

**The Relationship between Qualitative Job Insecurity and Meaningfulness at Work:
The Mediating Effect of Job Crafting**

Danai Garoufallidou

Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Utrecht University

M.Sc. Social, Health and Organisational Psychology

Track: Work and Organisational Psychology

Abstract

In today's cost-of-living crisis and rapidly changing modern organisational world (Patrick & Pybus, 2022), the present study aimed to explore the relationship between qualitative job insecurity (QJI), job crafting, and meaningfulness at work. Drawing upon the revised Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R), it was expected that QJI would be negatively related with meaningfulness at work and that job crafting would mediate the relationship between those two variables. The final sample of the study consisted of 249 employees from various organisations internationally, who participated in a quantitative cross-sectional research design. To test the hypotheses, two regression analyses were conducted utilising the SPSS system. As expected, the results revealed a negative relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work. Regarding the mediating hypothesis, this was partially confirmed indicating that job crafting decreases the negative impact of QJI on meaningfulness at work. Despite the limitations of this study, the findings are in line with the JD-R model and shed new light to the empirical evidence around the study variables. Practical organisational implications aiming at the prevention of QJI, through decision-involvement and employee growth trainings, along with the creation of resourceful job crafting organisational environments are highlighted.

Key words: qualitative job insecurity, job crafting, meaningfulness at work, revised job demands-resources model

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Employees have a fundamental will to create a positive meaning in their work (Rosso et al., 2010) and build a personal identity in their organisations (Dutton et al., 2010). As per Pratt & Ashforth's (2003) definition, meaningfulness refers to the amount of significance a work condition holds for an individual. It is what makes the work to be perceived as uniquely important and is associated with a more positive meaning for individuals (Rosso et al., 2010). Meaningfulness at work is a topic of great importance in the domain of human resources management and development (Bailey et al., 2016). It impacts and satisfies the core need of human psychological wellbeing (Blustein, 2006), and has been associated with work-related benefits for the employees, including increased job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Grant, 2007; Rosso et al., 2010). Thus, it has a positive impact on both personal and work-related outcomes (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003), highlighting the importance of it for organisations. Therefore, since meaningfulness at work is a crucial factor in today's working contexts and labour market, the focus of this study on such an impactful variable will expand our knowledge and add to our understanding of the path towards meaningfulness in the modern organisational force.

Qualitative job insecurity (QJI) could affect meaningfulness at work. De Witte et al. (2010) describe QJI as a fear of losing valued job aspects that primarily affect work life, such as career possibilities and salary development (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Hellgren et al., 1999). When employees perceive a potential deterioration of their working conditions, they tend to think that the organisation does not have bright and meaningful prospects. This implies that they cannot develop personally from the present job ultimately, making QJI a possible threat of meaningfulness, as it influences employees' growth needs (Tu et al., 2020). Furthermore, it has become a significant issue among organisational environments (De Witte et al., 2016), and has been highlighted as a consequence of social and economic crises, such as the cost-of-living crisis (Patrick & Pybus, 2022), that have forced organisations to adapt to changes to face the altering environmental conditions (Urbanaviciute et al., 2021). Due to that, over the last decades, job insecurity has been regarded as a crucial factor and has been investigated in the literature, indicating mostly negative outcomes for both employees and organisations (Cheng & Chan, 2008). However, as De Witte et al. (2016) stress, research focused on the qualitative aspect of job insecurity has been less considered. Therefore, as the unstable organisational environment, along with the individual's subjective perceptions, can

impact the meaningfulness at work (Guo & Hou, 2022), the investigation of QJI would add to our understanding of this variable, and its possible outcomes. This will enhance the available limited research around it and will direct the ways of counterbalancing it.

Job crafting, known as the process of employees redefining the conditions and reimagining their job tasks and relationships in personally meaningful ways (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), could explain the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness. Job crafting has been found to be particularly critical as a path to meaningfulness in the modern labour market (Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski et al., 2010), as it can impact the way employees identify themselves and perceive the meaning of their work in a wide range of job contexts (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). To be led there, employees can change either how their work is implemented (e.g., changing their tasks) or the frequency and the quality of interactions with their coworkers (e.g., changing their relationships at work) (Tims & Bakker, 2009). Employees have the power to create a work environment that will allow them to move towards their professional and personal growth (Grant & Parker, 2009) and address their specific needs. As organisational interventions may not be able to support and address all employee's specific needs, job crafting could be a very important benefit for management (Tims et al., 2013). In a wide range of organisations employees engage in job crafting, as research indicates (Berg et al., 2008), and careers are perceived to be mostly the responsibility of the individual in the modern organisational context (Tims et al., 2013). However, although empirical studies have made significant contributions to our understanding of the factors that influence job crafting and its impact on employees and organizations, as Wrzesniewski et al. (2013) support, there is a lack of research specifically focusing on job crafting as a mechanism for employees to foster a positive sense of meaning and identity in their work, leaving an open gap to be filled.

