

The Role of Occupational Self-Efficacy as a Mediator between Paradoxical Leadership and Job Crafting from the Lens of Proactive Motivation Theory

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- By utilizing the theory of the proactive motivation model, the mediation effect of occupational self-efficacy between paradoxical leadership and job crafting has been examined in this study.

Study Design/methodology/approach- This study adopted a temporally segregated research design for two time intervals, 1 month apart; we collected data from 422 employees from the telecom sector of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Findings- Using SMART PLS-SEM, the findings showed that the relationship between paradoxical leadership and job crafting was mediated by occupational self-efficacy. The data supported the hypothesized relationships.

Research Practical Implications- The study highlights the significance of employees' proactive behavior providing practical insights for managers and identifies occupational elements by incorporating the model of proactive motivation theory. Organizations can undertake leadership training that is specifically designed to promote proactivity. Managers should create a balanced leadership and conducive environment to initiate occupational self-efficacy that can promote proactivity in job crafting.

Originality/value- There is limited research on the topic of paradoxical leadership that can align with the proactivity of employees who have been efficacious at work. These findings offer insight into how employees' occupational self-efficacy can initiate the proactivity of job crafting in a dynamic environment.

Keywords: Theory of proactive motivation model, paradoxical leadership, Occupational self-efficacy, Job crafting

JEL Classification Codes: J2, J24, L8, M1, M1,M12

1 | INTRODUCTION

An increasingly competitive and globalized labor market is putting pressure on businesses and their workers to adapt, transform, acquire, and upgrade continuously to secure long-term sustainability and improved financial and operational results (Khan et al., 2024). People must go above and beyond their job activities to succeed in today's increasingly complicated workplaces; these behaviors are referred to as "proactive" behaviors (Kim & Beehr, 2021; Rudolph & Zacher, 2021). The complexity and dynamism of today's business environment, along with the quick advancement of information technology (Adigwe et al.,

2023), have made organizational members' proactive conduct increasingly essential for effectiveness and efficiency. It could be quite challenging to stay up with the fast-paced and competitive business world without the active participation of employees in the form of ideas, initiatives, and feedback (Lidman et al., 2023). Nowadays, employers place a higher importance on workers who go above and beyond their conventional roles in the organization to support both their specific positions within the company and its overall success (Chughtai et al., 2023; Guohao et al., 2021).

One of the most important constructs that depicts an employee's proactiveness includes job crafting. Job crafting is the process by which a person alters an existing position to better suit his or her strengths and shortcomings in terms of cognition, physical ability, and social interaction (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The means of depicting how employees exploit personal resources and future possibilities to customize their work by vigorously modifying their jobs, methods, and relations with others at the workplace (Batool et al., 2023). Instead of depending only on tried-and-true techniques, organizations tend to support creative activities like job crafting, which allow employees to visualize their jobs in a better way that suits their interests and skills (Park & Park, 2023).

Leadership actions inspire workers to work toward the company's vision and purpose, and they pave the way for those goals to be achieved despite obstacles (Chughtai et al., 2023). In other words, leaders who engage in deliberate, purposeful interactions with their staff are more likely to foster an environment where their workers can maximize their productivity and effectiveness in their jobs (Ma et al., 2023). Contradictory yet interconnected elements that exist concurrently and continue over time. Smith and Lewis (2011) sum up a paradoxical viewpoint. Paradoxical Leadership serves as a source of inspiration for workers, motivating them to strive toward the organization's vision and purpose (Kundi et al., 2023). To attain success, paradoxical leaders effectively manage the conflicting demands of several agendas, including but not limited to maintaining continuity while embracing change, addressing both urgent and long-term concerns, and balancing self-interest with group goals (Kundi et al., 2023). In Pakistan, which is characterized as a high-power distance society, leaders predominantly adopt an authoritative leadership style (Abbas & Ali, 2023) which impacts the level of initiative related to the job, displayed by employees often known as job crafting.

The current study proposes that occupational self-efficacy might serve as a mediating concept according to the proactive motivation theory of Parker et al. (2010). Occupational self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability and expertise to handle varied work-related difficulties (Klaeijssen et al., 2018). Individuals who possess intrinsic motivation and a willingness to witness new experiences are more inclined to actively pursue innovative methods to improve their work environment (Mielniczuk & Laguna, 2020) and provoke proactive outcomes such as job crafting. Occupational self-efficacy is linked to the inclination to develop innovative approaches to work and proactively take action (Islam et al., 2024). This study suggests that occupational self-efficacy can be considered as a proactive motivating system, initiated by paradoxical leadership to provoke job crafting.

This study significantly contributes to the body of knowledge and literature on paradoxical leadership by adopting an inspirational, proactive stance and concentrating on the individual results. Current research focuses on identifying the causal factor that fosters workers' proactive expression of job crafting while identifying the role of occupational self-efficacy as the connecting link of paradoxical leadership and

employee proactivity (job crafting) and as mediation studies, which would aid in guiding how to intervene from the lens of the theory of proactive motivation model.

