermore, personal resources such as PsyCap, JC, and proactive personality may stimulate innovation outcomes (Tho, 2022). However, there is a lack of studies investigating the impact of AVJC on PsyCap.

This highlights the importance of understanding how PsyCap interfaces with various factors influencing individual and organizational success. By integrating insights from AVJC optimization, individuals and organizations can streamline processes and unlock potential efficiencies. By complementing this with PsyCap enhancement, they may cultivate the psychological resources needed to meet the challenges with resilience and prosper in dynamic environments (Doci et al., 2023). However, the mediation of PsyCap between AVJC and performance has not been confirmed. Therefore, it would be imperative to study PsyCap as the mediator between AVJC and innovative behavior in this study.

H2a: PsyCap has a positive direct relationship with EIB.

H2b: PsyCap mediates the relationship between AVJC and EIB.

Moderating Role of Employee Empowerment on Avoidance Job Crafting and Psychological Capital

When employees at all levels are granted authority and empowered to make day-to-day job-related decisions, it significantly impacts their work attitude and enhances individual performance (Seibert et al., 2004). Delegating authority fosters a sense of ownership and increases employee self-efficacy, empowering them to control and utilize resources to accomplish assigned tasks effectively. Consequently, EE emerges as a foundation for shaping individual and organizational performance (Al Zeer et al., 2023). This delegation of authority encourages autonomy, instills a sense of responsibility, and drives employees to strive for excellence and contribute positively to the organization's overall success (Kanjanakan et al., 2023).

Scholars have argued that the relationship between EE and PsyCap is based on the positive emotions experienced by employees who are engaged with their work. It strengthens the thinking and action process, resulting in higher performance, job satisfaction, creativity, and innovation (Anupama et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2018). Furthermore, research points to the importance of studying the job-related antecedents of EE to understand the underlying mechanisms through which it influences job performance (Kanjanakan et al., 2023). Moreover, it is argued that EE plays a pivotal role in determining performance outcomes, encompassing both in-role performance, which pertains to tasks explicitly outlined in an employee's job description, and extra-role performance, which encompasses discretionary behaviors that contribute to the broader organizational effectiveness (Doğru, 2019).

Understanding the intricacies of EE and its relationship with job-related factors can provide valuable insights into optimizing organizational practices. By identifying the contextual elements that foster a culture of empowerment, organizations can effectively tailor strategies to enhance employee autonomy and decision-making authority (Robbins et al., 2002). Furthermore, recognizing the significance of EE in shaping performance outcomes shows the importance of implementing empowerment initiatives to boost productivity in job duties and encourage discretionary efforts that contribute to overall organizational success and competitiveness in the dynamic workplace (Yin et al., 2019).

H3: EE moderates the relationship between AVJC and PsyCap; for example, the effect of AVJC is stronger when EE is high (vs. low).

Research Methodology

This study investigated the factors influencing employee innovative behavior. The research was conducted in universities of Pakistan because faculty may engage in avoidance job crafting (AVJC) to perform their duties in blended learning mode during the COVID-19 pandemic. Job resources and job demands are among the vital aspects of job characteristics. The JD-R model argues that job demands adversely affect health

and energy, whereas certain job resources are specific to work performance. Based on the JD-R model, employees may self-initiate to expand their job resources and shrink hindering job demands (Bakker et al., 2023), where the former may be called approach job crafting while the latter may be known as avoidance job crafting. This study argues that employee innovation may increase if employees proactively decrease hindering job demands. On the other hand, looking through the Conservation of Resources theory lens, it may also be argued that by decreasing hindering job demands, employees try to save resources that may help them perform better.

