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Exploring the Link of Empowering Leadership and Employees Innovative Work Behavior: The Mediating Role of Job Crafting and Proactive Personality as Moderator

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ABSTRACT

Employees' innovative work behaviors are pivotal in driving organizational growth and development by providing a nurturing environment for the inception, maturation and implementation of novel ideas. Existing literature offers limited insights into the underlying psychological factors that influence individuals' propensity to engage in innovative work behaviors. Through the lens of job demands and resources framework, we propose that employees who work with empowering leaders are more likely to engage in job crafting, which, in turn, fosters innovative work behavior. We further suggest that this link is moderated and contingent of the proactive personality of the employees. Using Smart PLS 3.2, a moderated mediation was tested on multi-organizational data of 362 subjects collected from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Results showed that job crafting partially mediates the relationship of empowering leadership and employees' innovative behavior. Findings not only confirmed the moderating effect of employees' proactive personality on the

link of empowering leadership and job crafting, but also the entire indirect effect of empowering leadership and employees' innovative work behaviors via job crafting was found contingent on employees' proactive personality. We discuss the theoretical and managerial implications of the findings along with the limitations.

Keywords: Empowering leadership, employees innovative work behavior, job crafting, proactive personality, moderated mediation

Introduction

The contemporary business landscape, characterized by its volatility and turbulence, has necessitated a strategic shift towards innovation as a cornerstone of organizational survival and growth (Battistelli et al., 2014; Chowhan et al., 2016; Lauser, 2010). In response to the recognition of innovation's criticality for organizational development, there is a burgeoning trend toward fostering a culture where employees at all levels are expected to participate in innovative work behavior (IWB)—the effective transformation of creative ideas into tangible outcomes (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009, Wang et al., 2020). Given the significance of IWB, researchers have investigated the factors that facilitate its occurrence. To this end, research has consistently identified leadership, work group dynamics, organizational climate, individual attributes, job demands, personality traits, and values as significant predictors of individual IWB. Among these, effective leadership has been a catalyst for inspiring and enabling innovative behavior among employees (Javed et al., 2019).

Different styles of leadership like ethical, servant, authentic, transformational, inclusive and ambidextrous have been shown to incite employees' IWB (Javed et al., 2018; Mansoor et al., 2021; Usman et al., 2020). On the contrary, research exploring the relationship between leadership and follower innovation has also yielded inconsistent findings (Eisenbeiss & Boerner, 2013; Rosing et al., 2011). Such mixed results challenge the simplistic assumptions of previous research on the relationship of leadership and IWB. The potential for omitted variable bias suggests that the direct relationship between leadership styles and IWB may be more complex than initially apparent, thereby highlighting the importance of considering additional factors and contextual nuances. In order to elucidate the intricate relationship between leadership and innovative behaviors, scholars have advocated for a shift

away from traditional leadership models. They suggest that researchers should explore leadership approaches that explicitly address the multifaceted nature of the innovation process, thereby transcending the limitations of previous studies (Hunter et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2020; Zacher et al., 2016). Given the insights gained from prior studies, our research delves into the relationship between empowering leadership (EL) and IWB, particularly within a non-Western cultural environment.

The inherent risks associated with IWB suggest that they are non-routine activities that require employees to deviate from conventional thinking and express novel ideas (Kanter, 1988; Kessel et al., 2012). This implies that employees must be willing to challenge the status quo and dissent from superiors, necessitating a high degree of autonomy to foster IWB (Javed et al., 2019). EL becomes relevant here, that foster employee empowerment by delegating authority, granting autonomy, and assigning additional responsibilities to workers. The temporal interplay between EK and IWB has been a subject of debate in the literature. Despite their theoretical association, empirical research has yielded conflicting results (Ahearne et al., 2005; Audenaert & Decramer, 2018; Zhou & Hoever, 2014). The mixed findings in the literature point to the potential mediating and moderating effects on the EL-IWB relationship.

In this regard, while significant strides have been made in understanding the impact of EL on employee IWB, the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of this relationship remain relatively unexplored. This study aims to address this gap by developing and testing a refined, generalizable model anchoring on the job-demand resource model (JDR: Demerouti et al., 2001) that elucidates the specific pathway through which EL leads to IWB and identifies the contextual factor that influences the strength of this relationship. We propose that EL provides a supportive work environment that engages employees in job crafting (JC)—employee-driven behaviors that involve actively reshaping the parameters of one's job to better correspond with personal competencies, requirements, and preferences (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and so serves as a critical mediator in the EL-IWB relationship. This indirect pathway, linking EL to IWB through JC, has not been previously examined in the literature.

