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# Job crafting and job satisfaction in a sample of Italian teachers: the mediating role of Perceived Organizational Support

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We aimed to explore the mediating role of perceived organizational support (POS) on the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction, which is considered as an important outcome for the development of well-being at work. Participants were 263 teachers from public schools in the South of Italy. Results indicated that POS fully mediated the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction. Implications for management educational practice and limitations of the study are discussed.

**keywords:** Job satisfaction, job crafting, mediation analysis, perceived organizational support, public school.

## 1 Theoretical background

In the literature, job satisfaction has been studied as the positive or negative evaluative judgments people make about their jobs. Locke (1976) firstly, defined job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from the evaluation of one's job. Later, Spector (1985) defined job satisfaction as: "employee attitudes, including pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of

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work, and communication” (p. 693). Recently, further studies, in line with these definition, have conceptualized teachers job satisfaction as teachers’ affective reactions to their work or to their teaching role (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011). These studies (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2010) have taken in account two main facets for the measuring of job satisfaction: a dimension-specific job satisfaction measuring the extent to which teachers are satisfied with specific characteristics of their job, and an overall sense of satisfaction with the job (Moè et al., 2010; Sargent and Hannum, 2005). With regards to it, a variety of instruments has been developed to measure job satisfaction. One of most used is the Minnesota Satisfaction (MSQ) (Barbaranelli et al., 2010). This version is composed by 100 items in the long form and 20 items in the short form. MSQ scores may be computed into one overall level of satisfaction score or combined to form subscales measuring extrinsic and intrinsic factors, often used in literature (Callea et al., 2016). Many researchers believe that an overall assessment of satisfaction is better than a sum of the parts (Spector, 1985; Ciavolino and Nitti, 2013a; Ciavolino and Nitti, 2013b; Nitti and Ciavolino, 2014; Ciavolino and Carpita, 2015; Ciavolino et al., 2015). Although job satisfaction has been deeply studied also in scholar contexts, in particular the teachers’ job satisfaction, as above mentioned, we observed that there is a lack of literature about its relation with job crafting. Job crafting is actually considered a specific strategy of proactive work behavior used by employees to adjust their jobs to their needs, skills and preferences (Petrou et al., 2015; Tims et al., 2013). Literature about job crafting is relatively recent even if we find its first conceptualization in 2001, when Wrzesniewski and Dutton defined as job crafters those individuals who actively personalize and modify their job both physically, by changing task boundaries, cognitively, by changing the relationships among job tasks, and relationally, by adjusting and varying the relationships they build with others colleagues. More recently, authors studied job crafting defining it as a function of the physical and cognitive changes that individuals generate in their task and relational boundaries (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014). One of the most important attributes of job crafting is that employees have personal initiative to alter and modify their tasks or other job characteristics (Tims et al., 2012). The theoretical framework of job crafting is the job demands-resources (JD-R) model. This model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) specifies how employee well-being and effectiveness can be developed using two specific classes of working conditions: job demands and job resources. The class of job demands includes characteristics of the job that can potentially lead to strain if they go beyond the abilities of employees to adapt themselves to changes (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007); job demands can include a heavy workload and interactions with others, which can be emotionally demanding. The second area of working conditions refers to the extent to which the job can give resources to employees (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007). Job resources are those physical, psychological, social or organizational characteristics of the job that accomplish different functions: first, they are important in achieving work goals, secondly they can balance job demands, reducing those demands which represent physiological and psychological costs, finally, job resources can improve personal growth and skills development. Examples of job resources are autonomy and performance feedback. According to some scholars, job crafting is an especially important process for cultivating work engagement and satisfaction in a

workforce that is experiencing increasing dissatisfaction with work and retiring later in life (Berg et al., 2013), as often it happens in scholar institutions. For example, Leana et al. (2009) in a study of early childhood educators, introduced the dimension of collaborative job crafting in which the employees (the teachers) work together collectively redesigning their jobs. They found that collaborative job crafting was positively related to performance, particularly for less experienced teachers and associated with stronger satisfaction; finally job crafting has been found related to positive organizational and individual outcomes (work engagement and job satisfaction), as a recent research evidenced (Zito et al., 2015).

