HOW MANAGERIAL JOB DEMANDS INFLUENCE EMPLOYEE STRESS: AN

INTERPERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Research has shown that compared to average workers, managers are more likely to experience stressful job demands. This phenomenon has become more prominent throughout the course of the COVID-19 crisis. I see this as an opportunity to examine a cross-level interplay between managers' job demands and employee stress. Evidence suggests that at least half of the workplace stress can be attributed to interpersonal interactions. The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how managers' work stressors impact their tendency to expand or contract their relational network through relational job crafting (or modification in the frequency and quality of relationships for work-related purposes). Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach (i.e., quantitative and qualitative), the current study investigates how managerial job demands impact their interpersonal exchanges with others, which then inform employee stress. The multi-level quantitative inquiry (254 employees nested in 64 managers) found significant relationships between managers' job demands and relational job crafting, which then leads to managers' ability to be interpersonally fair. There was a significant relationship between managers' implementation of interpersonal justice and employee stress. Further, both expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting significantly mediate the relationship between job demands and interpersonal justice. Managers' relational job crafting was found to be a significant moderator to the relationship between employee perceptions of leader-member exchange and stress. Contrary to the theorized expectation, managers' relational job crafting activities do not transform into employee stress through interpersonal justice. Nonetheless, the relationship between managers' relational job crafting and employee stress was found to be significant. In the qualitative phase of the study, I conducted over thirty hours of interviews with 14 managers and 19 employees. The interview transcripts were analyzed thematically on (i) managerial, (ii) employee, and (iii) nested datasets, to account for within and between-level phenomena. The findings from the two studies converged to elucidate stress as a trickle-down phenomenon from managers to employees through interpersonal exchanges. The study contributes to our understanding of job design, justice, and stress scholarship, to understand the impact of managerial job demands on employee wellbeing. Theoretical, managerial, and policy implications are discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

Dedication

To my mom, Mrs. Naz Masood, who I lost during my Ph.D. journey. You have been a continuous source of support and encouragement throughout my Ph.D. years. Unfortunately, you are not here to see this meaningful journey end. I hope you are celebrating this, and I hope you are proud. To my dad, Mr. Masood Idris, for always appreciating and celebrating my work. I hope I have made you proud and that I will continue to do so.

This work is also dedicated to my grandparents, Mr. Chaudhary Rasheed Ahmed and Mrs. Enayat Rasheed, for always believing in me. You had predicted my success long before I embarked on this journey. In a way, each one of my accomplishments is dedicated to you both.

Dedicated to my children, Alishba and Hadi, for putting up with my hectic research and teaching routine for the past few years. Thank you for hanging in there. You have been a continuous source of strength for mommy!

Dedicated to my spouse, Usman Akbar, for supporting my long and hectic schedules throughout these years. Thank you for your understanding and support.

Dedicated to my friends and siblings, especially to my sister, Dr. Maida Masood for having meaningful conversations about my research and offering continuous emotional support.

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Above all, none of this would have been possible without my faith in God. I acknowledge God for being my continuous source of strength and tenacity. I am grateful and look forward to the new beginnings for my research, purpose, impact, and service.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Due to the unprecedented Corona Virus Disease - 2019 (COVID -19) crisis and the affiliated economic uncertainties, organizations around the globe are interested in uncovering the mechanisms to manage employee stress levels in the wake of increasing job demands. Many have noted the effect of the COVID-19 crisis on various walks of life, including work (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020; Gibson, 2020; Kramer & Kramer, 2020; Rudolph et al., 2020; Spurk & Straub, 2020) and mental health (Holmes et al., 2020; Sinclair et al., 2020, van Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021). Research shows that workplace stress was estimated to be at an all-time high even before the pandemic (Chokski, 2019) and is only projected to upturn amidst and after the crisis is over. Stress has serious repercussions not only for employees but also the organizations, including reduced job satisfaction (Fried, Shirom, Gilboa, & Cooper, 2008), higher emotional exhaustion (Lee & Ashforth, 1996), reduced physical wellbeing (Akerstedt et al., 2002; Kivimäki et al., 2012), and decreased performance outcomes (McCarthy, Trougakos, & Cheng, 2016). It is estimated that due to stressful job demands, managers are expected to work under high stress for extended periods of time (Brett & Stroh, 2003). Indeed, managers often experience job-related stressors including work overload, time constraints, work pressure, and other administrative hassles etc. (Bruch & Ghoshal, 2002; Jen Su, 2016). Experts contend the dawn of COVID- 19 crisis has particularly impacted managers due to increased job demands, prevailed uncertainty, and having to be the bearers of the bad news across the organizational ladder (Hillebrandt, Saldanha, Brady, & Barclay, 2021; Knight, 2020).

The current research seeks to investigate how work experiences during the COVID-19 crisis added to managers' stressful job demands distinguishing these job demands into challenge

and hindrance stressor framework (see e.g., Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine et al., 2005; Rodell & Judge, 2009). Challenge stressors are job demands that offer potential for competence, as well as personal and professional growth (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rodell & Judge, 2009). On the contrary, hindrance stressors refer to job demands that not only thwart one's personal and professional growth but also their ability to attain such goals (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rodell & Judge, 2009). Scholars have noted the various factors that contributed to workers' mental health including job demands, isolation at work, uncertainty and job insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Campion et al., 2020; Daly & Robinson, 2020; Holmes et al., 2020). However, little attention is paid to the cross-level interaction between managers' job demands and employee stress that stems from the interpersonal relationships.

Further to this, the COVID-19 pandemic has predominantly identified society's dependence on "*essential workers*" (Guasti, 2020) and, by contrast highlighted the "*nonessential*" worker category. Recently, the definition of essential work has expanded from healthcare practitioners, (Matsuishi et al., 2012), and law enforcement professionals, to first responders (Gershon et al., 2010), postal workers, food distribution, communication services (Benhamou & Piedra, 2020), and critical infrastructure workers (e.g., water and natural gas). The website of Public Safety Canada defines essential work as services and functions deemed necessary to sustain "life, health and basic societal functioning". To maintain the societal functioning, essential workers were the only class of workers expected to go to work during the various waves of the COVID-19 crisis (Guasti, 2020). All other workers were urged to work from home. According to a recent estimate, about 40% of Canadian jobs can be done from home (Deng, Messacar, Morrissette, 2020).

A constellation of factors has added to non-essential workers' distress including work demands, inadequate support, lack of control, and work isolation (Holmes et al., 2020; van Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021). The expectation to "stay inside" or observe social distancing was shown to impact the overall wellbeing of non-essential employees (Brooks et al., 2020; Venkatesh & Edirappuli, 2020). Therefore, the current research focuses on non-essential workers by investigating the impact of managers' job demands on subordinates' perceived stress. Given that the work-from-home directive has been a socially isolating experience for most non-essential workers (van Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021), attention was paid to interpersonal exchanges between managers and employees in determining employee wellbeing.

In particular, the current research uncovers the efficacy of a common coping mechanism in response to stressful job demands such as relational job crafting or manager's proactive reprioritization of the interpersonal relationships as a means of coping from taxing job demands (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Due to the work-for-home expectation for non-essential workers, relational job crafting efforts would include optimizing interactions and interpersonal relationships with work and non-work contacts to manage both domestic and work-related demands (Sturges, 2012). Further to this, relational job crafting that maximizes job resources, such as social network, support, and responsibilities, fosters an environment of mutual respect, trust, and dependence on work relationships (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). Undoubtedly, relational job crafting allows "individuals' abilities and needs to become more compatible with the job demands" (Li, Yang, Weng, Zhu, 2021, p.4). The current study avails social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) to argue, implementing interpersonal justice on manager's behalf is contingent upon a subjective exchange value (Sherf, Venkataramani, & Gajendran, 2019), which further leads to a differential behavior towards their employees (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018;

Zapata et al., 2013). Since relational job crafting entails interpersonal recalibration among organizational members with proactive modifications in the frequency and nature of interactions at work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), it is expected to compromise managers' ability to be interpersonally fair towards their employees. Noting the prior evidence on the relationship between interpersonal justice and stress (see e.g., Reb, Chaturvedi, Narayanan et al., 2019), it is asserted that managers' engagement in relational job crafting can indirectly inform subordinates' perceived stress.

Managers today are increasingly scrutinized, and are required to be more than just profit-maximizing agents. Walumbwa and colleagues (2008) noted the increased pressure on managers to demonstrate integrity and fairness. Contrary to distributive (i.e., fairness of outcomes e.g., resource allocation; Adams, 1965) and procedural (i.e., fairness of processes; Leventhal, 1980) justices, managers typically enjoy more control in determining the quality of exchanges with their employees through *interpersonal justice* (Scott, Colquitt, & Paddock, 2009). Bies (2001) defined interpersonal justice as the fairness of interpersonal treatment and exchanges towards others while implementing procedures and allocating outcomes. Therefore, interpersonal justice can potentially ameliorate the negative impact caused by reduced distributive and procedural justice (Cropanzano, Slaughter, & Bachiochi, 2005).

Researchers have identified two predominant rules of interpersonal fairness namely: (i) respect or treating others with dignity and sincerity, and (ii) propriety or demonstrating appropriateness and non-bias towards others (Bies & Moag, 1986). Relatedly, interpersonally fair managers are evaluated on the extent to which they adhere to these two rules (Bies & Moag, 1986; Johnson, Lanaj, & Barnes, 2014). Interpersonal justice also involves far less uncertainty than other forms of justice as it "reflects universal expectations for social interactions" as

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managers often know what it means to be polite and respectful (Johnson et al., 2014, p. 3). Other examples of interpersonal justice are treating employees with courtesy, respect, and dignity – without directing inappropriate comments towards them (Colquitt & Rodell, 2015). Not surprisingly, managers play the key role associated in administering fair or just treatment especially in regard to interpersonal justice (Scott, Gaza, Conlon, & Kim, 2014). Interpersonal justice has been found to be a reliable predictor of employee attitudes and behaviors (see Colquitt et al., 2001) and can be observed in potentially any manager-employee encounter (Bies, 2005).

Despite mounting evidence signifying the role of interpersonal justice in predicting employee behaviors and attitudes, a vast majority of managerial literature focuses primarily on the distributive and the procedural justice (Wang & Noe, 2010). Consequently, interpersonal justice enjoys little research attention (Li, Zhang, Zhang, & Zhao, 2017). Recently, Graso and colleagues (2020) questioned whether justice literature, hitherto, considered managerial interpersonal motives. Relationships with one's manager are usually assessed through the relational ethics perspective often epitomized through the principles of interpersonal justice (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Naturally, employees who are not treated with respect by their managers through compromised interpersonal exchanges, engage in activities that are directly in conflict with the organizational interests (LeRoy, Bastounis, & Poussard, 2012) and often experience negative emotions (Adamska & Jurik, 2021). On the other hand, employees treated with respect and courtesy are more likely to transcend their job requirements even in the absence of formal rewards (Rego & Cunha, 2010). Such examples of proactivity and engagement are noted across disciplines. For example, employee territoriality

about sharing information declines if it threatens the quality of relationship with the supervisor (Gao et al., 2011; Hirak et al., 2012).

Due to its extensive advantages for employees and organizations (see e.g., Colquitt et al., 2013 for a meta-analytic review), it is crucial to motivate managers to promote interpersonal justice (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Scott et al., 2009; Hillebrandt et al., 2021). However, managers are not always motivated to be interpersonally fair (see e.g., Hillebrandt et al., 2021; Sherf et al., 2019). This may be due to managers' low trait empathy (see e.g., Patient & Skarlicki, 2010; Whiteside & Barclay, 2016), high core self-evaluations and anxiety (see e.g., Hillebrandt et al., 2021), workload and lack of rewards for implementing justice (Sherf et al., 2019), and social exchange obligations toward employees (Zapata, Olsen, & Martins, 2013; Zhao, Chen, & Brockner, 2015). Much of the actor-centric explanation for why managers act unfairly towards their employees is done using individual differences perspective (for exception, see Sherf et al., 2019). Using a multi-study approach, Sherf and colleagues (2019) showed that managers' ability to be fair can be informed by their workload and the associated rewards with being fair. The current research extends this argument and suggests when managers experience stressful job demands, their ability to act in an interpersonally fair manner depends on the type of relational job crafting they engage in.

The current research focuses on interpersonal justice for two reasons. First, interpersonal justice is demonstrated at the immediate level of the manager and the employees (Khan, Bell, & Quratulain, 2021) and is, therefore, shown to be more of a contextual determinant of employee work outcomes. Second, due to the work isolation experienced during the COVID-19 crisis (van Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021), interpersonal fairness emerged as a salient contextual determinant within the work interactions. In addition to the outcomes noted above, managers'

ability to implement interpersonal justice is important for various reasons. First, interpersonal

justice has shown to promote psychological experiences of safety, meaningfulness, and

availability at work (Khan et al. 2021). Evidently, how managers treat their employees can

impact their psychological connections not only with the managers but also the organization

(Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009; Khazanchi & Masterson, 2011; George & Zhou, 2007). Second,

when managers implement interpersonal justice, it creates a work environment of openness and

candidness with free flow of information where employees are not afraid to take creative

interpersonal risks and, therefore, remain constructively motivated (Khan et al., 2021). Finally,

employees who experience interpersonally fair treatment, perform better, are less likely to be

deviant (e.g., shirking or stealing at work), and are less likely to turnover (Colquitt et al., 2013).

Problematization

Employee stress refers to any type of unpleasant emotions experienced within or without

one's work environment as they feel threatened in any way without being able to propose an

adequate reaction, often resulting in anxiety and frustration (Seaward, 2019). Different forms of

stressors can contribute to workplace stress (Kihara & Mugambi, 2018). Examples of perceived

stress at work include an overall work environment that thwarts individual wellbeing and

productivity (Richardson, 2017), reduced work engagement, inability to cope with or control job

demands or to voice grievances due to fear of losing one's job (Seaward, 2019). The existing

scholarship on employee stress has approached this concept from various perspectives including

definition and operationalization, the antecedent stressors, strains, interventions and related

coping strategies (Kihara & Mugambi, 2018). Others have focused on managing employee stress

in various settings (i.e., military, see e.g., Friedman, 2006; Jensen & Wrisberg, 2014, natural

disasters, see e.g., Field et al., 2012, Zhang et al., 2017). In other words, extreme situations

account for various forms of employee stress (Oruh, Mordi, Dibia, & Ajonbadi, 2021).

Currently, several studies have identified the strategies for managing employee stress during the

COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Greenberg and colleagues (2020) noted the use of proactive

measures to monitor the employee concerns and wellbeing with efforts to reduce any ambiguity

as a fruitful avenue to mitigate workplace stress. Others have outlined the importance of work-

life balance and effective team management as means of stress management (see for example,

Dymecka et al., 2020; Tannenbaum et al., 2021). Evidently, the role of leadership in determining

and maintaining employee wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis cannot be overlooked (see e.g.,

Masood & Budworth, 2021; Mehta et al., 2020; Sultana et al., 2020). In other words, the stress

literature could be advanced through the trend of mediated-moderation models between

leadership and employees (Rosinha et al., 2017).

To expand the existing scholarship on employee stress, the current study investigates how

managerial interpersonal mechanics in response to experiencing stressful job demands, inform

employee stress during the COVID-19 crisis. This is explored from the perspective of having to

operate in an extreme situation with an expectation of being interpersonally fair. Managers'

interactions with their employees along with the degree of fairness with which they treat them

can account of significant employee outcomes (Harms, Credé, Tynan, Leon, & Jeung, 2017).

Understandably, the extent to which managers provide guidance and promote future growth can

unarguably influence employee stress experiences (Bass & Bass, 2008; Diebig, Bormann, &

Rowold, 2016). Overall, the literature is replete with the examples of how stress can influence

managers and how managers can both be "a source of stress or source of relief from stress" for

their employees (Harms et al., 2017, p.178). However, little research has explored the relational

facets of how managerial job demands influence employee stress with mediating mechanisms

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illustrative of the much-demanded fairness. Scholars have long argued the role of managers in (i) mitigating the effects of job stressors for their employees (Offerman & Hellman, 1996; Schmidt et al., 2014), and (ii) becoming a source of stress for them (Bass & Bass, 2008; Rajah, Song, & Arvey, 2011). Empirical evidence shows when employees receive support from their leaders (interchangeably used with managers in literature; Harms et al., 2017), they not only experience less stress but are also able to cope better with their own jobs (Ganster et al. 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002). A significant body of scholarship suggests the idea of contagion effects on employees as dissipated from their managers (see e.g., Anderson et al. 2003; Lewis 2000, Sy et al. 2005). Relatedly, a manager's lower stress levels are often mirrored in employee stress through emotional contagion (Hatfield et al., 1994).