Following from the above, it would be interesting to investigate the dynamics between QJI and meaningfulness at work, through job crafting. Understanding the possible mediating role of job crafting, in our rapidly changing economy where organizations are placing more emphasis on employee proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008), holds practical implications for organisations and managers. Instead of just reacting to fixed job responsibilities, employees' personal initiatives in shaping their jobs and creating meaningful experiences can bring benefits to organizations by gaining innovativeness and adaptability (Frese & Fay, 2001). Subsequently, researchers and organisational practitioners can gain valuable insights into how employees may react to QJI, the outcomes of which have been less

explored (Urbanaviciute et al., 2021), and indicate a possible way to creating meaningfulness at work, through the active reshaping of the work environment. Therefore, the following questions arises: Does job crafting mediate the negative relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work?

Theoretical Framework

Qualitative job insecurity and meaningfulness at work

The relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work can be understood through the lens of the revised Job-Demands Resources model (JD-R) (Schaufeli & Taris, 2004); a model that assumes that employee health and well-being result from a balance between two main categories, the positive (resources) and negative (demands) job characteristics. Analytically, job demands refer to specific aspects of the job requiring emotional, physical, or mental investment from the employee (Demerouti et al., 2001). They are understood as stressors, and they can impact the well-being of employees. Job resources are specific aspects of the job that help employees reach their work goals, reduce job demands and costs, and promote personal development. These could include personal, social, or organisational factors (Demerouti et al., 2001). QJI can be perceived as a demanding job aspect, as employees who work under insecure conditions, possibly invest excessive effort, resulting to the deduction of their resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017. Demerouti et al., 2001).

According to the revised JD-R model job demanding situations -in this case QJI- can impact work outcomes, such as the degree of meaningfulness experienced at work, based on the health impairment process. Particularly, there are two main processes of interaction between job demands and job resources: the motivational process and the health impairment process. The motivational process operates in working environments that provide employees with plenty of resources to foster willingness to dedicate their efforts and abilities to the work task. These abundant resources play both an extrinsic and an intrinsic role and through work engagement they can result to positive organisational outcomes (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). On the other hand, the health, or energetic, impairment process clarifies how the employee can be led to negative work outcomes and/or well-being sequences. This occurrence, in more detail, can happen through the gradual draining of the limited job resources and the continuous energy consumption due to the high job demands (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In the case of this study, the high levels of QJI could lead to reduced levels of meaningfulness at work, through the continuous and gradual draining of job resources due to the high QJI.

Regarding meaningfulness at work, the metanalysis of Schnell et al., (2013) indicated that as an outcome it has been strongly linked with work engagement and organisational commitment, while a meaningful work was negatively associated with exhaustion, job disengagement and stress (Fairlie, 2011; Milliman et al., 2003; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Such work typically comprises three critical elements, according to Steger et al.'s (2012) model. Specifically, the first aspect is psychological meaningfulness, or the degree to which employees perceive their actions to hold personal significance. The second component is meaning making through work, which involves how experiencing work as meaningful is positively affecting other social structures. The third factor is the one of greater good motivation and encompasses the idea that work is meaningful when employees feel that they have made a remarkable and inspiring difference (Steger et al., 2012). Employees perceive their work as meaningful when their personal growth is facilitated (Brown & Leigh, 1996; Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004), thus the uncertainty of employee's growth needs (QJI) could decrease their experienced meaningfulness.

As Shoss (2017) states individuals experiencing high levels of meaningful work are more psychologically vulnerable to the consequences of job insecurity, and likely to perceive job insecurity increasing from low to moderate levels as the violation of the norm of reciprocity by their employer (Blau, 1964). Job insecurity is distinguished into quantitative and qualitative, with the quantitative being defined as the "perceived inability to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job position" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p. 438) and the qualitative referring to the concern of employees that their job will lose some important for them characteristics (Hellgren et al., 1999). Both dimensions of job insecurity have been recognised as equally important (De Witte et al., 2016), but less scientific attention has been put into the qualitative aspect (De Witte et al., 2012). Moreover, the stressful nature of QJI and its negative associations with well-being outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, performance) have been underlined by the metanalysis of De Witte et al. (2012), and even though this variable could affect meaningfulness more investigation is needed (Vander Elst et al., 2016; Selenko & Batinic, 2013). Since meaningfulness at work is connected with personal goals and growth needs (Rosso et al., 2010), the reduction of the qualitative characteristics of the employee's work could become a threat (Tu et al., 2020). Taking the aforementioned into account, the following hypothesis is formed:

H1. QJI is negatively related with meaningfulness at work.