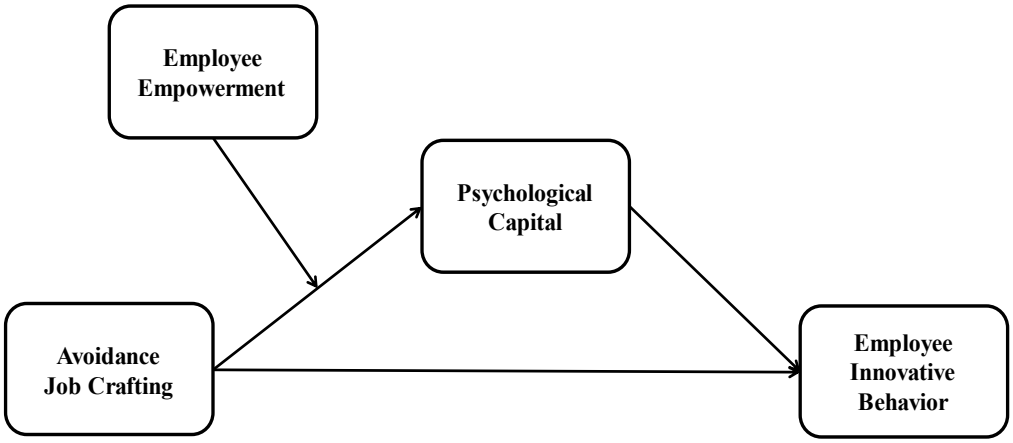

Figure 1: *Hypothesized Model*

Sample Size and Data Collection

The selected target population comprised faculty members employed across different private universities in Pakistan. Given the context of the pandemic, their professional activities underwent disruption, necessitating a shift to online work modes. The purposive sampling technique was adopted because the study was specific to university faculty. Self-administered survey questionnaires were used to collect cross-sectional data through online tools and in-person to overcome accessibility issues during a pandemic. After data cleaning, 381 complete and usable responses were available for subsequent analysis. There was no problem with the language of the questionnaire because the university faculty were well-versed in the English language.

Measures

The scales used for measures in this study were from several sources. Other than PsyCap, the remaining items were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to Agree 5=Strongly).

AVJC was evaluated with a six-item scale adopted from Tims et al. (2012). An example is, “I make sure that my work is mentally less intense.” It was evaluated on a six-point Likert scale. EE was measured using the Employee Empowerment Questionnaire (EEQ) developed by Hayes (2014), which has eight items. An example

item is "I am allowed to do almost anything to do a high-quality job". This study used the reduced version of PCQ-12 (Avery et al., 2011). PCQ-12 has twelve items measured on a six-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to Agree 6=Strongly). EIB was measured from the adapted Janssen (2000) scale with nine items. An example item is "I transform innovative ideas into useful applications."

Demographics

Of the 381 respondents, 236 (61.9 percent) were male, and 145 (38.1 percent) were female. According to descriptive results, 262 (68.8 percent) of the respondents were in 21 to 30 years age group, 63 (16.5 percent) of the respondents were in the 31 to 40 years age group, and only 56 (14.7 percent) respondents were more than 50 years of age. Most respondents (40.4 percent) had between 6 to 10 years of job experience. Some 50.1 percent were MS/MPhil degree holders. The results of the descriptive analysis for vital demographic variables are given in the following Table 1.

Table 1
Demographics

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	236	61.9
Female	145	38.1
Age		
21-30	262	68.8
31-40	63	16.5
More than 50	56	14.7
Qualification		
Masters'	53	13.9
MS/MPhil	191	50.1
PhD	84	22.0
Other	53	13.9
Experience		
Below 5 yrs.	73	19.2
6 to 10 yrs.	154	40.4
11 to 15 yrs.	121	31.8
More than 15 yrs.	33	8.7

Statistical Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

This study used SPSS 21 for initial data screening, including missing values, descriptives, and outliers. SMART PLS 4 partial least square structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze the proposed hypotheses. It was used because of its better predictive accuracy and versatility in SEM than other software options. Table 2 provides the factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and CR of all the variables used in the study. The Cronbach alpha ranged from 0.890 to 0.925, which gave the reliability of

all the items in the study (Nunnally, 2010). To determine convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loadings were examined. The factor loadings for all items on respective variables exceeded the threshold value of 0.50 (Kline, 2011).

Table 2

Factor Loadings

Construct		Loadings	Alpha	AVE	VIF	CR
Avoidance job crafting	AVJC1	0.664	0.850	0.577	1.403	0.890
	AVJC2	0.835			2.255	
	AVJC3	0.791			1.881	
	AVJC4	0.833			2.474	
	AVJC5	0.816			2.406	
	AVJC6	0.584			1.644	
Employee empowerment	EE1	0.709	0.876	0.538	2.431	0.902
	EE2	0.796			2.484	
	EE3	0.716			2.199	
	EE4	0.633			1.450	
	EE5	0.780			2.361	
	EE6	0.734			2.277	
	EE7	0.788			2.468	
	EE8	0.695			1.599	
Psychological capital	PC1	0.675	0.908	0.515	1.824	0.925
	PC10	0.702			2.239	
	PC11	0.823			3.611	
	PC12	0.790			3.458	
	PC2	0.547			1.779	
	PC3	0.453			1.555	
	PC4	0.461			1.256	
	PC5	0.775			2.319	
	PC6	0.695			1.873	
	PC7	0.794			2.282	
	PC8	0.863			4.440	
	PC9	0.867			4.383	
Employee innovative behavior	EIB1	0.651	0.897	0.556	1.518	0.917
	EIB2	0.796			2.241	