Moreover, repeated studies advocate for examining individual variations in responses to EL to gain a deeper understanding of EL's effectiveness under different conditions (e.g., Lee et al., 2018; Zhang & Zhou, 2014). We argue that employees' proactive personality (PP) may improve such direct EL-IWB relationship or indirect via JC which is another omitted relevant factor between the chain of EL-IWB relationship. In this way, the present study is an initial endeavor to address two primary questions of why and when EL might lead to employees' IWB.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Empowering Leadership and Employees Innovative Work Behaviors

EL has been characterized as a leadership style in which a leader delegates authority, actively involves employees in decision-making processes, and fosters employees' self-directed behavior. In contrast, low-empowering leaders restrict employee autonomy, discourage self-management, and exhibit a lack of confidence in their subordinates' abilities (Chen et al., 2011). Thus, it is reasonable to argue the relationship between EL and IWB based on JD-R theoretical framework. JD-R is a psychological model that explains how job stress and well-being are influenced by the balance between job demands (workload, time pressure etc.) and job resources (autonomy, support etc.). The Job Demand Resource Model posits that a high degree of job demands in conjunction with a low level of job resources can lead to job strain and adverse health outcomes. Conversely, the presence of both high job demands, and high job resources may facilitate job engagement and positive well-being.

We argue that EL can significantly enhance key job resources, including autonomy, competence, and support. By fostering these resources, EL may mitigate the detrimental effects of job demands and create a work environment that encourages IWB. Employees who perceive a high degree of autonomy, competence, and support are more likely to engage in IWB. With this supportive climate they feel empowered to take risks, explore new approaches, and propose novel solutions, as the resources provided by EL reduce barriers and support their creative efforts. This argument has been supported by empirical studies in various work settings. For instance, with three different countries data of nursing workforce empirically substantiated a positive link between EL and IWB (Jønsson et al., 2021). Similarly, in an educational work setting of Greece public sector also confirmed similar

relationship (Gkorezis, 2016). Moreover, (Wihuda et al., 2017) studied the relationship between EL and IWB in the hotel industry and found similar results. Accordingly, we propose the first hypothesis:

H1: El and IWB are directly and positively related.

Job Crafting as a Mediator

Employee-driven modifications to job design are known as job crafting behaviors. Wrzesniewski & Dutton, (2001) identified three distinct dimensions of job crafting: (1) *task crafting*, involving alterations to the quantity, scope, or nature of job duties; (2) *relational crafting*, encompassing modifications to the quality or quantity of workplace interactions; and (3) *cognitive crafting*, consisting of changes in perceived job characteristics.

Based on the JD-R model, we argue that EL plays a crucial role in shaping both job demands and job resources. By providing autonomy, participation, and support, EL reduces perceived job demands and increases perceived job resources, creating a positive work environment for employees (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014) that can significantly impact all three types of job crafting. For task crafting, EL provides autonomy and encourages experimentation, enabling employees to take ownership of their work and explore new approaches. For relational crafting, it promotes collaboration and social support, fostering positive relationships and a sense of belonging. For cognitive crafting, empowering leadership enhances job meaning and fosters a positive work identity, helping employees perceive their work as valuable and fulfilling. In essence, EL creates a conducive environment that empowers employees to shape their jobs in ways that align with their personal and professional goals, leading to increased job satisfaction, engagement, and performance (Kim & Beehr, 2018; Tims et al., 2022).

Further, we believe JC can significantly influence employees' IWB. By taking on additional responsibilities or modifying existing tasks, employees can increase their task autonomy, leading to greater control over their work and the freedom to explore new possibilities. Additionally, building stronger relationships with colleagues fosters a collaborative and creative work environment, encouraging the sharing of ideas and the development of innovative solutions. Moreover, seeking out

new challenges and opportunities allows employees to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to innovate and thereby JC helps employees engaging into IWB.

The empirical research shows positive relationships both paths when linking EL to JC and JC to IWB which is clue of mediation of JC between EL-IWB relationship. For instance, (Kim & Beehr, 2018) found a positive association between EL and JC. Similarly, Norwegian workers of different occupations also confirmed the positive relationship of EL and JC (Thun & Bakker, 2018). A number of studies also supported the hypothesis of the positive relationship between JC and IWB (e.g., Gkorezis, 2016; Mutonyi et al., 2020; Rao Jada et al., 2019; Slåtten et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2019). Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, we propose that EL, JC and IWB are not only directly related to each other but also JC mediates the direct EL-IWB relationship. Thus, formulate the following set of hypotheses:

H2a: EL has a positive effect on JC.

H2b: JC has a positive effect on IWB

H3: JC mediates the direct EL-JC relationship.

Proactive Personality as a Moderator

Individuals differ between the continuum of proactive and passive personality. PP is a psychological construct that describes an individual's tendency to anticipate and take action to shape their environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Individuals with a proactive personality are inclined to intentionally modify their circumstances, including their physical environment (Buss, 1987). They demonstrate a propensity to identify opportunities, initiate action, and persevere until they achieve desired outcomes (Crant, 1995). Conversely, individuals with a passive personality generally adapt to and tolerate existing circumstances, rather than actively pursuing opportunities for change (Bateman & Crant, 1993).

