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# Relationship of job crafting with job outcomes among frontline customer service employees: Moderating role of dysfunctional customer behavior

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✦ **ABSTRACT.** Questa ricerca si propone di presentare l'effetto moderatore del comportamento disfunzionale dei clienti sulla relazione tra job crafting e risultati lavorativi (soddisfazione lavorativa, stress lavorativo e lavoro emotivo) alla luce della teoria della conservazione delle risorse. Lo studio trasversale è stato condotto su 440 dipendenti del servizio clienti (345 uomini e 94 donne) che prestano servizio nei centri commerciali situati a Islamabad e Rawalpindi, in Pakistan. Questo studio conclude che il comportamento disfunzionale dei clienti è motivo di preoccupazione perché influisce sui risultati lavorativi dei dipendenti: le organizzazioni dovrebbero responsabilizzare i dipendenti formandoli per migliorare le loro risorse.

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✦ **SUMMARY.** *Dysfunctional customer behavior is a cause of concern due to its short and long-term impact on both employees as well as organizations. This paper aims to present the moderating effect of dysfunctional customer behavior on the relationship between job crafting and job outcomes (job satisfaction, job stress, and emotional labor) in light of the conservation of resource theory. This cross-sectional study was comprised of 440 frontline customer service employees (345 males and 94 females) serving in shopping malls located in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Results indicated a negative relationship of job crafting with job stress and a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Moreover, a positive relationship of dysfunctional customer behavior was found with job stress and emotional labor, and a negative relationship with job satisfaction was also found. Furthermore, it was found that dysfunctional customer behavior moderated the relationship of job crafting with job stress and emotional labor, but it didn't moderate the relationship of job crafting with job satisfaction. This study concludes that dysfunctional customer behavior is a cause of concern as it impacts the job outcomes of employees. Organizations should empower employees by training them to enhance their resources. Future studies may check for mediational pathways to enrich this finding.*

**Keywords:** *Dysfunctional customer behavior, Job crafting, Job outcomes, Conservation of resource theory, Frontline customer service employees*

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## INTRODUCTION

In any service setting, frontline customer service employees (FLCSEs) play a key role in customer satisfaction. Frontline service work (FLSW), which refers to the work in a subservient position, involves FLCSE's direct contact with a customer or recipient of a service, in which he/she is expected to focus on customer's satisfaction and well-being, (Subramony, Groth, Hu & Wu, 2021) along with managing workplace tensions to meet the goals specified by the management (Bélanger & Edwards, 2013). Notions like customer-first strategy and customer centrism, are widely adopted by individuals, businesses, and society, which keep prime focus on customers during service encounters (Bi, Choi, Yin & Kim, 2021). This creates an illusion (of social inequality) that employees have secondary importance (Hu & King, 2017), emitting a signal of superiority among customers, which also compels employees to perceive themselves as inferior since their job is to fulfill customers' needs (Kashif & Zarkada, 2015). This broadened gap makes the customers feel licensed to bargain with the employees (Bélanger & Edwards, 2013), be reluctant to stand in a queue or behave politely, in case of delayed services (Kashif, Braganca, Awang & De Run, 2017), and get involved in verbal abuse (even in physical abuse), thinking of them as inferior (Kashif & Zarkada, 2015). Dysfunctional customer behavior (DCB) is frequently seen (Harris & Daunt, 2013) to negatively impact employees, organizations, and other customers as well (Harris & Reynolds, 2003).

This paper aims to study the phenomenon of DCB in Pakistan. Having conservation of resource (COR) theory as the theoretical underpinning of our research framework, we assume that DCB acts as a stressor that impacts the relationship between personal resource (job crafting) and job outcomes (job stress, job satisfaction, and emotional labor) among FLCSEs in shopping malls. In Pakistan, limited findings exist in this realm with focus on service sectors such as beauty salons and transport industry (Nawaz et al., 2020), clothing retail outlet (Nawaz & Khan, 2020), banks (Kashif & Zarkada, 2015), cafés and coffee shops (Ahmed, Islam, Ahmad & Kaleem, 2021), hospitality industry (Raza, St-Onge & Ali, 2021), restaurant industry (Baig, Kamran & Malik, 2022), and in malls and shopping centers (Ali & Sajjad, 2018). Through this research, we have tried to bring attention to the occurrence of this behavior in shopping malls. No matter in which setting they work, FLCSEs face several challenges

that lead to many negative outcomes. DCB, being one of the biggest challenges, holds enough potential for further exploration.

## Dysfunctional customer behavior

In the past, several terms such as consumer misbehavior (Fullerton & Punj, 2004), customer unfairness (Berry & Seiders, 2008), jay-customer behavior, coined by Christopher Lovelock (Harris & Reynolds, 2003), deviant consumer behavior (Mills & Bonoma, 1979) and customer badness behavior (Yi & Gong, 2006) have been used to refer to this concept. The term DCB refers to certain actions by customers in service settings that violate general norms of conduct (Daunt & Harris, 2012; Kang & Gong, 2019), and may intentionally or unintentionally, overtly or covertly, disturb the functional service encounters (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Kang and Gong (2019) conceptualized it in three dimensions. First is verbal abuse, which refers to communication of anger (Grandey, Dickter & Sin, 2004) such as impolite language or yelling to humiliate the employees (Bi et al., 2021), which brings discomfort and hurts them because of disrespectful, devaluing, impatient, and rude verbal expressions (Li & Zhou, 2013). It may be observed during face-to-face, telephonic, or even virtual customer-employee interactions (Berry & Seiders, 2008). Second is disproportionate demands which come with an uneven power relationship whereby the customer puts forward excessive demands that the employees find difficult to meet (Kang & Gong, 2019), and is also reflected in the customer's belief in his authority to bargain with the supplier (Bélanger & Edwards, 2013). The third is illegitimate complaints (occur in rare circumstances) which refers to complaints that are made at any time for any reason in an attempt to attain the desired outcomes, unlike legitimate complaints which are functional (i.e. legitimate expressions of dissatisfaction) (Kang & Gong, 2019).