EIB3	0.639	1.543
EIB4	0.516	1.350
EIB5	0.837	2.767
EIB6	0.835	2.641
EIB7	0.823	2.542
EIB8	0.796	2.194
EIB9	0.750	1.920

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) is a discriminant validity measure that has been proven to be superior to cross-loadings and Fornell Larcker in Monte Carlo simulations, as proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). In order to assess discriminant validity, HTMT inference was recommended for PLS path modeling. According to Henseler et al. (2015), the threshold value for HTMT inference is 0.909. For this study, all HTMT values were below the threshold. Therefore, this research had acceptable discriminant validity, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Discriminant Validity

	AVJC	EE	EIB	PsyCap
AVJC	1			
EE	0.765	1		
EIB	0.859	0.888	1	
PsyCap	0.816	0.894	0.880	1

Furthermore, the model fit was then checked using the square root mean (SRMR) values, which came out to be 0.078. As shown in Table 4, Henseler et al. (2015) also confirmed that an SRMR value less than the 0.08 threshold limit is considered a good fit index. The coefficient of determination or R-square was greater than 0.700. It is the variation in the dependent variable explained in the model.

Higher correlation among variables may cause multicollinearity in the model and may affect its statistical significance. The variation inflation factor (VIF) threshold value is used to check multicollinearity, and it should be less than 5 (Kim, 2019). Therefore, this model is safe from multi-collinearity risk because all the VIF values are within the acceptable threshold value (Table 5).

Common Method Bias

Podsakoff et al. (2024) argue that respondent bias may be introduced when the respondents fill out a survey questionnaire for independent and dependent variables simultaneously, resulting in Common Method Bias (CMB). The CMB was assessed through the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) in PLS-SEM. In this study, all the VIF

values (Table 5) are less than 3.33; therefore, the model can be considered free of common method bias (Knock, 2015).

Table 4

Coefficient of Determination

	R-square Statistic	F	Significance	SRMR
EIB	0.723	413.46	0.000	0.078
PsyCap	0.711			

Table 5

Multi-collinearity

Collinearity statistics VIF inner model	VIF
AVJC → EIB	2.060
AVJC → PsyCap	1.920
PsyCap → EIB	2.060

Hypotheses were tested in the structural model using 10000 bootstrapping in SmartPLS 4. Based on the PLS-SEM results in Table 6, AVJC significantly positively affected EIB (β=0.377, p=0.000). Therefore, H1 was supported. In addition, PsyCap had a significant positive effect on EIB (β=0.538, p=0.000). Hence, H2a was supported. Further, the specific indirect effect (H2b) was significant on EIB (β=0.036, p=0.005). The significant moderating effect of EE on the relationship between AVJC and PsyCap (β=0.067, p=0.004) supported H3, such that the relationship was stronger for higher values of EE and vice-versa (figure 3). Overall, it resulted in a partially moderated mediation model.

Table 6

Model Test Results

Relationship direct effect	Original sample (β)	Sample mean	Standard deviation	p values	Decision
AVJC → EIB	0.377	0.376	0.048	0.000	Supported
PsyCap → EIB	0.538	0.540	0.049	0.000	Supported
EE x AVJC → PsyCap	0.067	0.066	0.023	0.004	Supported
Specific Indirect Effect					
EE x AVJC → PsyCap → EIB	0.036	0.035	0.013	0.005	Supported