### 1.1 *Perceived Organizational Support as a mediator variable*

Nowadays, evaluating the perception of support that workers receive from own organization can be an essential element to maintain a balance between the dynamics of the relationship within the company and positive outcomes for the worker and for the organization. For this reason, in literature (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002) Perceived Organizational Support (from now POS) is considered one of the strongest predictors of positive behavior of workers. POS concerns the quality of the relationship between the employee and organization, this relation derives by measuring the extent to which employees believe that the organization values their contributions and cares about their welfare (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employees use their judgments of POS to estimate their effort-outcome expectancy. The demonstrations of gratitude and consideration by the organization to employees, both in moral and tangible terms, promote the development of feelings of approval, esteem and affiliation towards the organization. The POS is usually used as a mediator for organizational and individual outcomes (Hochwarter et al., 2003). For our knowledge, there is a lack of literature about the relation between job crafting and job satisfaction and the mediating role of POS in this relation in public institutions. So, in line with the studies above presented, and moving from previous poor research about job crafting, perceived organizational support and job satisfaction in scholar contexts, we aim to explore the following theoretical model which assumes that job crafting could be a significant predictor of teachers job satisfaction, and this relationship can be mediated by POS as showed in the following figure.

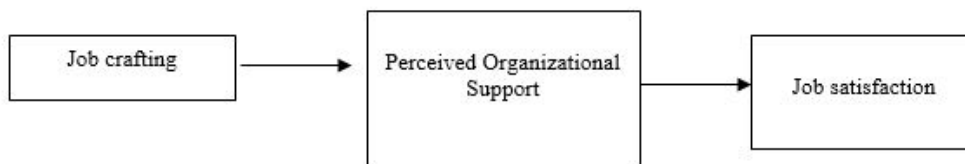


Figure 1: *The theoretical model*

## 1.2 Designing a study to test mediation

The main aim of the study is to explore a mediation model. To do it, we followed indications provided by Baron and Kenny (1986). Their paper, in fact, represents the most common method for testing mediation in psychological research. Scholars often conduct research to explore and verify whether and to what extent one variable could affect another. However, finding that two variables are related to each other can be only one small piece of the aim of research. Knowledge increases when the process that produces the effect can be studied and comprehended. For instance, Preacher and Hayes (2004) suggest that it can be useful to know whether a management training program leads to an increase in job satisfaction by affecting employee attitudes toward management or by changing behavioural habits. In this example, attitudes and habits are potential mediators of the relationship between the management training program and employee satisfaction. It is used a variable called mediator, that is “to the extent that it accounts for the relation between the predictor and the criterion” (Baron and Kenny, 1986, p. 1176). In the Figure 2 we find the simplest form of mediation the type that occurs when one variable (M) mediates the effect of X on Y. This model is called *simple mediation* as shown below.

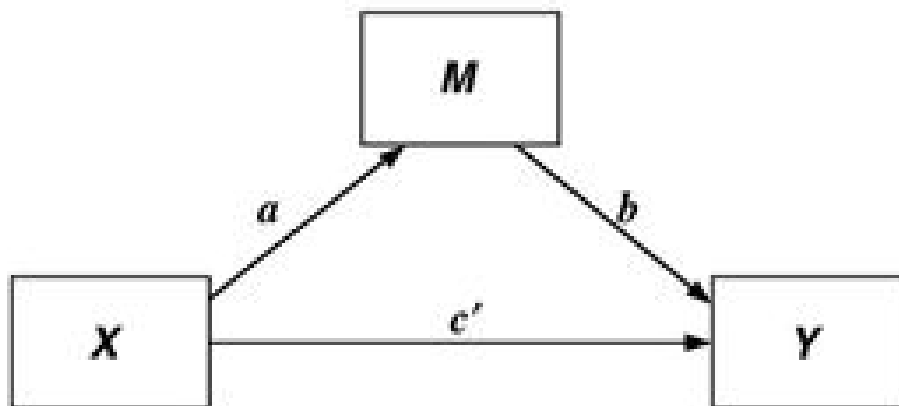


Figure 2: *The model of simple mediation*

To measure the mediating effects four steps are performed using three regression equations. Firstly, it is necessary to determine the variables (the predictor, the mediator and the criterion variables) in a conceptual model, which makes theoretically sense. In the first step the predictor variable must be turned out significantly related to criterion variable in order to measure  $c$ , i.e. the total effect. In the second step, the predictor variable is related to the mediator variable in order to measure  $a$ . The third step shows a relation between the mediator variable and the outcome (or criterion) variable, in order to measure  $b$ . In the fourth step, the reduction of the intensity of the relation between the predictor and the outcome ( $c'$ ) when the mediator is added to the model (Frazier et al., 2004) should be tested. According Baron and Kenny (1986), several analyses should be