1.2 | Research Questions

The study seeks to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the predictors, motivating mechanisms, and factors that impact proactive results by underpinning the theory of Proactive Motivation given by Parker et al., 2010. This research study has the following research objectives:

1. To explore the effect of paradoxical leadership on employee's proactivity in job crafting.
2. To explore the effect of paradoxical leadership on employee's occupational self-efficacy.
3. To explore the effect of occupational self-efficacy on employee's proactivity in job crafting.
4. To explore the mediating effect of occupational self-efficacy on paradoxical leadership and employee proactivity in job crafting.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Theory of Proactive Motivation Model as an Overarching Theory

The model of proactive motivation developed by Parker et al. (2010) specifically emphasizes the comprehension of how individuals initiate and maintain proactive behaviors to accomplish work-related objectives. Proactivity is assuming control of situations, anticipating possible problems, and capitalizing on chances to instigate change (Khan et al., 2024). The Proactive Motivation Model posits that motivation in the workplace is not exclusively influenced by external stimuli like rewards, structures, or penalties, but is also a proactive process wherein individuals actively design their objectives, tactics, and activities to attain desired outcomes (Parker et al., 2010). The model argues that the proactive processes by which individuals harness personal and contextual aspects to stimulate their motivation and behavior ultimately result in enhanced organizational outcomes.

The proactive motivation hypothesis advocates that there are fundamental approaches that result in the development of proactive objectives and behaviors. An example of such a technique is the representation of possible future events and their accompanying results. Through actively participating in this intentional endeavor, individuals can enhance their ability to align with their environment, optimize the internal dynamics of their organizations, and cultivate a harmonious rapport with their external circumstances (Din et al., 2023). This may need personal growth through the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and methods. It may be necessary to alter external variables, such as the behaviors of others or your working conditions.

Drawing from the theory of the proactive motivation model (Parker et al., 2010), which advises that the employee's proactive behavior is a function of external driving factors or contextual circumstances along with some personal factors, it is stated that paradoxical leaders may influence the employee's occupational self-efficacy which in turn results into their positive proactive behaviors, like, job crafting. Paradoxical leadership is a managerial approach that fosters and advocates for innovation, creativity, and adaptability in the workplace (Kundi et al., 2023), intending to benefit all stakeholders. Businesses that implement paradoxical leadership create a productive environment that promotes the growth and success of their employees (Bajaba et al., 2021). This research study proposes that organizations can improve proactive behaviors related to job crafting by keeping individuals who possess self-efficacy and by emphasizing specific

leadership styles. The current study aims to demonstrate that when there is effective leadership, such as paradoxical leadership, employees engage in proactive job crafting and their occupational belief can act as a mediator, facilitating positive outcomes, through a mediation model (see Figure 1).

2.2 | Paradoxical Leadership and Job Crafting

Paradoxical leadership is the skill of leaders to successfully manage the needs of their followers and the goals of their organization by using strategies that may seem contradictory ([Le et al., 2020](#)). The concept of paradoxical leadership involves balancing five essential components: (1) striking a balance between self-centeredness and other-centeredness (SO); (2) maintaining both distance and closeness (DC); (3) treating subordinates consistently while allowing individualization (UI); (4) enforcing work necessities while permitting adaptability (RF); and (5) maintaining choice control while permitting independence (CA) ([Zhang et al., 2015](#)). The academic study on paradoxical leadership emphasizes the significance of integrating paradoxes to cultivate inventive and enduring strategies for enhanced survival ([Zhang et al., 2015](#)). One instance of this is the requirement for leaders to efficiently supervise staff performance by establishing a well-organized system of incentives and promotions ([Vroom & Jago, 2007](#)). Simultaneously, it is imperative to grant employees liberty to foster elevated levels of work performance, necessitating the empowerment of their work responsibilities. Paradoxical leaders adeptly navigate and harmonize conflicts between control and autonomy across time ([Kundi et al., 2023](#)).

Job crafting refers to the deliberate actions taken by employees to modify their work environment to better match their skills, interests, and priorities ([Wrzesniewski et al., 2013](#)). Job crafting encompasses three distinct techniques: task crafting, cognitive crafting, and social crafting. Task crafting entails making concrete modifications to the quantity or extent of tasks ([Niessen et al., 2016](#); [Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001](#)). Cognitive crafting entails reassessing the significance and individuality inside the workplace ([Niessen et al., 2016](#); [Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001](#)). Social crafting refers to actively modifying the quantity and quality of interpersonal relationships within the workplace ([Niessen et al., 2016](#); [Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001](#)). The job requirements are growing increasingly intricate as a result of the implementation of additional responsibilities and assignments in the workplace ([Tims et al., 2012](#)). Proactive behavior is a crucial element for the survival and growth of organizations in a complex and uncertain environment ([Wang et al., 2017](#)). It demonstrates the intentional foresight and reaction to modifications in work tasks or job duties ([Lidman et al., 2023](#)). [Zhang et al. \(2015\)](#) argue that paradoxical leadership enhances competent work behavior, adaptable behavior, and initiative by demonstrating acceptance and recognition of the contradictions present in challenging settings. These additional duties go beyond their job obligations and are specifically aimed at implementing more efficient methods of completing activities ([Dysvik et al., 2016](#)).

