

Risk the Change or Change the Risk? The Nonlinear Effect of Job Insecurity on Task Performance

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Abstract: Job insecurity has been recognized for its negative effect on employee performance. Nevertheless, this study argues that, under the threat of job insecurity, employees may also be likely to seek to reduce the threat by proactively crafting their tasks and improving performance. Drawing from the perspective of Vroom's expectancy theory, it is proposed that, only when job security is at moderate level will employees expect it as possible to make such a change to respond to the situation. Accordingly, a curvilinear mediated model is developed that links job insecurity and task performance indirectly through task crafting, and a two-waved time-lagged survey involving 328 employees was conducted to test the model. The results showed that job insecurity had an inverted U-shaped relationship with task crafting and that this relationship was moderated by strengths-based psychological climate, a measure of how employees feel their strengths are appreciated in the organization. In this sense, strengths-based psychological climate can enhance the positive relationship between job insecurity and task crafting. Overall, the finding suggests that job insecurity may not always be detrimental. Thus, there will be significant managerial implications in creating favorable conditions for increased task performance.

Keywords: Job insecurity; task crafting; task performance; strengths-based psychological climate

1 Introduction

In order to survive in the intensified global competition, organizations usually implement organizational restructuring and apply new technology to improve organizational performance [1,2]. Moreover, organizations tend to decrease operating costs by downsizing, outsourcing, or short-term hiring [3,4]. These factors make employees' job less stable, contributing to increased job insecurity, which is a stressful experience for employees [5,6]. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how employees react to such an experience.

Existing literature focuses mainly on the employees' negative reactions to job insecurity, suggesting that employees may feel that their psychological contract is violated and personal resources are consumed. For instance, studies found that job insecurity will result in an increased turnover intention, lower job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment and emotional exhaustion [7–10]. Such a dominant view directs practitioners and scholars to generally conclude that job insecurity should be avoided. Nevertheless, this conclusion is quite premature since job insecurity may also propel employees to take actions to reduce the risk of job loss.

Job insecurity is the subjective perception that the nature and continued existence of one's job are perceived to be at risk [2]. It is a negative emotional experience. According to the feeling-as-information theory, emotions, as a signal, can convey information about the environment to individuals [11]. Negative emotions will prompt employees to realize that there is a discrepancy between the current situation and the ideal state, which may cause them to think about how to make a change [12]. It is thus possible that negative



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emotions may stimulate the employees' initiative motivation to change the status quo [13]. As a negative emotional experience at work [6,14], job insecurity will inform employees about negative environmental conditions, making them aware of problems that may incite employees to make efforts to improve the current situation [15]. Therefore, when employees feel that their jobs are insecure, they may take actions to improve their performance to reduce the risk of being fired [16]. We propose that employees are likely to adopt task crafting to improve task performance when they feel insecure at work. Task crafting is a primary form of job crafting that focuses on altering task boundaries, such as the number, scope, and sequencing of work tasks [17]. Employees can improve task performance by engaging in task crafting because it can make job content fit well with their own characteristics. By doing so, they can demonstrate their own value and indispensability to the organization, in the hope of reducing job insecurity. Hence, we argue that job insecurity can prompt employees to engage in task crafting in order to improve task performance.

The proposed positive reactions may be contingent on certain boundary conditions. In this study, we postulate that whether job insecurity makes employees engage in tasking crafting depends on their judgment of the possibility of effectively reducing the threats of job loss. When job insecurity is at a relatively low level, employees may seek to change the status quo. However, when job insecurity exceeds a certain tipping point, employees may come to a sense of desperation since they will believe that their efforts are unlikely to make any change. Therefore, we argue that employees are more likely to engage in task crafting as job insecurity increases from low to moderate levels. When job insecurity passes the tipping point and increases, they may be less likely to engage in task crafting, because the increasing desperation will demotivate them to do so. Thus, job insecurity may have an inverted U-shaped relationship with task crafting. We further hypothesize that the curvilinear effect of job insecurity on task crafting will be moderated by strengths-based psychological climate. Van Woerkom et al. defined strengths-based psychological climate as "individual employees' perceptions of the formal and informal policies, practices, and procedures in their organization concerning the identification, development, use, and appreciation of their talents and strengths." People feel appreciated because of their unique strengths and where those strengths can be put to work in this climate [18]. When employees believe that there is a strong climate to develop, appreciate and use their advantages in the organization, they will consider that the organization provides opportunities for them to conduct task crafting under the threat of job insecurity because they have more opportunities to do the works to which they are better suited and can use their strengths. Furthermore, employees also believe that such efforts can and will be recognized and appreciated by the organization. Therefore, we propose that strengths-based psychological climate can enhance the positive relationship between job insecurity and task crafting.