As Harris and Reynolds (2003) cite, factors that predominantly result in DCB by customers as per Fullerton and Punj's model (1993) include psychological factors (e.g., personality characteristics, moral development, gratification of aspirations, and thrill-seeking desires, etc.), demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, qualification, and financial standing etc.), and contextual factors (e.g., physical surroundings, range types of products/services offered, associated risks as well as the public image etc.). As explained by the power

perspective (Mills & Bonoma, 1979), a customer's perception of a store's comparative power also determines DCB (Harris & Reynolds, 2003) and customer dissatisfaction is also a contributor (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Three motive-based misbehaving customers are clustered as financial egoists, money grabbers, and ego revengers (Daunt & Harris, 2012).

Various findings have pointed out severe negative impacts of DCB in the form of emotional exhaustion (leading to employee withdrawal) (Kang & Gong, 2019), long-term psychological impact (sustained feelings of degradation and stress disorders), short-term emotional effects (emotional distress, feigned emotional response to mollify aggressive customers), behavioral effects, and in rare cases physical effects (Harris & Reynolds, 2003). The relationship between DCB-job stress-job satisfaction has also been pointed out (Bi et al., 2021). It is also a source of irritation, rage, remorse, worry, and depression among employees (Harris & Daunt, 2013). Moreover, it has also been found to affect cognitive performance (causing reduced task performance), recalling ability, working memory (Rafaeli et al., 2012), employee's capacity to satisfy customers (Al-Hawari, Bani-Melhem & Quratulain, 2020), and job performance along with job satisfaction (Chen, Kang, Wang & Zhou, 2021). Frequency of customer aggression was also found to significantly predict job-induced tension (Goussinsky, 2011). It is also notable that, in rare (non-injurious occasions), it draws a positive impact on teamwork (Harris & Reynolds, 2003); however, it is also associated with employee well-being (burnout), which further leads to employee incivility with customers as well (Nawaz et al., 2020).

## Job crafting

First devised by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), the term job crafting is characterized as an informal process, whereby employees play an active role in designing their work practice by initiating cognitive, physical, or social changes to align it with their individualistic interests and standards (Slomp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013) which are primarily done individually. It can happen formally/informally, with/without the involvement of managers (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2008) and its core feature is the bottom-up approach which empowers the employees to exercise the knowledge they have about themselves and their jobs; which contributes to its meaningfulness (Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) proposed three forms of job crafting. First is task crafting, which refers to altering a job's task boundaries (i.e., a formal set of responsibilities given in the job description). An employee can do it by changing the form (task nature), scope (amount of time, energy, and attention), and type or number of activities (adding or dropping tasks) while he/she performs his/her job. Second is cognitive crafting, which refers to a change in cognitive task boundaries, and focuses on an employee's vision and approach towards his job (i.e., either as a set of distinct work tasks or as a whole) making it personally more meaningful. Third is relational crafting, which refers to the changes in the relational aspects of the job; whereby an employee alters the quality, amount, and frequency of interaction, and decides whom to interact (more or less) with while executing his job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), being in charge (over a job), enhancing self-image at work, and building connections act as driving forces to craft a job. Other determinants include situational predictors (i.e., decision latitude, task interdependence, discretion to craft a job, etc.) and individual predictors (i.e., proactive personality, regulatory focus) (Demerouti, 2014). Job crafting generally occurs in three stages in which an employee (a) feels motivated to craft his/her job, (b) identifies and engages in available opportunities, and (c) visualizes associated outcomes upon him/her (Berg et al., 2008).

According to Berg and colleagues (2008), job crafting can affect an employee and his performance depending upon which task he/she completes, how he/she completes it, and the interpersonal dynamics of the workplace. Limited findings address outcomes of job crafting (Demerouti, 2014), yet it has been suggested that job crafting enhances job satisfaction (Li, Chen, Lyu & Qiu, 2016), occupational well-being and work performance (Rudolph, Katz, Lavigne & Zacher, 2017), organizational commitment and job performance (Siddiq et al., 2022). Moreover, it is negatively correlated with negative job outcomes such as work-related negative affect (Slomp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013), role stress (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload), burnout (Singh & Singh, 2018), exhaustion, cynicism, and workload (Hakanen, Seppälä & Peeters, 2017), and turnover intentions (Rudolph et al., 2017). Job crafting also positively correlated with surface acting as well as deep acting (Kim & Lee, 2017; Yang et al., 2022). Another study mentions a positive relationship between job crafting and deep acting (Ko, 2019). Similar constructs

to job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), such as initiative taking had a positive correlation with surface acting (Ikhida, Timur & Ogunmokun, 2023); OCB (Shagirbasha & Sivakumaran, 2021), personal initiative, and initiative climate (Sok, Danaher & Sok, 2021) had a negative relation with surface acting and positive association with deep acting.