Prior research on stress and interpersonal justice primarily focused on intrapersonal perspectives (e.g., Reb et al., 2014; Schuh et al., 2017; Reb et al., 2019). Others have focused on the role of managers in shaping how employees appraise and react to different stressors (LePine et al., 2016). For an instance, certain stressors such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000; Tepper, 2017) and laissez-faire leadership (Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007) are widely associated with higher levels of perceived stress among employees (LePine et al., 2016). Other research offers advice for workers dealing with overworked and "stressed out" managers assuming it to be dissipated through emotional contagion (Chamorro- Premuzic, 2017; Davis-Laack, 2015; McKee, 2015; Saunders, 2014). A meta-analysis by Harms and colleagues (2017) illustrates how managerial stress levels may translate into employee stress through reduced transformation leadership. Further, Lepine and colleagues (2016) studied how managers may impact employee reactions to stressful work demands through managing or manipulating the stress appraisal processes.

However, none of these studies identify the (i) the role of managerial job demands in influencing employee stress levels; and (ii) the actual interpersonal mechanisms through which a manager influences employee stress levels. To this end, our theoretical understanding of the interdependence of managerial job demands on employee wellbeing is insufficiently explored. Given the scarcity of research on how supervisors' justice implementation influence employee dynamics, scholars have urged to study the fairness-related mechanisms in the workplace (see e.g., Valet, 2018). Notably, in its current form, the management literature offers limited insights on how leaders (or managers) may impact followers' stress (LePine et al, 2016). In particular, most existing studies have overlooked the role of relational dynamics between managerial stressors (e.g., job demands) and employee stress. In other words, our understanding of whether and how stress acts as a "trickle-down" phenomenon (i.e., downward dissipation from managers to employees), is far from complete. Specifically, we lack a comprehensive understanding of how a manager's increased or stressful job demands influence employee stress on an interpersonal domain.

To address this research gap, the purpose of this research is to extend the earlier arguments around stress and leadership, theorizing manager stress as an antecedent to managerial behaviors while employee stress as a consequence of managerial behavior (Harms et al., 2017). As noted earlier, the goal of the current research is to investigate managerial stress as a trickle-down phenomenon on a relational domain, I rely on the interdependence of managers and employees' interpersonal exchanges (Graen & Uhl-Bien 1995). For example, is it possible that the residue of a manager's stressful job demands seep into the employee work environment? Alternatively, could it be that a manager's response to stressful job demands result in a situation that may directly impact employee levels of perceived stress as well? More importantly, I am

interested in exploring how an overworked manager interacts with his or her employees from relational viewpoint. Accordingly, the goal of this research is to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does a manager's stressful job demands impact their interpersonal interactions with their employees?

RQ2: How does a manager's interpersonal interactions influence employee stress levels?

Relational job crafting allows job crafters to seek others' opinions, advice, and expertise, to enhance their work-related social resources including social connection and support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This perspective stems from an assumption that social connections can help individuals cope with taxing job demands and even enhance their demand-specific capacities (Devloo et al., 2011). Relational job crafting also allows individuals to shape their job demands as they see fit by increasing workload or responsibilities such as offering mentorship to certain organizational members and even reduce and eschew interpersonal experience that might be unpleasant or unproductive (Li et al., 2021). Traditionally, crafting relationships at work is seen as a way to optimize one's potential at work while seeking reciprocal support to succeed at one's job (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Nonetheless, scholars have questioned whether there is a dark side of relational job crafting (Rofcanin et al., 2019). In the current research, I extend their research question from a managerial viewpoint. In that vein, I am interested in evaluating whether managerial relational crafting challenges managers' ability to be interpersonally fair and consequently result in employee stress. Although the existing research provides some evidence for the significance of managerial job crafting (e.g., Berg et al., 2010), the actual outcomes of

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managerial job crafting and their ramifications within organizational success are relatively

underexplored (Shin et al., 2020).

The Present Study

The current study borrows from job stressor literature to distinguish work stressors from

social stressors (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Dormann & Zapf, 2004). Work stressors refer to

challenge and hindrance-based stressors (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rodell & Judge, 2009). On the

other hand, social stressors refer to "a class of characteristics, situations, episodes, or behaviors

that are related to psychological or physical strain and that are in some way social in nature"

(Dormann & Zapf, 2004, p. 62). Examples include workplace conflict, poor team climate, and

isolation (van Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021). Work isolation or individuals' perceptions of

dissociation from organization and its members (Marshall, Michaels, & Mulki, 2007) is an

alarming stressor within non-essential workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (van

Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021). In particular, the nonessential workers were expected to "sit out

the storm and work from home", with lesser opportunities for making connections and

interpersonal support due to geographical dispersions and/or social-distancing requirements (van

Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven, 2021). Similarly, lack of interpersonal justice at work can be considered

as a form of social stressor. van Zoonen, & Ter Hoeven (2021) noted that non-essential

employees are more likely to experience social stressors. Therefore, the current research studies

the shift of non-essential managers' interpersonal exchanges with employees in the wake of

stressful job demands within a social context. Interestingly, managers' need to belong can also

presumptively impact their ability to prioritize fairness to establish or maintain psychological

closeness between themselves and the members of their team on both individual and collective

levels (Graso et al., 2020). It is, therefore, of significance to explore how manager's involvement

in relational crafting as a job demand reduction strategy (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), impacts their subordinates. In particular, I am interested in uncovering how managerial job demands impact the interactions with their subordinates through relational crafting, and how it impacts managers' ability to be interpersonally fair. Further, how do these interactions impact subordinates' perceived stress.

Indeed, relationship formation characterized by respect and consideration between supervisor and subordinates is a significant component of effective management (Harms et al., 2017; Reb et al., 2019). Similarly, the positive effects of support, trust, and relationship-building are understood to (i) lower employee levels of perceived stress; (ii) serve as resources to cope against stress (e.g., Firth, Mellor, Moore, & Loquet, 2003; Skakon, Nielsen, Borg, & Guzman, 2010; van Dierendonck, Haynes, Borrill, & Stride, 2004; Wallace et al., 2009). However, it is noted that fairness in general and interpersonal fairness in particular means more to some than others (Collins & Mossholder, 2017). Further, evidence shows the variability in justice is far more stressful for employees than experiencing a consistently unfair treatment (Matta, Scott, Colquitt, Koopman, et al., 2017). Accordingly, it is relevant to understand how employees receive the differential treatment that may entail selective resource (e.g., information, influence, and attention) allocation (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). For example, research contends some individuals are more sensitive to equal exchanges than others (Collins & Mossholder, 2017; Lu et al., 2017). Therefore, the current research argues the differential interpersonal treatment as a result of relational crafting leads to employee stress.

Through sequential mixed-methods investigation, the research objectives of the current research are threefold. First, I aim to uncover how managerial job demands influence the interactions between managers and employees. In particular, I am interested in understanding

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how stressed-out managers treat their subordinates. In doing so, I will consider the unique effect of work experiences during the extreme situation to build on how stressful job demands may impact manager-employee relationships. Second, I aim to explore how manager-employee interactions lead to employee stress. In particular, the current research explicates (i) the utility of relational job crafting as an effective coping mechanism against managerial job demands; (ii) conceptualize relational crafting as an antecedent to interpersonal justice at manager-level; (iii) employee stress pathways through both relational crafting and interpersonal justice. Finally, I managers' engagement in relational job crafting as a boundary condition to study to manager - employee relational exchange quality (and their employees (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Schriesheim, Castro, & Cogliser, 1999) and employee stress.

Research Significance and Contributions

Obtaining a comprehensive understanding of relational mechanisms have practical implications for stress management and job demands literature. Such research adds value for employers in outlining the interconnectedness of disparate organizational levels in predicting employee wellbeing. In doing so, the current research seeks to make at least three broader contributions. First, by investigating the intricate manager-employee interactions within an extreme context (i.e. the COVID-19 pandemic), the current research outlines some of the emerging challenges faced by managers in the wake of work disruptions during the extreme events (Hällgren et al., 2018; Morgeson et al., 2015) including the common job stressors (i.e., challenge and hindrance stressors, Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rodell & Judge, 2009), and how that may translate into some of the common social stressors (Dormann & Zapf, 2004) for employees as measured through managers' engagement in relational job crafting and implementation of interpersonal justice. The current research also considers the other-reports (i.e., employee

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perceptions) of their exchanges with the managers in determining the levels of perceived overall employee stress at individual level (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine et al., 2005; Rodell & Judge, 2009).

Second, the current research expects a differential outcome for relational job crafting based on the kind of stressor experienced by managers. Further, it assumes, each stressor would differentially impact the interpersonal justice outcome through either expansion or contraction of managers' relational crafting. This would then impact employees' perceived stress accordingly. In particular, the current research hypothesizes that managers' engagement in either expanding or contracting their relational network would have a unique interaction with employee reports of the quality of exchanges they enjoy with their managers to inform stress.

Third, the current research offers a more practical contribution by examining the cross-level interaction of the impact of the work stressors experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it informs employee wellbeing. The findings of the current research can be applied to advance our understanding of the job design, justice, and stress scholarships. The takeaways of the current research would also inform the design of organizational interventions for non-essential employees in various occupations.

The following section overviews the various inter-related contributions offered by the current study followed by theoretical, managerial, and policy implications of the current research.

Contribution 1: Stress as a "trickle-down" phenomenon

The current research examines how managers' job demands may impact how they treat their employees. It also considers the employee experiences of stress based on a manager's reactions to stress at an interpersonal level. To my knowledge, this is among the few studies

contributing to the "trickle down" effect of managerial stress in extreme situation (i.e., COVID-19) context. The current study distinguishes itself from others by approaching this phenomenon through an interpersonal perspective. In doing so, it addresses two major gaps in the literature. First, it focuses on justice actors rather than recipients (Scott et al., 2009) by adopting a unique within and between person approach rather than having a static perspective (Rupp, 2011). Second, it integrates the literature on stress and justice to elucidate the psychological interdependence between managers and subordinates. Indeed, justice enactment and work stress are identified as promising avenues for future research (Graso et al., 2020). In doing so, the current research expands our understanding of how stress is managed and perceived within manager-employee interactions. Exploring such dynamics would help us delineate pathways for stress-reduction for organizational members.

Contribution 2: Nuanced Outcomes of Job Crafting

The current research examines manager-employee interpersonal relationships at the junction of stress and job crafting. In doing so this research contributes to the young and emerging literature on job crafting by evaluating its role in minimizing managerial job stressors. Indeed, job crafting has been studied primarily at micro-levels with little insights on the impact of managerial job crafting behaviors on employees. The current research investigates how job crafting as a demand reduction coping strategy by managers may induce stress within employees. In doing so, it responds to the call for future research by Bruning and Campion (2018), to explore the nuanced outcomes of job crafting. Nielsen and Abildgaard (2012) suggested future research should focus on different kinds of job crafting in conjunction with various aspects of employee wellbeing with samples other than blue collar employees. The current study examines this mechanism in managers. Further, it outlines relational crafting as a significant component of

manager–employee relations and conceptualizes it as an antecedent to interpersonal justice (e.g., Rupp & Cropanzano, 2002). In that regard, the current research model considers relational crafting as a mediating mechanism instead of exploring it as an outcome variable or its effects.

By focusing on the relational differentiation, the current research explores the interactive effect of job demands and LMX in predicting relational crafting. In doing so, it offers theory development on relational crafting by considering LMX as a boundary condition between relational crafting and employee stress. Prior research on LMX has predominantly considered the positive and high-quality exchanges between the actor (i.e., manager) and target (i.e., employee; Harms et al., 2017).

Contribution 3: Extreme Sitaution Context

The state of existing literature on employee stress has overall matured during the past decades, by recognizing the range of externalities the construct offers for workers, employers, and the communities (Aderibigbe & Mjoli, 2018). As noted, stress can have serious repercussions for individuals and employees such as poor performance, increased absenteeism, higher turnover, etc. Further to this, employees who experience extreme stress are more likely to experience family dispute and personal struggles, which can be dissipated throughout the broader society (Osibanjo et al., 2016). Nonetheless, COVID-19 crisis is classified as an extreme situation and, therefore, would require a more systemic approach against the work stressors and the trickle-down effect of stress across different levels. The current research extends the limited stream of literature on interpersonal justice and employee stress (Hui et al., 1999; Masterson et al., 2000). In particular, it is proposed that a manager's engagement in relational job crafting may, in fact, impact the stress levels of his or her direct reports.

Empirical Contributions

The current research provides an interdisciplinary explanation to how stressed-out managers treat their employees. Drawing on the social exchange theory, the current research helps us delineate pathways that help us understand the conditions under which managers are more likely to be interpersonally fair. By examining the role of relational job crafting as a potential antecedent to interpersonal justice, the current research offers a counterintuitive explanation to implementing interpersonal justice.

In doing so, it borrows from disparate yet overlapping literature from justice, job crafting, and job stress literature to discuss stress as a trickle-down phenomenon within organizations. By incorporating a multi-level research approach to these scholarships, the current research opens a new line of inquiry to study a concept of "*nested crafting*", where repurcussions of job crafting efforts on one level can be felt on another level through interpersonal exchanges.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Managerial Job demands

The current research offers several theoretical and managerial implications. First, my theorizing suggests managerial work demands may translate into employee stress through interpersonal relationships. In that regard, managers should consider fostering a work environment that allows managers to effectively cope with their stressful work demands while instilling the value of maintaining interpersonally fair treatment. The current research helps us develop an understanding of the effect of managerial job-demands on employee health and wellbeing. The findings of the current research allow practitioners to overhaul the existing job designs to mitigate the negative consequences of work stressors. In general, organizations can offer additional resources to help managers cope with different forms of work stressors.

Similarly, employees can be provided with additional social resources to cope with any social stressors due to lack of managers' support. Scholars have outlined several tools to address different forms of work stressors – particularly the hindrance stressors such as unnecessary paperwork (Rodell & Judge, 2009). Adequate arrangements can be made to minimize any undue stressors particularly for managers to promote a healthier workforce.

In that sense, human resource practitioners should actively screen managers' actual and perceived job demands with respect to their interpersonal experiences at work. While organizations may not be interested in reducing the essential job demands, active steps could be taken by human resource practitioners to ensure managers do not have to experience hindering job demands to partially ameliorate the negative impact of job demands on interpersonal justice. Further, identifying manager's efforts to be fair (e.g., through time, efforts, and attention, etc.) through rewards and recognition can also significantly promote fairness (Sherf et al., 2019).

Effective Coping Mechanisms:

Interestingly, the current research highlights manager's engagement in relational crafting may impact their ability to be interpersonally fair. In that sense, organizations can put in place specific policies and practices to prioritize interpersonal fairness. For example, 360-degree surveys allow organizations to collect data from multiple sources to take necessary measures. Additionally, interventions such as mindfulness training may allow managers to keep track of their interactional exchanges with their employees.

In particular, the proposed indirect relationship between managerial job demands, relational crafting, and interpersonal justice suggests that organizations should pay attention and even monitor the managerial job demands. Indeed, managers are stressed out (McCarthy, Erdogan, & Bauer, 2019). Therefore, any level of intervention to help managers deal with their

job demands will benefit both physical and mental employee wellbeing. It is widely known that lower levels of employee stress and higher sense of justice at work not only improve work relationships but also enhances organizational performance (Reb et al., 2019).

An interesting projection of this research is that it is designed to underscore the impact of job crafting beyond job crafter's wellbeing. The current research adds to a nascent stream of literature by shedding light on how a manager's job demands can predict the amount of stress employees experience through relational crafting and interpersonal justice. Indeed, interpersonal justice can influence employee health, wellbeing, and sense of justice at work (Reb et al. 2014; Schuh et al. 2017). Indeed, employee stress in organizations leads to increased turnover, reduced performance, psychological distress, physical illnesses, and a significant financial due to frequent sick leave and absenteeism, (Bliese, Edwards, & Sonnentag, 2017; Choi, Yi, & Kim, 2018; Giorgi, Leon-Perez, Pignata, Demiral, & Arcangeli, 2018). Therefore, outlining the underlying mechanisms that trigger stress may allow us to promote healthier workforce.

On a broader level, my research underscores the value of inter-connectedness of manager-employee relationship in shaping organizational workforce. Scholars argue the embeddedness of jobs and tasks within interpersonal connections (Rofcanin et al., 2019). Therefore, it is of immense significance to study the relational and interpersonal aspects of the work environment (Grant & Parker, 2009). Organizations have long endeavored to find ways to boost employee productivity. Indeed, one of the ways organizations can optimize employee performance is through lowering their stress levels. Evidence suggests most employees flag the interactions with their supervisors as the most stressful aspect of their jobs (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

Psychological Safety:

On a macro level, the findings of the current research promote a culture of psychological safety or a collective belief among the organizational members that it is safe to take interpersonal risks within the work setting (Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, Dillon, & Roloff, 2007; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety is also shown to enhance various employee outcomes such as creativity, productivity, performance, and engagement (Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017).

Evidence shows supportive leadership behavior to be a consistent antecedent to psychological safety (for a review, see Newman et al., 2017). Examples of supportive supervisory behaviors that directly impact psychological safety are inclusiveness (Bienefeld & Grote, 2014), managerial support (May et al., 2004), trustworthiness (Madjar & Ortiz-Walters, 2009), openness (Detert & Burris, 2007) and integrity (Palanski & Vogelgesang, 2011). Evidently, a lot of supervisory interpersonal support can be demonstrated through relational exchanges between manager and employees. Due to its benefits on both employees and organizations (see e.g., Colquitt et al., 2013 for a meta-analytic review), researchers have long emphasized the need for implementing interpersonal justice at work (e.g. Ambrose & Schminke, 2009; Scott et al., 2009). However, empirical evidence suggests that not managers are motivated to implement interpersonal justice for various reasons.

