

IMPACT OF JOB STRESS ON EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE: MODERATING ROLE OF JOB CRAFTING AMONG REMOTE WORK EMPLOYEES

Ayesha Rahmat Rasheed

Research Scholar Department of Leadership and Management Studies, National Defense University,
Islamabad, Pakistan ayesha.r.rasheed@gmail.com

Wajeeha Brar Ghias*

Lecturer Faculty of Leadership and Management Studies, National Defense University
Islamabad, Pakistan wajeeha@ndu.edu.pk

Qurat ul Ain Saboor

Lecturer Faculty of Leadership and Management Studies, National Defense University
Islamabad, Pakistan quratulain@ndu.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

As competition increases, pressure on employees to perform better also increases, leading to job stress. This unmanaged stress affects employees' well-being, resulting in hindered performance and a decline in work quality. Hence, job stress and performance are crucial research topics. The primary goal of this research is to investigate the effects of job stress on employee performance and the moderating role of job crafting. As COVID-19 has altered the normal performance of work functions, this study focuses on the effects of stress on the performance of remote work employees who were the target sample for this study (n=175). The sample was chosen by convenience sampling and the data were tested and analyzed using SPSS. The results suggest that job stress negatively impacts employee performance and job crafting positively moderates this relationship in remote workers. Furthermore, the results generate valuable insights into the efficacy of job crafting to counter the effects of stress, particularly on employees' task performance.

Keywords: job stress, employee performance, task performance, job crafting, remote work employee.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the current market conditions organizations are riddled with complex goals and aims in an attempt to increase profitability that is often difficult to pursue. The workload may cause increased job stress which when it is too high, may negatively impact the performance of all personnel (Ezenwaji et al., 2019). Employees who are under job stress, are becoming more prone to poor performance due to which organizations have been suffering in terms of competitiveness and profits. Due to the newer remote mode of operations employees are expected to be flexible, adaptable, versatile, and available whenever the job requires it. Due to these reasons, employees appear to be overworked which consequently affects their work performance negatively. This pertains to the fact that stress levels in overworked employees may significantly increase and employees who are stressed from their jobs are not able to perform their work tasks well which results in poor employee performance. Meanwhile, job crafting has arisen as a miracle tool for workforces, especially for those doing remote work, which appears as a collection of proactive efforts that, in some way, adapt the function to the demands and characteristics of the workers while enhancing their performance. Proactive job crafting has become essential to the success of modern businesses since it creates a system of carefully crafted operations (Singh & Singh, 2018). Hence job crafting can act as a tool that kills two birds with one stone and moderates negative links between stress and performance.

The outbreak of the coronavirus led to organizations' abrupt transition to remote work which is being adopted all around the world due to its flexibility and convenience (Vander Elst et al., 2020). Companies are performing their functions on remote work despite the prevailing risks of work overload and social isolation which may lead to stress and result in underperforming individuals. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine whether job stress is somehow linked with employee performance among remote workers and if job crafting can act as a moderator between them.

* Corresponding Author

This research study unlike many others focuses on not just employee performance but more specifically, task performance and how job stress may have the ability to affect it (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). Since the scale used for performance in this paper is that of task performance this study provides information on how job stress may alter an employee's ability to perform the tasks they have been assigned. The discoveries give organizational managers the instruments along with data they must have to control the levels of stress of their remote working employees more effectively and help them in improving their performance by incorporating job crafting as well. In the past most researchers while studying organizations and employees have concentrated on the typical workplace setting with employees working in a physical office space with little focus on the work and issues of the employees of the online world (Sharmilee et al., 2017). After the pandemic more offices decided to offer remote work opportunities since it is a much more flexible and favorable option. A common misconception among executives of many firms is that the corporate culture present in the physical workplace equally applies to the online workspace. However, there is little and insufficient information and literature on this phenomenon. This study sought to close these information gaps and increase comprehension of the realities of the experiences of remote employees with job stress, employee performance, and job crafting.

As remote work and work from home became prevalent many businesses started seeing its benefits and how it emerged as a much more convenient option that allows for a broader reach and lesser expenses. The ability to function from the luxury of one's home benefits individuals in terms of finances and efficacy in addition to work autonomy, mobility, and satisfaction with the job (Vander Elst et al., 2020). For this reason, several organizations even today have become remote-first companies, and many others are considering it. Due to this reason, it has become important that we understand the strengths and consequences of working remotely and how it might affect the most important factor in any company i.e., performance. For precisely this reason this research paper aims to focus on inevitable factors such as employee performance being affected by job stress while also focusing on a moderating medium such as job crafting which might help counter the negative effects of their relationship. This study will provide insight into whether or not these variables are affecting remote workers the same way they do other employees and what this dynamic looks like among remote workers. This research study will provide a model and analysis of job crafting as a moderator since it is a fairly new and under-researched variable. Detailed research on job crafting as a moderator could provide valuable insight into how it can be used to manage the negative effects of other variables.