In light of the digitalization and rapid technological progress that has occurred since the economic downturn in the early 2000s, companies now seek personnel who can adapt to changing work environments ([Adigwe et al., 2023](#)). Job crafting is a prominent subject that focuses on utilizing past experiences to attain favorable outcomes, particularly in enhancing worker productivity ([Park & Park, 2023](#)). Leadership may facilitate employee engagement in job creation by providing valid arguments and necessary resources ([Wang et al., 2017](#)). Prior research has substantiated the notion that leadership plays a crucial role in exerting influence

on employees' motivation to engage in proactive behavior ([Afsar et al., 2019](#); [Afsar & Umrani, 2019](#); [Park & Jo, 2018](#)). Thus, different leadership styles can be reliable indicators of job crafting ([Wang et al., 2017](#)).

Based on the concept of proactive motivation, employees are more inclined to exhibit proactive behavior, such as taking initiative in their work, when their supervisors demonstrate paradoxical leadership styles. Paradoxical leadership is a leadership attribute that exerts a significant influence on performance ([Batool et al., 2023](#)). Employees are more likely to exhibit proactive behavior in the workplace when they feel support from their supervisors and superiors. Paradoxical leadership is exemplified through strategies such as cultivating strong relationships and granting people the autonomy to make individual decisions ([Batool et al., 2023](#)). The given justification is consistent with the notion of proactive motivation ([Parker et al., 2010](#)), which suggests that individuals while attempting to control their emotions, assess the importance of commencing a certain behavior and their competence in executing it successfully. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *There is a positive and direct relationship between paradoxical leadership and job crafting.*

2.3 | Paradoxical Leadership and Occupational Self-Efficacy

Paradoxical leadership, which is a contextual or management trait, contributes to enhancing employees' professional self-efficacy by promoting a proactive motivational state. Based on the research conducted by Le et al. ([2020](#)) paradoxical leadership is a significant hierarchical role that can enhance both motivation and efficiency by empowering individuals to assume responsibility for their tasks ([Batool et al., 2023](#)). Proactive personnel necessitate proactive motivation facilitated by effective leadership within the company environment. Paradoxical leadership has become a critical concern for firms aiming to prosper ([Zhang et al., 2022](#)). The motivating state referred to by Parker et al. (2010) is evident in employees' occupational self-efficacy. This can enhance the creation and pursuit of proactive objectives through the practice of job crafting.

Huang et al. ([2022](#)) study revealed that the relationship between paradoxical leadership and employees' innovative behavior is contingent upon two factors: subordinates' psychological capital and their sense of thriving in the workplace. These components function as concurrent and uninterrupted sequential mediators. Other studies have also found similar results, suggesting that employees' perceptions of job prosperity, employee empowerment, and security influence the behavior of subordinates when working under paradoxical leaders ([Li et al., 2020](#); [Yang et al., 2021](#)). This viewpoint is consistent with the proactive behavior theory (Parker et al., 2010), which proposes that different aspects of leadership influence the motivational emotions of employees. Delegation, as a leadership approach, boosts workers' motivation, which is crucial for achieving the assigned duties. Workers' self-efficacy, which refers to their confidence in their abilities to do well in their profession, is a crucial aspect in motivating them. Given this reasoning, we propose a hypothesis that,

H2: *There is a direct and positive relationship between paradoxical leadership and occupational self-efficacy.*

2.4 | Occupational Self-Efficacy and Job Crafting

Occupational self-efficacy is the term used to describe an individual's confidence in their capacity to successfully carry out the activities and duties that come with their profession ([Rigotti et al., 2008](#)). Prior research consistently demonstrates that occupational self-efficacy serves as a safeguard against detrimental influences, hence yielding favorable outcomes ([Islam et al., 2024](#)). Self-efficacy encompasses two distinct dimensions: occupational self-efficacy and task-specific self-efficacy. Occupational self-efficacy refers to an individual's confidence in their ability to perform their job effectively ([Çetin & Aşkun, 2018](#)). On the other hand, task self-efficacy is the belief in one's capability to complete a specific task within a given timeframe. ([Guarnaccia et al., 2018](#)).