Competitive Advantage:

To effectively navigate through the uncertainties of the economic conditions within hyped global competition, employers expect individuals to meet the requirements of the job demands while expanding their efforts for higher performance (Lu et al., 2017). The current research not only elucidates the role of managerial job demands on supervisor-subordinate

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relationships but also explores novel ways in which a manager's engagement in relational crafting may affect employee stress levels. Therefore, when practiced by managers, relational crafting may have serious repercussions. Consequently, organizations can ensure managers communicate and convey the criteria of their engagement in relational crafting, which may result in a differential treatment towards their employees. By maintaining effective relationships between managers and employees, businesses can establish a sustainable competitive advantage critical to organizational performance and success (Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000). Examining employee wellbeing based on the interpersonal experiences during turbulent times, therefore, is of specific significance.

These findings can be applied to develop human resource policies that require managers to be mindful of the interactions with their subordinates. Further, managers can also be trained to work towards ameliorating uncertainty particularly with regards to interpersonal work encounters. This may lead to the development of high-quality relationships at work, thereby, leading to higher employee performance (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Social Benefits and Policy Implications

Commonly studied employee stress factors include job insecurity and layoffs (Hill, 2020), health risks (Hill, 2020) and adverse work conditions including work demands and compensated related issues (Oruh et al., 2021). Given the tenor of the COVID-19 crisis, while it may be impossible to eradicate stress from workplace altogether, managers are nonetheless encouraged to adopt a more compassionate approach towards their employees (Masood & Budworth, 2021; Oruh et al., 2021).

In the wake of both anticipated and unanticipated work stressors faced by managers, during the COVID-19, the human resources professionals can implement relevant organizational

policies. For example, both regulatory interventions can be placed to monitor managerial job demands and related work stressors. Similarly, programs and initiatives can be placed which can not only provide support to employees but also foster empathy and compassion. Indeed, a culture of compassion at work that is critical in effectively leading employees in turbulent situations (Wasylyshyn & Masterpasqua, 2018) – such as the COVID-19 crisis (Masood & Budworth, 2021). Such approach to managing employee stress while allows organizations to pursue their strategic goals, also identifies the need to care for and support employees (O'Dea & Flin, 2003).

Another important implication of the current research is that it outlines the adverse outcomes of unhealthy overworking culture especially at manager-level. A policy description that fits the implications of the current research is a recent Bill 27 or "*Working for Workers Act*" passed late into 2021 and is expected to be in effect in June 2022. The legislation required all Ontario employers of more than 25 employees to introduce a formal work policy, which refrains workers from engaging in work-related communication outside of work hours (Working for Workers Act, 2021). Such policies around work communication would mitigate employee stress to a large extent particularly during turbulent times and extreme situations.

In sum, the COVID-19 pandemic is more than just a health crisis as it branches out to severe economic disorders (Masood & Budworth, 2021). Relatedly, the pandemic has changed the way we are expected to do our jobs. The present research outlines the "trickle-down effect" of managerial job demands and employee stress. In essence, this research suggests that managerial job demands can essentially impact employee stress as manager practices: (i) different forms of relational job crafting; and (ii) decreased interpersonal justice. In doing so, I also aim to identify the relational factors that moderate these relationships. The current research carves out some significant developments within the managerial literature by investigating the

link between managers' job demands and employee stress through interpersonal exchanges

during the COVID-19 crisis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Model

Employee wellbeing and stress can be tied into the way their supervisors treat them for several reasons (Harms et al., 2017). First, managers being the organizational agents are often perceived as "the face" of an organization (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Lavelle et al., (2018) argued that employees tend to hold organizations accountable for procedural (in)justice whereas supervisors are held accountable for interpersonal (in) justice. Therefore, a manager's ability to create and maintain quality relationships, along with their ability to treat their employees fairly can profoundly impact employee stress (Harms et al., 2017). Second, research confirms that managerial stressors can directly impact their leadership behaviors, which then predict employee stress (For meta-analysis, see Harms et al., 2017). In particular, the quality of interpersonal relationships can play a significant role in determining employee stress through interpersonal justice (Reb et al., 2019).

Further to this, managers can play a distinct role in allocating and/or withholding both material and social resources for their employees. For example, a manager's behavior in itself may provide reassurance to employees by allocating an effective distribution of resources (Harms et al., 2017). Indeed, managers are geared towards expending their efforts and resources on mitigating their own stress levels (Reb et al., 2019) than regulating employee stress (Harms et al., 2017). In general, stressors can keep managers from expending their limited resources on employees (e.g., Demerouti et al. 2001). Cavanaugh et al. (2000, p.66) posited a unique effect of stressors by suggesting they "may potentially cancel out or at a minimum reduce the true effects of self-reported work stress on work outcomes". However, how these stressors impact managers'

relationships at work and how that impacts employee stress is insufficiently examined. This is an important oversight as scholars cautioned that the effect of stressors from within-person studies cannot be applied to between-person designs or vice versa (Jayawickreme, Tsukayama, & Kashdan, 2017). Therefore, further research attention is needed to examine the differential impact of challenge and hindrance stressors on employee outcomes (Sawhney, & Michel, 2022).

Notably, relational job crafting or the proactive behavioral changes individual make to the interpersonal layouts of their jobs, is considered a fruitful coping mechanism against work stressors such as job demands (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Berg et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). However, the act of crafting relationships through avoiding others is sometimes essential to individual wellbeing, whereas, seeking extensive relational network may have its limitations (Tims et al., 2021). In general, managerial relational job crafting can entail spending extra time with some employees but not the others (see e.g., Berg et al., 2010; Rofcanin et al., 2019). In that sense, a validated technique of relational job crafting, as performed by managers in response to job demands "may raise flags" among the employees. This is because it is significantly important for individuals to be able to "anticipate how fairly they will be treated in the future" (Jones & Skarlicki, 2013, p. 5). The current research asserts that managers' engagement in different types of relational job crafting may take away the time and resources to have meaningful relationships with their subordinates. This is based on a presumption that manager-employee relational architecture may not always fall within the category of relational job crafting but is, in fact, described through interpersonal exchanges. As noted earlier, managers can drastically impact employee experiences of stress (Harms et al., 2017). Notably, individual experiences of stress are particularly informed by the extent to which they value the threatened resource or relationship (Fiedler, 1992). Generally, employees value fairness (Blader & Tyler,

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2005), as it can easily be exchanged with the employees at managers' discretion (Koopman et al., 2015). In that sense, managers' implementing interpersonal justice can serve as a job resource as part of an ongoing social exchange relationship (Blau, 1964; Foa & Foa, 1974) to minimize employee stress.

Employee stress is closely associated with negative affect (Reb et al., 2019) as a result of worn-out individual resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Consequently, individuals tend to expend considerable psychological and material resources to either adapt to or reduce job stressors (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007). Research indicates individual personal value orientation further informs their reactions and sensitivity to the (un)equal exchanges with their employers and/or superiors (Cohen & Keren, 2008; Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007; Thomas, Au, & Ravlin, 2003). From an instrumental perspective, employees who see their coworkers treated unfairly are likely to question how they themselves will be treated in the future (He et al., 2017). In other words, it is important for individuals to discern their superior is, in fact, able to handle his or her own stress (Day, Sin, & Chen, 2004) without releasing any second-hand stress within their work environment. The perceived stress tends to get aggravated particularly when the employees are uncertain about the manager's criterion for the said differential treatment (Matta et al., 2017). In that vein, when managers recaliberate the bounds of their work and non-work relationships as a means to cope with their taxing job demands (Tims et al., 2012), it is bound to result in a form of relational differentiation among the organizational members such that some indivduals receive more attention than the others (see e.g., Berg et al., 2010). Therefore, the current research argues that relational job crafting, which is the modification of work relationships beyond the realms of assigned connections, directly hampers with manager's ability to be interpersonally fair. Based on the aforementioned argumentation, the current

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research suggests that the compromised work relationships through relational job crafting and interpersonal justice will result in employee stress.

Scholars posited that the extent to which managers provide transparency to their employees while fostering employee development, would categorically ameliorate employee experiences of stress (Bass & Bass, 2008; Diebig, Bormann, & Rowold, 2016; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). In particular, employees experience less stress as they experience supervisory support and feel respected (Reb et al., 2019). It is evident that employees are often at the very least partially unaware of their manager's job demands. While some employees may be able to access their manager's work calendar to reckon their "availability", a vast majority seldom has any idea of the magnitude of job demands their managers are experiencing (Fiedler, 1992; Van Vugt et al., 2008). Harms and colleagues (2017, p.184) suggested that quality bonds and close-knitted ties between "leaders and followers would make followers more certain of the social and material resources available to them to deal with the potential or ongoing threats that might induce feelings of stress and burnout". In that sense, managerial exchanges with their subordinates namely leader-member exchange (LMX, Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) can play an important role in determining employee stress through differential treatments (Reb et al., 2019). The current research considers managerial relational job crafting as a boundary condition to the relationship between perceptions of LMX and stress.

Figure 1: Theorical Model
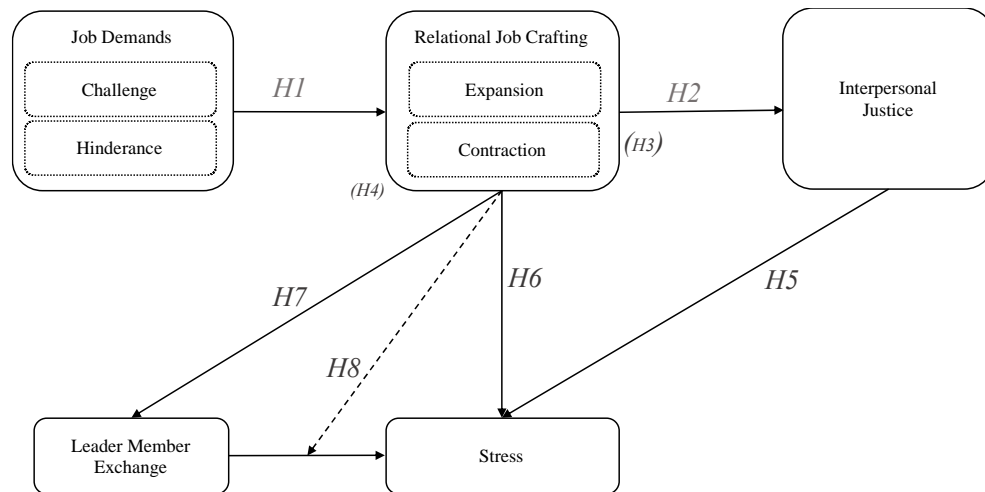
The current chapter shapes our understanding of how managerial job demands can influence employee stress outcomes through interpersonal exchanges. Through interconnected sections, I will offer a review of the existing scholarship, followed by the proposed hypotheses. The literature review uncovers different forms of stressors experienced by managers and how each form of stressor is affiliated with a distinct interpersonal outcome. Next, a succinct review of the literature on job crafting scholarship, with an emphasis on relational job crafting is conducted to develop an understanding of different forms of relational job crafting and their underlying stimuli. The literature review will shed light on the existing scholarship on the theoretical constructs, to lay foundations for the hypotheses. In a similar manner, all other constructs of choice such as interpersonal justice, perceptions of LMX, and stress will be

reviewed and operationalized. This will be followed by a categorical delineation of the hypothesized relationships through the lens of social exchange theory.

Literature Review

Job Demands

Job demands, such as expectations to either work hard and quick or manage a heavy workload are understood to compromise individual work behaviors and attitudes (Spector & Jex, 1998; Lu et al., 2017). High job demands are found to be correlated with incumbents' physiological and psychological costs (Lu et al., 2017). Not surprisingly, job demands being a stressor has historically been associated with higher levels of stress (Perrewe & Ganster, 1989; Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Evans, 2017). Prins and colleagues (2015) conducted a study on over 20,000 employees, supervisors, and managers. They concluded that managers are at a significantly higher risk of dealing with workplace stress, depression, and anxiety compared to their non-manager counterparts. Early theorization on workplace stress asserts that job demands can be perceived as harmless, threatening, and malign or they can be viewed as a challenge or opportunity (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) noted that stressors related to occupational stress are, in fact, subjective and whether it results in a stress response is contingent upon how an individual appraised that stressor. Stressors that are appraised as constraining generate a stress response while stressors that deemed as opportunities to progress may not cause stress (Sawhney, & Michel, 2022). To understand the stressful job demands experienced by managers, the current research draws from the challenge-hindrance stressors framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine et al., 2016; Rodell & Judge, 2009). This framework categorizes the broader concept of

job demands into positively yet moderately correlated challenge and hindrance stressors (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; LePine et al., 2016).

Challenge Stressors. Challenge stressors entail a category of work demands that offers rewards, growth, and developmental prospects (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Crawford et al., 2010; LePine et al., 2005). In other words, such stressors are challenging yet rewarding by offering enrichment, growth, and opportunities to learn (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Prem et al., 2017; Rodell & Judge, 2009). Examples of challenge stressors include workload, work complexity, level of responsibility, and time pressure (LePine et al., 2005; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Webster et al., 2011; Zhang, LePine, Buckman, & Wei, 2014). Crawford and colleagues (2010) noted challenge stressors can promote mastery and offer future gains.

Hindrance Stressors. On the contrary, hindrance stressors are discussed in terms of work demands that may limit one's professional growth or advancement opportunities (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Crawford et al., 2010). In other words, these are the demands that are interpreted as obstacles as they take the energy and focus away from achieving the desired goals while depleting individual resources (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Rodell & Judge, 2009). In other words, hindrance stressors are job demands that are seen as unnecessary and impeding one's personal and professional growth and development (Rodell & Judge, 2009). Hindrance stressors can typically stunt individuals' professional advancements while minimizing their ability to attain goals (Crawford et al., 2010). Examples of such work demands include office politics, administrative hassles, role conflict, interpersonal conflict, role ambiguity, red tape, and resource deficiency, etc. (LePine et al., 2005; Webster et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2014).

Job Crafting

Originating from the bottom- up job design perspective, job crafting is defined as the self-initiated and informal modifications to one's cognitive, physical, and relational boundaries to best align them with their work preferences (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Wrzesniewski and Dutton, (2001) premised individuals may engage in task crafting (i.e. making physical adjustments to the number and form of one's work activities), cognitive crafting (i.e. altering the cognitive perceptions of one's job), and relational crafting (i.e. modifying the frequency and nature of interactions one has with others at work).

Job crafting literature suggests individuals craft their jobs to (i) accumulate job resources for optimal performance; and (ii) reduce job demands and stress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Hobfoll, 1989). Accordingly, the three basic motivations to job crafting are rooted in individuals' desires to regain control, maintain a positive-image, and connect with others (Grant & Parker, 2009; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Grant and Parker (2009) outlined the role of job design through interpersonal negotiations between managers and their employees in restoring fairness and justice. Therefore, the current research focuses on the role of interpersonal motives to redesigning jobs as a means to optimize managerial job demands. In doing so, attention was paid to the cross-level interactions of different forms of managerial relational job crafting and employee stress.

Different conceptualizations of job crafting:

Job crafting has been operationalized using a variety of approaches. For example, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) conceptualized job crafting using a role based approach whereby individuals proactively engaged in three distinct types of job crafting namely: (i) *task*

job crafting or modifying the number, scope or type of work tasks; (ii) *relational job crafting* or modifying the frquency, nature, and/or the quality of work-related social interactions; and (iii) *cognitive job crafting* or modifying the way one perceives their job, organization, and/or the scope of work.

Tims and colleagues explained job crafting within the Job Demands–-Resources model (JD-R; Demerouti et al., 2001). In particular, they specified four job crafting dimensions, namely:

> *" (i) increasing structural job resources (e.g. crafting more decision-making latitude or developing oneself); (2) increasing social job resources (e.g. crafting support from colleagues); (3) increasing challenging job demands (e.g. crafting more tasks or responsibilities); and (4) decreasing hindering job demands (e.g. crafting fewer cognitive or emotional demands)"* (Tims, Twemlow, & Fong., 2021, p.55).

A major shortcoming of the JD-R approach to studying job crafting is that it does not identify cognitive crafting as an actual modification to job design, depite it being an integral aspect of job crafting as specified by the seminal scholors of job crafting. These two approaches to understanding job crafting are distinct despite the conceptual overlap (Demerouti et al., 2015; Tims et al., 2013). For an instance, most research on role crafting (i.e., task, relational and cognitive) has taken a qualitative approach. On the contrary, research on the JD-R framework is mostly quantitative (Tims et al., 2021).