This research will provide employers with the means they need to manage remote work employees and understand how factors such as stress may prove to be problematic for them and what strategy they should adopt to strengthen the core of a remote-based company i.e., its employees.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

In modern times due to a rapidly changing world and increasing market competitiveness variables such as job stress have become more prominent and prevalent among employees. Various sectors such as banking, healthcare, education, etc. are becoming more competitive leading to added pressure on employees to perform their very best at everything. This unmanaged pressure ultimately leads to job stress which weakens performance and makes employees mentally strained. Overtime job stress has been studied in a variety of settings and plenty of models have been crafted to better understand how it works including traditional offices and virtual teams (Bhui et al., 2016). Due to the current advancements in technology employees have been suffering from new kinds of job stress with regard to managing and understanding the latest developments in IT which may cause them to feel uneasy and incompetent. Along with that employees may also tend to get overwhelmed due to excessive and complex information.

Early articles characterized work performance as consisting of only activities and behaviors instead of the outcomes of these activities with research dating as far back as the 70s. With the recent shift in IT and technology employers are becoming more interested in advancing the performance of their employees so that it stays up to date and up to the mark given the competitiveness of the current market environment. Particular focus has been on task performance since the most important part of employees' performance happens to be the tasks they accomplish and the value they create for the organization. In the not-so-distant past organizations have massively depended on the skills of employees for growth and upheaval in an unpredictable workplace which is why proactive job crafting

has become essential for the success and survival of a modern-day organization (Wang et al., 2020). Job crafting these days is widely believed to improve working conditions and performance.

Moreover, the advent of remote work has brought forth various considerable changes in organizations with people either thriving at it or struggling to hold on. The COVID-19 outbreak has drastically compelled most businesses to adapt to this new operation procedure and style, without even giving the employees the counseling and training essential for doing remote work (Molino et al., 2020). While remote work has provided employees with flexibility, convenience, and greater freedom to go about their work it has also introduced a fair share of problems that are hard to ignore and ultimately lead to stress and weakened performance. Since the facets of remote work along with stress, performance, and job-crafting have not been researched in the Pakistani market as much as they have in the rest of the world it is rather interesting to see how they function in Pakistan. Considering the difficulties of remote work and the crippling impacts of job stress on employee performance, thorough research must be done on the subject matter so that Pakistan can stand in line with the rest of the world when it comes to technological advancement. In the past most researchers while studying organizations and employees have concentrated on the typical workplace setting with employees working in a physical office space with little focus on the work and issues of the employees of the online world (Sharmilee et al., 2017). This study sought to close these information gaps and increase comprehension of the realities of the experiences of remote employees with job stress, employee performance, and job crafting.

2.1. Job Stress and Employee Performance

Employee performance is often negatively impacted by job stress since increased stress can cause a considerable decline in performance (Ezenwaji., 2019). It is a renowned reality that dilemmas with high levels of workload and stress at work seem to be becoming worse every day, and each employee appears to be directly affected by this problem, irrespective of their experience or their industry. In the current market, organizations are fundamentally forced to engage in complex goals or objectives that are frequently difficult to achieve in order to either be successful in increasing productivity, profitability, or competitiveness. The workload must be defined correctly to function methodically and effectively, and when it is either too low or too high, it may negatively impact the performance of all personnel (Dasgupta., 2013). The most prevalent professional disease of the twentieth century, job-stress has a significant adverse influence on any individual's mental and physical health, as well as their ability to function at their jobs (Yunita & Saputra., 2019). Employees who are under job stress, have higher chances of making mistakes, poor performance, suffering from mental health problems, going through burnout, and engaging in conflict at work. Organizations on the other hand suffer the consequences and suffer higher turnover rates, detachment, and absenteeism if job stress is not managed. As aptly described by (Iskamto., 2021) work performance can either thrive or weaken depending on the severity level of job stress. It has been pointed out that if stress reaches a certain high level, the performance of workers will start to deteriorate since stress tends to hamper task execution (Iskamto., 2021). Workforces tend to become uncontrollable, show an inability to be decisive, and their behavior becomes impulsive. The most severe impacts include poor work performance, employee disturbances, hopelessness, the urge to quit, or declining work in an attempt to evade stress.