In the current scenario, we viewed outcome variables specifically about employees' emotional sphericity. Hereby, job stress is the natural outcome when an employee goes through uncomfortable and unwanted feelings because he/she does not find himself/herself aligned with normal or self-desired functioning under the influence of opportunities, restraints, or demands that are related to potentially crucial work-related outcomes (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983). Job satisfaction also refers to the affective state of employees with respect to different job facets (MacDonald & MacIntyre, 1997). Lastly, emotional labor is seen specifically in two dimensions, which are surface acting (employee's modification and control of emotional expression) and deep acting (control of internal thoughts and feelings in accordance with the mandatory display rules). These two dimensions represent an internal approach to emotional labor which makes it an employee-focused approach (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002).

## Theoretical underpinning

According to the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), every individual has a pool of resources which he/she strives to obtain, retain, and protect (from losing). These resources, may vary from individual to individual (characterized by internal or external locus) and encompass anything which has value to the individual (in the form of objects, conditions, energies, and personal characteristics) (Hobfoll, 1989) or which help him/her combat against stressor(s) and gain further resources. Emphasizing personal characteristics, Hobfoll (1989) mentions that these act as resources as long as they help in alleviating stress. Moreover, investigations on various personal resources are also suggestive of the indication that many personal traits, as well as skills, assist in resisting stress (Hobfoll, 1989).

As highlighted by Lyons (2008) as well, frontline customer service employees, which is the target sample of our study, reflect a large amount of authority in their task responsibilities, and timings, as well as in their relationships at the workplace. The nature of this job demands spontaneous

and unsupervised changes in the individual's job roles with the aim to enhance its meaningfulness and to meet their own personal needs and do not primarily involve management in decision making. Furthermore, job crafting can majorly be studied under two broad conceptualizations that are role-based and resource-based approaches (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Resource-based approach, which follows the perspective given by Tims and Bakker (2010) revolves around an individual's alignment of job demands and resources as per his/her abilities and preferences (Szóts-Kováts & Kiss, 2023). Role-based approach, which is being discussed in our conceptual framework, follows Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) perspective that focuses on the motivational aspect and puts emphasis on employee-driven changes in work role boundaries and perceptions, assuming that it fulfills work meaningfulness and its related positive outcomes (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach., 2019). As Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2019) state, these motivations of an individual are grounded in his/her need to gain control, his/her positive self-image, and his/her workplace social relationships. Accordingly, Berg et al. (2013) noted that employees make use of three personal characteristics (motives, strengths, and passion) to support their crafting efforts to make their jobs more meaningful. From a COR perspective, job crafting can be viewed as motivational energy, and keeping in view the discussed arguments, it is visible that it closely aligns with the conceptualization of personal characteristics.

Revolving around the stress theory of COR (Hobfoll, 1989), stress may occur in response to the physical environment which holds (a) risk of net loss of resources (anticipated or feared stress), (b) the net loss of resources (actual stress), or (c) lack of resource gain following the investment of resources (unsuccessful investment of resources by the person himself). DCB may act as an overwhelming phenomenon in work settings, resulting in actual loss, fear of loss, or hindrance in gaining further resources. It may also result in 'loss spirals' (corollary 2; COR theory) and the resulting loss of resources (principle 1; COR theory) is more salient (disproportionately) than the resource gain, in speed and in degree, which may elevate negative outcomes of one's job.

In light of empirical and theoretical evidence, we propose the following hypotheses:

H1: dysfunctional customer behavior shall moderate the relationship between job crafting and job stress such that it will be weakened, among frontline customer service employees;

H2: dysfunctional customer behavior shall moderate the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction such that it will be weakened, among frontline customer service employees;

H3: dysfunctional customer behavior shall moderate the relationship between job crafting and surface acting such that it will be weakened, among frontline customer service employees;

H4: dysfunctional customer behavior shall moderate the relationship between job crafting and deep acting such that it will be weakened, among frontline customer service employees (see Figure 1).

## METHOD

### Participants

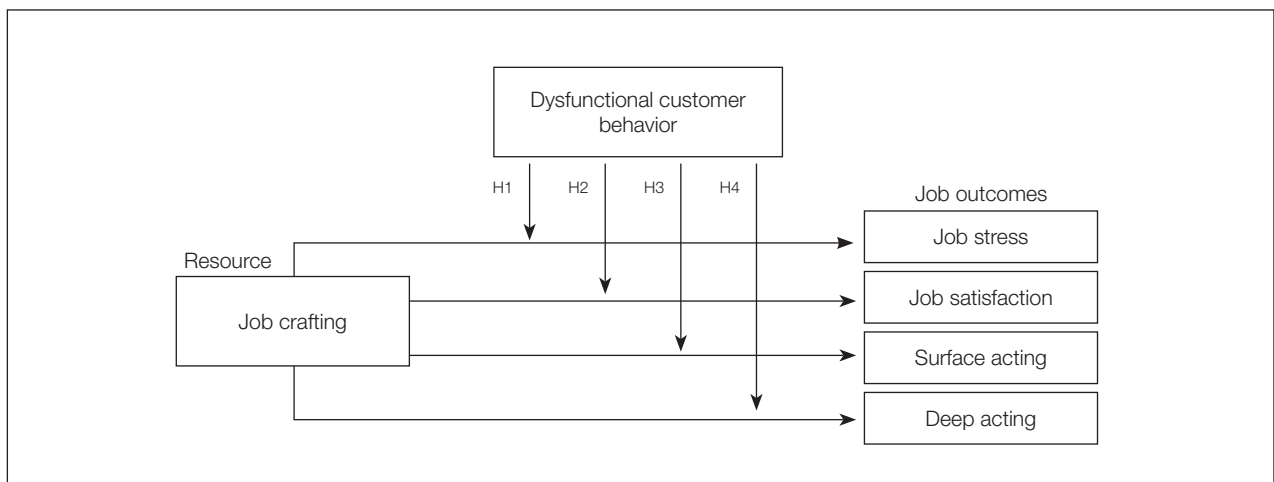
FLCSEs with an experience of 6 months (or more) at their workplace and having 12 years of education (and above) were included. FLCSEs ( $N = 440$ ; males = 345, females = 94) serving in shopping malls located in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan having an age range of 17-56 years ( $M = 26.7$ ,  $SD = 5.8$ ) and work experience ranging from 1-30 years ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 3.31$ ) participated in this study.