A number of scholars have actively attempted to bridge these two dominant perspectives in operationalizing job crafting. For example, researchers have identified a higher order factor

(i.e. approach and avoidance crafting) to different forms of job crafing (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Zhang and Parker, 2019). In an effort to integrate these two conceptualizations, Zhang and Parker (2019) while operationalizing job crafting as a hierarchical construct, also identified lower forms of the construct (i.e., behavioral or cognitive) crafting, followed by the actual content of job crafting (i.e., job demands and resources). Through proposing a hierarchical structure of job crafting, these researchers have identified eight different dimensions to job crafting such as (approach behavioral demands crafting, avoidance cognitive resource crafting, etc.).

Others have concentualized promotion and prevention crafting as a higher order, ramifying into different forms of job crafting (Bindl et al., 2019; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019). A number of studies have placed role crafting (i.e., task, relational, and cognitive), and resource crafting (i.e. increasing structural, relational, and challenging resources) as part of approach crafting, whereas, a reduction in hindering job demands as part of avoidance crafting (e.g. Harju et al., 2021; Mäkikangas, 2018; Petrou & Xanthopoulou, 2020). In that sense, approach crafting represents individual efforts towards attaining positive and desirable gains whereby avoidance crafting represents individual efforts to either prevent or protect one's self from negative outcomes (Zhang and Parker, 2019).

Relational Job Crafting.
Prior research has classified the actions of altering one's social work environment as relational crafting (e.g., Lu et al., 2014; Niessen et al., 2016; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) or enhancing social resources (e.g., Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012; Tims et al., 2012). As noted, the taxonomy of job crafting strategies takes the form of approach (i.e.,

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additional role or resource allocation) and avoidance (i.e., systemic withdrawal from a person or situation)-oriented perspectives (Bruning & Campion, 2017). Applied to relational crafting research, the acts of approach- oriented, promotion-focused expansion or broadening of one's social network at work is categorized under expansion-oriented relational crafting (Boehnlein & Baum, 2020; Rofcanin et al., 2019). On the other hand, scholars have classified avoidance-oriented, prevention-focused reduction of one's social network as contraction-oriented relational crafting (see e.g., Rofcanin et al., 2019). Notably, such operationalization of relational job crafting well-coincide with the recent and emerging work on understanding and categorizaing different forms of job crafting startegies. Relational job crafting is among the less studied dimensions of job crafting and, therefore, requires further scholarly attention (Tims et al., 2021).

Interpersonal justice

Colquitt and colleagues (2001) described interpersonal justice as treating employees properly through demonstrating politeness and respectful behavior towards employees. Interpersonal justice is predominantly explained through the lens of social exchange theory (e.g., Blau 1964; Homans 1958), which suggests quality relationships are established and nurtured to maintain an equilibrium between valued resources and some form of equivalent return on those resources. Such nature of exchange creates a sense of reciprocity between an actor (i.e. manager) and a target (i.e., employee) of justice (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). These resources may take socioemotional or symbolic forms and need not be economic in nature (Reb et al., 2019). Notably, this bedrock justice theory is crafted from the viewpoint of employee expectations and therefore, often overlook the unique demands of acting fairly from managerial viewpoint (Graso et al., 2020). Therefore, the current research considers managerial account of a differential

treatment towards their employees as interpersonally fair or unfair as per their social exchange standards.

Bies and Moag (1986) discussed interpersonal justice in terms of employee experiences of the quality of interpersonal treatment they receive from their superior during various stages of organizational procedures. In other words, interpersonal justice would mean employees are not only treated with respect and dignity but also that management provides explanations for their decisions in an open, timely, and honest way (Bies, 2005; He et al., 2017). Notably, interpersonal justice captures an entire gamut of interpersonal experiences between manager and their employees on a regular basis (Mikula, Petri, & Tanzer, 1990).

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

LMX (Graen, 1976; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-bien, 1995), as an indicator of the quality of the relationship between individuals and their supervisors, "[…]is an appropriate operationalization of the bond felt by a subordinate for their leader and the degree to which they believe they can count on them for support" (Harms et al., 2017, p.181). LMX perspective contends that managers engage in distinguished connections with their subordinates that may either take a form of low-quality (e.g., transactional) or high-quality (e.g., socioemotional) exchanges (Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997). Researchers contend that LMX quality has a distinct effect on employee experiences from both high and low-quality LMX employees (see e.g., Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975; Liden et al., 1997; Maslyn & Uhl-Bien, 2001).

Seminal research on LMX suggests that managers do not arbitrarily establish and maintain high-quality relationships with employees but these exchanges are often informed by (i) employee competence; (ii) like-mindedness/mutual understanding; and (iii) managerial

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preference and prejudices based on race, religion, class, etc. (Graen, 1976; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Liden & Graen, 1980). These assertions were later confirmed by a number of researchers (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). For example, through meta-analysis, Dulebohn and colleagues (2012) identified three basic determinants of LMX quality namely: member characteristics (e.g., competence and performance levels), leader characteristics (e.g., expectations and personal attributes) and relational dynamics (e.g., personal preferences, trust, compatibility, etc.) Of the aforementioned determined, only member work characteristics (i.e., skillset, level of competence, and performance) are considered equitable or fair among the employees (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020).

Blau (1964) posited the relational exchanges within organizations through social exchange perspective account for a range of organizational and employee outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Lioukas & Reuer, 2015). Notably, work relationships are not just social relationships, but are also exchange relationships (Liden, Erdogan, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2006; Liden et al., 1997). Indeed, a relational exchange can predominantly inform individual behavior at work (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). A high-quality exchange relationship entails a good amount of mutual respect, trust, obligation, support, setting clear expectations (Hesselgreaves & Scholarios, 2014). On the other hand, low-quality exchange comprises of poor information exchange and overall lacks inclusion from decision-making (Hesselgreaves & Scholarios, 2014). Typically, low exchange relationships are often deprived of mutual trust and respect and entail minimal exchange of information (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). The nature of the two kinds of exchanges are discussed as follows.

High Exchange Relationships. Evidence suggests that individuals in high LMX interactions are typically advantaged as they have a greater access to organizational resources than individuals in lower LMX interactions (Geertshuis et al., 2015). Therefore, it can be inferred that an access to transparent communication and information are also a form of valuable organizational resources, distributed differentially in both quantity and quality, by supervisors. Both social exchange (Blau, 1964) and LMX viewpoints (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) contend that employees in high-quality LMX receive a well- defined, role-related information, including clear expectations and feedback on performance, which accentuates their work-related behaviors to even outperform their low-quality LMX counterparts. Dansereau and colleagues (1975) noted that individuals extend high-quality exchanges through greater trust and delegation. In line with that principle, Hesselgreaves & Scholarios (2014) contended that high LMX is also a source of extra-role obligations and accountabilities. What this means is that employees in high-quality LMX are expected to perform extra-role responsibilities for their superior, who often reciprocates by doing the same for their followers (Price & Van Vugt, 2014).

Low-Exchange Relationships. Liden and colleagues (1997, p.83) explained low-quality LMX encounters as "relationships that are void of mutual trust, loyalty, respect, and liking . . . [i.e.,] not positive, rather than negative". In that regard, low-quality LMX relationships are distinguished from abusive, energy-draining exchanges (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). For an instance, some employees may even renounce the high-quality LMX exchanges in certain instances (e.g., when managers lack influence, autonomy, resources, or even the repute of trustworthiness; Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Graen & Scandura, 1987). Low-quality LMX are often comprised of stringent employment rules with employees following the formal job descriptions (Buch, Thompson, & Kuvaas, 2016). Such exchanges consist of an incompatible leader-follower

dyad (Gooty & Yammarino, 2013). Employees in low-quality exchanges are less favored by

their leaders and as a result receive limited resources from their supervisors (Buch et al., 2016).

Stress

Stress is often characterized with the physiological and/or psychological arousal in response to

an external stimulus that may pose a threat to something of value to the individuals while

exhausting the available resources to confront the threat (Hobfoll, 1989; Lazarus & Folkman,

1984; LePine, LepPine & Jackson, 2004). The debate around continuous theorization and

analysis of work stress has made it difficult to provide a universal definition for it (Nappo, 2020).

Nonetheless, the notion of perceived imbalance in the individual interactions with their

surroundings and other individuals is widely accepted (Di Martino, 2000; Nappo, 2020).

Although acute stress can have adaptive characteristics in the short-run, chronic stress can have

deleterious impact on employee stress (Maslach et al. 2001; Moore, 2000).

Research distinguishes two broader categories of stress namely: job and interpersonal

stress (Fiedler, 1992). Job stress stems from the nature of the assigned tasks (e.g., complexity,

level of demand or difficulty) including individual work conditions (e.g. time pressure, work

environment, etc.; Harms et al., 2017). Interpersonal stress emanates from relational conflict or

feeling pressured to meet others' demands or expectations (Harms et al., 2017). Indeed, stress

and leadership are intertwined in a way that employee stress can essentially be ascribed to their

superior's behavior towards them (Harms et al., 2017). Therefore, stress is often aggravated

when employees receive little to no support from their supervisors (Reb et al., 2019).

Some of the most stressful characteristics of work include social or physical segregation,

poor quality relationship with superiors, relational disputes, and low social support (International

Labor Organization, 2012). It is asserted that stress arises when employees are unable to meet the

demands originated by their supervisors and/or the psychosocial work environment in which they are unable to generate an equivalent response (Nappo, 2020). Evidence shows that supervisory support can significantly moderate employee emotional demands (Mette, Garrido, Harth, Preisser, & Mache, 2018). In particular, supervisors' consistent attention and interpersonal interactions can considerably buffer employee stress (Boz, Martínez, & Munduate, 2009).

Workplace stress is theorized as individuals' subjective evaluations of external or environmental *strains and stressors* (Bliese et al., 2017). Lazarus and Folkman (1984, 1987) explained stress in terms of negative appraisals of the actions, events, and/or the environment. Stress is explained in terms of resource depletion, lack of control, and even reduced self-efficacy (Demerouti et al. 2001). Although stress may offer adaptive functions in the short-term, it may have drastic repurcussions on employee health, well-being, and performance if experienced for prolonged times (Maslach et al. 2001; Moore, 2000).

Consistent with early theorization (e.g., Folkman, 2011; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Motowidlo, Packard, & Manning, 1986), the current research focuses on individuals' subjective interpretation of stressful events. In other words, I am interested in the extent to which employees "feel" stressed due to a differential treatment they experience from their managers.

Hypotheses Development

Job Demands and Relational Crafting

Job demands represent the organizational expectations from its members whereby job control, autonomy, and support signify the valuable work resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Lu et al., 2017). In particular, when an organization requires increased work efforts through higher job demands, the organizational members expect an equivalent amount of resources to

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maintain the exchange obligations (Lu et al., 2017). This suggests undertaking a broader range of responsibilities may be accompanied with an expectation to receive the proportionate job resources to help individuals cope with the increased job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, in the absence of adequate job resources individuals may also resort to informal techniques (e.g., job crafting) of resource management (Tims, Bakker & Derks, 2012). Therefore, individuals often control their job demands through proactive work behaviors such as job crafting (Wrzniewski & Dutton, 2001).

As an informal job redesign strategy, job crafting, in general, and relational job crafting, in particular, allows individuals to believe they are in charge of their work environment, which may even enhance their personal resources (van Wingerden, Bakker, & Derks, 2017). Although job crafting has been predominantly studied at employee-level, research evidence from a two-sample study indicates that managers are in fact the "crafting leaders" as they enjoy more autonomy in their work environment (Roczniewska & Puchalska-Kamińska, 2017; Shin et al., 2020). For non-essential managers, there has been a pronounced change in information sharing and other work protocols due to the current COVID-19 situation (van Zoonen & ter Hoeven, 2022). Therefore, it is argued that a manager's stressful job demands result in their engagement in relational crafting by either broadening or narrowing the nature and frequency of interpersonal communications and connections they have with other organizational members, stakeholders, and even external interpersonal resources (Berg et al., 2010). Therefore:

Hypothesis 1a: Managers' job demands are directly related to their engagement in relational job crafting.

Once appraised, job stressors are neither uniform nor unidimensional with respect to their individual and organizational outcomes (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; van Zoonen & ter Hoeven, 2021). In particular, certain forms of job stressors can generate positive stress or eustress whereas others may generate negative stress or distress (Selye, 1982). As noted, challenge stressors offer growth and developmental opportunities to the point where they can also be perceived as job resources (Sawhney, & Michel, 2022). Bakker and Demerouti (2007, p.312) posited, "physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job" that allow individuals to meet their work goals while reducing job demands and stimulating personal growth". LePine and colleagues (2005) posited that challenge stressors allow individuals to transcend their job requirements as a form of coping. Interestingly, the relational job crafting as a result of stressful job demands may take the form of expansion-oriented (i.e., individuals seeking interpersonal support to attain a work target or include certain employees to a project, Rofcanin et al., 2019) or even individuals actively attempting to interact with more people for work-related purposes (e.g., Bindl et al., 2019). For example, a manager may expand conversations, entertain frequent meetings, and even invite certain individuals (e.g., co-managers, superiors, employees from other teams, interns etc.) onboard to seek extra support on some projects or meet tight deadlines and work targets through expansion-oriented relational crafting. Therefore, it is posited:

Hypothesis 1b: Challenge stressors are directly related to expansion-oriented relational crafting.

Scholars noted that job demands that require "sustained physical and/or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills" (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, p. 312) can usually lead to strain especially in the presence of limited job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001).

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Understandably, individuals employ a range of emotional and cognitive mechanisms to counter the adverse effect of job demands such as draining the existing resources and increasing job strain (LePine et al., 2005). Scholars noted hindrance stressors is a situation whereby individuals are "not likely to believe that there is a relationship between effort expended on coping with these demands and the likelihood of meeting them" (LePine et al., 2005, p.766). Considerably, the relational job crafting as a result of stressful job demands can also take a form of contraction-oriented (i.e., limiting meetings with employees particularly if they are not involved in the said project) strategies (Rofcanin et al., 2019). Given the defined role of relational job crafting in managing expectations of other organizational members pertaining one's job demands (Sturges, 2012), it is expected that managers may very well restrict their social and relational network as they experience hindrance job demands. For example, a manager may choose to systematically ignore (e.g., limiting meetings and/or declining conference calls) or neglect interacting with individuals (including their subordinates and superiors) who functionality offer limited utility on the said projects through contraction-oriented job crafting (Rofcanin et al., 2019). Other examples of avoiding a stressful situation by systemically dissociating oneself from a person, event, or organization as presented in the literature is taking breaks by exiting a situation to think about the next steps, avoiding unfriendly organizational members, or delegating work to subordinates (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Therefore, it is proposed:

> *Hypothesis 1c: Hindrance stressors are directly related to contraction-oriented relational job crafting.*

Relational Crafting as an Antecedent to Interpersonal Justice

Interpersonal justice or the extent to which individuals are treated with politeness, dignity, and respect (Bies & Moag, 1986) may cost significant time and energy resources on

manager's part (Brockner, Wiesenfeld, & Diekmann, 2009; Danziger, Levav, & Avnaim-Pesso, 2011). Evidence shows that managers tend to control their work resources through job crafting within task, relational, and cognitive domains to deal with challenging or stressful job demands (Berg et al., 2010; Shin et al., 2020; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Further, in order to perform effectively, managers tend to engage in relational differentiation to favor the individuals who would make the best use of their limited resources and further offer them resources to maintain their contributions to the collective goals (Dansereau et al., 1975). It is important to note that individuals can concurrently engage in a variety of job crafting strategies (such as expanding and contracting relationships at work) to not only minimize their stressful job demands but also gain newer and more helpful resources (see e.g., Tims et al., 2021). For example, a manager can craft frequent interactions with the clients or customers (Kooij et al., 2017). On the other hand, managers can also delegate work to assistants to systemically lower their own job demands (Bruning & Campion, 2018). As for interpersonal justice, it can take a form of either hierarchical (i.e., supervisor-employee) or horizontal (e.g., coworkers/comanagers, etc.) interactions within a workplace to shape relationships in a way that can help advance organizational goals (see e.g., Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2015; Lavelle, Rupp, Manegold, & Thornton, 2015). Scholars have noted that acting fairly towards subordinates often require job resources (see e.g., Johnson et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019). Interestingly, relational job crafting in itself is a form of increasing job resources (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2001; Tims et al., 2012). Therefore:

Hypothesis 2a: Expansion-oriented relational job crafting is positively related to managers' implementation of interpersonal justice.