This paper aims to reveal the complex path from job insecurity to positive outcomes at work (e.g., task performance), and how the positive effects of job insecurity can be induced and managed. Our study suggests that job insecurity may not always be detrimental. Thus, there will be significant managerial implications in understanding this complex path. If job security can lead to positive reactions under certain conditions, managers may try to create these favorable conditions to propel employees to perform better.

2 Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1 Job Insecurity and Task Crafting

People generally expect a sense of control which has been considered as "an intrinsic necessity of life itself" [19]. Thus, employees have the basic need to take control over their job [18]. In nature, job insecurity represents a lack of control [20]. When employees perceive their jobs as insecure, they will have the feelings of uncertainty, which could stimulate their need for having control over job [21]. Task crafting is a primary form of job crafting that focuses on altering task boundaries, such as the number, scope, and procedure of work tasks [18]. People can promote the fit between the person and the job through task crafting. According to the person-job fit theory [22,23], the fit between the individual's own characteristics and the requirements of job can improve the individual's task performance and strengthen the control over the work. In this sense, we argue that job insecurity may make employees seek to improve their task performance through task crafting. Borman et al. divided job performance into task performance and contextual performance [24].

Our study focused on task performance because task performance is consistent with our preceding argument. Task crafting can make employees make a better fit between task and person, which is related to task performance. Meanwhile, task crafting can also enable employees to demonstrate their abilities and efforts, proving their value to the organization.

However, drawing from Vroom's Expectancy theory, the driving force of an employee's action depends on the employee's judgment of the possibility of whether the action can achieve the desired outcomes [25]. In other words, when employees think that it is possible to successfully change the status quo by crafting tasks, they will be more motivated to engage in such behaviors. Thus, we believe that there is an inflection point for job insecurity. As job insecurity rises but is still below the inflection point, employees will be more motivated to change the status quo through engaging in task crafting. However, when the job insecurity is higher than the inflection point, employees may feel increasingly desperate and believe that the status quo is difficult to change. As such, after the inflection point, job insecurity will weaken the employees' motivation to craft task. Taken together, job insecurity may have a curvilinear relationship with task crafting such that the relationship is positive as job insecurity increases and reaches the inflection point and becomes negative when job insecurity surpasses the point. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Job insecurity has an inverted U-shape effect on the employees' task crafting.

2.2 The Moderating Role of Strengths-Based Psychological Climate

Additionally, employees' expectations of whether they can improve performance through engaging in task crafting and their sense of value will also affect whether they craft task. Here, we argue that such expectations may also be shaped by strengths-based psychological climate, which refers to the employees' evaluations of the organization's concern about the identification, development, use, and appreciation of their talents and strengths [18]. When employees perceive that there is a strong climate for development, appreciation and use of employee strengths in the organization, they will be aware that there are more opportunities to use their own advantages [26]. Given that employees can craft their tasks to make the best use of their advantage, the strengths-based psychological climate enables employees to expect that there are more opportunities for crafting tasks. As such, if and when they perceive their jobs as insecure, they are more likely to engage in task crafting. Meanwhile, since there is a strong climate for the development, appreciation and use of employees' advantages in the organization, employees can better develop and demonstrate their own advantages, getting more appreciation and recognition from the organization. In this sense, employees may be less likely to be discouraged by a high level job insecurity. Therefore, when the strengths-based psychological climate is high, employees are likely to engage in task crafting, even though job insecurity is at a relatively high level. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Strengths-based psychological climate moderates the curvilinear relationship between job insecurity and task crafting. When the strengths-based psychological climate is strong, employees may engage in more task crafting.