Stress can have enormous impacts on a company's and its employee's performance, along with having terrible effects on an individual's mental health (Yunita & Saputra., 2019). Job Satisfaction, productivity, Decision-Making Skills, attendance, precision originality, organizational skills, attention to Personal detail and appearance, consistency, alertness, ingenuity, tardiness, and tenacity, are some of the areas of employee job performance that are likely to be impacted by stress (Ratnawat & Jha, 2014). It appears that individuals experience work-related stress when they are pushed to the limit, under pressure from their employers or superiors to do their assignments. High levels of job stress ultimately leading to job performance dissatisfaction have resulted from managers providing less assistance in accomplishing the project (Sharmilee et al., 2017). According to the theoretical framework put forth by the Job-Demands Resources Model (Bakker and Demerouti., 2017), work demands, such as overload of work and technological overburden, have been shown to further the process of motivation and produce favorable results such as improved job performance and, job satisfaction (Ingusci et al., 2019). But when workload requirements surpass available resources, a progressive health deterioration process with adverse effects occurs i.e., burn-out, job stress, etc. (Bakker & Demerouti., 2017). Doing remote work can sometimes lead to an information overload which can cause excessive strain and increased

stress. Along with this, remote workers also must be constantly available online for their work which can lead to work overload as they work more than usual. This may result in hampered employee performance as the employees would eventually start to feel overworked and would not be able to contribute their best efforts to the tasks at hand.

The COR theory is comprised of 4 main principles (Hobfoll et al., 2018) namely, principle number 1: the loss primacy principle, principle 2: the investment of resource principle, principle 3: the gain paradox principle and principle 4: the desperation principle. Keeping in mind principle 1 for this study which states that 'much more noticeable than resource gain is resource loss'. In simple words, the primary principle of COR theory postulates that loss of resource not only has a greater overall impact than resource gain but also impacts people more quickly and with rising rates with time (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Concerning our study, we can consider employee performance to be a resource for the organization and the employee at an individual level, and job stress can be considered a factor contributing to the loss of these resources i.e., employee performance. The loss of this resource will not only have a greater overall impact but will also lead to a much more lasting negative impact on the employees and the organization. Hence, this leads us to hypothesize that:

H1: Job stress has a negative impact on employee performance in remote work employees.

2.2. Job Stress and employee performance moderating effect of job crafting

Job-crafting has arisen as a collection of proactive efforts that, in some way, adapt the performance to the employee's characteristics and demands while enhancing their job satisfaction, purpose, value, and happiness (Wrzesniewski et al., 2001). Additionally, it is a process that includes actions associated with the workplace that focus on adjustments to the responsibilities or cognitive and relational aspects (Slomp & Vella-Brodrick, 2015). Improved and enhanced outcomes related to work, such as performance, may also be a result of job crafting, which involves enhancing job resources and motivation (Niessen et al., 2016). When employees feel like their employment lacks motivation or constructive challenges, they may heighten their resources and demands in an effort to put their skills to good use. Enhancing sources can also improve performance since they help people reach their objectives and mitigate the negative impacts of work overload and excessive demands. (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

The association between job crafting and employee performance may be even more pronounced for people who minimize the number of things on their to-do list in order to maintain a healthy level of expectations and achieve their professional goals without getting overburdened. Both the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti., 2017), and the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018), argue that resources can both increase positive results and mitigate bad ones. Therefore, in terms of resourcefulness on an individual level job crafting can be a useful proactive coping method in reducing unfavorable or adverse results as well as improving positive outcomes. The JD-R model also argues that a motivational role is played by an increase in assets, such as that achieved by job-crafting, in encouraging positive work-related outcomes, including enhanced and improved employee performance.

As mentioned earlier the COR theory talks about 4 main principles. One of these principles is principle number 2 which states that 'to guard against resource loss, make up for losses, and acquire resources, people must dedicate more resources' (Hobfoll et al., 2018). If we were to consider employee performance as a resource that has suffered loss as a result of job stress, then job crafting can be considered to be the investment of resources to make up for and prevent further loss by taking proactive measures to design the tasks and maintain demands.

According to the JD-R model, job resources are essential for reducing adverse effects like job stress and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti., 2017). Therefore, by taking proactive steps to improve one's methods and level of ease at work, job crafting should help minimize job stress. Employees might, for instance, enhance their job crafting facets by modifying their work schedules and procedures to meet job requirements. Employees can execute more and more difficult jobs thanks to their creativity in job crafting, which enhances their performance (Bakker et al., 2014). Consequently, it is possible that taking a proactive approach to stress management is one of the processes by which job-crafting leads to better employee performance.

The positive association between task performance and job crafting was demonstrated by Weseler and Niessen (2016). Consequently, this positive association moderates the adverse effects on employee performance of job stress. The COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) places a strong emphasis

on the value of sources in preventing burnout. It emphasizes that individuals should not use reactive coping techniques but rather behave proactively to acquire resources and lessen their vulnerability to the possibility of future or real-time loss of resource. Based on the COR theory, people purposely invest in resources to shield themselves from situational pressures or unpleasant experiences (Hobfoll., 2002). Therefore, through the strategy of balancing job resources and demands, the individual resourcefulness of job crafting will lessen job stress. Principles numbers 2 and 4 state that ‘To safeguard against loss of resource, compensate for losses, and acquisition of resources, people must dedicate more resources and ‘If their resources become scarce and depleted, people switch into a protective mode to protect themselves respectively (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Both these principles can explain the use of job crafting and how it is a proactive defensive strategy that can minimize the loss of resources such as performance which suffers negatively due to job stress and takes a severe hit and how people use it to protect and shield themselves and their work from further damage and harm. Considering these results, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Job crafting moderates the relationship between job stress and employee performance in remote work employees

The theoretical framework developed for this study is as shown in the following figure 1.