performed and the results assessed with respect to the criteria just described. These criteria are assessed by estimating the following equations (Preacher and Hayes, 2004):

$$Y' = i_1 + cX \quad (1)$$

$$M' = i_2 + aX \quad (2)$$

$$Y' = i_3 + c'X + bM \quad (3)$$

In the equation above presented, “ $i$ ” is an intercept coefficient. A *perfect mediation* is called when the effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  decreases to zero with the inclusion of  $M$ , (James and Brett, 1984, define this situation *complete mediation*). When the effect of  $X$  on  $Y$  decreases by an inappreciable amount, but not comparable to zero, *partial mediation* is said to have occurred. In addition to satisfying these conditions, two further assumptions must be occurred in order to assert that mediation happened, according to Baron and Kenny (1986); there should be no measurement error in  $M$ , and  $Y$  should not cause  $M$ . Finally, is possible to calculate the percentage of the indirect, or mediated, effect, dividing  $a X b / c$ .

## 2 Aims and Hypotheses

The overall purpose of this study was to identify the relationships between dimensions of the job crafting, perceived organizational support (POS) and job satisfaction in a sample of Italian teachers from primary, middle and high schools. In the present study, we hypothesize that perceived organizational support will mediate the relationship between the dimensions of job crafting and job satisfaction, leading to the following hypotheses:

- $H_1$ : job crafting will be positively related to job satisfaction;
- $H_2$ : job crafting will be positively related to perceived organizational support;
- $H_3$ : perceived organizational support will be positively related to job satisfaction;
- $H_4$ : perceived organizational support will mediate the effect of job crafting on job satisfaction.

## 3 Sample and procedure

Participants were 263 Italian teachers employed in public schools in the South of Italy, in particular they were from primary (47.1%), middle (31.6%) and high school (21.3%). They were 16.6% males, 84.4% females, ranging in age from 25 to 64 years of age (mean = 48.94 years, SD = 7.46 years). They completed a questionnaire individually during break time at school. The informed consent was requested and privacy was guaranteed. The distributed questionnaires were introduced by a short text explaining that the aims of the study were the job satisfaction in the public schools. About 12.1% of the participants were single, 83.5% were married (or lived with a partner) and the rest were divorced

(3.2%) or widowed (1.2%). As regards education, 47.6% had a university degree, 32.9% had a high school degree and the remaining had a post university degree. As regards occupational status, 92.4% had a permanent contract whereas just 7.6% had a temporary job. As regards organizational tenure in the same place, most of participants worked in the same school since over two years (86.3%). About organizational tenure in the same job but not in the same school, 54.2% of subjects work since about 20 years, 30.9% of them work since a period between 10 and 19 years, 10.4% works in a time span until 10 years, while the remaining of participants works since a few years (time span under 5 years).

## 4 Variables and Measures

The questionnaire is composed by a socio-biographical section and a second section about the scales used to measure the constructs investigated. For the purpose of the present study, the job crafting has been defined conceptually starting from theoretical Job demands-resources' model (Tims et al., 2012).

1. *Job crafting scale* (from now JCS). Job crafting is considered as a specific type of proactive work behaviour that workers engage in to adjust their job to their needs, skills, and preferences (Tims et al., 2013). It has been measured with the Dutch job crafting scale developed by Tims et al. (2012). The JCS scale consists of 21 items that explain four dimensions. Increasing structural job resources (from now on "increasing structural JR") is measured using five items. An example item is: "I make sure that I use my capacities to the fullest." Increasing social job resources (from now on "increasing social JR") is measured using five items and an example item is: "I ask colleagues for advice". Increasing challenging job demands (from now on "increasing challenging JD") also contains five items, such as "When there is not much to do at work, I see it as an opportunity to start new projects". The last dimension, decreasing hindering job demands (from now on "decreasing hindering JD") consists of six items. An example is: "I try to ensure that my work is emotionally less intense." Response categories ranged from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Cronbach's alpha of the total job crafting is = .76. Cronbach's is also presented in Table 1, we also calculated media and correlations between variables.
2. *Perceived Organizational Support* (from now POS). It was measured using 8 items (two items have been reversed) from Battistelli and Mariani (2011). The scale is measured on a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (completely agree). The scale has been adapted for educational contexts, it is unidimensional and it measures the degree to which an employee perceives a help from their organization (sample item: "The school values my contribution to its well-being"). High scores indicate higher levels of POS. In the present study, the scale reached very good reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .89).
3. *Job satisfaction* (from now JS). It was measured by the 20 items of Italian short-form version of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) (Barbaranelli et al.,