An individual's self-confidence enables them to overcome professional problems, increasing the likelihood of making changes in different areas of their work to stay motivated and accomplish desired objectives ([Tims et al., 2016](#)). The study conducted by Lavy and Littman-Ovadia ([2017](#)) has shown that self-efficacy has a favorable impact on both employee engagement and well-being in the workplace. The motivation levels of employees, such as their belief in their ability to perform their job well, have been found to have a significant impact on organizational results, such as proactive behavior ([Aksoy, 2019](#)). Proactive motivation suggests that when employees have a strong belief in their ability to perform well at work (occupational self-efficacy), they are more likely to feel capable of adapting to different tasks and situations. This, in turn, encourages them to actively seek opportunities to improve their job design and take initiative in their work. Therefore, we propose a hypothesis that,

H3: *There is a direct and positive relationship between occupational self-efficacy and job crafting.*

2.5 | Mediating Role of Occupational Self-Efficacy

The current study examines the role of Occupational Self-Efficacy as a mediator between Paradoxical Leadership and Job Crafting. Mielniczuk and Laguna ([2020](#)) argue that optimistic ideas have a beneficial influence on an individual, resulting in a subsequent modification in their behavior. Chughtai and Rizvi and ([2020](#)) Mielniczuk and Laguna ([2020](#)) found that persons who are already dedicated to their work are more inclined to pursue new approaches, such as taking initiative or engaging in "job crafting," to improve their job performance. The study revealed that paradoxical leadership has a beneficial impact on employees' impression of autonomy, passion, and innovation within the organization. Furthermore, the impact of paradoxical leadership on employees' innovative behavior is contingent upon the levels of organizational self-esteem and harmonious passion ([Wang et al., 2022](#)).

Shao et al. ([2019](#)) found that workers' creative self-efficacy can be improved when leaders display paradoxical leadership behavior in high-pressure situations. The researchers Xue et al. ([2020](#)) postulated that paradoxical leadership exerts influence on employees' vocal expression by fostering a work environment that cultivates a feeling of safety and assurance in their capacity to make valuable contributions. Wang et al. ([2020](#)) found that receiving assistance from colleagues and management, as well as having a strong belief in one's professional skills, led to the greatest levels of task and relational job crafting.

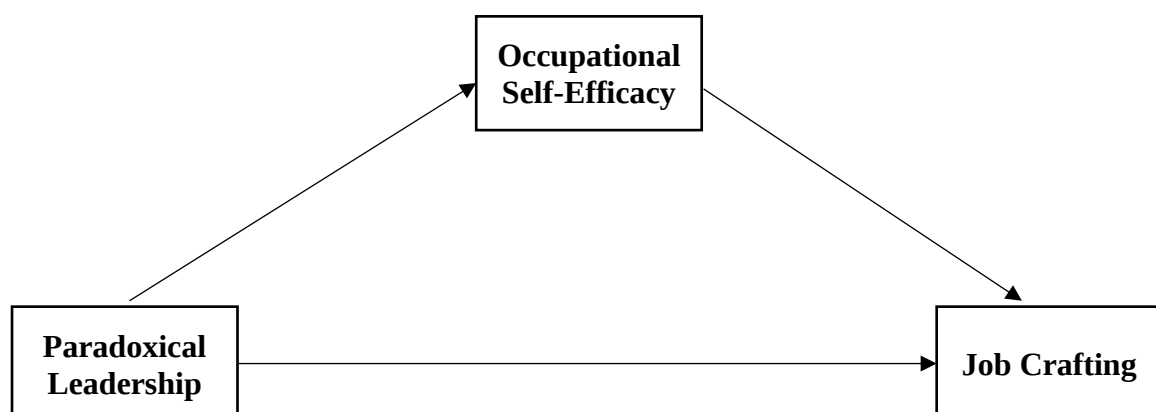
Individuals with a high level of self-efficacy are more inclined to accomplish their responsibilities by adapting their jobs to match their skills ([Islam et al., 2024](#)). According to Bargsted et al. ([2019](#)), this can result in a work atmosphere that is both beneficial and efficient. This study suggests that paradoxical leadership enhances employees' job crafting by boosting their occupational self-efficacy. Employees in a conducive work environment engage in experimentation and view their failures as valuable opportunities for learning ([Lidman et al., 2023](#)). The convergence of individual, managerial, and contextual elements plays a crucial role in boosting employees' motivation and effectiveness in their work, encouraging them to engage in job crafting. The proactive motivation theory suggests that certain leadership behaviors might operate as a catalyst for encouraging workers' engagement in states of motivation. Employees have more capacity to assess their circumstances and implement proactive strategies when they possess a heightened level of motivation ([Khan & Chughtai, 2022](#)).