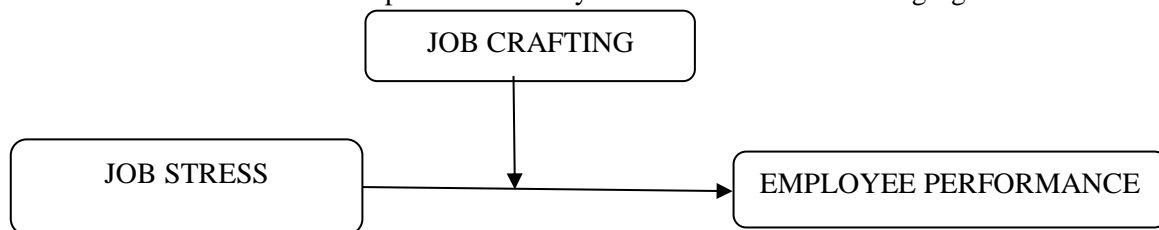


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

2.3 Remote Work

Due to the pandemic, remote work often referred to as work from home, has turned into the new standard for countless workers around the world. During the pandemic, many businesses and employees were enforced to shift to remote work hastily and without proper preparation and training. Early estimates from Euro found revealed that as a result of the pandemic, about 50% of Europeans conducted tasks from home which was a huge leap from the meager 12% before the emergency. The coronavirus outbreak has compelled most businesses to embrace this type of operation, frequently without giving staff members the training needed to do remote work (Molino et al., 2020) and (Wang et al., 2020). As we have already noticed, research has proved that doing remote work has both its advantages and downsides. It is also important to find out how remote work, as a "new way of working," has changed or affected the performance and well-being of workers along with productivity who have never previously engaged in remote work, along with pinpointing the particular workplace factors that remote workers experience during the covid crisis (Vander Elst et al., 2017). Remote work during the pandemic is characterized by workplace isolation (Toscano, Zappalà 2020). Although earlier studies noted that social isolation is one of the major problems of remote work, its prevalence has unavoidably increased over time. The ability to work from home benefits individuals in terms of finances and productivity as well as work autonomy, mobility, and satisfaction of job. Employees can work from home and communicate via video conferencing, according to studies. Workers with remote jobs have greater liberty to schedule activities and manage the execution of their tasks. In addition, they save money and time by not travelling every day. Doing remote work gives office workers more freedom. This refers to the degree to which a job permits an individual to make choices regarding the approach to taking the work (Vander Elst., 2020). However, according to some academics doing remote work has downsides as well, such as a lack of proper management and supervision that makes miscommunication more likely. Many researchers (Zhang et al, 2021) have demonstrated indications of its weak performance as opposed to one-on-one communication, despite its ease of access.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants and procedures

The data collection for this research study was conducted by developing online questionnaires on google forms. The reason for it being the advantages explained by many researchers of surveys and especially online surveys and data collection since it is a clean, efficient, and effective method (Bartram B., 2019). For the purpose of the study, two different questionnaires were developed on google forms which were later circulated to various organizations via email. The companies that are remote first or provide complete remote work options were shortlisted in the first step of data collection. Afterward, HR managers of these companies were emailed individually and asked for consent to get the questionnaires filled out by their employees. After subsequent acceptance, the first questionnaire was emailed accordingly. The reason for this approach was to overcome the biases of the data set as much as possible. The questions of the questionnaires were kept as simple and easy to understand as possible to avoid any misconceptions. Some prior research was done as well to identify the organizations in Pakistan that are either remote first or working on a full remote system and to shortlist them. The questionnaires were then emailed to get the responses from the employees of these and other organizations. This current research study however has a time lag design.

The time lag study usually involves observing the same sample of individuals over different periods. For this study, the questions for the variables were divided into two different questionnaires. A gap of one month was implemented between the data collected from the first and the second questionnaire. The data was collected from the same sample of individuals. Convenience sampling has been used in this research study for data collection. For this study convenience sampling was used because of the limitation of resources and time and the nature of the sample. In addition to this, the accessibility of remote workers also proved to be a factor in employing convenience sampling. A sample size of 175 remote work employees was used for this research study. The questionnaires were sent out based on convenience and availability. A sum of 200 questionnaires was dispatched of which 175 questionnaires were considered to be appropriate to use for this research. The overall response rate was 87.5%. there were 45.7% male respondents along with 54.3% female respondents. The data was collected by remote workers situated in different demographics from all across Pakistan. This data was collected with the help of a 5-point Likert scale used in the questionnaires.