2010) Participants asked what they think about various aspects of their jobs ranging from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). The scale covers two dimensions: intrinsic job satisfaction (12 items; sample item: The feeling of accomplishment I get from the job) and extrinsic job satisfaction (8 items; sample item: "My pay and the amount of work I do). Previous research (Barbaranelli et al., 2010) showed the strong psychometric properties of the MSQ, with excellent coefficients of internal consistency reliability. In this study, the reliability of overall job satisfaction was good overall for the dimension of intrinsic JS (Cronbach's alpha = .88), as presented in Table 1.

## 5 Data analysis

Means, correlations and Cronbach's alpha were performed. Furthermore, regression analyses were run, in order to test the mediating role of POS in the relationship between the job crafting and job satisfaction, we followed recommendations by Baron and Kenny (1986) for testing mediation. Conditional for mediation was that job crafting was related to job satisfaction ( $H_1$ ), that job crafting was related to POS ( $H_2$ ), and that POS was related to job satisfaction ( $H_3$ ). To test hypotheses  $H_1$ , independent variable was entered in the first step. To test hypotheses  $H_2$ , we regressed independent variables on mediator (Step 2). To test hypotheses  $H_3$ , we regressed mediator on dependent variable (Step 3). Finally, to test mediational hypotheses, we regressed independent variables and mediator on dependent variable (Step 4). Evidence for mediation was found when job crafting had a smaller or non-significant relationship with job satisfaction when introducing POS.

## 6 Results

In the Table 1 means, standard deviations, correlation coefficients, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for job crafting, perceived organizational support and job satisfaction are showed. We observed that most of the sample is in the late middle career stage, that is between 35 and 50 years ( $M_{age} = 48.94$ ;  $SD = 7.46$ ), age and job satisfaction are not related significantly.



Table 1: Means, standard deviations, correlations and Cronbach's alpha coefficients

<i>Variables</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
1. Age	48.94	7.46	-					
2. Sex	1.83	.37	-.16*	-				
3. Organizational tenure (6 = over 20 years)	5.33	.91	.64**	.02	-			
4. Job crafting	3.15	.54	.14**	-.10	.06	.76		
5. Job satisfaction	3.45	.64	.03	.06	-.10	.36**	.88	
6. Perceived organizational support	4.73	1.35	.02	.04	-.05	.39**	.65**	.89

N = 263; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ . Values along main diagonal are coefficient alphas for scaled variables. Sex: 0 = female, 1 = male.

Firstly, scaled variables reached good reliability, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients between .76 and .89. Moreover, job crafting was positively correlated to age, perceived organizational support and job satisfaction. In order to test mediation hypotheses, regression analyses were performed (Table 2). In the Step I, job crafting ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was positively related to job satisfaction. In the Step II, job crafting was positively related to mediator variable (POS) ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In the Step III the mediator variable (POS) was positively related ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < .05$ ) to job satisfaction. Finally, in the Step IV, POS ( $\beta = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ ) was still related to job satisfaction, but job crafting had not a significant relation with the dependent variable. The effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable was non-significant when introducing mediator in the regression; therefore, POS fully mediated the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction, supporting  $H_4$ . Furthermore, the effect indirect was .070 and represented about 62% of the total effect.

Table 2: Summary of regression analysis: predicting job satisfaction

	Job satisfaction (N = 263)			
	Step I (c)	Step II (a)	Step III (b)	Step IV (c')
Job craft (JC)	.11*	.37**		.05
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)			.19*	.17*
<i>R</i>	.11	.37	.19	.19
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.01	.14	.03	.04
<i>F</i>	3.26*	40.98**	9.38*	4.82**

\* $p < .005$ ; \*\* $p < .001$ .