Existing research evidence on job crafting shows the act of avoiding certain tasks and relationships may sometimes be essential to protect individual wellbeing while the act of increasing social and structural resources can come at a cost to job crafters (for a review see, Tims et al., 2021). Relational job crafting entails individuals "altering the extent or nature of their relationships with others" (Berg et al., 2010, p.165). However, the existing literature on managerial job crafting offers little insights on who exactly do managers alter their relational network with in order to practice relational crafting. For example, Berg and colleagues (2010) identified a senior manager's proclivity to work with interns as part of expansion-oriented relational crafting. The same study outlined a manager's tendency to restrict interactions with their superiors, which can be categorized under contraction-oriented relational crafting. Similarly, clients have also been identified as a viable target of relational job crafting (e.g., Loi, Xu, Chow, & Chen, 2020). Others have classified individuals' tendency to seek social support, coaching, and even feedback from others as a form relational job crafting (Shin et al., 2020). Importantly, there has been a clear distinction between relational job crafting and job social support (Wang, Chen, & Lu, 2020). Where social support at work refers to the extent to which individuals receive guidance and support from other organizational members, relational job crafting is individuals acting on work's relational boundaries (Wang et al., 2020). Put differently, "relational job crafting is an action of social interaction and job social support is a state or quality of social interaction" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 341). In sum, scholars have agreed relational job crafting can take a form of both internal and external social capital (see e.g., Shin et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). In other words, the target of the relational job crafting is wider than work social support whereby the job crafter may actively engage with external resources such as

clients, customers, and patients, etc. in addition to seeking meaningful relationships with the organizational members (Wang et al., 2020).

On the other hand, interpersonal justice (Bies & Moag, 1986) captures individuals' day-to-day events and encounters at work in regards to sincerity, dignity, respectfulness, neutrality, and honesty. Indeed, managers' personal resources are limited (Bergeron, 2007), their attention is contingent upon their ability to process information (Ocasio, 1997), with a finite level of control they can practice over their work environment (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Therefore, managers must carefully pick and choose the employees on the receiving end of their valuable personal and organizational resources, particularly in the presence of high job demands. Interestingly, the act of avoiding certain tasks and relationships to deal with taxing work demands and situations has been a helpful coping strategy for job incumbents (Zhang & Parker, 2019). When managers choose to craft their social resources through relational job crafting, it may take away their time and energy resources to be interpersonally fair across the board. This is because when managers fall short of their work resources, they are almost unlikely to engage in respectful decision-making, allow employees to voice their concerns, or even mask their personal biases towards employees (Barnes, Lucianetti, Bhave, & Christian, 2015; Johnson et al., 2014; Margolis & Molinsky, 2008) – in other words be interpersonally fair. Further to this, relational job crafting being an informal job redesign strategy often has obscure outcomes. Therefore:

> *Hypothesis 2b: Contraction-oriented relational job crafting is negatively related to managers' implementation of interpersonal justice.*

Mediating role of relational job crafting

Scholars argue individuals' relationship with their manager to be the most critical one amongst other work relationships (Chen, Tsui, & Farh, 2002; Dienesch & Liden, 1986). While managers seldom have control over the procedural and distributive justice, they are typically free to choose the degree to which their subordinates enjoy the dignity, respect, truthfulness – in other words be interpersonally fair (Scott, Colquitt, & Paddock, 2009). In that vein, managers are also equipped with the hierarchical advantage to control their employee resources (Farmer & Aguinis, 2005). Notably, managers tend to expand their relational network with those who offer some value to their personal and professional objectives while limit their contact with those who hinder their progress (Berg et al., 2010). Given that challenge stressors such as workload, job complexity, and number of responsibilities (Rodell & Judge, 2009) present opportunities for mastery and future advancements, (Crawford et al., 2010), it is more likely to require employee cooperation through expansion-oriented relational job crafting to implement interpersonal justice. Therefore, it is asserted, when managers deal with challenge stressors, they are more likely to implement interpersonal justice through expansion-oriented relational job crafting. Therefore, it is posited:

> *Hypothesis 3a: Expansion-oriented relational job crafting mediates the relationship*
> *between challenge stressors and interpersonal justice*

The implementation of interpersonal justice requires personal resources (e.g., time and effort etc.) on manager's behalf "to ensure that a given employee is treated with dignity, respect, and truthfulness" (He et al., 2017, p.537). Accordingly, managers tend to differentially allocate time and resources among employees (He et al., 2017). From social exchange viewpoint,

managers focus on the instrumental benefits of relationship formation at work relational

exchanges in terms of the transactional value of the employee contributions (Rousseau, 1990;

Shore et al., 2004; Lu et al., 2017). Consequently, relational crafting may result in either

depletion (or enrichment) of individual work resources, which may even give rise to negative

reactions from other organizational members (Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015; Rofcanin et

al., 2019). In essense, managers may decide to delegate unwanted work and, therefore,

interactions to assistants (see e.g., Bruning & Campion, 2018). This can unarguably result in a

situation where certain organizational members would have access to more opportunities,

resources, and interpersonal connections than others. Evidently the criteria for relational job

crafting (as specified in literature) is rather vague and geared towards personal wellbeing (see

e.g. Loi et al., 2020; van Hooff & van Hooft, 2014) than promoting justice within workplace.

Therefore, it is asserted that when managers encounter hindrance stressors, they tend to practice

contraction-oriented relational job crafting, which can then decrease their ability to be

interpersonally fair.

> *Hypothesis 3b: Contraction-oriented relational job crafting mediates the relationship*
>
> *between hindrance stressors and interpersonal justice*

Multilevel mediation of interpersonal justice

Colquitt (2001) posited that interpersonal justice represents the degree to which

employees are treated with dignity, transparency, courtesy, and respect. Reb and colleagues

(2019) noted respect and consideration to be among the most primitive psychological needs an

employee can experience at work. Scholars argued the role of interpersonally fair treatment laden

with respect, courtesy, and trust (Masterson et al. 2000; Scandura, 1999) in lowering employee

stress (Hui et al. 1999; Reb et al., 2019). Researchers have long argued that managerial justice *motives* could be transient and often informed by organizational goals (Graso et al., 2020). Further, managers' intentional and behavioral motives, as well as, the actual act of implementing justice are influenced by both internal and external factors (Graso et al., 2020). In particular, managers tend to consider the *consequences* of interpersonal justice through its exchange value (e.g. Bernerth, Whitman, Walker, Mitchell, & Taylor, 2016; Johnson et al., 2014; Margolis & Molinsky, 2008; Zapata, Carton, & Liu, 2016). Consequently, managers tend to be selective in investing these efforts among employees, thereby, treating some with high level of interpersonal justice compared to others (He et al., 2017). Therefore, it is safe to assume a bi-dimensional relationship between managerial motives and consequences of implementing justice (Graso et al., 2020).

Several studies associate the lack of interpersonal justice with psychological distress (Greenberg, 2006) and workplace stress (Pérez- Rodríguez, Topa, & Beléndez, 2019). A qualitative study conducted by Vermunt (2002) outlined the significance of managerial decisions on employee stress. In particular, it was argued that if a manager's decision signified a breach of justice rule per employee standards, the employees may experience more stress. Further, it was revealed that a differential or unfair treatment from a superior, which violated the rule of interpersonal justice can act as a greater stressor for employees than work overload (Vermunt, 2002). Notably, an interpersonally fair supervisory treatment strengthens the viability of the social exchange between manager and employees (Hom et al., 2009). Nishii and Mayer (2009) noted the "employees are more accepting of differentiation when the pattern of differentiation can easily be attributed to differential employee ability or performance" (p.1421).

Accordingly, a manager's differential treatment based on anything other than employee competence and contribution is received by employees as "unjustified preferential treatment and favoritism" (van Breukelen, van der Leeden, Wesselius, & Hoes, 2012, p. 47), thereby violating justice (Chen, He, & Weng, 2018) on a relational level. Scholars argue that relational crafting enables individuals to attain, maintain, and even transform functional, fulfilling, and engaging social interactions to optimize one's personal work experiences (Slemp et al., 2015), and wellbeing (van Hooff & van Hooft, 2014). Although the existing empirical research has not focused on employee stress and relational job crafting per se, research evidence indicates a negative association between employee negative affectivity, which is closely intertwined with stress, and relational quality with one's superior (Bernerth et al. 2007; Hochwarter, 2005; Hui et al. 1999). Evidence suggests interpersonal justice is strongly associated with the interpersonal exchanges between manager and employees (Rockstuhl, Dulebohn, Ang, & Shore 2012), which can be strongly informed through manager's engagement in expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Therefore, I advance the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: There is an indirect effect of manager's expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting on employee stress via interpersonal justice.

Cross-level Effect of Interpersonal Justice on Employee Stress:

Implementing interpersonal justice in the workplace can cover a range of day-to-day encounters such as treating employees with politeness, respectfulness, sincerity, honesty, and transparency of procedural or outcome issues (Bies & Moag, 1986). Employees typically hold managers accountable for interpersonal justice in the workplace (Lavelle, Rupp, & Brockner, 2007). Having positive interpersonal exchanges with one's direct managers is a key determinant

of individual wellbeing at work (Borzaga & Depedri, 2005; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006). Compared to other forms of justice, interpersonal justice is the most pronounced mechanism through which managers can directly influence employees' daily work experiences (Scott, Colquitt, & Zapata-Phelan, 2007). This is because day-to-day interpersonal encounters are so prominent in workplace that the role of interpersonal fairness becomes more meaningful to workers, in comparison to any other form of justice (Bies, 2005; Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008). Workplace stress is a modified physiological and psychological reaction to day-to-day taxing events, which significantly informs how workers expend their personal resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Motowidlo et al. 1986). Overall, the literature on organizational justice is replete with examples of fairness or justice as an antecedent to employee stress (Chirumbolo, Urbini, Callea, Lo Presti, & Talamo, 2017; Elovainio, Kivimäki, & Vahtera, 2002). Previous research has established a relationship between perceptions of interpersonal justice and amount of stress perceived and reported by employees (Reb et al., 2019). This was based on a presumption that when employees experience more social, organizational, and supervisory support from their managers, they tend to experience less stress (Babin & Boles 1996; Ganster et al. 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Viswesvaran et al. 1999). The existing research on employee stress and LMX quality (e.g., Bernerth et al. 2007; Hochwarter 2005; Hui et al. 1999) does not specifically focus on employee stress, instead these studies focuses on negative affectivity, which conceptually overlaps with employee stress (Reb et al., 2019).

However, Reb et al.'s (2019) study took an intrapersonal approach to illustrate the link between employee perceptions of interpersonal justice and their level of perceived stress. The current research extrapolates this relationship on an interpersonal domain and examines the cross-level effect of managers' implementation of interpersonal justice and level of stress

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experienced by employees. This is based on an assertion that managers who are interpersonally fair demonstrate higher levels of supervisory support, which then negatively impacts employee stress. Indeed, employees tend to experience lower levels of stress as they receive support, respect, and courtesy from their direct supervisors (Reb et al., 2019). Therefore, it is posited:

>*Hypothesis 5: There is a negative relationship between interpersonal justice implemented*
>*by managers and the perceived employee stress.*

Cross-level Effect of Managerial Relational Job Crafting on Employee Stress

Social exchange perspective contends employees tend to experience a fair amount of stress and even unproductivity when their relational expectations particularly with their superiors are not met (Collins & Mossholder, 2017). As noted earlier, relational crafting is a "risky" phenomenon, which may result in unexplained differential interactions among organizational members (Rofcanin et al., 2019), especially when occurred at managerial level. From a social exchange perspective, employees tend to view the managers who demonstrate differential treatment as inconsistent, unjust, and unstable (He et al., 2017). Consequently, relational job crafting is very likely to create difficult experiences for certain employees particularly the ones who receives lesser resources and attention from their managers (Wang, Demerouti, Le Blanc, & Lu, 2018). The physical and psychological manifestation of stress are categorized with energy depletion, reduced control, and self-efficacy, which may be informed by supervisory support such as managers expending limited resources on employees (Demerouti et al. 2001). Therefore, it can be deduced that employees experiencing manager's contraction-oriented relational crafting are likely to report experiences of work stress. In particular, when managers become selective with their employees, they may also hold back some important exchange of performance-

relevant information (Daniels et al., 2014) thereby adding ambiguity and stress to employee work environment.

The universal norm of reciprocity within social and interpersonal relationships (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) implies when employees experience inclusion in their manager's expansion-oriented relational crafting, they should experience lower levels of stress. He and colleagues (2017) argued when individuals experience lower "relational differentiation", the social exchange relationship is likely restored. This is because the employees in this category are typically satisfied with the relationship they enjoy with their superiors (He et al., 2017). Therefore, a manager's inability to meet employee relational expectations will result in higher stress levels. Based on this argument, the following hypothesis is advanced:

> *Hypothesis 6a&b: a) Managers' engagement in expansion-oriented relational crafting would lower employee stress while b) contraction-oriented relational job crafting would increase employee stress.*

Leader-Member Exchange and Relational Job Crafting

Before theorizing the relationship between LMX and relational crafting, I would like to outline the distinguishing features between the two. First, LMX offers a relational explanation to the complex interchange between leaders and followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) whereas relational crafting comprises of "creating and/or sustaining relationships with others at work, spending more time with preferred individuals, and reducing or completely avoiding contact with others" (Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, & Berg, 2013, p.283). Notably, unlike LMX, the scope of interactions in relational job crafting spread beyond manager-employee relationships. In particular, relational job crafting is a powerful phenomenon for individuals who can reckon the

role of others in excelling in their own jobs (e.g., Grant, 2007, 2008). For example, a marketing manager can craft their relational boundaries through seeking extra connections with salespersons than other stakeholders due to the commonalities between their jobs (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). Second, LMX may be influenced by non-work-related factors (e.g., race, color, economic background, etc.) as discussed earlier whereas relational job crafting is exclusively geared towards transforming one's work connections (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski et al., 2013) to attain work-related goals. Finally, LMX is measured on a continuum whereas relational job crafting offers two distinct orientations (i.e. expansion vs. contraction). In essence, while there might be a misconception on a potential overlap between relational job crafting and LMX, they are in fact two different concept. Relational job crafting deals with redefining the bounds of relationships with internal and external members of the organizations to advance work-related goals (e.g., Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). On the other hand, LMX focuses on the quality of day-to-day exchanges between manager and their direct report(s), per se often determined by work or non-work-related factors (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Based on social exchange norm of reciprocity, it can be concluded that individuals in high-quality exchanges enjoy the exchange of communication in a more positive, frequent, and effective manner compared to their low-exchange LMX counterparts (Geertshuis et al., 2015). Notably, expansion-oriented relational crafting behaviors promote cooperation (e.g. Marcus & Le, 2013) and social exchanges (Liu et al., 2013) to meet the collective goals of the team and even the organization (Boehnlein & Baum, 2020). Expansion-oriented relational crafting involves a proactive establishment and extra-role maintenance of social connections at work e.g., mentoring, networking, obtaining (and/or providing) feedback (Boehnlein & Baum, 2020).

Given relational job crafting is not arbitrary and often entails defined (yet unpublicized) goals for managers, it can take up the forms of mentoring relationships and/or feedback provision to some employees and not the others. In other words, employees who enjoy manager's high-quality exchanges are likely to experience their preferential relational crafting treatment.

Contrary to the high-quality LMX, low quality exchanges deprive individuals from effective communication and therefore meaningful information (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This may result in supervisors missing out on some important aspects of employee performance, making these individuals appear incompetent (Geertshuis et al., 2015). Interestingly, contraction-oriented relational crafting is characterized with limited relational network, communication, and even encounters with individuals at work (Rofcanin et al., 2019). These studies suggest, "if a person tends to view life negatively, this person may be less likely to build effective work relationships with others" (Hui et al. 1999, p. 8). In particular, "As employees experience less stress as a result of the support they receive from their leader, their perceptions of LMX quality are expected to increase" (Reb et al., 2019, p.750). In line with that reasoning, it is asserted that individuals who experience lower LMX from their managers receive a less favored and differential relational crafting treatment. Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced.

> *Hypothesis 7a&b: The quality of LMX is directly related to relational crafting orientation such that a) LMX is positively related to expansion-oriented while b) negatively related to contraction-oriented relational job crafting.*

Multi-level Moderation of Relational Job Crafting

A key aspect of LMX perspective suggests that due to time, energy, and other resource constraints, managers need to differentiate the quality of relational exchanges in workgroups

(Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Evidence suggests that managers are often expected to "enlist at least some of [their] people as 'special' assistants" in order to accomplish their work goals and avoid any project-related failures" (Graen, 1976, p.1241). Given the resource constraints, managers are unable to establish high-quality relationships across the board (Liden & Graen, 1980). Therefore, to maintain their performance goals, managers must attain and maintain high-quality relationships (offering supplemental resources) with some employees and not the others (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020).