Occupational self-efficacy mediates the relationship between leadership and job crafting by enhancing employees' confidence in their ability to influence and improve their work environment ([Black et al., 2018](#)). Leaders who foster a supportive and empowering atmosphere boost employees' self-efficacy, which in turn motivates them to engage in job-crafting behaviors ([Khan et al., 2020](#)). Individuals with high self-efficacy believe that they can accomplish specific tasks, handle challenges without hesitation, set goals, take risks, and put in the effort needed to achieve those goals ([Hirschi, 2012](#)). When leaders enhance the occupational strength of their subordinates with their support then it further fosters proactive behaviors such as job crafting ([Jiang et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, paradoxical leadership—characterized by a balanced and well-structured approach—plays a crucial role in creating a positive work environment by boosting employees' self-efficacy and helping them effectively complete their tasks leading toward proactivity. This mediation process emphasizes the importance of effective leadership in facilitating proactive work behaviors and enhancing organizational performance. From this, we can deduce that:

H4: *Occupational self-efficacy mediates the relationship between paradoxical leadership and job crafting.*

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework



3 | METHODOLOGY & DESIGN

3.1 | Data Collection and Sampling

We collected data from full-time employees working in the telecom sector of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The organizations were selected through convenience sampling and the participants were selected purely voluntarily based on the personal and professional contacts of the authors of the study. This approach is effective in past research, in the context of Pakistan ([Shamim et al., 2023](#); [Syed et al., 2022](#)) collected from government and commercial sector employees. To mitigate the issues related to cross-sectional studies and single-source data, a temporally segregated research design was adopted where data were collected at two different time waves with a time interval of approximately 1 month as per the past research-based recommendations given by Podsakoff et al. ([2012](#)) because the proactive behavior is observed after sometimes as the motivational state or attitude drive it which took some time to happen. The time lag technique is used to avoid the common method bias. At time 1 (T1) data regarding our independent variable, i.e., paradoxical leadership and mediator, occupational self-efficacy was collected and almost 678 questionnaires were distributed but only 537 were returned, yielding a response rate of 79.2%. At time 2 (T2) data regarding the dependent variable, job crafting was collected and out of 537 only 422 were received yielding a response rate of 78.6% after discarding the missing or unusable responses. We eliminated the dropouts from our final datasheet because the dropouts of respondents were due to unavailability misinformation, or job quit of employees. A cover letter ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents was sent to the HR managers of the organizations for smooth data collection over a period of time.

3.2 | Measurement Tools

Since English is the official language of Pakistan and a medium of communication in higher education institutions of Pakistan, hence understandable by the employees as most of the respondents had a Master's as their higher level of education. Therefore, English was not a major problem to understand. Previous studies employing survey techniques in Pakistan have also found to use of the English language to collect their responses ([Chughtai et al., 2023](#); [Naseer et al., 2023](#); [Shamim et al., 2023](#)). Keeping this in mind the current study utilized a survey-based technique to collect the responses, where self-administered, paper and pen questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. All scale items were measured on an anchor of a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = "strongly disagree" and 5 = "strongly agree". SPSS is used for data entry and Smart PLS-SEM is used to test the measurement model and structural model to draw the results.

Paradoxical Leadership was measured by using a 22-item scale developed by Zhang et al. ([2015](#)), The Sample item includes; "My manager/supervisor manages subordinates uniformly but considers their individualized needs" The Cronbach's alpha reliability was found to be 0.95. For **Occupational Self-Efficacy**, a six-item scale, developed by Rigotti et al. ([2008](#)) was utilized, the sample item included; "I meet the goals that I set for myself in my job", the Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was found to be 0.86 in the current study. Whereas, for **Job Crafting**, a nine-item scale developed by Niessen et al. ([2016](#)) was adopted, sample item includes; "I find personal meaning in my tasks and responsibilities at work", Cronbach's alpha reliability of this scale was found to be 0.91.

3.3 | Control Variables

The current study has considered certain control variables. Specifically, several researches on leader-follower dynamics have considered variables such as gender, age, education, and experience within the same business. The scale utilized for control variables in the present study is as follows. Gender can be indicated by using the numbers 1 for male and 2 for female. Marital status can be represented by using the number 1 for single and 2 for married. Age can be categorized as follows: 1 for the age range of 25-30, 2 for 31-35, 3 for 36-40, and 4 for those above 40. Education level can be denoted by using the numbers 1 for bachelors, 2 for Masters, 3 for MS, and 4 for PhD. Experience can be classified as follows: 1 for less than a year, 2 for 1-5 years, 3 for 6-10 years, and 4 for more than 10 years.

4 | RESULTS and ANALYSIS

4.1 | Demographical Information

The sample of this study was comprised of males (64.5%) and females (35.5%). Most respondents belonged to the age group of 30 to 40 years (31-35 years – 28.9% and 36-40 years – 21.8%), having the highest qualification of masters (52.6%). The majority of the participants had work experience of 1-5 years (44.5%) and marital status indicated that 66.4% were married and 33.6% were unmarried.