The mediating effect of job crafting in the relationship between job insecurity and meaningfulness at work

According to the JD-R theory, job crafting has been characterised as the changes employees make in their job demands and job resources (Tims & Bakker, 2009). There are four types of job crafting: increasing structural job resources, such as autonomy, variety, and learning opportunities; increasing social job resources, like social support, supervisory coaching, and feedback; increasing challenging job demands, such as proactive involvement in new projects; and decreasing hindering job demands, for example by decreasing the number of emotional interactions or cognitive tasks (Tims et al., 2012). According to this conceptualization, employees seek to increase their job resources (structural, social) and their challenging job demands, or to decrease their hindering job demands (Tims & Bakker, 2009). All in all, job crafting is the process of employees redefining and reframing their job designs in personally significant ways (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). It can foster positive work outcomes, such as job satisfaction and engagement, as it enables employees to shape their work environment to better fit their personal needs and preferences (Tims & Bakker, 2009).

QJI could be positively associated with job crafting. According to Briscoe et al., (2012) there is a new rhetoric that job insecurity could be an inclination towards development. From a theoretical perspective, high demands are not always threatening, but they can be perceived as challenges. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) presented two categories of job demands: the hindrances and the challenges. Hindrances refer to demands that hinder progress and have a negative impact on the person, while challenges refer to the demands that although they might require effort, they have the potential to promote growth, learning, and development. Individuals that are more likely to perceive job demands as less threatening and more challenging, are better equipped to identify job resources, leading to greater opportunities for job crafting (Petrou et al., 2015. Berg et al., 2010). In this case, job insecurity acts as a trigger for an active reaction (Piccoli et al., 2021). Simultaneously, since in the case of QJI the job doesn't completely vanish (De Witte et al., 2012), employees might perceive their crafting as a way to help the organisation succeed, which will let them gain more security (Piccoli et al., 2021). Thus, situations of uncertainty -QJI- can be viewed as a challenge (Berg et al., 2010) and stimulate employees to craft their jobs (Lu et al., 2014).

Furthermore, there is earlier empirical evidence for the positive relationship between job crafting and meaningfulness at work (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Grant, 2007).

Generally, job crafting has been linked with work engagement, commitment, performance and turnover (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013) resulting to it being perceived as a very promising concept in organisational psychology (Tims & Bakker, 2009). Employees craft their work so that they can grow themselves and enhance their self-conceptions in their organisation (Sonenshein et al., 2013). They dare to actively shape their jobs to fulfil their psychological needs and discover the underlying meanings and identities, contributing to their perceptions of meaningfulness (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). The essence of job crafting is that one changes their work aspects to better balance the job with personal needs, goals, and skills, and that these aligning changes, in turn, can influence the meaningfulness of the work (Berg et al., 2013). Thus, as literature indicates, job crafting could be perceived as a way to meaningfulness in modern work contexts (Berg et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski et al., 2010).

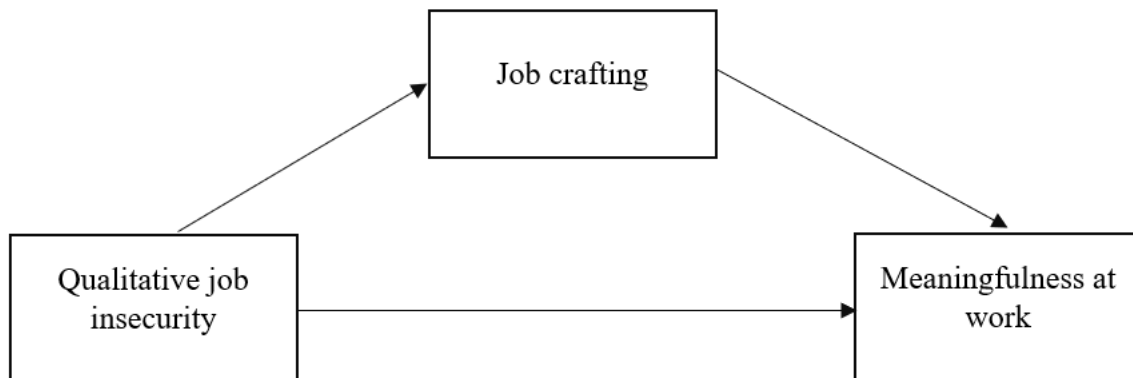
Job crafting could mediate the negative relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work. In the literature, it is indicated how job insecurity seems to be dangerous for the psychological health of the employees (De Witte et al., 2016). However, considering that QJI can be perceived as a job demand, according to the health impairment process of the JD-R theory (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), the existence of enough resources could possibly mediate the relationship between the demanding variable of QJI and the outcome of meaningfulness at work, making it weaker. In organisational environments that are characterised by job insecurity, engaged employees are particularly motivated to reshape their job tasks and relationships, as this helps them reduce uncertainty and align their work with their values and needs (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Thus, in this case perceiving job crafting as a job resource, we could expect that it mediates the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness.