2.3 The Mediated Moderation Effect

Since the objective of this study is to examine the influence of job insecurity on task performance, we further link task craft to task performance. When employees engage in task crafting, their task performance may be improved for two reasons. On one hand, they redraw task boundaries, rearrange appropriate task scopes, and adjust their work procedures [18,27] so as to improve their ability and fit between individual preferences and task. In keeping with the Person-Job Fit theory, if the ability and preferences of employees match the job tasks, performance can improve. On the other hand, when employees fulfill their needs of control over work through task crafting, they may be more motivated to perform the tasks, because the satisfied need for control can help internalize their work motivations and thus encourage them to invest more efforts [28]. As such, they are quite likely to perform better. Taken together, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Task crafting is positively related to employee performance.

The strengths-based psychological climate could affect the employees' judgment of the feasibility and value of task crafting, which will lead them to show different levels of task crafting behavior when they feel job insecurity. Furthermore, task crafting impacts upon employees' performance. Therefore, it is logical to consider that the interaction of job insecurity and strengths-based psychological climate may affect employee performance (Fig. 1). Thus, for employees who perceive a strong strengths-based psychological climate, when they feel job insecurity, they engage in more task crafting behavior because of the stronger feasibility and value of task crafting, resulting in improved performance. Conversely, for employees who perceive a weak strengths-based psychological climate together with job insecurity, their expected judgment on the feasibility and value of task crafting is lower, resulting in a lower likelihood of task crafting and poorer job performance. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: The interaction effects of job insecurity and strengths-based psychological climate affect job performance through the mediating role of task crafting.

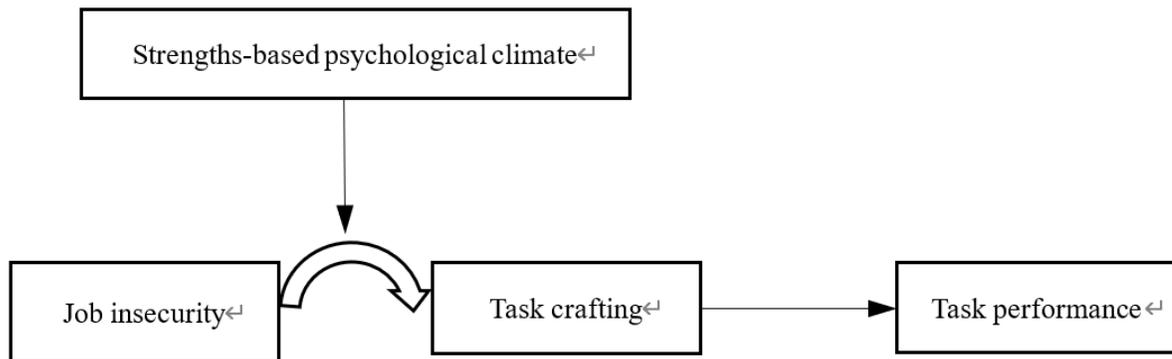


Figure 1: The research model

3 Method

3.1 Data Collection and Participants

We collected our data using a questionnaire survey in two waves. In the first phase, we sent out questionnaires in which we measured their demographic information, job insecurity, and strengths-based psychological climate using paper and internet-based surveys. In the second phase, which occurred two weeks after the first phase, we measured their task crafting and task performance.

The sample for this study was drawn from 10 companies from information technology, finance and real estate industries. Of all the 386 questionnaires distributed, 328 were returned and valid for inclusion in the data analysis. Of these valid samples, 40.5% were female and 59.5% were male. 58.5% of the samples were between 20 and 29 years old, while 22.9% were between 30 and 39 years old. Most of the samples had a Bachelor's (43.3%) or College degree (22.9%). Furthermore, most of the samples have organizational tenure of 3 to 5 years (54.6%) and are frontline employees (58.2%), 54.9% of these samples are from private enterprises, and 17.1% were from state-owned enterprises. Details of the demographic characteristics of the samples are shown in Tab. 1.