Notably, the expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting often render an interpersonal variation in treatment among employees (Rofcanin et al., 2019), especially when practised by a manager. Early theorizing on relational crafting focuses on interpersonal motives (e.g., relatedness; Niessen et al., 2016; belongingness; Wang et al., 2018; prosocial and impression management, Rofcanin et al., 2019). Relatedly, LMX has been shown to influence job crafting particularly on the social resource domain (see e.g., Radstaak & Hennes, 2017). Important to note relational job crafting allows individuals to establish and shape work relationships that enhance one's personal experiences (Slemp et al., 2015) and even wellbeing (van Hooff & van Hooft, 2014). It is believed that both managers and employees can be driven by the dynamics of relational exchanges at work (Matta & Van Dyne, 2020). In particular, managers being the "gatekeeper" of resources can predetermine the quality of LMX relationships (Creary, Caza, & Roberts, 2015). However, LMX is also contingent upon factors such as subordinates' performance, credentials, and dependability, etc. (Creary et al., 2015). Naturally, employees with poor performance are less likely to receive job resources and may form low-quality relationships with their managers (Chen, He, & Weng, 2015; Graen & Uhl- Bien, 1995). Interestingly, relational job crafting is considered risky by some scholars as it may exhaust (or

enhance) individual personal resources and may ignite negative reactions among employees (Demerouti et al., 2015). However, the current literature on relational crafting offers murky insights on the criteria to engage in each form of relational crafting. Indeed, the underlying mechanisms and outcomes of expansion-oriented and contraction-oriented relational crafting need to be further investigated (Van den Broeck et al., 2008). Since stress tends to wear down work resources (Hobfoll 1989), it is affirmed that stress tends to reduce the perceptions of LMX quality through compromised interpersonal relations (Reb et al., 2019).Given the bi-dimensional nature of relational crafting, it is asserted when managers expend time and efforts to include a given employee in a project, share information on decision-making, and/or generally invest more time in them, it should increase employee perceptions of LMX and decrease stress. Therefore, following hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis 8a: Managers' expansion-oriented relational job crafting moderates the relationship between employee perceptions of LMX and stress such that the relationship between LMX and stress is strengthened.

Given relational crafting is an informal technique to manage job demands whereby individuals do not announce their goals or intentions to engage in relational job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), it is proposed that managers' engagement in relational job crafting would directly hinder their ability to consistently maintain high quality relationships across the board. Therefore, managerial relational crafting may inevitably result in a differential treatment with their employees.

Interestingly, not all employees value reciprocity to the same extent (Collins & Mossholder, 2014, Lu et al., 2017). Some individuals are more sensitive than others to the

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criterion of (in) equality when it comes to the interpersonal exchanges with their superiors (Lu et al., 2017). In particular, it is asserted that employees not only care deeply about how they are treated but also how others are treated and may reprove the perpetrators of relational differentiation (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011), especially transgressions related to interpersonal exchanges (O'Reilly, Aquino, & Skarlicki, 2016). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is also explained through the principle of rationality, which contends employees appraise their interpersonal exchanges with their supervisors based on the underlying reasons of such interactions. Notably, managers do not offer a rationale behind their engagement in relational job crafting (Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, when managers treat their employees differentially without offering any justification for such treatment, employees tend to experience stress (Reb et al., 2019). As noted earlier, employees' inability to account for managerial criteria for preferential or differential treatment often leads to stress (Reb et al., 2019), the following hypothesis is advanced:

> *Hypothesis 8b: Managers'contraction-oriented relational job crafting moderates the relationship between employee perceptions of LMX and stress such that the relationship between LMX and stress is attenuated.*

CHAPTER THREE : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

The current chapter outlines mixed-methods as a methodology of choice for the current study, followed by a rationale, advantages, and the assessment of rigor of research design.

Aims and Purpose of the Research:

This mixed-methods study has been preceded by two guiding research questions:

    a. How do managers' stressful job-demands influence their interpersonal interactions with their employees?

    b. How do manager-employee interactions impact employee stress?

Given the added emphasis on the relational interdependence between manager and employees, I will first review the literature on the mixed-methods design, followed by the justification, the design, components of each mono-method, and data integration method of the current research.

The Mixed-Methods Design

    Johnson and colleagues (2007) explained mixed-methods research as a form of research that combines the characteristics of quantitative and qualitative approaches within their data collection, interpretation, and inference techniques to add "breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration" (p.123). The core assumption of a mixed-methods approach is that the combination of statistical techniques (i.e., quantitative) with the description of lived experiences (i.e., qualitative) provides a richer explanation than either of the two datasets alone (Bryman, 2006; Greene et al., 1989; Harrison, Reilly, & Creswell, 2020). Given that mixed-methods research design offers the characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003), it is important to note one study does not dwindle the scope of either of the two datasets (Harrison et al., 2020).

Notably, mixed-methods research explains a model for the flow of processes and procedures while outlining when to integrate the findings (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). In other words, rigorous mixed-methods studies offer independent yet solid integration of quantitative and qualitative aspects of research with each component contributing substantively to the research questions. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) noted core mixed-methods research can take the form of one of the three designs namely convergent, exploratory sequential, and explanatory sequential designs. Convergent design mixed-methods research entails the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data followed by the integration of findings from the two strands of research (Harrison et al., 2020; Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). In convergent research, the data collection and analysis are often independent to one another (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Such research design offers a complete interpretation of research question in each phase of the research (Harrison et al., 2020). Sequential design could either take an exploratory or an explanatory form (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In exploratory sequential design, researchers first conduct qualitative research and build on the findings of this research in a follow-up quantitative design (Harrison et al., 2020). Such studies are helpful in developing instruments or questionnaires to apply and generalize qualitative findings to larger populations (Jaga & Guetterman, 202). Explanatory sequential design involves collection and analysis of quantitative data and use the findings of this phase to systemically approach a follow-up qualitative study (Harrison et al., 2020; Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Such research design is intended to provide an explanation or elaboration on the initial quantitative study (Harrison et al., 2020; Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). These core research approaches are important in designing an effective design such as interventions, case studies, and justice studies (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021).

Integration: In mixed-methods research study, integration (or mixing of both research strands) refers to the interaction of qualitative and quantitative research strands (Harrison et al., 2020; Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Notably, "this mixing is the cornerstone of mixed methods research, as the premise of mixed methods is that the integration of data leads to more than the sum of its parts" (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 477). Fetters and colleagues (2013) have identified three common types of integration namely merging, connecting, and building.

Merging refers to the process of integrating qualitative and quantitative strands, to attain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon (Fetters, 2020). In convergent research design, this can take a form of researchers examining the relationship between quantitative and qualitative strands by considering the statistical occurrences of a given theme or nodes in qualitative strand and comparing it to variables in the quantitative strand (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). In explanatory sequential research design, the researchers can discuss how the follow-up qualitative study explained the findings of the initial quantitative results such as variation, significant and non-significant findings (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Finally, merging allows the evaluation of generalizability by comparing the quantitative and qualitative results exploratory sequential designs.

Connecting is the integration strategy that involves generating a sample from the quantitative strand for a follow-up qualitative strand to elaborate on the research findings (e.g., purposefully identifying individuals to elaborate on the findings; Fetters et al., 2013). An overarching goal for this kind of integration is to interpret the quantitative results from the qualitative study (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). For example, in convergent design, researchers may outline a subset of sample for qualitative study (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). In explanatory

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sequential mixed-methods research, the quantitative results may drive the sampling process based on their scores on the quantitative study (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Finally, in exploratory sequential design connecting can take the form of probabilistic sampling (than purposeful) to inform the follow-up research phase (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021).

Building integration is the process of systemically establish a data collection instrument such as surveys through the initial qualitative findings (Fetters, 2020). For example, the qualitative findings can be used as a starting point for researchers to make sure the instrument generated is contextualized for larger populations. For example, the codes generated can inform the variables. The goal is to make sure the instrument is in accordance with the target audience's literacy levels (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). This form of integration can be included in any mixed-methods design. For example, in convergent or explanatory sequential designs, building entails documenting interview questions to elaborate on quantitative findings (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). In exploratory sequential design, building allows researchers to develop instruments using qualitative insights (e.g., themes lead to construct development, nodes lead to variable development by identifying each item to be measured, and quotes lead to questionnaire writing; Jaga & Guetterman, 2021).

In general, the design of mixed-methods research guides the method of integration as well such as the specifics of the quantitative and qualitative method interface (Morse & Niehaus, 2009, Schoonenboom, 2018). Nonetheless, there are two important considerations for the mixed-methods researchers. First, "any mixed-methods research design can have more than one integration strategy as appropriate to address the research questions" (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021, p.7). Fetters and colleagues (2013) explained this phenomenon as embedding or the process of

employing more than one types and points of integration in mixed-methods design. Second, any integration strategy can be utilized in any of the mixed-methods design as driven by the research question(s) (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021).

The mixed-methods research design and approach are discussed in detail below.

The Current Research: Mixed-Methods Design

Justification. The current research ties together the theoretical perspectives from job demands, job crafting, justice and stress within the manager-employee context. Given these concepts are embedded in distinct yet well-established scholarships, it is important to consider some of the challenges and limitations of measuring these variables. Although early scholarship on job crafting behaviors was based on qualitative investigations (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Berg et al., 2010), most recent literature on job crafting investigates it quantitatively either at a single or multiple point in time with time lags (Rofcanin et al., 2019). Scholars have noted the need to add methical plurality to measure different forms of job crafting behaviors (see e.g., Zhang & Parker, 2019). Notably, most significant literature on job demands, justice and even workplace stress has predominantly adopted a quantitative approach (see e.g., Matta et al., 2017; Pérez-Rodríguez, Topa, & Beléndez, 2019). Further, scholars contend it is overall challenging to measure managers' justice enactment (e.g., Molinsky, Grant, & Margolis, 2012; Patient & Skarlicki, 2010). Scholars argue that organizational studies "often include varying contexts with complex open systems and the management of people at different levels within the organization" (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 475). In a hundred-year review on team research published in the Journal of Applied Psychology, researchers outlined the need for more qualitative and comparative methodologies to advance the management scholarship (Mathieu, Hollenbeck, van

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Knippenberg, & Ilgen, 2017). Finally, a comprehensive approach to "occupational demands, mediating factors, and wellbeing outcomes" could be attained through contemporary approaches to research to promote accuracy and consistency within the literature (Willis, Neil, Mellick, & Wasley, 2019, p. 409). Therefore, noting the various nuances related to measuring the constructs of my choice, the current research will adopt mixed-methods research approach to understand how managerial stressful job demands trickle-down to the employee-level through relational and interpersonal exchanges.

As noted above, mixed-methods research entails the combination of statistical experience with lived experience (Harrison et al., 2020) is recommended for this study primarily for two reasons. First, mixed-methods research designs are deemed specifically beneficial when the nature of context shifts drastically and frequently (Venkatesh et al. 2013). Given the impact of COVID-19 crisis on workplace is a rapidly evolving situation, how it impacts individual work demands and consequent attitudes are best captured through mixed-methods design. Second, mixed-methods design is also considered an appropriate approach when scholars find it difficult to make conclusive deductions from the available information (Venkatesh et al. 2013).

Mixed methodology provides several potential benefits to the researchers. For example, Gibson (2017) outlines mixed-methods research can offer four main advantages to research through (i) elaboration; (ii) generalization; (iii) data integration; and (iv) interpretations. She further recommends if these values are upheld by the researchers, the research can generate deeper and richer insights than monomethod research. In other words, mixed-methods research has higher impact on management related disciplines (Molina- Azorin, 2011). Similarly, Venkatesh and colleagues (2016, p.437) noted mixed-methods research can add value through

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answering both confirmatory and explanatory research questions, offering stronger inferences than mono method studies, and generating "a greater assortment of divergent and/or complementary views". Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) noted that mixed-methods research allows comparable methodologies to confirm or disconfirm research outcomes and therefore increases the validity of the associated findings. Similarly, evidence shows that mixed-methods research can benefit management research by yielding research insights from process (i.e., qualitative) and outcomes (i.e., quantitative) – or even individual-level (through qualitative) and multi-level (through quantitative) components (see e.g., Molina- Azorin & Cameron, 2015). Others have noted that in business research, mixed-methods research is often beneficial by increasing validity of the findings through the collection of a second source of data, thereby creating knowledge (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & Nummela, 2006). In particular, reflecting on the concept of "methodological fit", Gibson (2017) recommends analyzing the research question, the existing state of literature, and the projected theoretical contributions before deciding mixed-methods research to be the best way forward.

Design. Evaluating the strengths and advantages of mixed-methods design, I consider it to be an appropriate approach for the current research. Evidence shows that mixed-methods research design should be informed by the research question of interest as "each rationale suggests formal research questions that may be examined" (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 486). Considering the research questions of interest (i.e. how managerial stressful job demands impact their interactions with the employees and how managerial interactions with the employees impact the levels of stress reported by employees), mixed-methods research is deemed as a suitable approach for the current study. Given the present research draws from a developed theoretical model that could be tested through a use of validated research instruments, the approach of data collection will draw

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from "*explanatory sequential*" design as it utilizes the qualitative information to explicate the quantitative findings for elaboration and triangulation (Harrison et al., 2020). Such an approach further allows the researchers to gain additional insights and rich explanations of the findings from the quantitative study (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala, 2013). Evidence suggests (QUANT =>QUAL) research design can offer complementarity and completeness in making final inferences (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021; Venkatesh et al. 2013; Venkatesh et al. 2016).

Components of each mono-method

The current research design can be considered as a "multi-strand" mixed-methods research (Harrison et al., 2020). The current study is branched out into two dominant phases namely; the quantitative phase 1 and the qualitative phase 2.

Phase 1: In Phase 1, I empirically investigated the proposed hypotheses through survey instruments. In particular, managers from different industries and backgrounds were approached to fill out a managerial survey with a unique identifier. In order to maintain anonymity, the unique identifier comprised of the first three letters of manager's name followed by last 2 letters of manager's surname. The managers were then requested to forward their work teams the employee surveys. The employees were also required to add a unique identifier by adding the first three letters of the organization, followed by the last three letters of the manager's last name. More information on the procedure is included in the chapter on quantitative methodology.

Phase 1 Research Paradigm: Positivism

A dominant research paradigm used within organizational sciences is positivism (Scotland, 2012). Positivism assumes the reality to be objective and absolute, which can then be studied or understood through objective approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In particular,

researchers in this paradigm tend are motivated by control and objectivity (Nyein, Caylor, Duong, Fry & Wildman, 2020). Therefore, positivism promotes empiricism or "the understanding of a single shared reality, and the goal of identifying cause and effect in research" (Nyein et al., 2020). Naturally, positivism draws from quantitative methods to observe reality with as little subjectivity as possible. In that sense, positivism aims to gather facts on large representative datasets, and focuses on reliability, validity, and generalizability of the research findings (Nyein et al., 2020).

Phase 2: During Phase 2, I examined the in-depth explanation of the occurring phenomena and the complexities associated with certain contextual triggers such as the current pandemic. Two independent interview guides were designed for semi-structured interviews of manager and employees. I started with interviewing the managers to discuss their interpersonal work attitudes in response to increased or stressful job demands. I then obtained managers' permission to contact their employees. The goal of this step was to further obtain information on employee perceptions of interpersonal exchanges with their managers as their managers struggled with their job demands. Consequently, the implications of manager-employee interactions on employee wellbeing were investigated through individual and matched responses. Given the higher attrition rate due to a potential breach of confidentiality issue, I analyzed the dataset of both managers and employees separately before analyzing the nested dataset. More information on the qualitative methodology and analysis can be found in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

Phase 2 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

An interpretive approach to organizational scholarship questions the relevance of natural sciences methodology to adequately investigate the social reality (Lee, 1991). Interpretivism

essentially suggests that individuals develop their personal understanding and judgments based on their interactions with their surrounding (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). In other words, any given environmental stimulus may have varying interpretations for different individuals as well as the observing social researcher (Lee, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a result, it is imperative for the researchers to consider the intricacies of investigating the empirical reality and what it means to the individuals observed (Lee, 1991). Typically, researchers within this paradigm tend to comprehend a phenomenon by outlining the meaning individuals ascribe to them (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991).

Epistemology:

Epistemology refers to the philosophical assumption of what is considered knowledge and the extent to which something can and cannot be known or comprehended (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In particular, the researchers evaluate the epistemological assumption on a continuum ranging from "a knower can know and observe phenomena in an objective sense" to "knowledge is subjectively constructed and therefore unique to the knower" (Nyein et al., 2020, p.89). Given mixed-methods research draws from two contrasting methodological viewpoint, it is important to understand the epistemology of the current research from varying research paradigms. Aliyu and colleagues (2015) noted there is "no fundamental reason why" positivists cannot use qualitative methods or why constructivists cannot use quantitative methods (p. 22). Therefore, such coexisting of philosophical assumptions and methodologies is prevalent.

From an epistemological standpoint, I adopt multiple paradigms. During the initial quantitative phase, I relied on the positivist perspective whereas the qualitative research utilized an interpretive lens. As any mixed-methods study, my research design was informed by a

dominant paradigm that guides the course of this research (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). The current research is sensitive to the fact that it was conducted during the COVID-19 crisis. Therefore, the guidelines for contextual research studies were followed (Hong, Chan, Thong, Chasalow, & Dhillon, 2013).

Integration: For integration, the current research will combine the use of *merging* and *connecting*. Merging is particularly helpful when study findings contradict the dominant framework (see e.g., Jaga & Guetterman, 2021; Turner et al., 2017). Therefore, merging would be a useful tool in explaining the nuanced outcomes of relational job crafting, which originally stems from the positive organizational psychology. In explanatory sequential designs, researchers can use the qualitative results to explain the quantitative findings (including both significant and non-significant relationships; Jaga & Guetterman, 2021).