Participants were undergraduates ( $n = 283$ ) and graduates ( $n = 154$ ), whose per day work hours ranged from 3-14 hours ( $M = 9.8$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ). On average each participant took 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

### Measures

- *Demographic sheet.* The demographic sheet inquired the respondents about their job title, place of work (and branch), per day work hours, per week work hours, job experience, type of organization (clothing, restaurant, etc.), gender (male or female), year of birth and age, and qualification.
- *Dysfunctional Customer Behavior Scale.* It is a 13-item scale (Kang & Gong, 2019) that was used to measure how often the respondent has experienced DCB. It has three subscales verbal abuse, disproportionate demands, and illegitimate complaints which are measured via a 5-point Likert scale (1= never to 5= always). There is no reverse-scored item and the reliability value for the scale is .85.
- *Job Crafting Questionnaire.* It is a 15-item scale (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013) which was used to measure the extent to which an employee engages in job crafting activities. It has three subscales (5 items each) namely

**Figure 1** – Conceptual framework of this study



task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting measured through a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). None of the items are reverse scored and Cronbach alpha for the entire scale as mentioned by the author is .91.

- *Job Stress Scale*. It is a 13-item scale (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983) which was used to measure job stress among employees specifically in time stress and anxiety dimension. It used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). None of the items are reverse-scored. The reliability of this measure is reported to be .91 (Shabir, Abrar, Baig & Javed, 2014). A modified version of this scale (Bukhari & Kamal, 2017) was used.
- *Generic Job Satisfaction Scale*. It is a 10-item scale (MacDonald & MacIntyre, 1997) which was used to measure job satisfaction on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). None of the items is reverse scored. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale reported by the author is .77. The word "get along" in item 9 of the scale was modified to "on good terms" with the author's permission.
- *Emotional Labor Scale*. It is a 15-item scale (Brotheridge and Lee, 2003) which measures emotional display in six dimensions (frequency, intensity, variety of emotional display, the duration of interaction, surface acting, and deep acting). The first four dimensions cover the job-focused emotional labor such that they showcase perceived interpersonal work demands. Having focus on employee's internal and affective state, the present study utilized 9 items from the two subscales (deep acting and surface acting) to measure employee-focused emotional labor, as these focus on employee's process of emotion management, which is an internal approach to emotional labor. It uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never to 5 = always). None of the items are reversed scored. Reliability values for subscales are .93 for surface acting and .95 for deep acting (Kim, Yoo, Lee & Kim, 2012).

## Procedure

After obtaining permission from relevant administrative authorities, FLCSEs working in different shopping malls in Islamabad and Rawalpindi were approached individually via convenient purposive sampling technique during their working hours and were requested to participate in the

research after signing out the consent form. Out of 500 distributed questionnaires, 462 were returned. Out of these, 440 were found acceptable.

## RESULTS

### Control variables

In the present study, gender, age (in years), educational qualification, job experience (in years), work hours per day, and work hours per week, were entered prior to study variables to control their impact on outcome variables as seen in light of literature (Ali & Sajjad, 2018; Cheng, Jiang, Xie & Liu, 2022; Dhamija, Gupta & Bag, 2019; Karatepe, Uludag, Menevis, Hadzimehmedagic & Baddar, 2006). The main focus of the study was to determine the moderating impact of DCB. Therefore, demographic variables were first entered together to view their combined effect.

### Data analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics (version 20) was used to carry out all the analysis except for CFA which was carried out with the help of IBM SPSS Amos (version 22). Mean, standard deviations and correlations were computed. CFA was performed to check the factor structure of the scales. Standardized scores were used to create interaction terms in priori to hierarchical multiple regression to check the moderating impact of DCB.

### Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among study variables

Table 1 shows that the alpha coefficients of all the instruments range from .73 to .88 indicating them as reliable (Field, 2013). As a general guideline, a skewness value between -1 and +1 is considered excellent (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2022), whereas an accepted range of value for kurtosis is -2 to +2 (George & Mallery, 2009). This indicates that data was normally distributed. Job crafting had a non-significant relationship with dysfunctional customer behavior, surface acting, and deep acting, whereas it was negatively associated with job stress, and positively associated with job satisfaction.