Therefore, the second hypothesis of this paper is as follows:

H2. Job crafting mediates the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work.

H2a. QJI is positively related to job crafting.

H2b. Job crafting is positively associated with meaningfulness at work.

Figure 1*Conceptual Model***Method****Research Design & Procedure**

To measure the relationships between the different variables of this study, a quantitative cross-sectional research design was used, as the data was collected at a given point in time, in 2023 (Kesmodel, 2018). The data for this study were collected in March and April 2023, within a research project on the meaning of work in the cost-of-living crisis, from a group of five masters' students at Utrecht University. The data was collected through a self-reported online questionnaire in English, given to employees within various organizations internationally. The link for the questionnaire was shared through the researcher's social network platforms, and the average time of completion was 28.26 minutes. Therefore, using the snowball technique of data selection (Parker et al., 2019), 495 questionnaires were collected and went through the inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were as follows: 1) participants should be over 18 and working full time/part time, and 2) they should have answered all the demographics' questions and the items of the scales of this study (QJI, meaningfulness at work and job crafting). Confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were stressed via the information sheet (Appendix I) and informed consent was requested. Before distributing it, ethical approval was received (UU-SER: 23-0480) from the Ethical Review Board of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences of Utrecht University.

Respondents

Before finalising the sample size, a G*Power analysis was conducted (Faul et al., 2019), which based on the effect size ($f^2 = .06$) and the number of predictors, showed that 245 participants should be included in the study. Based on the inclusion criteria, 49.7% of the total respondents had to be eliminated leading to the final sample of 249 participants, a number that was sufficient based on the G*Power analysis. The respondents had an average of 31.18 years old ($S.D. = 9.77$) and most of them were women (56.2%), while 41.8% were identified as males, and 1.6% as non-binary. Moreover, regarding their level of education, most of the respondents were bachelor's graduates (39.4%), followed by master's degree holders (32.1%) and high school graduates (14.9%). Regarding their country, there was a variety of 36.5% participants from the Netherlands, 21.7% from Croatia, 15.7% from Germany, 8.8% from Greece, and, finally, 17.3% from other countries (e.g., Belgium, Switzerland, Spain). The majority of the participants (40.6%) stated that they work for 40 hours or more in a weekly basis, followed by those who work 36 hours (9.2%) and 8 hours (7.6%). Working tenure in the current position of the respondents was measured from a range of less than 1 year up to 50 years or more and the most common scores were less than 1 year (22.1%), 2 years (16.9%), and 3 years (14.9%). Finally, most of the participants indicated that they receive a salary between 1001 and 2200€ (28.9%), followed by a percentage of 21.3% of the participants who receive a salary below 1000€, and those who receive between 2201 and 3000€ (20.5%).

Instruments

Meaningfulness at work. This variable was measured by the scale of the Work and Meaning Inventory (Steger et al. 2012) composed of 10 items that overall assess: Greater good motivations (e.g., “The work I do serves a greater purpose.”), positive meaning (e.g., “I have found a meaningful career) and meaning making through work (e.g., “My work helps me better understand myself.”). The answers were given using the 5-point Likert scale from “*completely false*” to “*completely true*”. The total Cronbach's alpha score for this scale was $\alpha = .87$.

Qualitative job insecurity. This variable was measured with the QJIM scale of Blotenberg & Richter (2020). The instrument consisted of an 11-item scale, for example, “I worry that the values of the organization will change for the worse” and “I worry that my skills and knowledge will not benefit my work”. Items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale,

ranging from “*strongly agree*” to “*strongly disagree*”. The scale was reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha, $\alpha = .88$.

Job crafting. Job crafting was assessed using the Job Crafting Scale (Tims et al., 2012). The scale overall measures four things: increasing structural job resources (e.g., “I try to learn new things at work”), decreasing hindering job demands (e.g., “I try to ensure that my work is emotionally less intense), increasing social job resources (e.g., “I look to my supervisor for inspiration”), and increasing challenging job demands (e.g., “If there are new developments, I am one of the first to learn about them and try them out). Responses were given on a Likert scale ranging from “*never*” to “*often*”. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was calculated as $\alpha = .80$.

Control variables. The control variables in this study were age and gender. According to Dhanjal (2019), gender and age were found to be associated with the levels of meaningfulness. In this study, age was measured in the questionnaire in years, while gender was measured by a 4-point scale where ‘1’=*male* and ‘2’=*female*, ‘3’=*non-binary*, ‘4’=*prefer not to say*.