4.2 | Convergent & Discriminant Validity

To assess convergent validity, a reflective measurement model was developed. Uni-dimensionality is determined by evaluating the inter-correlation between the indicators of a construct. This procedure is used to confirm that the structures are unidimensional. The research study assesses the convergent validity of the construct by calculating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Hair et al. ([2019](#)) suggest that to maintain adequate convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) value should be more than 0.5. The average variance extracted (AVE) values for paradoxical leadership, occupational self-efficacy, and job crafting are 0.54, 0.59, and 0.57 respectively. All numbers listed above significantly surpass the specified threshold level of 0.5. The results of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1*Results Summary of Reflective Measurement Model*

Construct	Indicators	Factor Loadings (FL)	Construct	Indicators	Factor Loadings (FL)	Construct	Indicators	Factor Loadings (FL)
Paradoxical Leadership	PL1	0.74	Occupational Self-Efficacy	OSE1	0.78	Job Crafting	JC1	0.74
	PL2	0.75		OSE2	0.78		JC2	0.77
	PL3	0.73		OSE3	0.77		JC3	0.77
	PL4	0.71		OSE4	0.76		JC4	0.75
	PL5	0.75		OSE5	0.75		JC5	0.77
	PL6	0.72		OSE6	0.79		JC6	0.74
	PL7	0.72					JC7	0.74
	PL8	0.71					JC8	0.74
	PL9	0.74					JC9	0.77
	PL10	0.73						
	PL11	0.72						
	PL12	0.72						
	PL13	0.76						
	PL14	0.75						
	PL15	0.75						
	PL16	0.73						
	PL17	0.76						
	PL18	0.76						
	PL19	0.69						
	PL20	0.72						
	PL21	0.72						
	PL22	0.72						
	PL23	0.74						
AVE		0.53			0.59			0.57
CR		0.94			0.89			0.92

To assess discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker suggestions were also adhered to conduct an extra evaluation of discriminant validity. Fornell-Larcker's (1981) principle states that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for a variable should be greater than the correlation with other variables used in the model. The square root of the average variance extracted for all constructs in the study was found to exceed the correlations of these constructs with the variables indicated in the model.

Table 2 displays the results, and the square root of the average variance recovered for paradoxical leadership (0.73), occupational self-efficacy (0.77), and job crafting (0.75).

Table 2*Fornell-Larcker Test for Discriminant Validity*

Construct	Paradoxical Leadership	Occupational Self-Efficacy	Job Crafting
Paradoxical Leadership	0.73		
Occupational Self-Efficacy	0.46	0.77	
Job Crafting	0.52	0.47	0.75

Table 3 depicts the means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations and Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of the study variables.

Table 3

Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations and Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of main study variables

Variable	Means	SD	PL	OSE	JC
PL	3.15	1.17	(0.95)		
OSE	3.35	1.10	0.46**	(0.86)	
JC	3.17	1.07	0.22**	0.47**	(0.91)

Notes: $n=422$; PL = Paradoxical Leadership, OSE = Occupational Self-Efficacy, JC = Job Crafting. Alpha Reliabilities are given in parenthesis; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

4.3 | Direct Effects

To understand the relationships between the variables, the path coefficients of the model were analyzed by using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results obtained from the model are evaluated by extracting the coefficients, t-values, and p-values, which indicate the level of significance. As per Hair et al. (2019) recommendations, a path coefficient value that is equal to or more than 0.10 is regarded to be significant, whilst values below 0.10 are considered to be insignificant. After doing bootstrapping, the t-value is calculated. The analysis of the results in this study is based on a critical t-value of 1.96 at a significant level of 5% ($\alpha=0.05$).

The analysis of path coefficients reveals that paradoxical leadership has a direct and positive impact on Job Crafting ($\beta = 0.39$, $p\text{-value} < 0.00$). This suggests that hypothesis H1 is supported, as paradoxical leadership has a significant positive effect on Job Crafting. Paradoxical leadership is directly associated with a mediating variable, occupational self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.46$, $p\text{-value} < 0.00$). Therefore, H2 is also confirmed, indicating that paradoxical leadership has a significant and positive influence on occupational self-efficacy. Moreover, the study demonstrates a significant relationship between Occupational self-efficacy and job crafting. Results indicate that there is a strong positive correlation between occupational self-efficacy and job crafting ($\beta = 0.29$, $p\text{-value} < 0.00$). Therefore, we may conclude that there is a significant and positive association between occupational self-efficacy and job crafting, supporting hypothesis H3 (see Table 4).

Table 4

Results of Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Hypothesis Paths	Path Coefficients	t-value	Supported / Not Supported
H1	PL -> JC	0.39***	9.45	Supported
H2	PL -> OSE	0.46***	9.00	Supported
H3	OSE -> JC	0.29***	7.16	Supported

Notes: $n=422$; PL = Paradoxical Leadership, OSE = Occupational Self-Efficacy, JC = Job Crafting; ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

The purpose of calculating R square (R²) is to evaluate the variability in dependent variables. In this model, R² values of 0.19 are classified as weak, 0.33 as moderate, and 0.67 as substantial. The value for Occupational self-efficacy, which serves as the mediator, is 0.25. Similarly, the R² values for Job Crafting are calculated to be 0.34. These values signify a model that meets the desired standards.