Table 1: Demographic data

	Number (%)		Number (%)
Gender		Organizational tenure (Years)	
Female	195 (59.5%)	2 and below	23 (7.0%)
Male	133 (40.5%)	3–5	179 (54.6%)
Age (Years)		6–8	64 (19.5%)
20 and below	1 (0.3%)	9–11	26 (7.9%)
20–29	192 (58.5%)	12–14	9 (2.7%)

30–39	75 (22.9%)	15 and over	27 (8.2%)
40–49	42 (12.8%)	Job tenure	
50 and over	18 (5.5%)	2 and below	9 (2.7%)
Education		3–5	121 (27.5%)
High school or under	53 (16.2%)	6–8	80 (24.4%)
College degree	75 (22.9%)	9–11	48 (14.6%)
Bachelor’s degree	142 (43.3%)	12–14	14 (5.3%)
Master’s or higher degree	58 (17.7%)	15 and over	56 (17.1%)
Nature of the enterprise		Position level	
State-owned enterprise	56 (17.1%)	Senior manager	9 (2.7%)
Private enterprise	180 (54.9%)	Middle manager	63 (19.2%)
Foreign enterprise	42 (12.8%)	Primary manager	65 (19.8%)
Joint venture enterprise	50 (15.2%)	Frontline employee	191 (58.2%)

3.2 Measures

Job insecurity was measured with a 3-item scale developed by Hellgren et al. and was proven to be applicable in domestic situations [21]. A sample item is “I am worried about having to leave my job before I would like to.” The measurement is on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was 0.89. Task crafting was measured with a 5-item scale developed by Slemp et al. [29]. A sample item is “Introduce new work tasks that you think better suit your skills or interests.” The measurement is on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was 0.83.

Task performance was measured with a 7-item scale developed by Williams et al. [30]. A sample item is “Meets formal performance requirements of the job.” The measurement is on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was 0.89.

Strengths-based psychological climate was measured with a 12-item scale (5 items for identification & development, 4 items for appreciation, and 3 items for use) developed by Van Woerkom et al. [18]. A sample item is “I gain recognition for activities I do well.” Measurement is on a five-point scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha) in this sample was 0.93.

Control variables of this study include the gender, age, education, job tenure, organizational tenure, position level and nature of the enterprise.

3.3 Data Analyses

All analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 22) and Mplus (Version 7.4). Firstly, we tested the discriminant validity with confirmatory factor analyses, followed by Harman’s single-factor test and confirmatory factor analyses to test the common method biases. We used descriptive statistics to analyze the means, standard deviations and Pearson correlations between the study variables.

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to assess the relationships between job insecurity and task crafting (Hypothesis 1). To test the possible moderation effect of strengths-based psychological climate on the relationship between the job insecurity and task crafting (Hypothesis 2), we conducted moderation analyses. Furthermore, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to test the relationships between task crafting and task performance (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we utilized bootstrapping to test the mediated moderation effect (Hypothesis 4).

4 Results

4.1 Confirmatory Factor Analyses and Test of Common Method Bias

We conducted confirmatory factor analyses to test the discriminant validity. The results of the confirmatory factor analyses are shown in Tab. 2. The results suggested that the four-factor model (job insecurity, task crafting, task performance, and strengths-based psychological climate) fit the data better than the other models. Thus, the discriminant validity of the four variables was confirmed.

Table 2: Results of confirmatory factor analyses

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
4-factor model	627.485	224	2.801	0.074	0.919	0.908
3-factor model	1166.918	227	5.141	0.112	0.811	0.789
2-factor model	1590.726	229	6.946	0.135	0.726	0.697
single-factor model	2841.375	230	12.354	0.186	0.475	0.422

Although this study collected data through two waves, which was in order to establish strong causality relationship, the common method biases cannot be completely avoided because the data were still from the same subject. We performed Harman's single-factor test to examine the common method biases. We processed all the items in the questionnaire as a factor, and the KMO value was 0.928, which met the criteria for factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis showed that the first factor explained 29.97% of the variance, and did not exceed the 50% standard recommended by Harrison et al. [31]. The test results suggested that there were no significant common method biases.