Analysis

The analysis of the data for testing the conceptual model and hypotheses was conducted by the program SPSS. Data was screened based on the inclusion criteria, outliers were checked, and missing values were handled using the method of excluding cases pairwise, which was only excluding cases in which relevant information were missing. To identify the outliers, the values of Mahalanobis, Cook’s and Leverage were used (El-Masri et al., 2021), leading to the finding of one outlier. The correlations of the items of each scale with total scales were also examined, and the reliability of each scale was calculated using Cronbach’s α analysis. In addition, the assumptions of additivity, linearity, homoscedasticity, normality were examined, by studying the correlations, Histogram, the P-P plot and the Scatterplot. All of the variables sufficiently met the assumptions required for the analysis to be conducted.

To test hypothesis one, I used a simple linear regression between the QJI and meaningfulness at work, and the control variables. Then, Mediation PROCESS modelling (Model 4, Appendix II) was used, as described by Hayes (2013). This model involves testing for the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and the indirect effect via the proposed mediator. Thus, the direct effect of QJI on meaningfulness at work,

and the indirect effect of QJI on meaningfulness at work via the concept of job crafting, were examined. It was important to also include the control variables to reduce the possibility of spurious relationships based on demographic characteristics. After the analysis, the total effect of the indirect effect was calculated.

Results

Descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 1, QJI was found to be negatively correlated with meaningfulness at work ($r = -.33, p < .001$) and job crafting ($r = -.28, p < .001$). Additionally, job crafting and meaningfulness at work were positively correlated ($r = .34, p < .001$). Lastly, regarding the two controlling variables, namely age and gender, these showed to not have a significant correlation neither with the dependent variable, meaningfulness at work, nor with the independent, QJI. However, age was found to be negatively correlated with the variable of job crafting ($r = -.16, p = .010$).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. QJI	2.80	.82	-				
2. Job crafting	3.32	.46	-.28**	-			
3. Meaningfulness at work	3.63	.65	-.33**	.34**	-		
4. Gender	-	-	-.03	-.02	.03	-	
5. Age	31.18	9.77	.01	-.16*	-.01	-.18**	-

Note. $N = 249$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .001$

Hypotheses Testing

On a sample size of 249 respondents, a simple linear regression was conducted to test the first hypothesis, which expected a negative relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work. The results indicated that, indeed, the two variables were negatively associated ($B = -.26, t = -5.54, p < .001$), and none of the control variables (age, gender) showed to

significantly affect this relationship (see Table 2). Therefore, *Hypothesis 1: QJI is negatively related with meaningfulness at work*, was supported.

Table 2

Regression Coefficients of QJI on Meaningfulness at Work (H1)

Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>
Constant	4.37		4.34	
QJI	-.26*	.05	-.26*	.33
Gender			.02	.07
Age			.00	.00
R ²	.110		.111	
ΔR ²	.107		.110	

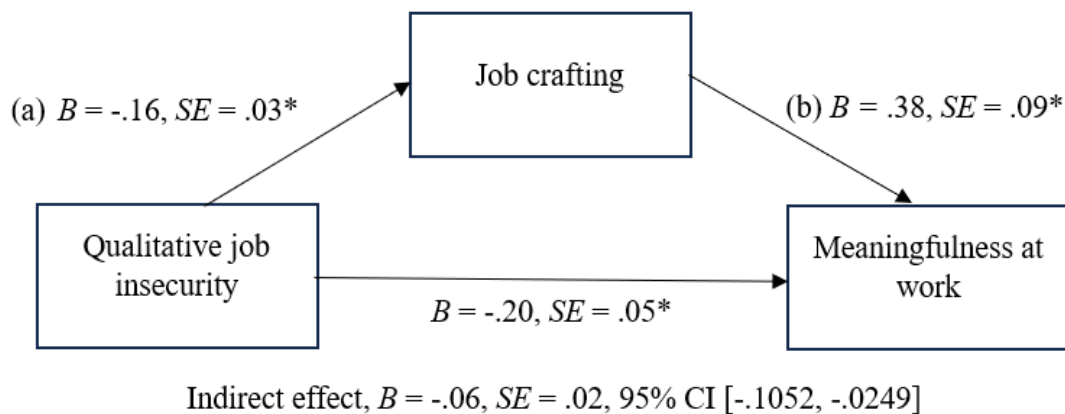
Note. $N = 249$. In model 2, the control variables were entered. * $p < .001$

For the second hypothesis of the study, which expected that job crafting would act as a mediator in the main relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work, a PROCESS model 4 regression analysis was conducted. Part of the second hypothesis, were the two sub-hypotheses H2a and H2b. Hypothesis 2a was path a of the mediation analysis, and it stated that QJI would be positively related to job crafting. The findings show that the association between the independent variable, QJI, and the mediator, job crafting, was negatively significant ($B = -.16, t = -4.68, p < .001$). Thus, *Hypothesis 2a: QJI is positively related to job crafting*, was rejected. Moving forward, Hypothesis 2b, which was path b of the process model, expected that job crafting would be positively associated with meaningfulness at work. The analysis showed that job crafting indeed had a positive significant impact on meaningfulness at work ($B = .38, t = 4.43, p < .001$). Thus, *Hypothesis 2b: Job crafting is positively associated with meaningfulness at work*, was supported. Subsequently, as shown in Figure 2 the hypothesised indirect relationship was supported by the data ($B = -.06, SE = .02, 95\% CI [-.1052, -.0249]$). Thus, *Hypothesis 2: Job crafting mediates the negative relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work*, was partially confirmed as job crafting was eliminating the negative effect of QJI. Hence, since both the direct effect ($B = -.20, t = -4.20,$