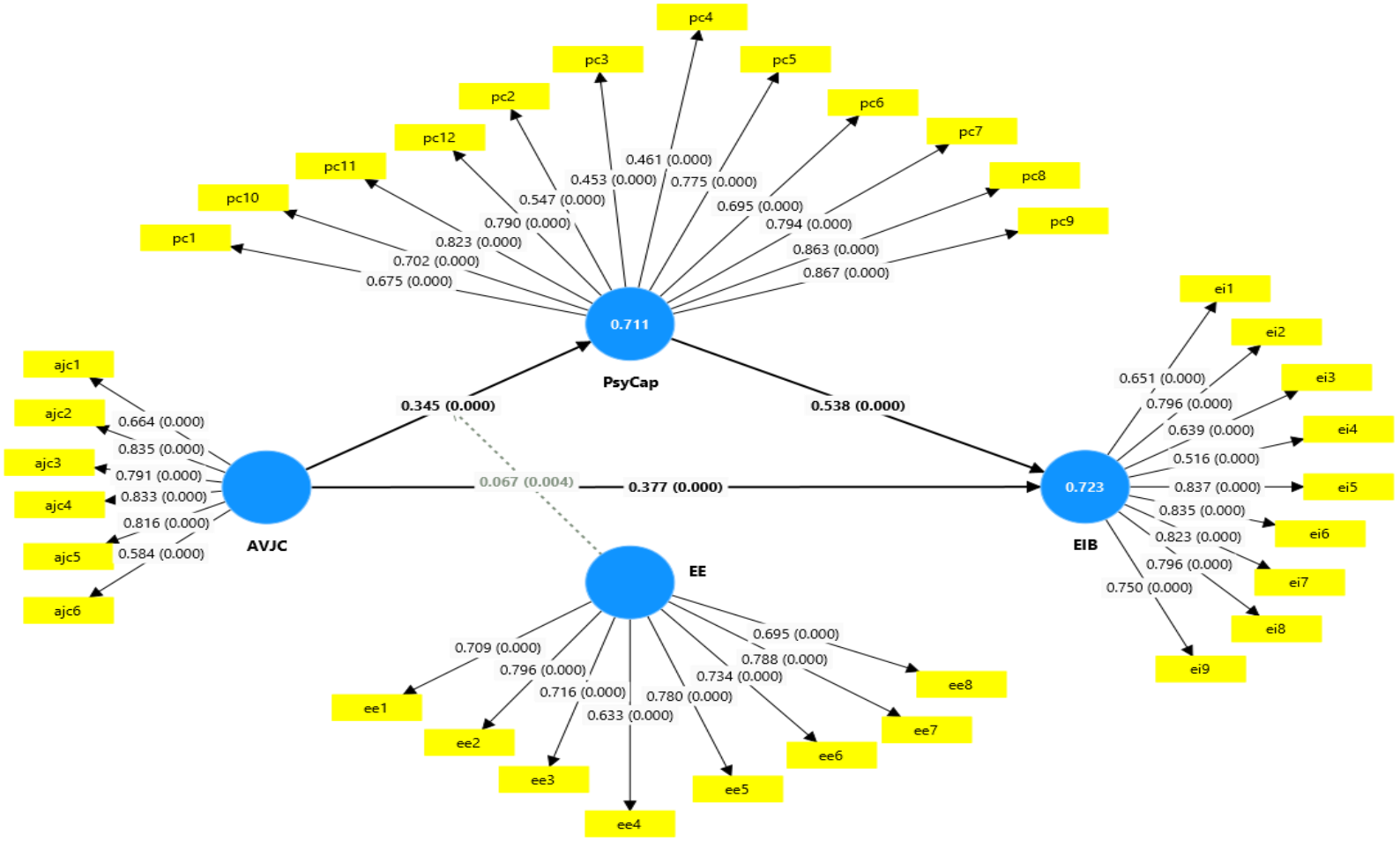

Figure 2. *Structural Model*

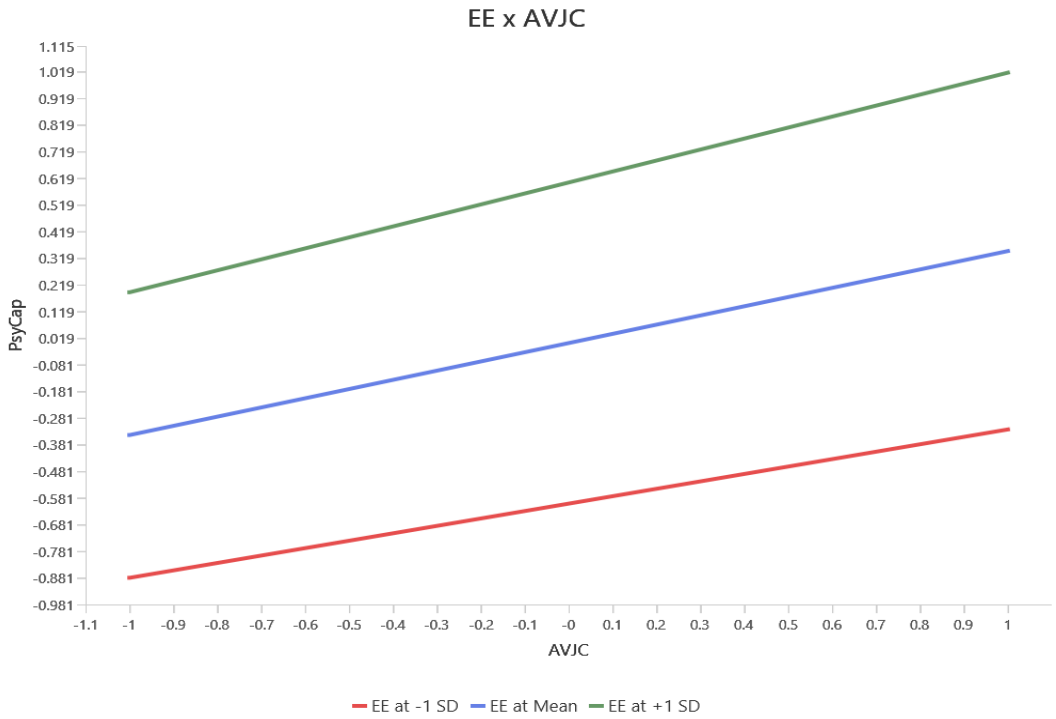

Figure 3. *Slope Analysis for Moderator*

Discussion

A theoretical model was proposed and tested to explore the effects of AVJC in EIB. Furthermore, the moderation of EE and mediation of PsyCap in relation to AVJC on EIB were studied. The results showed that AVJC had a direct positive and significant influence on PsyCap, EC, and EIB. Moderation of EE between AVJC and PsyCap was also significant. In addition, the indirect effect of AVJC on EIB was significant. In line with previous studies, PsyCap significantly positively affected EIB (Tang et al., 2020). Therefore, the overall results show partial moderated mediation for this model.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

It would be impossible to imagine a modern workplace without job crafting in one way or another (Leana et al., 2009). However, earlier studies gave limited attention to explaining the role of AVJC in employee innovative behavior. Our findings suggest that decreasing the job's hindering aspects increases employees' innovative behavior. Furthermore, PsyCap significantly explains the relationship between AVJC and EIB. This research expands the scope of job crafting theory by delving into the subtle interactions among its constituent variables. Integrating empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks reaffirms the role of innovative behavior within the JD-R

model. It sheds light on the overlooked aspect of avoidance job crafting as a key determinant. Furthermore, the study's exploration of the interplay of AVJC, PsyCap, and EE on EIB contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how individual behaviors and psychological resources influence workplace innovation dynamics. These insights hold implications for practitioners and scholars, offering valuable guidance for organizations seeking to foster innovation amidst evolving work environments. Thus, this study advances theoretical discourse and provides practical implications for EIB and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

In addition, this study offers several recommendations for organizations aiming to cultivate and nurture positive organizational behaviors among their employees. Fostering a culture that values and rewards innovation can catalyze sustained competitive advantage even during pandemic-like conditions. Organizations can achieve this by providing employees with platforms and incentives to share and implement innovative ideas, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment toward organizational goals. Secondly, empowering employees by granting them autonomy and decision-making authority over their work processes can enhance their sense of agency and intrinsic motivation.