The prior research shows that employees exhibiting a proactive personality were more likely to engage in job crafting as a results of increase structural and social resources and enhance job challenges (Bakker et al., 2012; Philip, 2021). We argue that PP can amplify the positive effects of EL on JC. By fostering a sense of autonomy, self-efficacy, initiative, and motivation, proactive individuals are more likely to take advantage of the opportunities provided by EL to shape their work in meaningful ways. Thus, we believe that PP may act not only as a moderating effect

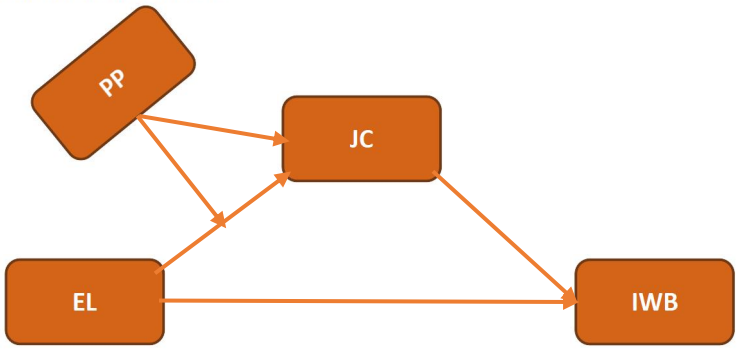
on the EL-JC path relationship but also may have a contingent effect on the entire indirect pathway linking EL to IWB via JC. In this light, we propose the following hypotheses and subsume all the prior arguments and hypotheses into the theoretical framework of the study in Figure 1.

H4: Employee PP has a positive effect on JC.

H5: PP moderates the relationship of EL and JC.

H6: The indirect relationship of EL and IWB though JC is contingent on employee PP.

Figure 1: Theoretical framework



Method

Sample and Procedure

Due to resource constraints, we employed a cross-sectional research design for this study. The collected data was multi-sourced from different types of organizations including manufacturing, education and banking sectors. A non-probability approach of convenience sampling was used. The survey was personally administered with the help of students and colleagues. The questionnaire's introductory part informed the purpose of the study to respondents and requested them to voluntarily participate in the study. In response to a total of 500 distributed questionnaires, we collected 385 filled questionnaires with an overall response rate of 77%. However, the data screening process eliminated 23 invalid questionnaires. Thus, final analyses were performed on 362 valid responses.

The sample consisted of 70.7% male and 29.3% female participants. The majority of the participants possessed experience of 1-10 years with 79% to other categories. Sample was mostly of the middle-aged respondents of 77% to the total. Regarding educational attainment, approximately 24.3% held a bachelor's degree,

6.6% had a master's degree, and 12.4% had a Master of philosophy degree, and some 1.1% of the respondents had acquired Doctor of philosophy (PhD) degree. The demographic statistics are given in detail in Table I.

Table I. Respondent Profile

Demographics		**Frequency**	**Percent**
Gender	Male	256	70.7
	Female	106	29.3
Experience	1-5 years	176	48.6
	6-10	111	30.7
	11-15	39	10.8
	16-20	20	5.5
	Above 20	16	4.4
Education	Bachelor	88	24.3
	Master	223	61.6
	MS/MPhil	45	12.4
	PhD	4	1.1
	Other	2	.6
Age	20-30 years	75	20.7
	31-40	206	56.9
	41-50	60	16.6
	51-60	21	5.8

n=362

Measurement of Variables

We took the 12-item measure to gauge EL from Zhang & Bartol, (2010) that was originally developed by Ahearne et al.'s (2005). This instrument assesses four dimensions of EL as shown in Table II, each dimension has 3-item. Given that the four dimensions of EL, we took this variable as second-order construct. Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, (2014) scale that was developed on the three-dimensional structural conceptualization of JC including task (TC), relational (RC) and cognitive crafting (CC) was adopted in this study. It has a total of 15 items, five for each attribute of JC. It was also taken as a second-order construct because of its multi-dimensional nature.

We adopted a six-item scale with Scott and Bruce (1994) to measure employees IWB. A shorter version scale with four-items based on highly factor loadings (Jiang, 2017) of these items were borrowed Bateman and Crant (1993). The respondents rated all the constructs on a seven-point Likert scale representing 1 “strongly disagree” and 7 as “strongly agree” except JC which were recorded on a seven-point scale with the anchoring of 1 “hardly ever” to 7 “very often”.

Control variables

To mitigate the potential confounding effects of demographic factors on our hypothesized relationships, we incorporated four control variables into our statistical model i.e., gender, age, experience, and education in line with the previous research (Rao Jada et al., 2019; Yousaf et al., 2021).

Data Analytic Approach

For preliminary descriptive statistical analysis, we employed SPSS 24 and for path analysis and to test the overall model of the study, we used Smart PLS 3.2. This software tool designed for variance-based structural equation modeling using the partial least squares path modeling method, was employed to analyze the research model and to test hypotheses. In comparison to covariance-based structural equation modeling, partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is a more suitable approach for exploratory research and predictive studies due to its primary focus on theory development and prediction (Hair et al., 2021). Given the exploratory nature of the study, PLS was a suitable choice.

SEM is a multivariate analysis technique commonly employed in the social sciences to assess theoretically supported linear and additive causal relationships (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004). PLS, a specific SEM approach that prioritizes the analysis of variances. Unlike other SEM methods, PLS is less restrictive regarding data distribution assumptions, making it a suitable choice for various research contexts (Vinzi et al., 2010). As a prediction-oriented tool, PLS focuses on explaining variances and operates under the assumption of non-parametric predictors. Notably, PLS's applicability extends to both small and relatively large sample sizes, reinforcing its reliability in diverse research scenarios (Hwang & Tsai, 2011).