**Table 1** – Descriptive statistics and alpha reliability coefficients of instruments

Var.	$\alpha$	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skew.	Kurt.	1	2	3	4	5	6
DCB	.86	29.25	9.47	.56	.19	–					
JC	.85	54.43	10.95	–.22	–.51	–.08	–				
JS	.88	40.41	10.07	–.65	.72	.43**	–.28**	–			
GJS	.86	38.63	6.54	–.44	–.07	–.28**	.35**	–.33**	–		
SA	.76	17.97	5.49	–.14	–.27	.38**	–.08	.54**	–.22**		
DA	.73	9.72	3.09	–.29	–.46	.28**	.02	.43**	–.12**	.56**	

*Legenda.* DCB = dysfunctional customer behavior; JC = job crafting; JS = job stress; GJS = general job satisfaction; SA = surface acting; DA = deep acting; Skew. = skewness; Kurt. = Kurtosis.

Table 2 shows that CFA validated the factor structure of all the instruments. It is suggested that  $\chi^2/df$  in the range of 2 to 1 or 3 to 1 indicates an acceptable fit (Carmines & McIver, 1981; Marsh & Hocevar, 1985 as cited in IBM SPSS AMOS). NFI and CFI having values greater than .90, and GFI, and AGFI with a value close to 1 indicate good fitness of model (Byrne, 2016). TLI with a value closer to .95 is indicative of good fit (as cited in Byrne, 2016). RMSEA value less than .05 indicates a good fit (Brown & Cudek, 1993 as cited in Byrne, 2016), and SRMR in a well-fit model stays small i.e. .05 or less (Byrne, 2016). Items are retained in their respective scales based on factor loading which should be equal to or greater than .3 (Stevens, 2012). All the values were in range. Errors were allowed to co-vary where values of model fit indices were not in range. From a single to a maximum of three covariances were added.

Table 3 presents the results of moderated multiple regression analysis with job stress, job satisfaction, surface acting and deep acting as outcomes, job crafting as predictor, and DCB as moderator. Model 1 in Table 2 explains the combined prediction of demographics as control variables (gender, age, education, job experience, and work hours per day), which in total account for a variance of 5% in

the outcome variable when it is job stress, 9% variance in job satisfaction, and 4% variance in surface acting, and 2% variance in deep acting. Model 2 explains that job crafting brings a 6% variance in job stress, 9% variance in job satisfaction, and 0% i.e no variance in surface and deep acting. Model 3 explains that DCB accounts for a 17% variance in job stress, 6% variance in job satisfaction, and 13% variance in surface acting and 8% deep acting. Model 4 shows the interaction effect of the moderator variable on outcome variables. It is seen to be significant upon job stress ( $\beta = .15, p < .001$ ) bringing an additional variance of 2% (Hypothesis 1; supported); surface acting ( $\beta = .12, p \leq .05$ ) bringing an additional variance of 1% (Hypothesis 3; supported), and upon deep acting ( $\beta = .12, p \leq .05$ ) bringing an additional variance of 1% (Hypothesis 3; supported). It is also evident that it has a non-significant moderating impact on job satisfaction ( $\beta = .05, p = .86$ ) (Hypothesis 2; not supported). Altogether, models 1, 2, 3, and 4 account for a total of 30% of variance in job stress, 24% variance in job satisfaction, and 18% variance in surface acting, and 11% variance in deep acting.

From Figure 2, it is evident that the slope of inverse relationship between job crafting and job stress is the steepest

**Table 2** – Confirmatory factor analysis of all the instruments used in study

Variable	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	GFI	CFI	TLI	NFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
DCBS <sup>a</sup>	112.34	60	1.87	.96	.97	.96	.94	.94	.05	.04
JCQ <sup>b</sup>	180.12	87	2.07	.95	.94	.92	.89	.93	.05	.04
JSS <sup>a</sup>	118.98	62	1.91	.96	.97	.96	.94	.94	.05	.04
GJSS <sup>a</sup>	72.06	32	2.25	.97	.97	.96	.95	.95	.05	.03
ELS <sup>a</sup>	61.86	25	2.47	.97	.96	.95	.94	.95	.06	.04

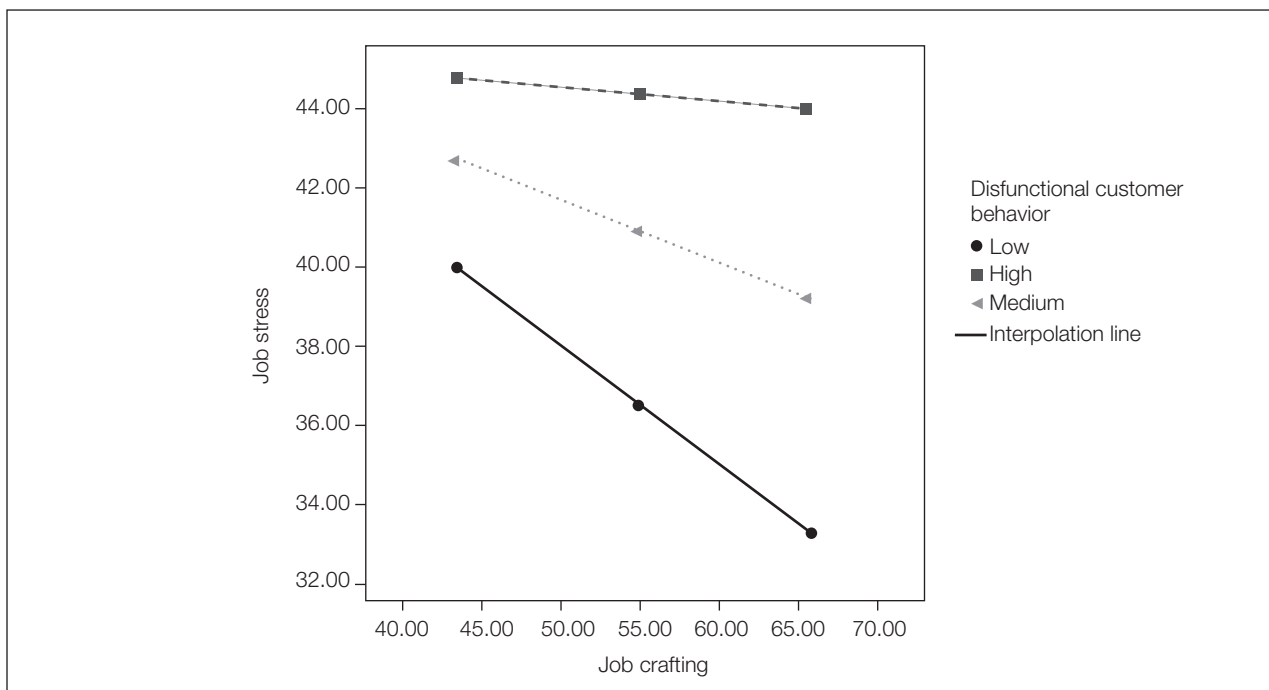
*Legenda.* df = degree of freedom; GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; NFI = Normed Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Square Residual; DCBS = *Dysfunctional Customer Behavior Scale*; JCQ = *Job Crafting Questionnaire*; JSS = *Job Stress Scale*; GJSS = *Generic Job Satisfaction Scale*; ELS = *Emotional Labor Scale*.