3.2. Measure

This study has one independent variable which is job stress, one dependent variable which is employee performance, and one moderating variable which happens to be job crafting. The questions for the variables were divided among the two questionnaires. The responses were gauged by using a 5-point Likert scale which had ranges from 1-5. The ranges in particular order were 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, and 5= strongly agree.

3.2.1. Job stress

To evaluate job stress among remote workers the scale for job stress developed by (Shukla & Srivastava, 2016) was used. The questions from the section titled job stress were used in the questionnaire. A total of 9 questions were used as a result, in the final questionnaire for the current study. A sample item from the scale was “I have a lot of work and very little time to do it in”. Cronbach α was 0.904.

3.2.2. Employee performance

This research particularly focuses on the task performance element of employee performance. For this reason, the task performance scale created by (Koopmans et al 2012) was applied to this study which included a total of 13 questions. A sample item from the scale was “I was able to perform my work well with minimal time and effort”. Cronbach α was 0.801.

3.2.3. Job Crafting

To evaluate the role job-crafting plays as a moderator the job-crafting scale created by (Slemp & Vella-Brodick, 2013) was used. This questionnaire included a total of 15 questions and would help determine whether job crafting was acting as a moderator or not. A sample item from the scale was “I introduce new approaches to improve my work”. Cronbach α was 0.890.

3.3. Analytical Strategy

Regression analysis was conducted to examine the theoretical model with SPSS 29.0. First The Durbin-Watson test was used to determine the variables' independence. Second, to test the homoscedasticity of the data the Levene test was employed. Third, the correlation analysis was conducted using SPSS.

Finally, a mod graph was generated, and we used the mod graph program to generate a graphical representation of the interpretation of moderation (Jose P. E., 2013).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Reliability Test

To ensure that the instrument items are stable and consistent, it is crucial to conduct a reliability test (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The results of table 1 illustrate the particular reliabilities of the variables. Job stress consists of 09 items with the value of $\alpha = 0.904$ which means this value is excellent. Similarly, task performance has 13 items with the value of $\alpha = 0.801$ which mean this value is good and lastly, job crafting has 12 items with the value of $\alpha = 0.890$ which again means this value is good and there are no correlations among the variables. Hence, further analysis can be performed.

Table 1 Reliability of all instruments (n = 175)

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Stress	09	.904
Task Performance	13	.801
Job Crafting	15	.890

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive analysis is performed to examine the mean values of the responses received. The questionnaires were scored with the use of a 5-point Likert scale. The standard deviation and mean values of the items for the independent, dependent, and moderating variables which were stress, task performance, and job crafting respectively, were calculated as part of the descriptive analysis. The table 2 given below displays the findings of the descriptive analysis.

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis (n = 175)

Variables	Mean	St. dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Stress	3.2692	1.53329	0.339	-0.616
Task performance	3.4237	0.51310	0.041	1.473
Job Crafting	3.6194	0.64025	-0.254	1.523

4.3 Correlation

The results shown in table 3 illustrate the relationship of the variables via correlation. As demonstrated in the table there is a high correlation between all the variables. The negative sign indicates an inverse correlation between stress and task performance and stress and job crafting. These results prove both our hypotheses 1 and 2, thus satisfying the objectives of this study. Moreover, the correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation (n = 175)

Variables	Stress	TP	JC
Stress	1		
TP	-.379**	1	
JC	-.205**	.418**	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$

4.4 Hypothesis Testing

To help clarify the link between the dependent independent and variables, linear regression is used to evaluate the study's hypothesis. Determine what percentage of the variance in the dependent construct can be observed by the independent construct using this statistical method. To comprehend the data, tests of assumption, independence tests, homoscedasticity tests, normality tests, and linearity tests are also used before applying the regression approach.

4.4.1. Hypothesis testing for H1 (Regression Analysis)

To test hypothesis H1 linear regression was employed. Employee performance (a dependent variable) was regressed on the independent variable i.e., job stress. The results of regression illustrate that the independent construct significantly predicts employee performance with $F = 31.005$ and $p < 0.001$.

similarly, $\beta = -.307$ and, $p < .001$ which illustrates that stress has a negative significant influence on task performance

Table 4 Regression Analysis of H1

(a)	B (b Coeff)	SE	Beta	T	P
Constant	-	-	-	-	-
Stress	-.103	0.022	-.307	-4.590	.000

Note: N=175, F= 31.005, $R^2 = 0.265$, Adj $R^2 = 0.256$, ***P < 0.001

Dependent Variable: Task performance

These findings demonstrate that stress has a significantly negative impact on the performance of remote workers. This result proves hypothesis 1 of this study thus satisfying the first objective of this research.

4.4.2 Testing for Hypothesis H2

By testing hypothesis 2 we would be determining the moderating effect of job-crafting on the association between task performance and stress. To test this impact of the moderation we use linear regression. The results of table 5 illustrate two models. The value of the coefficient for model 1 is noted as -0.307 which signifies that there exists a significant negative relationship between task performance and stress with the p-value being 0.000 which is lesser than 0.001, hence this result is in accordance with the outcomes of hypothesis 1.