Common Method Variance

Podsakoff et al., (2003) posit that the reliance on self-reported questionnaire completion can introduce common method bias, potentially compromising research validity. To minimize this bias, some procedural remedies were used like mixed-order items of the questionnaire and anchoring scales of the different constructs were recorded on varied forms (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Following the empirical approach of Podsakoff et al., (2003), Harman's one-factor test was conducted using SPSS 24 to assess the presence of common method variance. The results indicate that Harman's single factor explained only 31.64% of the total variance, falling below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. Consequently, common method bias is deemed to be a minor concern in the present study.

Assessment of Measurement Model

To validate the overall measurement model, we first assess the psychometric properties of measurement scales used in the study by checking the reliability and validity. The results of these assessments, presented in Tables II, which demonstrated the robustness of the measurement model. Specifically, the internal consistency reliability of the scales, as measured by the Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha coefficients, was found to be exceptionally higher than the recommended cutoff of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021), ranging from 0.821 to 0.945 and 0.792 to 0.910 respectively for all measures used in the study. These findings indicate that the constructs in the model were reliably measured.

Next, to evaluate the construct validity we verified the convergent and discriminate validities of the latent constructs. To establish convergent validity, the outer loadings of the indicators and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were assessed. As depicted in Table II, all of the observed variables exhibited outer loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021), with values ranging from 0.722 to 0.911. Moreover, the corresponding t-values, all surpassing 2.54, and $p<0.01$ were statistically significant at the 1% level, and thus supporting the validity of these indicators. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) values for all latent variables were well above 0.50, falling between 0.592 and 0.711. These findings collectively demonstrate the convergent validity of both the observed variables and the underlying constructs (Hair et al., 2021).

To assess discriminant validity, a more rigorous heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) test was employed (Henseler et al., 2015) instead of traditional approaches of cross loading and Fornell and Larcker criteria. As shown in Table III, the HTMT values ranged from 0.151 to 0.613, well below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Hair et al., 2021). These findings provide strong evidence of discriminant validity among the constructs. In summary, the evaluation of the measurement model demonstrated that the constructs of the study were adequately measured by the selected scales and were suitable for further hypotheses testing within the structural model.

Table II. Summary of Measurement Model Results

Construct		**Loading**	**Cronbach's Alpha**	**Composite Reliability**	**AVE**	**Mean**	**SD**
EL (1st order)							
Enhancing the meaningfulness of work (EMW)	EMW1	0.791**	0.823	0.849	0.652	4.212	1.102
	EMW2	0.836**					
	EMW3	0.881**					
Fostering participation in decision making (FPDM)	FPDM1	0.798**	0.792	0.821	0.592	4.325	1.025
	FPDM2	0.789**					
	FPDM3	0.887**					
	FPDM	0.901**					
Expressing confidence in	ECHP	0.847	0.889	0.911	0.6	4.3	1.33

high performance (ECHP)	1	**			87	65	2
	ECHP 2	0.898 **					
	ECHP 3	0.860 **					
Providing autonomy from bureaucratic constraints (PABC)	PABC	0.910 **					
EL (2nd order)							
	EMW	0.900 **					
	FPDM	0.764 **					
	ECHP	0.857 **					
	PABC	0.806 **					
JC (1st order)							
Task crafting (TC)	TC1	0.911 **	0.910	0.945	0.702	4.682	1.211
	TC2	0.903 **					
	TC3	0.833 **					
	TC4	0.785 **					
	TC5	0.867 **					
Relation crafting (RC)	RC1	0.899 **	0.798	0.823	0.655	4.881	1.025

	RC2	0.722**					
	RC3	0.767**					
	RC4	0.789**					
	RC5	0.866**					
Cognitive crafting (CC)	CC1	0.798**	0.851	0.893	0.624	4.660	1.061
	CC2	0.901**					
	CC3	0.862**					
	CC4	0.788**					
	CC5	0.856**					
JC (2nd order)							
	TC	0.880**					
	RC	0.886**					
	CC	0.874**					
IWB	IWB1	0.901**	0.907	0.926	0.644	4.410	1.258
	IWB2	0.854**					
	IWB3	0.876					

		**					
	IWB4	0.854 **					
	IWB5	0.790 **					
	IWB6	0.801 **					
PP	PP1	0.839 **	0.902	0.927	0.711	4.691	1.365
	PP2	0.855 **					
	PP3	0.879 **					
	PP4	0.844 **					

***p<0.01, t>2.54*

Assessment of Structural Model

To begin with, on the recommendations of Hair et al., (2021), we first assess the potential for multicollinearity among the independent variables, and so we estimated the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each variable in the proposed model. The results are shown in Table III which indicate that the VIF values ranged from 1.011 to 1.235, well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2021). This suggests that multicollinearity is not a significant concern in this analysis.