$p < .001$) and the indirect effect were significant, it is concluded that there is a partial mediation in the study (see Figure 2). The proportion of the total effect of QJI on meaningfulness at work that operates indirectly is 23.18%, while 76.82% of the relationship operates directly.

Figure 2

Research Model with Coefficients of the Study Variables



Note. $N = 249$. SE is the standard error. CI is the confidence interval. * $p < .001$

Discussion

In our rapidly changing economy, where organizations are placing more emphasis on employee proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008) and job insecurity is becoming more and more prevalent (De Witte et al., 2016), the main purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work and the mediating role of job crafting. Employees have a fundamental desire to create positive meaning in their work (Rosso et al., 2010). As Carton (2018) highlights, meaningfulness at work is a central concern of many organisational leaders and given that it is a crucial element for future work outcomes, they pursue its enhancement. Thus, the aim of this study was to investigate the possible paths towards it. Therefore, two main hypotheses and two sub-hypotheses were formed to answer the research question: Does job crafting mediate the negative relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work?

Theoretical Implications

The first hypothesis of the study predicted that QJI would be negatively associated with meaningfulness at work. Indeed, and in line with the health impairment process of the revised JD-R model (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), the results confirmed this hypothesis, and a negative relationship was found between the two indicators. Adding to the limited findings regarding the effects of QJI (Urbanaviciute et al., 2021), this study highlights that QJI can be perceived as a stressor as well, and that the uncertainty of growth possibilities can affect the meaningfulness at work for the employees. Based on the JD-R model and the health impairment process, a possible explanation of this finding could be the lack of job resources that could buffer the negative outcome of the demanding organisational situation of QJI (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Particularly, such a job resource could be the lack of perceived control. As De Witte et al. (2012) indicated job insecurity could be problematic as it involves feelings of powerlessness. In addition, the findings of this study provide empirical evidence regarding the possible effect of the societal and economic cost-of-living crisis, which forced organisations to make changes. Particularly, it is indicated that the external and the organisational environment are interrelated, highlighting the importance of considering the general context in which organisations and employees are trying to flourish and find meaning. Furthermore, the sample of this study consisted of employees from various countries (Germany, Croatia, Netherlands, Greece, USA, South Africa), showing that the JD-R model can be applied across different populations, and that uncertainty can lead to similar outcomes worldwide. However, further investigation would be needed including country differences on the research design to evaluate these indications. Finally, future research could also investigate in a same study the effects of quantitative job insecurity in order to better understand the different or similar effects the sub-types of job insecurity could have on meaningfulness at work.

Moreover, the second hypothesis had two sub-hypotheses. The first sub-hypothesis, stating that QJI would be positively related with job crafting, was rejected. Based on the revised JD-R model, which presents two ways of perceptions for the job demanding situations: the hindrances and the challenges, it was expected that QJI would be perceived as a challenge. Even though this suggestion was rejected, the findings are still in line with the JD-R theory, as they indicate that QJI has a hindrance effect, because it deprives the growth of the employees and has a negative impact on them (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The way of perceiving demanding situations as challenges or hindrances can depend on the personal

resources employees hold (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), such as optimism and self-confidence; thus, low levels of these could possibly explain the negative relationship between QJI and job crafting (Petrou et al., 2015. Berg et al., 2010), and their investigation could possibly support the rhetoric that job insecurity can act as a motivator (Briscoe et al., 2012). Moreover, the second sub-hypothesis, stating that job crafting is positively associated with meaningfulness at work, was supported, as it was expected from previous research that underlined the positive impact of job crafting (Tims et al., 2013). This finding indicates the importance of personal initiatives towards the enhancement of meaningfulness, supporting job crafting's positive nature. Simultaneously, viewing them from the lens of the JD-R model, the results are in line with the perception of job crafting as a tool of actively reshaping the organisational environment in meaningful ways (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Additionally, May et al. (2004) indicated that an organisational environment that is being crafted by the employee to better fit with their identity and values, is positively related with meaningfulness. In line with this empirical evidence, the findings add to our understanding of the importance of job crafting initiatives in the modern organisational context.