Table 5 Regression Analysis of H2

Model 1	R ²	ΔR^2	Beta Value	T	Significance
Constant	-	-	-	-	-
Stress	0.265	0.032	-.307***	-4.590	0.000
Model 2					
Interaction Impact (stress*job crafting)			0.230***	2.797	0.006

Conversely, the results of model 2 demonstrate the moderating role played by job crafting. Since the value of the coefficient for model 2 is 0.230 and the value of p is 0.000, it proves that there exists a positive significant moderation of job-crafting on the relationship between task performance and job stress. The value of ΔR^2 or change in R^2 is 0.032 which proves that the strength of the model is 3%. As a result, we can note that job crafting acts as an effective moderator and weakens the relationship between stress and employee performance in remote workers which proves hypothesis 2 of this study and satisfies the 2nd objective of this research.

4.5. Mod Graph

To get the correct interpretation of moderation and to conclude something of value from the moderator result we usually need a graphical representation. This was where we used the mod graph program to generate a graphical representation of the interpretation of moderation (Jose P. E., 2013). The graphical illustration of the data indicates that higher job crafting levels result in high moderation levels which would buffer the connection between task performance and stress. Whereas low job-crafting levels result in low moderation which would mean that no significant moderation could be created between stress and task performance. These results illustrated in the mod graph successfully prove both the hypotheses of this study. As these hypotheses are proven the objectives of this study are also achieved.

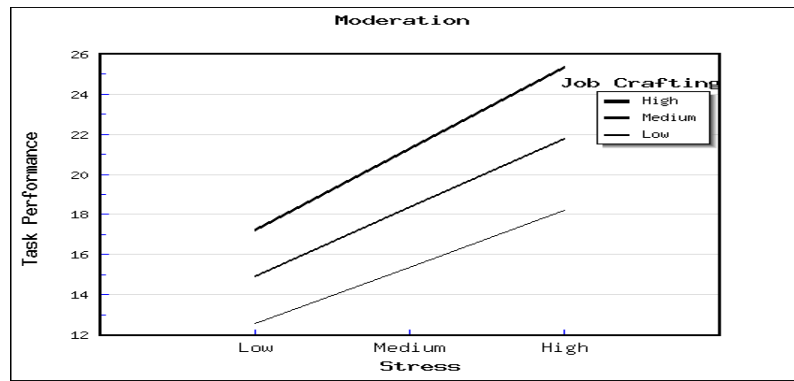


Figure 2 Mod graph

5. DISCUSSION

The sole objective of this research was to identify the link between stress and employee performance with a specific focus on task performance. This study also aimed at establishing the moderating role of job-crafting on this particular link. For this purpose, the study focused on analyzing this relationship among remote workers in Pakistan since the capability to understand and navigate the eccentricities of a non-traditional work environment i.e., remote work, is crucial. As evidenced by the results of linear regression of this study the value of R^2 explains 25.6% of the variance signifying that job stress significantly impacts employee performance. The rest of the results also prove that the nature of this particular impact is negative. Moreover, the results suggest that job crafting plays a vital part in regulating the negative connection between job stress and task performance. The task performance of the employees, who are good at incorporating job crafting into their work, will not be significantly impacted by job stress as evidenced by the results. The results and outcomes of this study are in line with prior research done on job crafting (Lee & Lee, 2018).

The ANOVA results provided validation for our mentioned assumptions completely. It was proved as a result that job stress has a very prominent impact on the task performance of remote workers which indicated that, “the higher the job stress of remote employees the more their task performance would suffer at work”. Thus, we prove our H1 ($\beta = -0.307$ and $p < 0.001$), illustrating that stress has a negative considerable influence on task performance. This particular finding is in coherence with the previous research done on job stress (Sharmilee et al., 2017).

Similarly, the results of the second hypothesis have shown that job crafting significantly moderates the link between performance and stress. Subsequently, job-crafting has proven to be helpful to employees in making their task performance better and stronger which supports the results where the value of R^2 is 29.7% variance of model 2. This is a consequence of the fact that job crafting produces a variety of results, such as favorable emotions and mindsets (Wang et al., 2020) societal connectivity (Slomp & Vella Brodrick, 2015), and work commitment (Demerouti et al., 2015), which subsequently give rise to advantageous outcomes for employee performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This finding adds to the limited but growing body of evidence supporting job crafting which has mostly been theoretical or qualitative.