In addition, as shown in Tab. 2, the single-factor model had a poor fit for the data ($\chi^2/df = 12.354$, CFI = 0.475, TLI = 0.422, RMSEA = 0.186), the four-factor model has the best fitting effect ($\chi^2/df = 2.801$, CFI = 0.919, TLI = 0.908, RMSEA = 0.074). It can be concluded that there are no significant common method biases in our measurement.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among the Variables

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables are displayed in Tab. 3. Job insecurity was negatively related to task performance ($r = -0.28$, $p < 0.01$), positively associated with task crafting ($r = 0.31$, $p < 0.01$) and strengths-based psychological climate ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, task crafting was positively associated with strengths-based psychological climate ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.01$) and task performance ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$). Meanwhile, strengths-based psychological climate was positively associated with task performance ($r = 0.14$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 3: Means, standard deviations, and correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Gender	1.59	0.49										
Age	2.65	0.91	-0.26**									
Education	2.63	0.96	-0.06	-0.55**								
Job tenure	3.18	1.65	-0.15**	0.79**	-0.56**							
Organizational tenure	2.09	1.58	-0.29**	0.63**	-0.34**	0.62**						
Organizational Nature	2.86	1.31	0.09	0.25**	-0.38**	0.18**	0.04					
Position level	3.34	0.88	0.16**	-0.17**	-0.18**	-0.26**	-0.1	0.17**				
Job insecurity	2.94	1.37	0.19**	-0.06	-0.26**	-0.03	-0.18**	0.26**	0.28**			
Task crafting	3.73	0.91	-0.02	-0.1	-0.02	-0.11*	-0.13*	0.11	0.18**	0.31**		
SPC	3.74	0.93	0.11*	0	-0.1	0.03	-0.19**	0.23**	0.06	0.39**	0.46**	
Task performance	3.88	0.91	-0.27**	0.30**	0.12*	0.17**	0.23**	-0.04	-0.23**	-0.31**	0.23**	0.14*

Note. SPC = Strengths-based psychological climate.

4.3 Tests

Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to test our expectations. Before the hierarchical regression analysis, job insecurity and strengths-based psychological climate are grand-mean-centered. In Step 1, only the control variables were entered into the regression model. In Step 2, we entered the job insecurity and job insecurity squared. In Step 3, we entered strengths-based psychological climate. Finally, we entered the interaction terms. The dependent variable is task crafting.

We first examined the effect of job insecurity on task crafting. As shown in Model 2 of Tab. 4, after controlling for the effect of gender, age, education, job tenure, organizational tenure, nature of the enterprise, and position level, job insecurity ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.01$) and its square ($\beta = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$) both had a significant effect on task crafting, with R-squared increasing from 0.05 to 0.24 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.19$, $p < 0.01$). The result in Tab. 4 shows that there is an inverted U-shaped effect on job insecurity and task crafting. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 4: Results of mediating effect test

Variables	Task crafting			Task performance	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Gender	-0.07	-0.05	-0.03	-0.08	-0.07
Age	-0.06	-0.11	-0.10	0.35**	0.37**
Education	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.19**	0.18**
Job tenure	0.02	0.12	0.09	-0.04	-0.06
Organizational tenure	-0.10	-0.09	-0.05	0.02	0.03
Nature of the enterprise	0.11	-0.04	-0.09	-0.05	-0.03
Position level	0.14*	0.09	0.11*	-0.05	-0.07
JIS		0.33**	0.07	-0.25**	-0.26**
JIS-squared		-0.38**	-0.60**	-0.29**	-0.15*
SPC			0.46**	0.51**	0.41**
JIS * SPC			0.44**	0.12*	0.02
JIS-squared * SPC			0.18*	-0.22*	-0.26**
Task crafting					0.23**
R²	0.05	0.24	0.53	0.40	0.42
ΔR^2	0.05*	0.19**	0.29**	0.40**	0.02**

Note. JIS = job insecurity; SPC = strengths-based psychological climate.