To evaluate the proposed hypotheses, we assessed the strength and significance of each path in the structural model using bootstrapping procedure with 5000 sub-samples (Hair et al., 2021). Table III and Figure 4 present the standardized path coefficients (β) for each relationship. Here in overall Model 3 of the study, we see that the highest path coefficients is between JC and IWB *(β= 0.402, p<0.01)* followed by EL and JC *(β= 0.376, p<0.01), PP and JC (β= 0.347, p<0.01)* and finally EL→IWB (*β= 0.326, p<0.01)*. Consequently, our direct paths relationship hypotheses

H1, H2a, H2b and H4 are fully substantiated whereas the indirect and moderation hypotheses tests are discussed in the proceeding headings.

Next, the coefficient of determination, or R^2, is a statistical metric employed to quantify the collective influence of exogenous latent variables on an endogenous latent variable within a structural equation model (Hair et al., 2021). As per Chin (1998), R^2 elucidates the variance in the endogenous variable attributed to the model. Moreover, R^2 serves as an indicator of the model's predictive accuracy and power, calculated as the squared correlation between the actual and predicted values of the endogenous construct. The R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with a value of 1 signifying perfect prediction. Henseler et al. (2009) and Hair et al. (2011) suggest that R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 represent weak, moderate, and substantial predictive power of a model, respectively. In the context of our proposed theoretical model, the R^2 values for IWB and JC were found to be 39% and 37%, respectively, indicating a weak to moderate level but statistically significant predictive capacity of the model.

Further, Hair et al. (2021) advocate for researchers to supplement the conventional structural model assessment metrics with the predictive relevance (Q^2) and effect size (f^2) indices. Cohen's (1988) guidelines for assessing the f^2 effect size categorize values between 0.02 and 0.15 as small, 0.15 and 0.35 as medium, and above 0.35 as large. The f^2 values are shown in Table III, indicating small-to-medium effect of each construct in the study model. To assess the predictive relevance of the model, blindfolding technique was employed. As a sample reuse method, blindfolding systematically omits a predetermined number of data points from the indicators of a latent construct and subsequently measures the model parameters using the remaining data. Following Hair et al. (2021), a Q^2 value greater than 0 indicates acceptable predictive relevance for a dependent construct. The calculated Q^2 values of 0.266 and 0.243 for endogenous constructs of model 3 of the study for JC and IWB respectively suggest that the model exhibits satisfactory predictive relevance for these constructs.

Mediation Analysis

To assess the mediating role of JC, we employed the two-step procedure outlined by Klarner et al., (2013). Initially, Model 1 was estimated without the mediator (Figure

2). The direct relationship between EL and IWB (0.501) was found to be strong and significant. Subsequently, JC was introduced as a mediator in Model 2 (Table III, Figure 3). The indirect effect of EL on IWB through JC *(EL →JC →IWB= 0.169, p<0.01)* was significant (Table III), while the direct effect remained also significant (0.326). Consequently, with 34.1% of the variance accounted for (VAF), JC was determined to partially mediate the EL-IWB relationship (Hayes, 2014; Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, hypothesis H3 is partially supported.

Table III. Results Summary of all Models

	Model 1	**Model 2**		**Model 3**					
	IWB	**JC**	**IWB**	**JC**	**IWB**	**f^2**	**VIF**	**HT MT**	**Mediation/ Moderated mediation**
Control variables						-	-	-	
Gender	0.058 ns	-	0.063 ns	-	0.63 ns	-	-	-	
Education	0.007 ns	-	0.009 ns	-	0.009 ns	-	-	-	
Experience	-0.094 ns	-	-0.052 ns	-	-0.52 ns	-	-	-	
Age	0.038 ns	-	0.016 ns	-	0.016 ns				
Direct relationships						-	-	-	
EL	0.501**	0.421**	0.326**	0.376**	0.326**	0.140	1.235	0.549	
JC		-	0.402**	-	0.402**	0.215	1.226	0.613	

PP		-	-	0.347**	-	0.187	1.011	0.151	
Indirect relationship				-	-	-	-	-	
EL→JC→IWB		-	0.169**	-	-	-	-	-	Yes (Partial mediation)
Moderating effect						-	-	-	
EP*PP →IWB		-	-	0.247**	-	-	-	-	
Contingent indirect effect					-				
EL→JC→IWB at PP -1SD		-	-		0.129ns	-	-	-	Yes (Moderated-mediation)

***p<0.01, ns: not significant*

Moderation and Moderated Mediation

To test the hypothesis H5 and H6, the moderating effect of PP as hypothesized in our theoretical framework (Figure 1) was included in the overall model 3 as shown in Figure 4. The structural equation model (SEM) analysis revealed a significant positive moderating effect of PP on the relationship between EL and JC *(interactional effect* $_{EL*PP\ on\ EL\rightarrow JC}$ *= 0.247, p < 0.01).* This indicates that the positive relationship between EL and JC is strengthened at higher levels of employees' PP. Specifically, the simple effect of EL on JC was positive at the average level of employees PP (β = 0.376) but decreased while increased significantly when employees possess very low levels of PP or high level of PP (see e.g., Hair et al., 2021). In model 3, the indirect effect of EL on IWB through JC *(0.129, p>0.01)* was significantly reduced and became non-

significant at lower levels of PP (-1 SD), while further increased with the value of interaction effect when employees have higher level of PP (+1 SD). This suggests that the indirect relationship between EL and IWB is not constant but contingent on employee PP and changes favorably with a higher level of PP and vice versa as illustrated in the simple slope analysis (Figure 5) which suggests that the line becomes more steeper with higher level of employees PP and becomes flat with lower level of PP. Based on these findings we conclude that hypotheses H5 and H6 were also supported by the data.