5.1. Practical Implications

Since this study is pioneer research in studying variables such as stress, employee performance, and job crafting in remote workers it can prove to be valuable for managers and employers in establishing strategies that could be used to reduce stress in their employees along with encouraging the usage of job-crafting as an instrument to give rise to improved performance. This study can prove to be useful for future managers because remote work is clearly here to stay and will only become more mainstream with the passing time. Understanding the repercussions and various factors influencing employees in such a non-traditional work setting will provide organizations with an edge and a head start into establishing effective strategies for what could be the future of office work. In addition to facilitating managers and employers, this study can also act as a basis for employees who are currently working remotely or will do so in the future. This study will enable them to understand the effects of stress on task performance and how they can use job crafting as an effective tool to counter these effects. Subsequently, this study will also prove to be helpful for employees in traditional settings.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

Taking into consideration the academic implications of this study we can presume that since this is a cutting-edge subject matter that broadens the field of research for variables such as stress, employee performance, and job crafting it can be used as a foundation for further research and will provide a substantial amount of data and literature for further evaluations. Job crafting has proven to be a fairly new and understudied variable, subsequently, the study will provide much-needed extensive information and data into the function of a variable such as job-crafting and will expand the field of research. Similarly, another standout point/implication for this study is that it sheds light on the effects of stress specifically on task performance, unlike other studies. This research will provide additional information specifically on task performance where previous studies have rarely made categories of performance their main focus.

5.3. Future Directions and Limitations

While every attempt was made to ensure that our research was exhaustive, it has several drawbacks. The mode of data collection, which was through a questionnaire, was another restriction of this project. We accepted the information provided by the respondent in the questionnaire; no follow-up inquiries or requests for clarification of the response were made of the respondents. In addition, survey-based research is vulnerable to sampling bias, demonstration challenges, and concerns regarding accurate responses, as was already mentioned (Cohen et al., 2018) Furthermore, we do not take into account variables that represent individual differences in adaptability, self-efficacy, or motivational and personality traits, this is because we primarily concentrate on job-related components to understand job stress and performance. Our focus on work-related elements also prevents us from looking at other aspects of the home environment that remote employees may encounter due to their presence there, for instance, the family conflict caused by such a situation (Galanti et al., 2021).

Since this study only adopted one method to collect the data, future researchers can extend the findings by employing mixed procedures of data collection such as interviews to interact with remote workers in order to further broaden the discoveries of this research field. Future researchers can also focus on remote workers by categorizing them into different industries along with different regions instead of taking a general approach as is done in this study. This study concentrates specifically on the form of performance known as task performance and how it is affected by stress which is why future researchers can also expand their research by looking into the impacts on other forms of performance such as contextual performance.

6. CONCLUSION

The study focused on investigating how an increase in job stress can lead to hampered employee performance, more specifically, task performance among remote workers as well as the moderating influence of job-crafting on this relationship. The study investigated how by employing job-crafting remote workers can improve their task performance and overall, well-being. As a result, the two hypotheses of the study were proven to be true. The results of the hypotheses further strengthen the core concept, literature, and established links within the study. This study equips employers and managers of the future by focusing the research specifically on remote workers. On the basis of the results of this research, since job stress negatively impacts task performance a proactive job crafting approach can help effectively counter this impact and create a suitable work setting. Furthermore, we are confident that our discoveries will function as an inspiration for other scholars who will continue to explore this crucial but understudied area.

REFERENCES

- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The Job Demands-Resources model: state of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309–328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710733115>
- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job Demands–resources theory: Taking Stock and Looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. I. (2014). Burnout and Work Engagement: The JD–R Approach. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 1(1), 389–411. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-031413-091235>
- Bhui, K., Dinos, S., Galant-Miecznikowska, M., de Jongh, B., & Stansfeld, S. (2016). Perceptions of Work Stress Causes and Effective Interventions in Employees Working in public, Private and