Subsequently, and based on the analysis, the second hypothesis was partially confirmed, indicating a significant indirect effect, which supports that job crafting mediates the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work, resulting in a decrease in the negative impact of QJI on meaningfulness. This finding adds depth to the understanding of the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work and it highlights the importance of employee's active involvement in adapting their work environments to foster a sense of purpose and fulfilment (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013), particularly in the context of QJI. Even though research has made significant contributions to our understanding of the factors that influence job crafting and its outcomes, there is a notable gap in the impact of job crafting as a mechanism that leads to the gradual development of a positive meaning and identity in work (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). Thus, the findings of the study add to the empirical evidence of the roles that job crafting can take and its power in altering negative outcomes, highlighting the focus that organisations need to place on its enhancement. However, as the hypothesis was partially confirmed, more research is needed to understand the overall factors that could possibly explain the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work. Particularly, it would be interesting to explore the levels of resilience (Morales-Solis et al., 2022) or the significance of work tasks (Schnell et al., 2013), in order to fully equip

organisations with supportive implications to eliminate the negative effects of QJI and enrich the meaningfulness of their employees.

Practical implications

Based on the findings of negative associations of QJI with the outcomes of meaningfulness at work and job crafting, it is important that organisations create a culture that prevents these negative effects. This can be pursued through a managerial culture that involves employees in participative decision-making and that values and encourages employee voice and input. This involves providing channels for employees to express their needs, concerns, and ideas regarding job design and work experiences (Berg et al., 2008). By actively involving employees in decision-making processes related to their work, feelings of ownership may be enhanced, leading to increased meaningfulness, and by sharing organisational input employee's control could be increased, eliminating their feelings of QJI, and increasing their sense of belonging (Piccoli & De Witte, 2015). In addition, organisations could promote resilience and adaptability practices to help employees prevent QJI. By offering training programs and targeted consulting services (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), organisations can give a boost to the personal growth of employees and help them foster self-confidence, proactivity, and resilience that can prevent the negative effects of uncertain circumstances (Morales-Solis et al., 2022).

Furthermore, based on the mediation effect supported, and since a highly restrictive organisational environment may deprive from employees the chance to adapt their tasks, interactions, and the overall way they perceive their job (Berg et al., 2008), it is suggested that organisations create an environment which fosters and encourages job crafting behaviours. This can be achieved by providing the job resources of autonomy and flexibility, that give freedom to employees to shape their job roles, tasks and relationships and encourage job crafting behaviours (Slemp et al., 2015). In addition, effective leadership and management practices play a critical role in facilitating job crafting and promoting meaningful work (Berg et al., 2008). Managers should provide guidance, feedback, reassurance, and support employees in their job crafting endeavors. Performance appraisal systems should be designed to recognize and reward job crafting efforts, to motivate employees to engage in such activities (DeNisi & Murphy, 2017). Overall, it's important to note that HR Managers have been regarded from literature as one of the most crucial roles to

promote and guide employees towards job crafting initiatives (Lee & Lee, 2018), thus emphasis should be placed on their available resources, awareness, and training as well.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

It is acknowledged that this study comes with some limitations. First, the design of the study was cross-sectional, meaning that all variables were measured at one point in time. Even though the causal order of the study's variables is plausible, drawing conclusions in terms of the causality of the relationships is difficult for this study design. Furthermore, results could also differ over time or might be influenced by temporary factors (e.g., employees' mood state). Future research could explore further the researched relationships with a longitudinal design instead, involving repeated observations. More specifically, this could be done via a diary study over an extended period, using the diary method as a tool (Rieman, 1993), as this has been regarded as a better tool to understand the frequency and accurate levels of engagement of employees in job crafting, without the influence of possible temporary factors (Tims et al., 2014).

Another limitation of the study has to do with the data collection procedure and the sampling technique. The use of researcher's social platforms and networks internationally was chosen by means of convenience, which makes it difficult to generalize the results and to prevent unequal sampling of the target population (e.g., coming from different educational, socio-economic background). Additionally, even though the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondent's answers were guaranteed, it should be considered that participants may have provided socially desired answers due to several factors (e.g., fear of company representation). Thus, future studies could use different sampling techniques and perhaps aim at the inclusion of a bigger percentage of low-income groups, as this could be a possible explanation of the unexpected positive relationship between qualitative job insecurity and meaningfulness at work (Sverke et al., 2006).