Figure 2: Model 1 Results (direct only relationship)

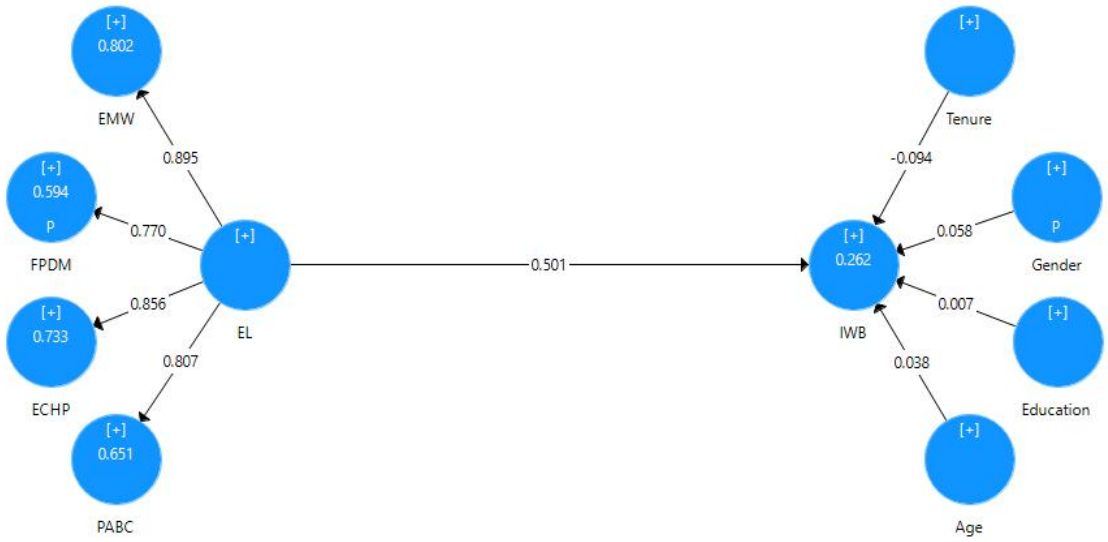


Figure 3: Model 2 Results (including mediator)