- non-governmental organisations: a Qualitative Study. *BJPsych Bulletin*, 40(6), 318–325. <https://doi.org/10.1192/pb.bp.115.050823>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research Methods in Education*. Routledge.
- Dasgupta, P. R. (2013). Volatility of Workload on Employee Performance and Significance of Motivation: IT Sector. *Science Journal of Business and Management*, 1(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.sjbm.20130101.11>
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., & Gevers, J. M. P. (2015). Job crafting and extra-role behavior: The role of work engagement and flourishing. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 91, 87–96. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2015.09.001>
- Diamantidis, A. D., & Chatzoglou, P. (2019). Factors Affecting Employee performance: an Empirical Approach. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 68(1), 171–193. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijppm-01-2018-0012>
- Ezenwaji, I. O., Eseadi, C., Okide, C. C., Nwosu, N. C., Ugwoke, S. C., Ololo, K. O., Oforka, T. O., & Oboegbulem, A. I. (2019). Work-related stress, burnout, and related sociodemographic factors among nurses. *Medicine*, 98(3), e13889. <https://doi.org/10.1097/md.00000000000013889>
- Galanti, T., Guidetti, G., Mazzei, E., Zappalà, S., & Toscano, F. (2021). Work from Home during the COVID-19 Outbreak. *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 63(7), 426–432. <https://doi.org/10.1097/jom.0000000000002236>
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2002). Social and Psychological Resources and Adaptation. *Review of General Psychology*, 6(4), 307–324. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.6.4.307>
- Hobfoll, S. E., Halbesleben, J., Neveu, J.-P., & Westman, M. (2018). Conservation of Resources in the Organizational Context: The Reality of Resources and Their Consequences. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5(1), 103–128. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104640>
- Ingusci, E., Callea, A., Cortese, C., Zito, M., Borgogni, L., Cenciotti, R., Signore, F., Ciavolino, E., & Demerouti, E. (2019). SELF-EFFICACY AND WORK PERFORMANCE: THE ROLE OF JOB CRAFTING IN MIDDLE-AGE WORKERS. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 20(2), 533–551. https://iris.unito.it/bitstream/2318/1722228/1/IJBS_Ingusci%20Callea%20Cortese%20Demerouti.pdf
- Iskamto, D. (2021). Stress and Its Impact on Employee Performance. *International Journal of Social and Management Studies*, 2(3), 142–148. <https://doi.org/10.5555/ijosmas.v2i3.42>
- Jose, P. E. (2013). *Doing Statistical Mediation and Moderation*. Guilford Press.
- Koopmans, L., Bernaards, C., Hildebrandt, V., van Buuren, S., van der Beek, A. J., & de Vet, H. C. W. (2012). Development of an individual work performance questionnaire. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 62(1), 6–28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17410401311285273>
- Lee, J. Y., & Lee, Y. (2018). Job Crafting and Performance: Literature Review and Implications for Human Resource Development. *Human Resource Development Review*, 17(3), 277–313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484318788269>
- Molino, M., Ingusci, E., Signore, F., Manuti, A., Giancaspro, M. L., Russo, V., Zito, M., & Cortese, C. G. (2020). Wellbeing Costs of Technology Use during Covid-19 Remote Working: An Investigation Using the Italian Translation of the Technostress Creators Scale. *Sustainability*, 12(15), 5911. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155911>
- Niessen, C., Weseler, D., & Kostova, P. (2016). When and why do individuals craft their jobs? The role of individual motivation and work characteristics for job crafting. *Human Relations*, 69(6), 1287–1313. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715610642>
- Ratnawat, R. G., & Jha, D. P. C. (2014). Impact of Job Related Stress on Employee Performance: A Review and Research Agenda. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 16(11), 01–06. <https://doi.org/10.9790/487x-161150106>
- Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research Methods For Business: A Skill Building Approach*. In Google Books. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sharmilee, Basit, A., & Hassan, Z. (2017, November 25). *Impact of Job Stress on Employee Performance*. Papers.ssrn.com. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3125336
- Shukla, A., & Srivastava, R. (2016). Development of short questionnaire to measure an extended set of

- role expectation conflict, coworker support and work-life balance: The new job stress scale. *Cogent Business & Management*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2015.1134034>
- Singh, V., & Singh, M. (2018). A burnout model of job crafting: Multiple mediator effects on job performance. *IIMB Management Review*, 30(4), 305–315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iimb.2018.05.001>
- Slemp, G. R., Kern, M. L., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2015). Workplace Well-Being: The Role of Job Crafting and Autonomy Support. *Psychology of Well-Being*, 5(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13612-015-0034-y>
- Slemp, G. R., & Vella-Brodrick, D. A. (2013). The Job Crafting Questionnaire: A new scale to measure the extent to which employees engage in job crafting. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 3(2), 126–146. <http://www.internationaljournalofwellbeing.org/index.php/ijow/article/view/217>
- Toscano, F., & Zappalà, S. (2020). Social Isolation and Stress as Predictors of Productivity Perception and Remote Work Satisfaction during the COVID-19 Pandemic: The Role of Concern about the Virus in a Moderated Double Mediation. *Sustainability*, 12(23), 9804. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12239804>
- Vander Elst, T., Verhoogen, R., & Godderis, L. (2020). Teleworking and Employee Well-Being in Corona Times. *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, 62(12), e776–e777. <https://doi.org/10.1097/jom.0000000000002059>
- Vander Elst, T., Verhoogen, R., Sercu, M., Van den Broeck, A., Baillien, E., & Godderis, L. (2017). Not Extent of Telecommuting, But Job Characteristics as Proximal Predictors of Work-Related Well-Being. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 59(10), e180–e186. <https://doi.org/10.1097/jom.0000000000001132>
- Wang, H., Chen, X., & Lu, C. (2020). When career dissatisfaction leads to employee job crafting. *Career Development International*, 25(4), 337–354. <https://doi.org/10.1108/cdi-03-2019-0069>
- Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of Their Work. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 179–201. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4378011>
- Yunita, P. I., & Saputra, I. G. N. W. H. (2019). Millennial generation in accepting mutations: Impact on work stress and employee performance. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 102–114. <https://doi.org/10.29332/ijssh.v3n1.268>
- Zhang, C., Yu, M. C., & Marin, S. (2021). Exploring public sentiment on enforced remote work during COVID-19. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(6), 797–810. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000933>