Finally, a last limitation that could be mentioned is regarding the length of the questionnaire, as the questionnaire was created from five master students, including scales and items for the different research variables. It is possible that the completion time, around thirty minutes, influenced the respondent's answers. Additionally, since the language of the questionnaire wasn't the native one of most participants, it might have required extra effort and time for them to understand and answer the items. These could explain the several unanswered items, and why people withdrew, and it can possibly have affected the levels of

careful consideration the employees put in while answering the questionnaire. Hence, even though the number of participants was still sufficient, a future recommendation would be to keep the length of the questionnaire shorter, to assure conscious responses.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined the relationship between QJI and meaningfulness at work, with a focus on the mediating role of job crafting. The findings revealed a negative association between QJI and meaningfulness at work, and job crafting was shown to partially mediate this relationship. These results shed new light on the enrichment of meaningfulness at work, emphasizing the importance of job crafting in contemporary work environments. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the complex dynamics between QJI, job crafting, and meaningfulness at work. It highlights the significance of addressing QJI to navigate the uncertain work landscape, and empowering employees to actively shape their work to pave their path towards the enhancement of their sense of meaningfulness.

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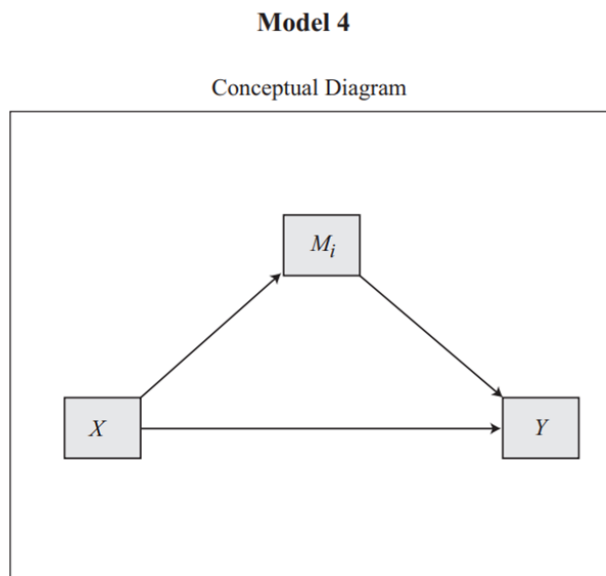
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Appendix I

PROCESS Model

1. PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2013)



Appendix II

Scales used for the study

1. Meaningfulness at Work (Steger et al., 2012)

1. I have found a meaningful career (positive meaning)
2. I understand how my work contribute' s to my life's meaning (positive meaning)
3. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful (positive meaning)
4. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose (positive meaning)
5. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth (meaning making through work)
6. My work helps me better understand myself (meaning making through work)
7. My work helps me make sense of the world around me (meaning making through work)
8. My work really makes no difference to the world (greater good motivations)
9. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world (greater good motivations)

10. The work I do serves a greater purpose (greater good motivations)

2. Qualitative Job Insecurity (Blotenberg & Richter, 2020)

1. I think my work will change for the worse
2. I have concerns about my career in the organization
3. I worry about getting less stimulating and varied tasks in the future
4. I worry that I will not be able to influence how I can plan my work
5. I feel anxiety about not being able to perform my duties in the way that I had earlier
6. There is a risk that I will not have access to the same resources (work colleagues, materials, information)
7. I worry that my work will not be as meaningful in the future
8. I worry that the quality of my work will deteriorate
9. I worry that my skills and knowledge will not benefit my work
10. I feel anxiety about not being able to handle the demands that will be placed on me
11. I worry that the values of the organization will change for the worse

3. Job Crafting (Tims et al., 2012)

1. I try to develop my capabilities (increasing structural job resources)
2. I try to develop myself professionally (increasing structural job resources)
3. I try to learn new things at work (increasing structural job resources)
4. I make sure that I use my capacities to the fullest (increasing structural job resources)
5. I decide on my own how I do things (increasing structural job resources)
6. I make sure that my work is mentally less intense (decreasing hindering job demands)
7. I try to ensure that my work is emotionally less intense (decreasing hindering job demands)
8. I manage my work so that I try to minimize contact with people whose problems affect me emotionally (decreasing hindering job demands)

9. I organize my work so as to minimize contact with people whose expectations are unrealistic (decreasing hindering job demands)
10. I try to ensure that I do not have to make many difficult decisions at work (decreasing hindering job demands)
11. I organize my work in such a way to make sure that I do not have to concentrate for too long a period at once (decreasing hindering job demands)
12. I ask my supervisor to coach me (increasing social job resources)
13. I ask whether my supervisor is satisfied with my work (increasing social job resources)
14. I look to my supervisor for inspiration (increasing social job resources)
15. I ask others for feedback on my job performance (increasing social job resources)
16. I ask colleagues for advice (increasing social job resources)
17. When an interesting project comes along, I offer myself proactively as project co-worker (increasing challenging job demands)
18. If there are new developments, I am one of the first to learn about them and try them out (increasing challenging job demands)
19. When there is not much to do at work, I see it a chance to start new projects (increasing challenging job demands)
20. I regularly take on extra tasks even though I do not receive extra salary for them (increasing challenging job demands)
21. I try to make my work more challenging by examining the underlying relationships between aspects of my job (increasing challenging job demands)