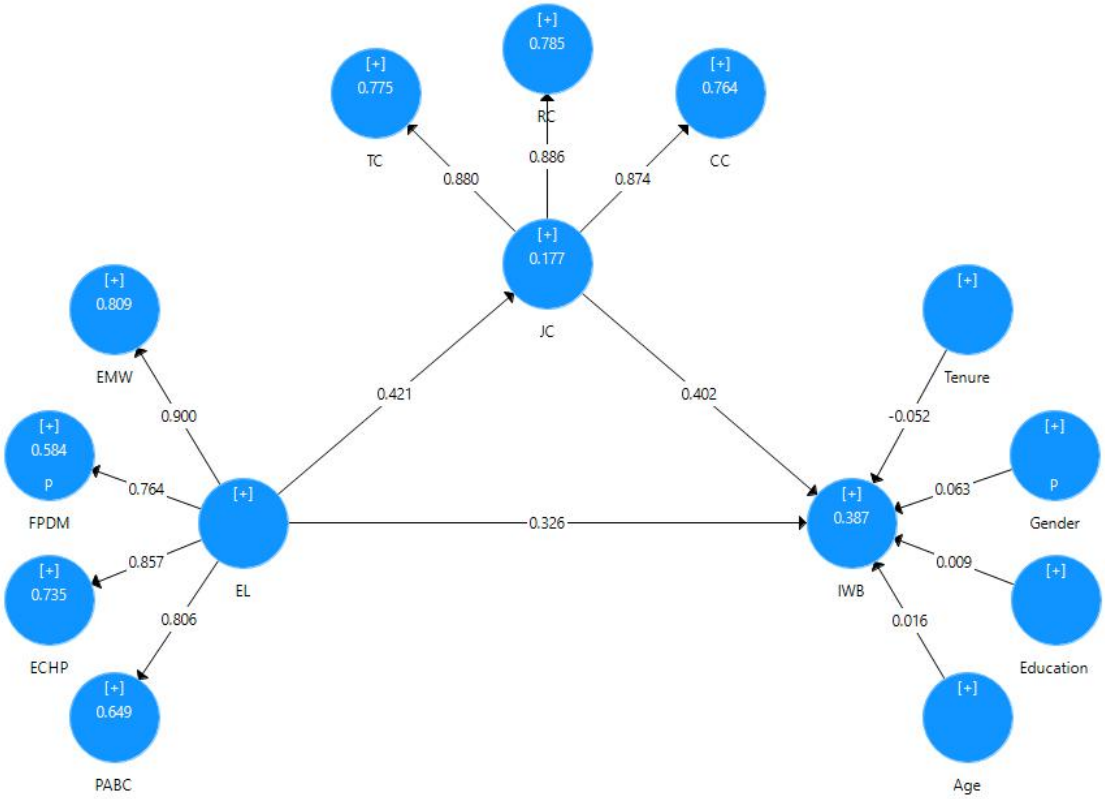
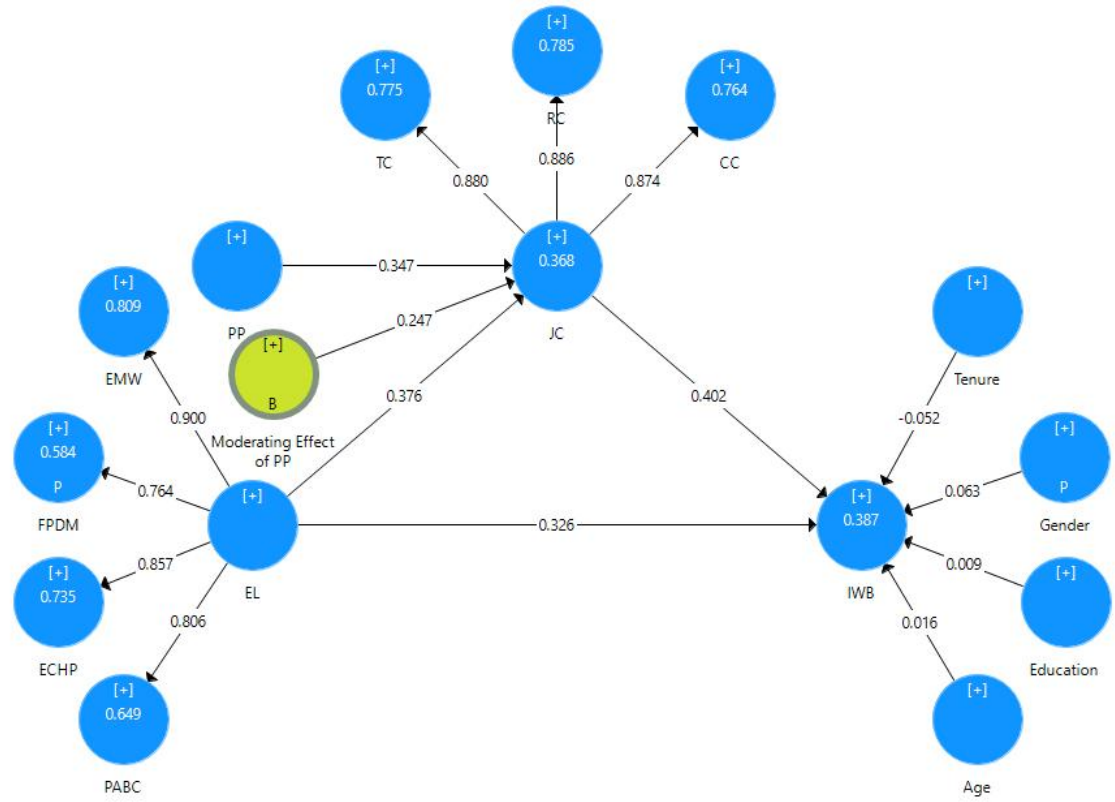
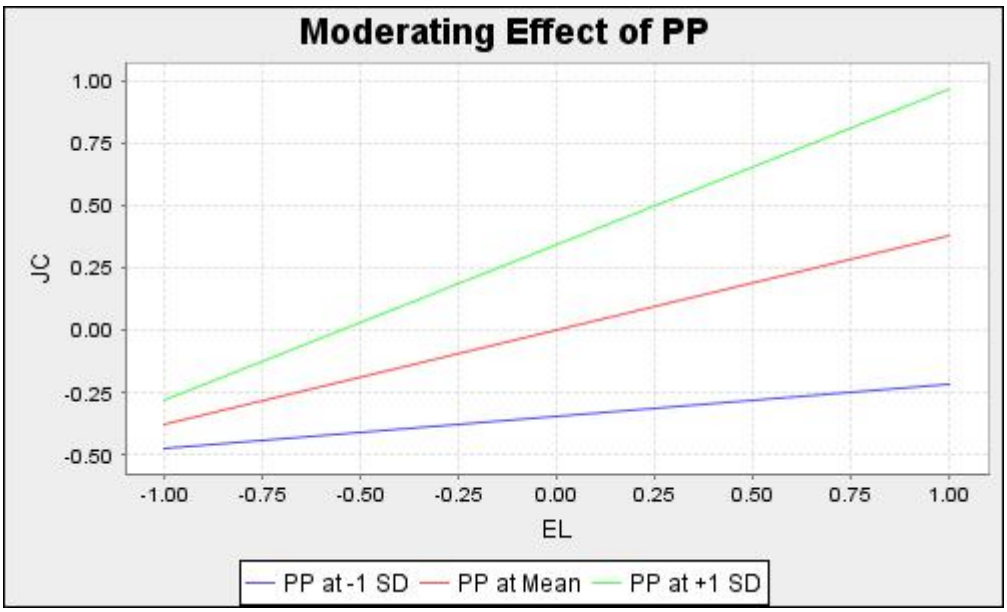


Figure 4: Model 3 Results (including both mediator and moderator)



For all above models, all paths are statistically significant at p<0.01, except control variables.