Based on the regression results in Tab. 4, we drew an inverted U-shaped curve of job insecurity and task crafting, which is shown in Fig. 2. Fig. 2 visually shows the inverted U-shaped relationship between job insecurity and task crafting. Fig. 2 intuitively shows that, compared to low and high levels of job insecurity, medium-level job insecurity is more likely to lead to task crafting.

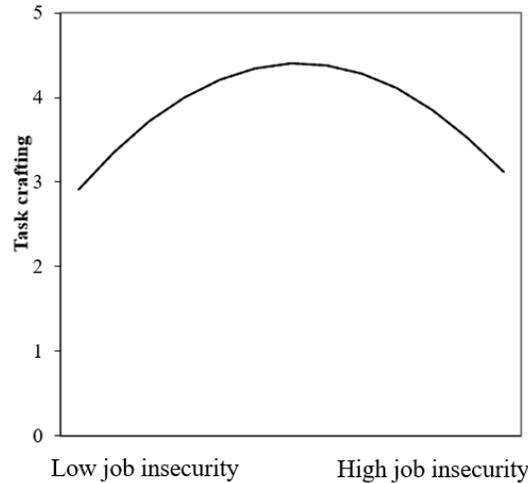
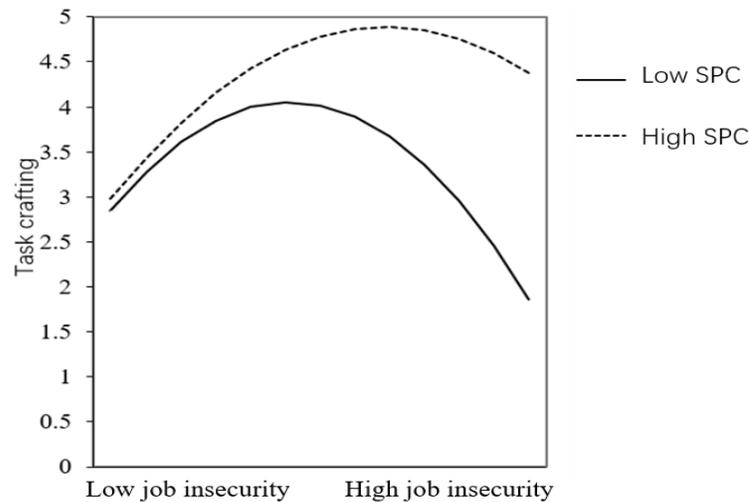


Figure 2: Inverted U-shape relationship between job insecurity and task crafting

Tab. 4 shows that strengths-based psychological climate significantly interacted with job insecurity to influence task crafting ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, strengths-based psychological climate significantly interacted with job insecurity-squared to influence task crafting ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$), and R^2 increased from 0.24 to 0.53 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$).

In order to intuitively show the pattern of the interactive effect, we depicted the simple main effects in Fig. 2 according to Cohen et al.'s [32] procedure. Fig. 2 shows that inflection point of the inverted U-shaped relation between job insecurity and task crafting shifted vertically as a function of strengths-based psychological climate. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, the relation between job insecurity and task crafting would become negative because the room of using task crafting as a psychological mechanism to deal with job insecurity becomes smaller as job insecurity increases. However, when strengths-based psychological climate is high, employees are more likely to perform task crafting, Hypothesis 2 was supported.



Note. SPC = strengths-based psychological climate.

Figure 3: Adjustment effect diagram of strengths-based psychological climate

The relationship between task crafting and task performance was tested using hierarchical regression. According to the data analysis results of Models 4 and 5 in Tab. 4, it indicates that under the control of related variables, task crafting is significantly positively correlated with task performance ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$). Hypothesis 3 was supported.

To examine the indirect effects and the mediated moderation effect, we use the BOOTSTRAP sampling method and the procedure suggested by Preacher et al. [33] for indirect effect testing. The results are shown in Tab. 5.