*Note.* Table presents confirmatory factor analysis for all the instruments.

<sup>a</sup> Error covariances were added. <sup>b</sup> Error covariances were not added. For any instrument, single or a maximum of three error covariances were added.

Surface acting and deep acting are subscales of emotional labor scales.

**Figure 2** – Dysfunctional customer behavior as moderator between job crafting and job stress





**Table 3** – Moderated regression on job stress, job satisfaction, surface acting and deep acting with job crafting as predictor and dysfunctional customer behavior as moderator

Predictor	Job stress		Job satisfaction		Surface acting		Deep acting	
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Model 1 (Control) <sup>a</sup>	.05		.09		.04		.02	
Model 2	.06		.09		.00		.00	.
Job crafting		-.25***		.31***		-.06		.04
Model 3	.17		.06		.13		.08	
Job crafting		-.21***		.29***		-.03		.06
DCB		.42***		-.25***		.37***		.28***
Model 4	.02		.00		.01		.01	
Job crafting		-.20***		.29***		.02		.08
DCB		.40***		-.25***		.35***		.26***
Job crafting x DCB		.15***		.05		.12*		.12*
Total $R^2$	.30		.24		.18		.11	

*Legenda.* DCB = dysfunctional customer behavior.

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Control variables include gender (0 = male, 1 = female), age, education (0 = undergraduate, 1 = graduate), job experience, per day work hours and per week work hours.

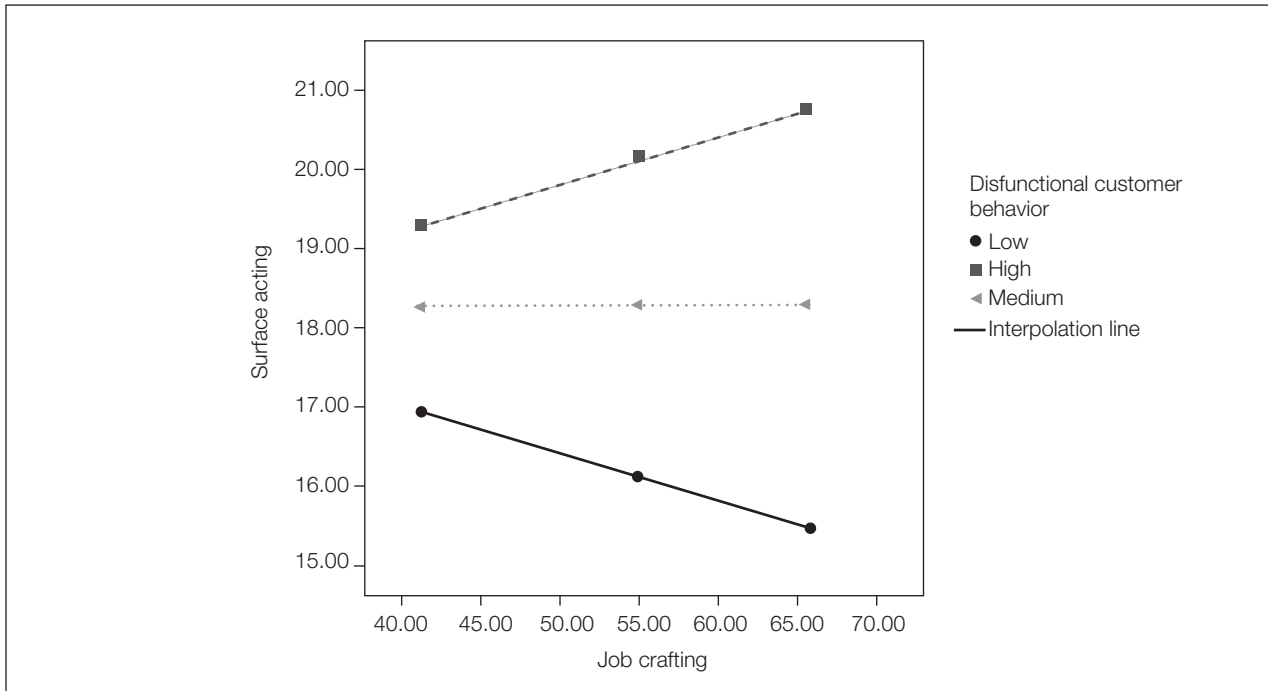
\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