Figure 5: Slop analysis of PP on EL-JC relationship



Discussion and Implications

Existing research on individual and organizational factors that foster and facilitate employees' IWB remains underdeveloped (Akbari et al., 2021). Previous studies have established the critical role of EL in inspiring and engaging employees' IWB. However, the specific mechanisms through which EL enhance employees' IWB have been scarce in the extant literature. Anchoring in the JD-R model, this study represents a pioneering effort to investigate the impact of EL practices on individual employees' IWB, proposing JC as a novel mediating factor in this relationship. In addition, we found that this indirect relationship of EL and IWB via JC was further strengthened when employees possess PP traits yet got weakened with the passive personality of employees.

On theoretical grounds, this research significantly advances the understanding of EL and IWB and contributed to the relevant literature in the following ways. First, the study found some new direct relationships in a newer organizational and country context, that to the authors knowledge are not previously established like the positive link of PP with JC and JC to IWB. In addition, consistent to the previous research we replicated the positive relationship between

EL and IWB, EL and JC. Second, concerning the measurement of variables, different scales are developed and tested in Western countries. However, their use and generalizability to non-western organizational context was very limited. Our study confirmed the psychometric properties of these measuring instruments with robust statistical techniques in a non-western organizational context (Tsui et al., 2007). Third, the majority of previous research on the relationship of EL and IWB was conducted in a single organizational context, either in manufacturing or service industries. Our study filled this void and simultaneously in a single study took the multisource of various occupations and organization types data and established the moderated mediation relationships among the study variables. In this way, our studies' findings provided a larger generalizability which is a one of the significant hallmarks of social research.

Further, a significant lacuna in existing research on EL is the under-investigation of why and when EL may exert simultaneous effects on multiple outcomes. Further, responding to recent calls of Cao et al., (2022) as well as Kim and Beehr, (2023) urging the examination indirect relationships between EL- employees outcomes like IWB with other novel mediating mechanisms. By proposing and empirically examining key intervening mechanism and boundary condition within the EL-IWB relationship, this study finally provided a more comprehensive understanding of the construct and advance the scientific knowledge base in this area. The investigation of JC as a mediating factor is particularly generative, as it offers the potential to elucidate the underlying process through which EL influences employees' IWB. Beyond the mediating factor, in line with the recent call of (Kim & Beehr, 2018) emphasized that future studies should investigate the moderating factors that may weaken or strengthen the relationship of EL and JC. Our study deepens the literature on individual differences aspect of employee PP that with high employees PP the EL-JC relationship not only augmented but also confirmed that the indirect relationship of EL-IWB via JC was conditional on the employees' PP. It implies that this indirect relationship even vanished with the very low level of employees' PP.

On practical grounds, the findings of this study have significant implications for managerial practices. Organizations can foster EL by encouraging their managers

to adopt this style. The study demonstrates that EL can effectively motivate employees to engage in IWB directly and indirectly through JC. This finding highlights the importance of managers understanding and implementing EL practices. By fostering an empowering environment where employees utilize their skills without fear of failure, managers can create a more conducive climate in this way where JC prevails which turns into major source for engaging employees into IWB. To enhance employees' IWB, managers should prioritize training and development initiatives. By equipping managers with these skills, they can effectively support their teams. For managers with underdeveloped interpersonal and empathy skills, workplace training to develop EL is essential. Successful EL training can cultivate positive attitudes and adaptability among managers, leading to improved relationships with both colleagues and customers. We also recommend that EL skills should be taken into account during the hiring process of managers in the organizations. The recruitment of employees possessing elevated EL skills by human resource management departments within organizations can lead to a diminution in post-training expenditures.

One of our study findings is the positive role of employees PP on JC urges that apart from the managers the employees should also develop the traits of PP and capitalize the benefit of EL practices in their organizations. Moreover, organizations should also initiate training interventions in improving the PP of their employees in order to more engage them in JC and ultimately IWB. The employer should also consider the PP of candidates during the selection process for non-managerial positions in their organization to avoid post training expenses.

Limitations and Future Research

The study's scope was circumscribed by constraints in manpower, materials, financial resources, and time. As a result, a convenience sampling procedure, a cross-sectional design and a self-reported instrument for data collection were adopted. We suggest for extended generalizability that future researchers using probability sampling procedures replicate the study findings. The self-reported procedure of data collection is usually susceptible to CMV, thereby future researchers if utilize time lag approach can assist in minimizing such bias effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Due to the cross-sectional design of the study, we are unable to claim causal effects

of the variables studied. Therefore, more research is needed using longitudinal design to improve our understanding of causal effects of the variables studied in this research. Further, our study's analyses were based on individual level, however, the EL is a team-level construct potentially compromising the accuracy of the research findings. Future investigations should consider EL as a team-level variable and all other variables used in this study as an individual-level. Thereby, multilevel analysis may produce more accurate results. We found a partial mediation effect of JC between EL-IWB relationship which indicates that there are still several other variables that can be explored as mediators between this relationship. Future researchers in the field are encouraged to dig out more underlying mechanisms and as well as their moderator that may elevate or diminish direct or indirect relationships between EL and IWB.

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