4.4 | Mediation Effects

The results were then analyzed to investigate the mediating function of occupational self-efficacy. Specifically, this investigation looked at whether occupational self-efficacy mediates the association between paradoxical leadership and job crafting. The findings of the structural model estimation support the need for direct links between the constructs, which is a necessary condition for evaluating this mediation. Adding to the analysis discussion from previously, the mediation hypothesis is further supported. This support stems from the direct relationship ($\beta = 0.457$, $p\text{-value} < 0.000$) that exists between the mediating variable, occupational self-efficacy, and paradoxical leadership. Additionally, occupational self-efficacy exhibits substantial correlations with the dependent variable. In particular, there is a correlation between occupational self-efficacy and job crafting ($\beta = 0.290$, $p\text{-value} < 0.000$). These results support the need to perform mediation analysis for the variables. The path coefficient ($\beta = 0.133$, $p\text{-value} < 0.000$) indicates the role of occupational self-efficacy as a mediator in the association between Paradoxical leadership and Job Crafting. This finding lends credence to the acceptance of hypothesis H4, which holds that the association between paradoxical leadership and job crafting is mediated by occupational self-efficacy. The indirect effects of the variables were analyzed. These effects were calculated as the product of the direct effects that connected the independent variable to the mediating variable and the mediating variable to the dependent variables. The direct effects (individual variables (IV) - dependent variables (DV) and the indirect effects (individual variables (IV) - mediator - dependent variable (DV)) are shown in Table 5 along with the corresponding significance levels. The direct and indirect effects were added up to get the overall effects.

Table 5

Results of Indirect/ Mediation Effects

Dependent Variable	Observed Path	Path Coefficients	t-value	Supported / Not Supported
Job Crafting	PL -> JC	0.39***	9.45	Supported
	OSE -> JC	0.29***	7.16	
H4	PL -> OSE -> JC	0.13***	5.43	

Notes: $n=422$; PL = Paradoxical Leadership, OSE = Occupational Self-Efficacy, JC = Job Crafting; ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

5 | DISCUSSION

The extensive body of study literature highlights the crucial importance of Leadership, as emphasized by Ishaq et al. (2021). Leadership and management are closely connected, with leadership acting as a means to perform tasks and achieve desired objectives under the direction of a leader. Leaders must possess effective leadership styles to achieve goals, influence employee attitudes and behaviors, and foster a favorable organizational environment (Hur et al., 2019). The literature acknowledges the clear connection between

leadership and proactive behaviors, as well as its role in generating a competitive advantage for firms ([Lai et al., 2019](#)).

This study, undertaken in a Pakistani environment, aims to investigate the correlations among several variables that have not been extensively examined before. The results of the current study indicate that the paradoxical leadership style has a strong and direct impact on the proactive behavior of job crafting. The presence of a positive beta value and the statistically significant effect seen provide clear evidence in support of hypothesis 1. Therefore, employees who assume their bosses as paradoxical are more likely to engage in job crafting, which involves actively shaping and improving their work. This can include being more creative and coming up with more ideas to make their work better (Park & Park, 2023). Recent studies have suggested that authentic leadership ([Scholar, 2022](#)) and transformational leadership ([Wang et al., 2017](#)) have a beneficial impact on individual job crafting.

Nevertheless, there is limited literature available that investigates the impact of paradoxical leadership on employees' job-crafting behavior to advance their careers. Paradoxical leadership grants employees greater autonomy allows for more flexible decision-making ([Guo et al., 2020](#)), and facilitates job crafting in dynamic and ambivalent situations. Employees who view their leaders as contradictory are more likely to feel self-assured and competent in voicing their ideas and recommendations for enhancing the work environment ([Batool et al., 2023](#)). Employees perceive themselves as accountable for making contributions to enhance organizational progress ([Guohao et al., 2021](#)). Positive leadership behaviors elicit a positive perception among employees, which in turn motivates people to actively participate in beneficial and proactive work-related activities, such as job crafting ([Li & Bao, 2020](#)).

Similarly, the results suggest that paradoxical leadership has a strong and direct impact on employees' occupational self-efficacy. This is supported by a positive beta value and a significant effect, confirming hypothesis 2. Paradoxical leadership specifically recognizes the value of subordinates, prioritizes their distinct skills and requirements, and enables subordinates to have a sense of being valued, trusted, and backed by their leaders ([Kundi et al., 2023](#)). This method helps to improve employees' organization-based self-esteem, self-efficacy, and hopeful attitude, leading to the development of individual resources ([Chughtai, 2018](#)). Paradoxical leadership enhances employees' self-efficacy by providing a combination of support and challenges, which inspires and encourages people to strive for their objectives and ambitions ([Li et al., 2020](#)). Likewise, the results demonstrate that job crafting is strongly influenced by occupational self-efficacy, as evidenced by a positive beta value and a significant effect, thereby confirming the original hypothesis 3, which is consistent with previous research. Past research has shown a positive relationship between good emotions at work and cognitive job crafting ([Rogala & Cieslak, 2019](#)). Paradoxical leadership in this situation provides employees with a pleasant sense of autonomy, allowing them to outline their roles and so increasing job autonomy and engagement.