(i.e., strongest) when DCB is at the lowest. At the mean level of moderator, the slope for job crafting and job stress becomes less steeper which shows that the relationship is weakened. At the highest level of moderator, the steepness of the slope shows that the relationship between job crafting and job stress is the weakest, indicating that increase in level of job crafting and brings the least decrease in job stress at high level of DCB. This shows that as the level of DCB increases the negative relation between job crafting and job stress is weakened, which implies that more job stress is experienced.

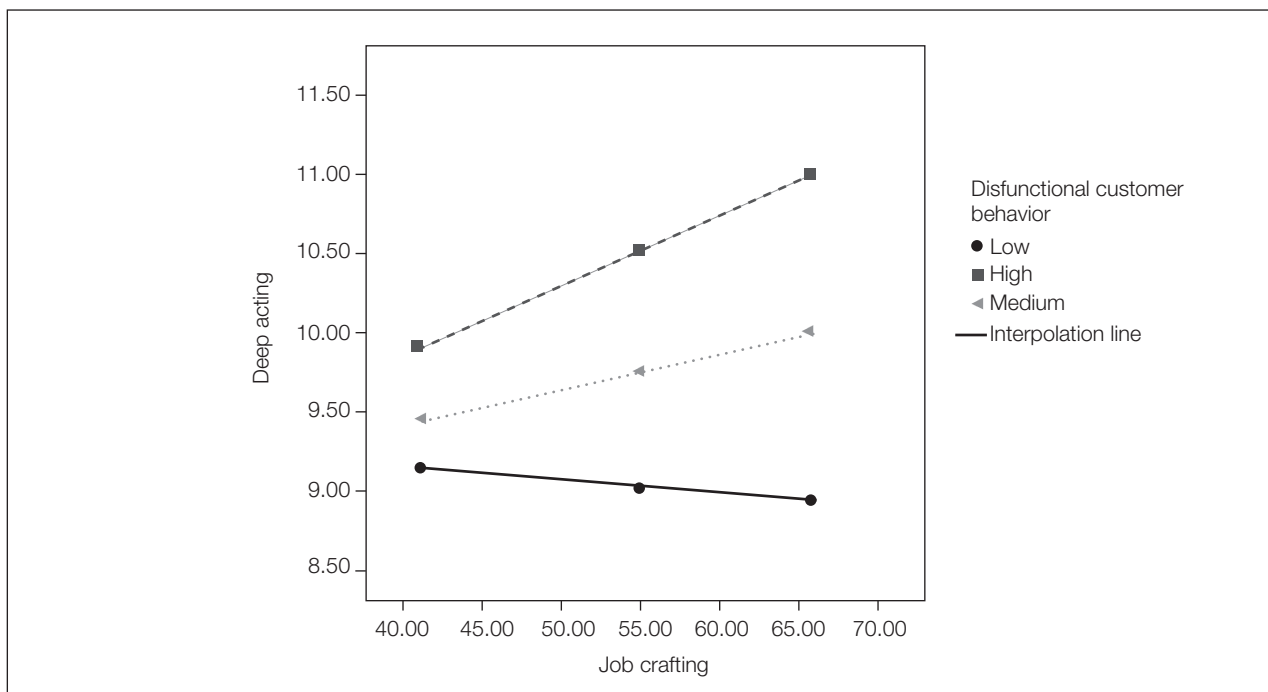
Figure 3 and Figure 4 represent the moderating effect of DCB on the relationship of job crafting with surface acting

and deep acting, respectively. In both the figures, it is evident that the slope of inverse relationship of job crafting with surface acting and deep acting is the steepest (i.e., strongest) when DCB is at the lowest. At mean level of moderator, the slope for job crafting and emotional labor becomes weakened (in both), and at the highest level of DCB, the steepness of the slope in positive direction shows that the relationship between job crafting and job stress becomes positive, indicating that as level of job crafting increases, increases amount of surface acting and deep acting both are experienced at the highest level of DCB. This proves that the stated Hypothesis 3 and 4 is supported.

**Figure 3** – Dysfunctional customer behavior as moderator between job crafting and surface acting



**Figure 4** – Dysfunctional customer behavior as moderator between job crafting and deep acting



**Table 4** – Mean differences in gender across study variables

Var.	Males (n = 345)		Females (n = 94)		t	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
DCB	29.70	9.57	27.56	8.97	1.94	.05	-.02	4.30	–
JC	54.13	11.25	55.63	9.74	1.17	.24	-4.00	1.01	–
JS	40.13	10.37	41.45	8.90	1.13	.26	-3.62	.98	–
GJS	38.18	6.75	40.26	5.50	3.08	.00	-3.41	-.75	.31
SA	17.84	5.47	18.43	5.62	.91	.36	-1.84	.67	–
DA	9.61	3.13	10.10	2.98	1.34	.18	-1.19	.23	–

*Legenda.* Var. = variable; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; DCB = dysfunctional customer behavior; JC = job crafting; PC = psychological capital; JS = job stress; GJS = generic job satisfaction; SA = surface acting; DA = deep acting.