We multiplied the partial derivative of task crafting with respect to job security by the partial derivative of task performance with respect to task crafting as the indirect effect of job insecurity—strengths-based psychological climate on task performance through task crafting. Hypothesis 4 proposed that the interaction effects of job insecurity and strengths-based psychological climate affect task performance through the mediating role of task crafting. Tab. 5 shows 95% of the confidence intervals do not contain 0, indicating that the indirect effect is significant, and the mediating effect of task crafting exists. Moreover, in the case of low job insecurity, the value of its indirect effect on task performance is positive, and in the case of high job insecurity, the value of its indirect effect on task performance is negative, indicating that the mediating role of task crafting is nonlinear mediating. Tab. 4 shows that it reaches the inflection point of the curve earlier when strengths-based psychological climate is at low level (job insecurity is at medium level, effect size = -0.055) than strengths-based psychological climate is at high level (job insecurity is at medium level, effect size = 0.075), which means that strengths-based psychological climate moderates the mediating effect of task crafting. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 4: Results of moderated mediation effect test

Indirect relationship	Moderator variable	Job insecurity	Effect	CI (95%)	
				Lower	Upper
Job insecurity -> Task crafting -> Task performance	Strengths-based psychological climate	High	-0.105	-0.182	-0.043
		Medium	0.075	0.034	0.122
		Low	0.255	0.120	0.409
	Strengths-based psychological climate	High	-0.307	-0.486	-0.145
		Medium	-0.055	-0.095	-0.022
		Low	0.197	0.090	0.312

5 Discussion

In this article, we developed a curvilinear mediated moderation model drawing from the Expectancy theory of Vroom [25]. Our results show that there is an inverted U-shaped relationship between job insecurity and task crafting. In line with the previous research that a certain degree of job insecurity could bring positive results [34], we found that employees initiated more task crafting activities at intermediate level than at low or high levels of job insecurity and that job insecurity exerted an indirect curvilinear effect on task performance through task crafting.

Moreover, this research indicates that the strengths-based psychological climate moderates the relationship between job insecurity and task crafting. When the strengths-based psychological climate is stronger, the relationship between job insecurity and task crafting is more positive. This moderation result verifies the effect of the interaction between the motivation for job crafting and perceived opportunity to craft job, which is consistent with the opinion of Wrzesniewski et al. [17]. For employees who feel a strong strengths-based psychological climate, they are more positive about the feasibility of task crafting, and thus they are more likely to engage in task crafting which will decrease the negative effects of job insecurity. For employees who perceive a weak strengths-based psychological climate, they will believe that task crafting is less feasible and worthless, resulting in less task crafting. This reduction is more sharply observed when job insecurity is high.

The study also showed that the interaction effect of job insecurity and strengths-based psychological climate is transmitted to task performance through task crafting. When job insecurity is at intermediate level and the strengths-based psychological climates is strong, the level of task crafting of employees is high, which will lead to a higher task performance for employees. Taking task performance as the result variable reveals the possible positive results of job insecurity. By introducing the variable of task crafting,

we linked job insecurity with task performance, showing that task crafting can indeed be a key measure to cope with job insecurity, so that the positive effects of job insecurity can be exerted. Our results help advance the understanding of the relationship between job insecurity and positive behaviors and provides significant ideas on how to cope with job insecurity in management practice.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

We systematically analyzed the possible positive effects of job insecurity and its mechanism based on expectancy theory. Firstly, this study advances the understanding of the effects of job insecurity. Previous research on the effects of job insecurity has been mostly linear [35]. We explored the inverted U-shaped effect of job insecurity on employees' positive behavior and outcome. Meanwhile, most prior studies have focused on the negative effects of job insecurity, and insufficient attention has been paid to the motivational effects of negative emotion on employees' positive behaviors.

Secondly, our research deepens the current understanding of the influence mechanism and the corresponding coping mechanism of job insecurity. In the past, the influence mechanism of job insecurity was widely analyzed from the conservation of resource theory or psychological contract theory. We discussed the job insecurity from the perspective of job crafting based on expectancy theory, to provide a new perspective to understand the impact and mechanism of job insecurity. Meanwhile, our results also show that task crafting could be used as a positive response to job insecurity.