Furthermore, investing in training and development programs that equip employees with the necessary skills and resources to engage in job-crafting activities can further enhance their capacity for innovation and adaptability. By embracing these recommendations, organizations can create environments that foster innovation, resilience, and sustained competitive advantage in an ever-evolving work landscape. Updating human resource policies that facilitate job crafting and create a culture of proactive behavior may be beneficial. Furthermore, promoting a job-crafting agenda may be critical to attracting new talent in the workplace.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Even though this study has highlighted theoretical and practical implications, several limitations remain that may be addressed in future studies. The data were collected from one setting during pandemic conditions and were somewhat limited, which may reduce the generalizability of findings. This study used a cross-sectional design. Using multi-source data in multi-level and mixed-method research designs for future studies is recommended. It would be interesting to investigate AVJC's influence on university employees' innovation and creativity when the pandemic is over. Therefore, future studies may benefit from data collected from other sources and adopting a longitudinal design.

Conclusion

Changes in the environment keep the work in organizational life in a perpetual state of flux. Therefore, associated jobs and tasks must be altered to keep performance uncompromised (Wegman et al., 2018). Thus, the focus is on employees who

proactively craft their jobs when job demands are high. (Chen & Tang, 2022). University employees working online were an example of such a unique situation.

This study aligns with the research that supports the idea that AVJC and PsyCap improve employee innovative behavior. It also emphasizes on paying more attention to the specific role of avoidance job crafting as a predictor of employee behavior (Bruning & Campion, 2022; Tims et al., 2012; Tian et al., 2021; Uen et al., 2021). It highlighted exploring the balance employees create in their job demands and resources through personal strengths and requirements (Fong et al., 2020). Additionally, the findings highlight that fostering a strong sense of connection and ownership over one's work leads to many positive organizational behaviors. When employees are empowered to take initiative and proactively shape their work environment, they are more likely to devise innovative task-completion approaches. This is exemplified by employees' willingness to take charge and strategically craft their work tasks according to their unique preferences and strengths. Such proactive engagement ultimately cultivates a culture of innovation and adaptability within the organization, laying the foundation for long-term success and competitiveness.

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