Step 1: regression of JS on independent variables

Step 2: regression of POS on independent variables

Step 3: regression of JS on mediator variable (POS)

Step 4: regression of JS on independent variable and on mediator variable (POS)

## 7 Discussion and conclusions

What does make a productive and successful teacher? When a “happy worker” is really a “productive worker”? (Peiró et al., 2014). These are some of research questions deriving from a discussion about results of the paper. The main purpose of the present study was to advance understanding about an indicator of well-being at work, such as job satisfaction which is considered as one of the positive outcomes of job crafting. Multiple regression analysis has fully supported our hypotheses. Job crafting was proved to be related significantly to job satisfaction as mediated by perceived organizational support. However, there are some limitations to the study, which must be mentioned. First, the cross-sectional nature of the study limited the possibility to assess causal relationships between the variables. Moreover, the self-reported data were another limitation because people may not perceive themselves accurately. A possible solution may be to gather data from co-workers, administrators or parents and students, because they are the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the service. Another limitation concerns the contextual differences in the study design. The present study was conducted among teachers of public schools in the South of Italy. Future research could replicate the study taking in account the difference between public and private schools. Findings could have many interesting implications both for theory and for practice. From a theoretical point of view, the paper has contributed to grow literature about job crafting and to its better understanding in relation to positive outcomes such as job satisfaction. As above described, literature on job crafting is recent, even more job crafting mediated by POS on job satisfaction in public schools. Teachers’ job satisfaction has been often associated with teachers’ absenteeism and attrition (Weiqi, 2007; Zembylas and Papanastasiou, 2004). Teachers’ job satisfaction and dissatisfaction have been studied as factor which are influenced by a number of variables. Scott et al. (2001) suggested that the sources of job satisfaction

and dissatisfaction may be classified into three classes: intrinsic rewards of teaching, that concern the actual work of teaching, for example working with the students and seeing students learn and develop; these are primary motives for becoming a teacher and a main source of satisfaction among teachers (Scott et al., 2001). Secondly, there are any factors extrinsic to the school, such as the mobility, the external evaluation of schools, or the negative social representation of teachers in the media, which lead to a decrease in the status and social consideration of teaching. Thirdly, we found school-based factors or contextual variables at school that may include relations with colleagues, parents, and the school leadership, as well as time pressure and/or counterproductive student behaviour. Literature indicated that the teachers in several public school systems are not satisfied with their jobs (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011). This situation seems to be confirmed by the high turnover among the teachers. However, to best of our knowledge we did not find literature about the perceived organizational support as a contextual variable that may affect job satisfaction. Previous studies (Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2011), in fact, focused on the factors above mentioned and have related job satisfaction to the feeling of belonging as a mediator on job satisfaction and intention to leave, but didn't consider the support perceived by teachers about the membership school. Furthermore, we observed that the scholar context is a specific organizational setting, different from other organizations. So, it is important that future research should examine in depth the measure of job satisfaction in scholar contexts, and the job crafting in its four dimensions; in particular, it may be interesting to consider emotional exhaustion among the teachers. A lack of support and feeling of belonging can be perceived as a psychological strain and cause exhaustion which is related to job dissatisfaction and consequently, to intention to leave or to increase of absenteeism at work. One implication of this study is that school administrators should pay more attention to teachers' organizational support and job satisfaction, as well as personal characteristics of teachers by developing actions for teachers (e.g., training, team work and so on) to increase job crafting activities. It is crucial for teachers but also for students because a teacher satisfied is an engaged worker in her or his own job and motivated to improve the quality of teaching. The quality of teaching is, in turn, essential for education of students, in terms of success, satisfaction and learning achievement. Another crucial research question is the relation between age and job satisfaction. We observed that the most of sample is of middle age (about 50 years old). Recent literature about organizational psychology evidences that people at work are becoming older and more age diverse in the last decades; it means that people will need to continue to work later in life to support themselves during retirement. As workforce ages, company policies and societies have to manage and sustain workers' well-being and occupational health for their later years of employment (Truxillo et al., 2015). This topic is increasing the interest of scholars and professionals in the field of the work and organizational psychology, particularly in most industrialized countries coming from Europe and North America. Significant differences across age are commonly evidenced, with higher satisfaction by older workers than younger ones. Similarly, skills, knowledge and effectiveness of the teachers can change over time, it determines a change in professional development needs from learning general skills to learning specific skills. Older teachers seek training opportunities about current professional needs (such as techno-

logical skills), so professional development programs that are adapted to teachers' career stages can enhance skills and knowledge but also increase the confidence that teachers at a later career stage have the capabilities to teach effectively, and gradually enhance satisfaction from teaching (Klassen and Chiu, 2010).

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