Furthermore, occupational self-efficacy acts as a catalyst for individuals to proactively pursue possibilities for job alignment and growth in the workplace ([Islam et al., 2024](#)). Job crafting is associated with proactive behavior, as it pushes employees to carefully examine work-related information ([Jiang et al., 2021](#)). The result for mediation hypothesis 4 is consistent with other research that suggests persons who assume accountability for their actions are generally more conscientious in carrying out their responsibilities, resulting in enhanced

performance ([Lestari, 2022](#)). Paradoxical leadership, allows subordinates to have autonomy in making decisions ([Karsten & Hendriks, 2017](#)). This leads to an increased interest in activities and improves individual capacities, resulting in better outcomes like job crafting. This sense of self-reliance inspires employees and leads to the improvement of job customization ([Batool et al., 2023](#)). Employees who see a balanced leadership within the organization tend to assess their thoughts and control their efforts, leading to proactive behavior as job crafting.

5.2 | Practical and Theoretical Contribution

The study specifically examines the elements that impact employee attitudes and behaviors, providing practical insights for managers in the telecommunications industry. The study highlights the significance of employees' proactive behavior in effectively addressing unforeseen events and workplace difficulties and adds to the current body of knowledge. It emphasizes that proactive behavior enhances organizational practices, promotes work behavior, and identifies occupational elements ([Jiang et al., 2021](#)) by incorporating the model of proactive motivation theory. Furthermore, the discussions by Inceoglu et al. (2018), emphasize the critical role of leaders in influencing employees' performance, behavior, and overall well-being. Additionally, it is proposed to undertake leadership training that is specifically designed to promote proactivity. Furthermore, we stress the significance of firms integrating targeted activities aimed at fostering the professional growth of their employees. Studies show that these efforts result in increased levels of proactive behaviors focused on change, such as job crafting, which ultimately benefit telecommunications organizations.

Managers should offer training in job crafting to ensure that it aligns with the goals of the organization and helps achieve the desired performance levels. Professionals can use the results of this study to help employees shape their jobs, creating a comfortable and flexible work environment that promotes efficiency. This method not only enhances the well-being of individual employees but also significantly adds to the overall prosperity and achievement of the firm. Organizations are constantly searching for leaders who can exhibit paradoxical behaviors to be more effective. The telecom sector has experienced advancements in technology and the implementation of innovative operational structures, resulting in the emergence of new job roles. This transition has significantly changed working circumstances, fundamentally restructuring the professional environment ([Giorgi et al., 2020](#)). Given the difficult circumstances, it can be extremely difficult for employees to stay motivated and perform well in their organizations. So, to boost occupational belief leaders must be effective and active to energize the crafting behavior of employees to cope with personnel and organizational competitions.

5.3 | Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although we made a strong attempt to follow standards and fill in research gaps, we encountered limitations during the study due to time and resource restrictions. Due to limited financial resources, the study encountered budgetary limits, resulting in time and resource limitations. Throughout the process of collecting data, numerous obstacles were faced. Certain employees had challenges in filling out the surveys as a result of their reluctance or linguistic obstacles. Furthermore, as a result of time limitations, the gathering of data was restricted to employees specifically in the telecommunications industries of the two cities, thereby restricting the applicability of the results. The limitations of the study emphasize the importance of being careful when interpreting the results and provide chances for more research with increased resources and a

more diverse group of participants. The primary issue with the current research is the small sample size, as it was based on convenient sampling, and the findings were generalized to the full population. To improve the resilience of future studies, it is recommended to augment the sample size. In addition, the data collection was limited to the telecom sector, and there is potential for investigating the same variables in other sectors such as education, tourism, health, or banking.

To summarize, future research should focus on increasing the sample size to ensure a comprehensive study and should also explore various sectors beyond the telecommunications industry. Furthermore, it is advisable to use a sophisticated method for examining the intricate aspects of paradoxical leadership and its influence on employee outcomes using thorough longitudinal analysis. Moreover, when studying the effects of paradoxical leader actions, future researchers should also examine the additional behaviors exhibited by followers, known as extra-role behaviors, in addition to their expected job-related activities ([Chughtai & Khan, 2023](#)). However, there has been limited research attention given to the exploration of the negative aspects of paradoxical leader behaviors, despite previous literature suggesting the need to do so. We urge future researchers to examine the potential negative consequences, such as stress, etc. The outcomes of the suggested model may vary across different countries owing to cultural disparities. To enhance the generalizability of this research, it would be beneficial to replicate this study in a varied cultural or contextual setting.

6 | CONCLUSION

We investigated the role of occupational self-efficacy as a mediator between paradoxical leadership and job crafting, using the proactive motivation model. We implemented a temporally segregated research design, conducting data collection from 422 personnel in the telecom sector of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The data was collected during two-time intervals, with a one-month gap between them. Our study, employing Smart PLS-SEM, revealed that the association between paradoxical leadership and job crafting was mediated by occupational self-efficacy. The findings corroborated the postulated associations.

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