Table 4 reflects that gender wise significant difference only exists in job satisfaction, where it is evident that females experience more job satisfaction in comparison to males. There were non-significant mean differences found in both the genders across dysfunctional customer behavior, job crafting, job stress, surface acting, and deep acting.

## DISCUSSION

FLCSEs often experience rude and misbehaving customers, which tends to impact them in multiple ways (Chen et al., 2021; Goussinsky, 2011; Harris & Reynolds, 2003; Kang & Gong, 2019; Nawaz et al., 2020). The present study addresses the moderating impact DCB on the relationship between personal resource (job crafting) and job outcomes (job stress, job satisfaction, and emotional labor) under the theoretical support of conservation of resource theory. The framework is tested among FLCSEs who serve customers in shopping malls. More specifically, data was collected from (FLCSEs) from the twin cities i.e. Islamabad and Rawalpindi, in Pakistan. Findings unveiled that DCB

when interacts with job crafting accounts for 2% change in job stress which is significant (see Table 2), supporting Hypothesis 1 of the study. This implies that DCB weakens the negative relationship between job crafting and job stress among FLCSEs. It is evident from literature that DCB not only brings serious consequences in the form of job stress (Bi et al., 2021), but also has a negative impact on cognitive performance of employees which ultimately diminishes their task performance (Rafaeli et al., 2012). It emotionally impacts employees which causes them to feel negative emotions and causing them to feel worried and irritated (Harris & Daunt, 2013). In light of COR theory, it can be said that DCB tends to diminish the resources present, resulting in an increased negative impact in the form of job stress.

The interaction between job crafting and DCB brought no change when outcome variables were job satisfaction (Hypothesis 2; not supported). Job satisfaction is taken as an affective state, which also keeps a positive correlation with job crafting (see Table 1), implying that, as job crafting increases, job satisfaction also increases, by multiplying an employee's meaningfulness of his/her job. As a result, the relationship between these constructs is not diminished by DCB.

However, DCB significantly moderated the relationship of job crafting with surface acting and deep acting by weakening it (Hypotheses 3 and 4; supported). The results are in line with the previous literature which points out the negative impact of DCB on job outcomes (Al-Hawari et al., 2020; Bi et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021; Goussinsky, 2011; Harris & Reynolds, 2003). Surface acting is about suppression of emotions, and DCB positively correlates with surface acting, giving a plausible explanation on its negative impact. Furthermore, acting as a stressor (based on COR theory), DCB also has the capacity to deteriorate resources. It is also seen to positively correlate with deep acting, which signifies that the employee puts in more effort in trying to genuinely feel the required emotions, which itself may be a cause of resource loss, as it consumes energy (in context of COR).

Overall, literature supports that job crafting itself occurs in stages and the very first step demands one's motivation to craft a job (Berg et al., 2008). Moreover, job crafting itself is said to be determined by situational as well as individual predictors (Demerouti, 2014). This explains that job crafting, although closely aligned with conceptualization of personal resource, has the capacity to be affected by an external stressor, that is also evident in our results.

Table 4 showed that there were non-significant mean differences, found in all the study variables except for job satisfaction, which was seen more in female FLCSEs. In accordance with socialization perspective (learning norms and beliefs in accordance with the society), individuals are expected to behave gender appropriately towards the opposite gender (Dormann, Brod & Engler, 2017). Additionally, females stand better at decoding non-verbal behavior than males (Hall et al., 2000 as cited in Dormann et al., 2017), implying that female employees are capable of detecting stressor earlier as compared male employees that helps them adapt accordingly, ultimately experiencing lesser stress and more satisfaction.

## Theoretical implications

As discussed previously, this research contributes by adding to the limited literature that has been discussed in this particular realm, specifically in Pakistan. This research taps many areas at once, such that it explains the powerful interaction of DCB with job crafting and its impact on job

outcomes. Secondly, most of the studies tend to focus on the moderating impact job resources on employee outcomes. To the best of our thorough literature search, none or only handpicked research findings have tried to explore moderating role of job demands or job stressors. Keeping this in view, it can be assumed that our study is among the first few studies to explore how job stressor in the form of DCB impacts the relationship between personal resources and job outcomes. It is evident from our study that DCB holds a powerful impact, that also affects the resource pool of FLCSEs. This calls for the need to introduce management strategies to cater the customers' needs as well as to provide FLCSEs with training that can give a boost to their personal resources, and hence enhanced profitability of the business. It suggests that organizational firms must take care of mental health of their employees by collaborating with counsellors to provide their services. Some useful strategies provided by Harris and Daunt (2013) include training via roleplays, footage of actual customers, emotional labor discussion sessions etc. can be practically implemented.

## Limitations

Due to paucity of time, the current study could only utilize data from malls located in only two cities of Pakistan. During the "sales promotion events" data could not be collected effectively due to enhanced customer influx in shopping malls. All the questionnaires used in this research were self-report questionnaires, which means that the responses may be subject to bias. Only shopping malls were marked to collect data, hence the results are limited towards generalization in other service settings where customer misbehavior is also faced. Uneven distribution of participants with respect to gender is attributed to cultural difference (male dominant society), as females are not commonly seen to be performing jobs, especially in service sector. Future research can address this limitation by taking care of sample distribution. In times of sale promotion offers, due to enhanced customer influx, data collection faced delays as well. Future studies can study this phenomenon in this specific context to analyze consumer behavior.

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