Thirdly, our research further indicated the boundary condition of job insecurity that affected task crafting, and analyzed the moderating effect of strength-based psychological climate on the relationship between job insecurity and task crafting, and clarified that when there was a stronger strength-based psychological climate in an organization, job insecurity predicted more task crafting, that was, when employees perceive their job as insecure at work, if strengths-based psychological climate is strong, employees would be more likely to engage in task crafting for improving task performance.

Fourthly, our research also contributes to the study of dependent variables of task crafting though our main contribution is to the job literature. In recent years, the potential incentives and mechanisms of job crafting have become the focus [36,37]. At present, scholars mainly analyze the antecedent variables of job crafting from individual factors [38,39], job characteristics [40], and leadership [41]. There is a dearth of attention to the motivational role of emotion. Our paper considers task crafting as a risk behavior that requires a certain motivation to be induced [42] and finds that job insecurity is one of the important antecedents of task crafting, which enriches and expands the research of antecedent variables of task crafting.

5.2 Managerial Implications

In order to cope with the rapidly changing market and survive in the intensified global competition, organizations have to take various measures to improve employee performance and reduce organizational operating costs, such as short-term employment, downsizing, technology upgrades, and organizational restructuring. These measures have inevitably affected the stability of the work environment, and produce job insecurity for employees. Thus, many researchers and practitioners have tried to find ways to reduce the negative impact of job insecurity on employees. Our model posits that job insecurity can be used to stimulate positive effects on task performance. This research has significant implications for managers. Our finding implies that managers should not take it for granted that employees always react negatively to job insecurity. It also suggests that a low to moderate degree of job insecurity may in fact motivate employees to take positive and proactive actions, such as encouraging employees to engage in task crafting. However, our model also indicates that once the job insecurity has exceeded a certain point, employees are unlikely to take positive actions to cope with job insecurity. Therefore, managers should take effective measures to reduce employee job insecurity, adjusting employee job insecurity to a reasonable level, so as to stimulate employees' positive behaviors.

Furthermore, our research suggests that managers should create certain conditions to encourage employees to take positive actions when they experience job insecurity. The moderating role of the

strengths-based psychological climate in this study shows that fostering a strong organizational atmosphere that identifies, develops, appreciates, and uses the individual strengths of employees can help them increase the perception of opportunities to engage in task crafting. Managers may design a training plan for developing the strengths of employees, communicate with employees about the training content and their strengths, encourage and support them when employees perform well and so on.

Finally, managers should encourage employees to engage in more task crafting which is better fit for their strengths. This study validates the significance of task crafting for individuals and organizations, and shows that more task crafting can improve employees' task performance. If employees have the ability and willingness to engage in task crafting, the organization should give full support, for example, reserving space for task crafting when designing work, giving feedback and supporting to the employees' reasonable task crafting.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations to the present study should be noted. First, although our study used a two-waved design and anonymous survey to collect data in order to improve the research validity, there might still be common method bias because all variables came from the same participant. Longitudinal studies or experiments may be the strict research design to establish the relationship of causality.

Second, tasking crafting as a process mechanism may not be effective under some circumstances (for example, production lines) because employees have no much chance to engage in task crafting under this circumstance. Although we believe that the conclusions of this study are applicable to most industries and jobs, we call for future research to investigate task-crafting behaviors about different job natures and industries.

Third, scholars have proposed that job insecurity has different dimensions. For example, Hellgren et al. [43] divided job insecurity into two dimensions: quantitative job insecurity and quality job insecurity; Greenhalgh et al. [20] believed that job insecurity includes losing the whole job and losing specific valuable characteristics of the job (such as, management changes, deteriorating relationships with colleagues). This study measures job insecurity as a single-dimension construct. In future work, we can use job insecurity as a multi-dimensional construct and examine the impact of each type.

Finally, job insecurity is a negative experience, and how employees react to it can be largely influenced by the external organizational environment. Future research can explore other environmental variables (such as, leadership styles) to regulate the relationship between job insecurity and task crafting.

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