In addition to merging, the current research also benefitted from the data collection approach to connecting. Connecting is a typical approach to integration in most explanatory sequential, evidence (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). It allows the researchers to gain in-depth insights from individuals who are willing to discuss their experiences in detail. The current research allowed participants from phase I to leave their contact information if they were interested in a follow-up interview. This gave me an opportunity to review the participant responses prior to contacting them and, therefore, generate meaningful insights. The complementing methods of integration in the current research was aimed to strengthen the external validity of the study findings. As noted above, data integration can be achieved in various ways. For example, Almandoz (2012) argued the "mixing" of the datasets can occur at various stages of the research process as the design gains its strengths from its "component parts" (p.1390).

Assessing rigor in mixed-methods:

Guidelines for assessing rigor in any monomethod design have long been established (Harrison et al., 2020). However, only a handful of managerial scholarship outlines the criteria to evaluate rigor and quality (Creswell, 2015; Harrison et al., 2020). Harrison and colleagues (2020) identified the best practices for reporting rigor (often interchangeably used with quality) within management scholarship. A useful framework to assessing the design of mixed-methods study can be measured using GRAMMS paradigm (O'Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl, 2008). The GRAMMS paradigm of reporting good research comprises of authors' accounting for a justification, the design type, the components of each method, data integration, limitations, and insights gained from mixing the two datasets.

To assess the quality of the current mixed-methods research, Rigorous Mixed-Methods Elements (Harrison et al., 2020) were considered.

Aims and purpose: Reflecting on the original research questions of interest, the current research has identified a clear rationale behind the use of the mixed-methods approach. In that regard, the value of each research, followed by a discussion of the mixed-methods research was considered in designing the current research.

Data collection: The current research identifies two independent strands of data collection. In that regard, specific procedures for collecting quantitative and qualitative data are reported in chapters 4 and 6, respectively. To be specific, the sampling strategy, procedures, and instrument used were also identified and reported for each strand.

Data Analysis: Harrison and colleagues (2020) noted the higher level of rigor in mixed-methods includes the reporting of the analysis procedure for each data strand (i.e., quantitative and qualitative). The analytic procedures can range from "basic to more sophisticated approaches; from descriptive to inferential quantitative analysis, to coding and thematic development qualitative analysis" (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 478). The current research has used a combination of techniques for analyzing each strand of data collection.

Data Integration: The data from each strand are linked based on the identified research design (i.e., explanatory sequential). In particular, the findings from the qualitative research are used to explain the quantitative results that preceded. For the purpose of data integration, a data comparison technique is used to discuss the overall findings of the current research.

Mixed-Methods Design Type: The current research has identified a visual display to show the research design type. Harrison and colleagues (2020) noted the inclusion of a diagram depicting the research design in detail.

Figure 2: Explanatory Sequential Methods Roadmap

Qualitative data is collected and analyzed to explain a quantitative analysis usually conducted at an earlier stage of MMR. The purpose of conducting this type of research is to elaborate on the existing findings and triangulate	Aims and Purpose
Quantitative Data Collection	Data Collection
Quantitative Analysis	Data Analysis
Identify the Quantitative Results that need further investigation	Data Integration
Qualitative Data Collection	Data Collection
Qualitative Analysis	Data Analysis
Determine how qualitative findings explain the quantitative results

Reference Mixed Methods | Elements of Writing |

Note: Rigorous Mixed Methods Elements by Design Type. Partially adapted from Methodological Rigor in Mixed Methods: An Application in Management Studies by Harrison R.L., Reilly, T.M., & Creswell, J.W., 2020, Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 14(4), p.486. Copyright 2020 by SAGE.

Elements of writing: The current research has reviewed the mixed-methods literature prior to identifying it as a method of choice for the current research. Harrison and colleagues (2020) considered this step to be integral for high-quality mixed-method studies. Further, the mixed-methods research type has been referenced throughout the writing elements of the current research such as title, abstract, and other important components of the dissertation

CHAPTER FOUR: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

Phase I: Quantitative Research

The purpose of conducting the quantitative research is twofold. First, to shed light on how managerial job demands impact their interpersonal experiences and consequently hinder their ability to be interpersonally fair. Second, to highlight how such managerial interactions impact employee stress. Notably, interpersonal justice has been theorized as an encounter-based experience that reflects the social interaction between manager and employees (see e.g., Bies, 2005). Therefore, data was collected from managers and their direct reports.

In particular, my research questions are tied to managers' stressful job demands, which are subject to fluctuating, and can consequently inform their interactions and employee experiences. Therefore, a cross-sectional research design was used to collect survey responses in order to attain consistency. The use of cross-sectional surveys is prevalent in social sciences and other disciplines where emphasis is placed on participant behaviors, intentions, attitudes, and opinions (Polit & Beck, 2014; Sedgwick, 2014). Cross-sectional research is also useful in outlining relationships between variables of interest. Cross-sectional surveys are convenient as they can typically meet the time, money, and resource constraints while effectively providing a snapshot of what the researcher wants to investigate (Connelly, 2016). Often times, cross-sectional study is the only viable approach when hypotheses testing cannot be manipulated for ethical reasons (Meninger, 2012). For example, assigning participants to groups solely to manipulate stress (e.g., through interactions) may raise ethical concerns due to potential for abuse.

Positivist Approach:

The adopted research paradigm for this study is posited within the positivist approach, which highlights the significance of quantifying a research phenomenon while relying on the principles of naturalism (Neuman, 2003). The positivist approach to research entails "the manipulation of theoretical propositions using the rules of formal logic and the rules of hypothetico-deductive logic, so that the theoretical propositions satisfy the four requirements of falsifiability, logical consistency, relative explanatory power, and survival" (Lee, 1991, p. 343-344).

In a nutshell, a positivist research approach utilizes deductive reasoning to develop a theoretical position and then leads to the empirical support or rejection of the hypotheses (Cavana et al., 2001, p. 8). Positivism employs the principles of deductive reasoning to establish a conceptual position and then through empirical evidence allows the support or rejection of the research hypotheses (Cavana et al., 2001, p. 8). Typically, data is collected through pre-existing, validated survey questionnaires (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Therefore, a positivist research approach is deemed as an appropriate paradigm for this portion of the study.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using Google Forms. Web-based questionnaires have gained popularity due to several advantages such as reduced costs, sustainability, large participant pool, etc., it, nonetheless, poses potential issues such as data reliability and selective non-response (Couper, 2000; Van Gelder, Bretveld, & Roeleveld, 2010). On the other hand, paper-and-pencil surveys are also not without limitations such as response rates and higher costs (Couper, 2000; Van Gelder et al., 2010). Paper-and-pencil surveys can also create issues such as data-entry errors and limited outreach to respondents. Given this research was conducted during the

COVID-19 pandemic, paper-and -pencil surveys were particularly not suited for this research design. In an attempt to minimize contact, one of the conditions of my ethics entailed a "zero-contact" policy where researcher and participants come in no physical contact at any point in time during the research. Therefore, the only viable and appropriate instrument for questionnaires was web-based surveying instruments.

Two different surveys were crafted for each level (i.e., manager and employees). Questions were asked about managers' appraisal of their job demands (e.g., challenge vs. hindrance), their propensity to engage in relational crafting, and implement interpersonal justice. Employees described their level of perceived stress with reference to the quality of leader-member exchange with their immediate managers. The average time of completion for managerial surveys was about 10 minutes. Employee surveys took about 5 minutes on average. The participants were informed of the potential risks of filling out the surveys. While there were no direct risks associated with survey taking, participants were informed that their responses can enable a process of reflection on their recent interactions with their managers. The participants were also informed while there were no direct benefits from taking the survey, their participation will help extend our understanding on how manager-employee interactions impact employee stress at work. Therefore, in the long term, the outcomes of this research may inform the policy implications and developing a workplace that is sensitive not only to the stressful job demands of the managers, but also manager-employee relational dynamics.

Given the sensitive nature of the questions and the fact that employees were invited to surveys through their direct managers, the participants were informed that they should only answer the questions they were comfortable answering. In that regard, the survey design did not hinder participant ability to move forward with the survey questions if they had chosen to skip

questions. The survey introduction covered the detailed information on my research and reminded participants that their decision to participate in my research was completely voluntary. I had also acknowledged the time, effort, and consideration they had invested in my study.

The survey data was then transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 26.0. All identifiable information including the unique identifier was replaced with numbers for respondents of each level to protect their confidentiality. The full data set was stored on a password-protected computer and password-protected cloud-based server.

Sample Size

For any research study, it is important to collect data from a sample that is (i) adequate in terms of size and hypotheses testing, and (ii) representative of the population of interest. While there is no "best approach" to determining the sample size, Combs (2010) explained the same size of at least 100 respondents for viable results. Green (1991) suggested 104 + k, where "k" is the number of predictors considered in a multiple regression analysis. Similarly, Hair and colleagues (2010) suggested the "n: k ratio" whereby the researcher has at least 5-10 responses (n) per variable (k). The current study comprised of 5 broader variables of choice. Out of five variables, two variables also had sub-dimensions. Nonetheless, the study design required nested responses. Therefore, for multilevel dataset, a power analysis was conducted using Multilevel Power Tool software (Mathieu, Aguinis, Culpepper, & Chen, 2012) to ensure the sample size of the current study is adequate. The failure to estimate the statistical power of cross-level interaction effects may result in researchers bearing "the risks of designing suboptimal multilevel studies, as well as erroneously concluding that meaningful substantive effects are nonexistent, both of which can potentially undermine important substantive discoveries" (Mathieu et al.,

2012, p. 953). The estimated power of the current multilevel study is 0.961. Therefore, the current sample size of 254 employees nested within 64 managers is considered adequate.

For population, the sample of the current study was drawn from the population of full-time, non-essential workers with the following inclusion criteria: (i) worked remotely during the pandemic; and/or (ii) either started a new job during the pandemic; or continued previous job during the pandemic in an alternative format. The final employee dataset comprised 31.1% men, 67.3% women, and 0.8% non-binary with an average age of 38.7 years, 11.5-year tenure.

As noted earlier, about 40% of Canadians are in jobs that can be done from home (Deng et al., 2020). Further, the likelihood of holding such jobs is not equal for all Canadians (Deng et al., 2020). It is important to consider these work dynamics during the pandemic because one's ability to perform their jobs from home reduces the income uncertainty and prospective likelihood of work interruptions (Messacar, Morissette, & Deng, 2020). Therefore, the scope of the current study was expanded through the use of web-administered, online questionnaires posted on various personal and professional channels.

Add self-administered survey template here

Participants and Procedures:

Given that the current research covers the relational interdependence between managers and employees, the data collection relied upon multiple approaches to collect nested data. Primarily, the data were collected from three main sources namely: organizational access, personal and professional networks, and self-administered online surveys. Participants were recruited between September 2020 and September 2021. Organizational access for data

collection was granted by a local non-profit organization based in Toronto. A call for research similar to the one outlined above was sent out in the employee newsletter. However, given a horizontal structure of the organization and lack of respondent interest, that organization was not a good fit for the current research. A multinational organization in the telecommunications sector headquartered in North America also allowed me to distribute the survey links via its intranet. Similarly, an integrated link was created that contained the "skip-logic" feature to channel managers and employees to their respective surveys. At that point, this survey was circulated by a Canadian Union of Public Employees local to all its members. However, data collected in such manner yielded limited number of matched responses. Therefore, a purposive snowballing sampling technique was employed at this point to facilitate the process of nested data collection. Marcus and colleagues (2017) have noted "snowball sampling as a cost-effective and hands-on way to obtain otherwise hardly accessible data is worth accepting a limited amount of bias" (p.667). Therefore, research participants were also recruited using word-of-mouth and snowballing techniques. The emphasis was placed on recruiting managers, who would first fill out the managerial survey and then forward the employee survey to their direct reports. Given the online nature of data collection, a representative in a post-secondary institution in Pakistan also agreed to circulate the survey responses across departments. Due to the global impact of the current pandemic, these participants fit the inclusion criteria of the current study. These participants were disclosed of the study goals prior to data collection. They were assured that their participation is entirely voluntary and all information collected as part of the data collection will be kept confidential and would only be used for research purposes. Managers were sent an introductory email containing a link for both managerial and employee questionnaire.

***PLEASE REFER TO THE SAMPLE EMAIL IN THE

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Prior to participation, managers were given an opportunity to view the survey questions for both manager and employee surveys. Some managers while filling out the managerial survey declined to forward the employee surveys to their teams. In other instances, none of the team members of certain managers filled out the employee surveys despite sending several reminders.

To match the nested dataset, each respondent was requested to create a unique identifier to connect questionnaires. These codes were created based on the formula that comprised of the first three letters of the organization plus (+) the last three letters of the managers' surname. For example, as a York University employee, my unique identifier would have been YOR+OOD. The employees followed the exact same formula using their manager's name. In that way, a unique identifier enabled me to match the employee questionnaires with that of the managers.

In total, I had received 107 responses from managers and 275 from employees. After discarding the mismatched and incomplete responses, the final dataset comprised of 254 employee responses nested in 64 managers with an average group size of approximately 3-4 employees.

Demographics. The participants were sent out a survey including measurements of demographics such as the average age of participants, their reported gender, average number of years they worked with their employer, and their industry of employment.

Procedure and sample. Data were initially collected through managers. The managers were then requested to send out the employee surveys to their teams. In some cases, both manager and employee respondents completed the questionnaires concurrently. Manager and employee

surveys were matched using the unique identifier discussed above. Unpaired responses were excluded from further nested analysis.

Measures. As discussed earlier, pre-existing survey instruments were utilized and adapted to suit the context of the current study. All items were measured on Likert-type scale. To confirm the face validity, the final survey was reviewed by at least three academic researchers prior to conducting the study. The following measures were used:

Job Demands. Job demands were measured using the 20-item validated scale ($\alpha = 0.883$) on challenge and hindrance stressors (10 items for each type) as utilized and recommended by LePine and colleagues (2016). The items in this scale are built on the pre-existing measures (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Zhang et al., 2014) and "expand upon previous measures to be more inclusive of, or to more adequately represent, the conceptual domains of challenge and hindrance stressors" (LePine et al., 2016, p. 1043). In this scale, the items on challenge stressors ($\alpha = 0.920$) pertain to "workload, work pace, time pressure, task complexity, accountability, and responsibility" (LePine et al., 2016, p. 1043). Sample items include "Having high levels of responsibility" and "Having to complete a lot of work". Hindrance stressors job demands ($\alpha = 0.887$) such as administrative hassles and struggles related to one's role, etc. (LePine et al., 2016). Sample items include, "unclear job tasks" and "office politics", etc.

Relational Job Crafting. Managers relational exchanges with their employees were reported on an adapted version of the scale containing 4-item expansion ($\alpha = 0.836$), and 4- item contraction-oriented ($\alpha = 0.899$) relational crafting using the scale developed by Laurence (2010) on a 5-point Likert scale. This scale has also been validated and published by Rofcanin et al., (2019) in their work on relational crafting. Sample item for expansion oriented relational crafting is: "I

increased the amount of communication I have with others to get my job done effectively at work". For contraction-oriented relational crafting, and example is: "I limited my relational network to effectively achieve my work goals."

Interpersonal Justice. Managers' self-reported responses will be collected to measure the interpersonal justice using a sub-dimension of Colquitt's (2001) scale ($\alpha = 0.864$). The participants indicated their responses on a scale of 1 "to a very small extent" to 5 "to a very large extent". Sample items include, "Do you treat this subordinate in a polite manner" and "Have you refrained from improper remarks or comments towards your employees?"

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). LMX 7 (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) on 5-point Likert-type scales with question-specific labels were used to measure leader-member exchanges ($\alpha = 0.885$). Research evidence supports the effectiveness of LMX 7 compared to other relevant instruments (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Sample items include: "Do you know where you stand with your leader i.e. do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do?" and "How well does your leader understand your job problems and needs?"

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). To measure employee stress, the *Perceived Stress Scale* (PSS) by Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein (1983), which captures "a global measure of stress" (Pérez-Rodríguez, Topa, & Beléndez, 2019, p.3). The shorter version of this scale consists of ten items with an appropriate reliability ($\alpha = 0.766$). In the original study, the range of responses for this instrument vary on a five-point Likert-type scale between 0 (*Never*) and 4 (*Very often*). Sample items include: "In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your problems at work?" and "In the last month, how often have you been able to control the difficulties of your job?".

Control Variables

As noted above, data were collected on certain control variables that have shown to potentially confound analyses in previous studies. Therefore, in accordance with the previous literature on job crafting, justice, and stress, scholarship, data were collected on respondents' age, gender, education, organizational tenure as potential control variables. Such socio-demographic variables have been proven to slightly impact the stress outcomes (e.g., Leineweber, Bernhard-Oettel, Peristera, Eib, Nyberg, & Westerlund, 2017). Age and gender were controlled as evidence shows both these characteristics may impact certain work-related behaviors including job crafting (see e.g., Bipp, 2010). In particular, it was shown that older individuals and women tend to seek more autonomy and feedback (Bipp, 2010). Both these behaviors can evidently impact the nature of relationship maintained with one's supervisor. Bipp's (2010) work also demonstrated that older individuals may seek positive work outcomes. There is also possibility that both age and gender may influence attitudes such as seeking autonomy and feedback. Education was controlled because previous research has shown the impact of education on job crafting behaviors (see e.g., Tims et al., 2012). Others have noted that the level of education attained is directly related to job roles, autonomy, and level of responsibility enjoyed at work, which can facilitate job crafting opportunities (Bakker et al., 2007). Finally, the present study also controlled for job tenure (or the number of years spent in a same role). Berg and colleagues (2010) have established that the number of years and ranks enjoyed within an organization can significantly impact individual ability to engage in job crafting.

Scholars have advised against controlling variables without an underlying theoretical significance (Becker et al., 2016; Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016). Further, per Becker and colleagues

(2016) recommendations, I performed my analyses with and without the control variables. The results are presented in the most interpretable format as the control variables did not alter the results substantially (Becker et al., 2016).

Pre-treatment Process

Data Screening

The survey results obtained using Google Form were digitally exported into IBM SPSS. All scale items were employed based on the theorizing and practice suggested for the original scales. Cox (1982) advised p-value < 0.1 to be acceptable. Others have specified a p-value of .05 as a commonly accepted benchmark for statistical significance (see e.g., Cowles & Davis, 1982). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected at a *p* value of .05 or less, and the effect size of the relationships identified were reported.

Prior to conducting survey analysis in SPSS, the dataset was screened for the potential quality issues (e.g., missing data, erratic entries etc.; Kruse & Mehr, 2008). This entailed a review of key variable descriptive statistics. The procedures used to prepare data for analysis included missing value analysis, managing outliers, and categorizing the demographics.

Given the dataset predominantly comprised of responses from two distinct geographical locations, it was analyzed using t-test to determine any significant differences. Furthermore, a confirmatory factor analysis was also conducted on each level to determine the model fit.

Missing Values Analysis

Missing values are an outcome of study non-responses or dropouts (Kwak & Kim, 2017). Having missing values in a dataset is problematic for several reasons. First, it can lead to a smaller data size than intended. Second, it undermines the reliability of the dataset, and can introduce bias

into the data. As part of early data screening, missing data could either be ignored for the sake of simplicity or replaced with values statistically estimated values. Kwak and Kim (2017) outlined the analysis of missing values should carefully consider the bias between observed and missing values.

After screening for the missing values, it was estimated that about 94% of the observed values were complete. The missing values can be attributed to several reasons such as data missing completely at random, at random, or not missing at random (Kwak & Kim, 2017). Once the missing values were identified, Little's missing completely at Random (MCAR) test was conducted in SPSS to determine whether or not the missing data is a product of randomness. The p-value for the test was not significant. Therefore, the missing data was treated as MCAR. Given the final dataset comprised of a relatively smaller sample size after discarding the mismatched responses (i.e., the employee responses without a manager and vice versa), it was important to retain the valuable information and to ensure consistency of sample size in all the analyses by systematically replacing the missing values.

Unconditional mean imputation technique was used to deal with the missing values, which involves replacing the missing values with series mean of the observed data. Mean imputation is commended for its simplicity and is particularly effective with the low percentage of missingness (Pratama, Permanasari, Ardiyanto, & Indrayani, 2016). While mean imputation can reduce variability in the data, this impact would be minimal given the small number of missing observations.

Categorizations

After screening for the missing values, the key demographic variables were organized into grouping categories in order to obtain quantified, meaningful comparison between them. The key demographic variables entailed: age, gender, tenure, and industry. In what follows, an explanation is included on how each of these grouping categories has been classified.

Age was organized in multiple groups in accordance with Statistics Canada information (Government of Canada, 2016), 'as follows: Category 1 - 18 and 19, Category 2 - 20 to 24, Category 3 - 25 to 29, Category 4 - 30 to 34, Category 5 - 35 to 39, Category 6 - 40 to 44, Category 7 - 45 to 49, Category 8 - 50 and over. Organizational tenure was categorized as follows: 0-4 (1), 5-9 (2), 10-14 (3), 15-19 (4), 20 and above (5). Since age and tenure each comprised at least five categories, they were treated as continuous variables in the analysis. The information on gender was obtained based on an open-ended question classifying gender on Group 1 – Male (0), Group 2- Female (1), and Group 3 – Other such as non-binary (2).

One of the inclusion criteria of the current research was non-essential, service employees and knowledge workers. Such workers are represented in two main sectors namely tertiary (categorized by retail, banking, healthcare, and clerical services) and quaternary sector (categorized by individuals the intellectual activities such as scientific and academic research, education, information technology; Adrian, 2014). Nonetheless, the data also relied upon self-administered surveys and, therefore, had a small percentage of individuals representing other sectors as well. However, these workers also met the inclusion criteria of the research as outlined above, therefore, their responses were retained for further analysis. The quaternary sector was categorized under 1 whereas the tertiary sector was categorized by 2. All other sectors such as manufacturing, automobile, etc. were coded as 0 in the dataset.

Preliminary tests:

Sample

An independent sample t-test was conducted on the variables of interest to analyze the two distinct sources of data (i.e., the sample from Pakistan vs. the sample from North America) for statistically significant differences. The independent sample t-test results showed no significant differences between the sample of respondents collected from Pakistan and that from North America with p-value = 0.576. Both samples were normally distributed with all means for Sample 1 and 2 within two standard deviations from one another. This indicates that both sub-samples were generated from the normal population.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA; Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) was conducted in AMOS to establish the construct and discriminant validity or the variable distinctiveness of the scale, as well as, to test for possible effects of common method bias, as outlined below. As noted, CFA allows the validation of not only the measurement model but also the measures (Jackson, Gillaspy Jr, & Purc-Stephenson, 2009). Therefore, measuring the fit between the items that measured the predictor, intervening, and outcome variables was recommended to determine whether the data fit the proposed model.

For level 1 (employee-level), CFA analysis yielded appropriate measurements as it comprised of the outcome variable (i.e., stress) and an intervening variable (i.e., LMX). For level 2 (manager-level), four other alternatives were tested to demonstrate the best fit. Hoyle (2012) specified first order models as the ones where the theorized items are loaded on their respective constructs. For example, job demands, relational job crafting, and interpersonal justice, etc. Notably, the four-factor model did not yield adequate model fit indices as reported below. In

general, I expected that the measures for relational job crafting to be best measured separately (i.e., on their respective sub-dimensions of contraction and expansion-oriented relational job crafting) as they represented distinct constructs that independently contributed to the model.

To explore this further, I tested the theorized constructs using their underlying constructs or subdimensions (Hoyle, 2012). For example, challenge and hindrance stressors within job demands, expansion and contrtaction-oriented relational job crafting. All study variables relevant to the proposed hypotheses were included in model testing. Modification indices (MI) were also considered to analyze the highly correlated items in the model. The items with the highest MIs were covaried to attain a better model fit. Hooper and colleagues (2008) noted the significance of evaluating MIs, which often result from adding or eliminating a path or covariance within the model, as they can lead to the changes in the chi-square.

For the manager-level model, the final model of best fit was the alternative model that included the measures for challenge stressors, hindrance stressors, expansion-oriented relational job crafting, contraction-oriented relational job crafting, and interpersonal justice. The final model demonstrated acceptable fit indices thresholds with a total of 32 items.

Level 1. CFA to assess the discriminant validity of the employee-level constructs. Model fit is evaluated using both global and focused fit indices (Jackson et al., 2009). For global fit index, the normed Chi-Square test of fit (χ^2/df ratio), the chi- square misfit statistic, comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker– Lewis index (TLI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Hayduk et al., 2007; Hu & Bentler, 1998).

The χ^2 / df ratio is an estimation of degree of fit between the expected covariance matrix. A reported ratio between 1-3 (some suggest less than 5) indicates a good fit. Some argue chi-

square is contingent upon the sample size and may not always be an appropriate indicator of a

model fit (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). Therefore, alternative measures are to

be considered.

Level 1 CFA of 17-items showed acceptable fit to the 2-factor hypothesized model: χ^2

(341.305), $p < 0.001$, CFI $= 0.860$, TLI $= 0.839$, and RMSEA $= 0.086$.

Level 2. A CFA of 32 items showed acceptable fit to the 5-factor hypothesized model: χ^2

(758.309), CFI $= 0.842$, TLI $= 0.825$, and RMSEA $= 0.085$, $\chi^2/df = 1.70$. This model was

significantly better than a 4-factor model: χ^2 (1366.656), $p < 0.01$, CFI $= 0.580$, TLI $= 0.545$, and

RMSEA $= 0.137$ or a 3-factor model: χ^2 (1945.456), $p < 0.01$, CFI $= 0.468$, TLI $= 0.434$, and

RMSEA $= 0.141$.

All items loaded significantly on their respective constructs with *p < 0.01* and the beta values

range from 0.322 (lowest) to 0.992 (highest). Therefore, the 5-factor model representing the

hypothesized structure of the data offered the best fit among the competing models.

Table 1.1 *Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Level 2)*

Models	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Five-factor Model (Hindrance Stressors, Challenge Stressors, Contraction RJC, Expansion RJC, Interpersonal Justice)	758.309**	0.842	0.825	0.085
Four-factor Model (Hindrance Stressors, Challenge Stressors, RJC Composite, Interpersonal Justice)	1366.656**	0.580	0.545	0.137
Three-factor Model (Hindrance Stressors and Challenge Stressors combined, RJC Composite, Interpersonal Justice)	1945.456**	0.468	0.434	0.141

Note: N = 107. All alternative models were compared to the five-factor model.
Abbreviations: CFA, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

Table 1.2 *Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Level 1)*

Models	χ^2	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Two-factor Model (LMX and Stress)	341.305**	0.860	0.839	0.086
One-factor Model (LMX and Stress Combined)	863.614**	0.535	0.472	0.157

Note: N = 254. All alternative model was compared to a Single-factor model.
Abbreviations: CFA, comparative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual. * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.

Reliability. Reliability refers to the degree to which the observed items are internally consistent.

The current research employs the survey instruments that have been empirically designed and

verified by scholars across various fields. The reliabilities for all scales were evaluated by

reviewing Cronbach's alpha. Scholars noted a generally acceptable Cronbach's alpha threshold is

0.70 and above. All items in the model had a satisfactory value for the internal consistency. The

Cronbach's Alpha values for all variables are included in table 2.1 and 2.2 along with the other

descriptive statistics.

Table 2.1. *Descriptive Statistics of and Correlations among Study Variables (level 2)*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Job Demands	3.455	.5847	(.883)						
2. Hindering job demands	2.738	.8537	.837**	(.887)					
3. Challenging job demands	4.172	.6524	.698**	.191*	(.920)				
4. Relational Job Crafting	3.121	.6646	.314**	.215*	.281**	(.6252)			
5. Relational Job Crafting – contraction	2.801	1.035	.177	.222*	.028	.656**	(.899)		
6. Relational Job Crafting – expansion	3.442	1.016	.230*	.055	.339**	.639**	-.161	(.836)	
7. Interpersonal Justice	4.084	1.0771	.173	.115	.159	.146	-.306**	.502**	(.864)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) ***
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **
(N= 107)

Table 2.2. *Descriptive Statistics of and Correlations among Study Variables (level 1)*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2
1. Stress	1.466	.655	(.766)	
2. Leader-Member Exchange	3.99	.718	-.409**	(.885)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) ***
*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) **
(N =254)

Common Method Bias: Harman's Single Factor Test

Common Method Bias is a form of a measurement error, which is a direct result of the measurement methods and can be problematic (Podsakoff et al., 2003). My model includes manager data at level 2 and employee data at level 1, so common method bias is of less concern for several of the multilevel analyses. Given the prospect of common method biases through self-reported data (e.g., social desirability and/or consistency motif; Podsakoff et al., 2003), and the possibility of its presence, particularly in the within-level analyses, Harman's Single Factor test was conducted on the variables of interest on both levels to test for the possibility of common method bias.

Level 1 (Employees): A principal components analysis (PCA) was conducted in which all variables (i.e., LMX and Stress) were loaded onto a single latent factor. The single factor explained 29.1 percent of the variance, which is well below the 50 percent suggested level where common method bias becomes a concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Level 2 (Managers): As noted, PCA on level 2 was also conducted in which all variables (i.e., challenge and hindrance stressors, expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting, and interpersonal justice) were loaded onto a single latent factor. The single factor explained 39.4 percent of the variance, which is also below the 50 percent suggested level where common method bias becomes a concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Further to this, the data were obtained independently from managers and employees at two separate points in time. Therefore, common method bias was not of significant concern for the common study.

Analytical Approach

A primary objective of this study was to test how stressful job demands (in particular challenge and hindrance stressors) encountered by managers impact their interpersonal exchanges with employees, and how these interactions result in managers' implementation of interpersonal justice. The size and complexity of the entire model required a multi-faceted approach. SPSS features were utilized for initial data quality, missing values, Harman's single factor test, reliability checks, and multiple regression hypotheses testing. While SPSS macros such as MLmed has the capacity to test certain multi-level models such as 1-1-1 and 2-1-1, the model design of the current study i.e. 2-2-1 was deemed unsuitable to be tested in SPSS. Therefore, I used MPlus to test multi-level mediation and moderated mediation on the two levels. AMOS was employed to assess model fit as part of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on each level.

To avoid potential biases introduced by control variables and to mitigate the effects of covariates, the main analyses were conducted and reported *without* control variables. However, each hypothesis was followed up by supplemental analyses with control variables (see Becker et al., 2016). All analyses conducted with controls yielded similar outcomes to the ones without controls unless reported otherwise.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed managerial job demands are directly related to their engagement in relational job crafting such that managers are more likely to engage in relational crafting in the presence of increased job demands. In particular, it was proposed that challenge stressors are directly related to expansion while hindrance stressors are directly related to contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Linear regression analysis was conducted to test the bivariate relationship.

Correlation analysis indicated that managerial job demands was statistically and positively correlated with their relational job crafting at p-value less than 0.001 (r = 0.314). Regression analysis indicated a statistically significant and positive relationship between managerial job demands and relational job crafting β =.379, SE = .105, t = 3.6, p < .001. Therefore, hypothesis 1a was supported.

The Pearson correlation depicted a positive and statistically significant relationship between the challenge stressors experienced by managers and their engagement in expansion-oriented relational job crafting and (r = .339, p-value <0.01). Regression analysis indicated a statistically significant and positive relationship between challenge stressors and expansion-oriented relational job crafting β = .5286, SE = .01430, t = 3.7, p < .001. Therefore, hypothesis 1b was supported.

The Pearson correlation depicted a positive and statistically significant relationship between the amount of hindrance stressors experienced by managers and their engagement in contraction-oriented relational job crafting and (r = .222, p-value < 0.05). Regression analysis indicated a statistically significant and positive relationship between hindrance stressors and contraction-oriented relational job crafting β = .2916, SE = .1168, t = 2.5, p < .05. Therefore, hypothesis 1c was supported.

For supplemental analyses, the variables were sorted in two blocks with control variables such as age, gender, and organizational tenure in block 1 and theoretical predictors in block 2. This step was repeated for each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 predicted that expansion-oriented relational job crafting is positively while contraction-oriented job crafting is negatively related to managerial enactment of interpersonal

justice. The Pearson correlation depicted a positive and statistically significant relationship between managerial expansion-oriented relational job crafting and interpersonal justice (r = .502, p-value <0.01) and a statistically significant negative managerial contraction-oriented relational job crafting composite and interactional justice (r = -.306, p-value < 0.01).

Regression analysis indicated a statistically significant relationship between expansion- oriented relational job crafting and interpersonal justice (β = .465, SE = .088, t = 5.6, p < .001). On the other hand, contraction-oriented relational job crafting and interpersonal justice also depicted statistically significant yet negative relationship (β = -.231, SE = .086, t = -2.8, p < .001). A follow-up supplementary analyses were conducted with controls entered in Block 1 of regression and predictor variables in Block 2. Both approaches yielded similar results. Therefore, hypotheses 2 a and b were both supported.

Hypothesis 3 a & b

Hypothesis 3a suggested an indirect relationship between the challenge stressors experienced by managers and their enactment of interpersonal justice through expansion-oriented relational job crafting. Hayes (2012) explained that mediation analysis helps researchers determine the "*how*" in a research question such as *how* can a relationship be explained between a predictor and an outcome variable. As per Preacher and Hayes' (2004) recommendation, I used the PROCESS tool for SPSS to test for single-level the mediation hypothesis. Hayes (2015) specified the utility of PROCESS macro in generating an index for indirect effects of mediation. Scholars noted bootstrapping to be powerful tool in testing mediation hypotheses (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004). Through this technique, data is replicated many times to estimate the sampling distribution from the available collection of its values to make it more precise. In that way, a sampling distribution is enabled, which can then serve as a "surrogate population".

The hypotheses testing used PROCESS Model 4 (Hayes, 2012) Macro in SPSS. I used 5000 bootstrap resamples to create a 95% bias corrected confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect of challenge and hindrance stressors on interpersonal justice via expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting, respectively (see e.g., Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Results show that the indirect effect of managerial challenge stressors on interpersonal justice through expansion-oriented relational job crafting is significant (ab = .23, 95% CI[0.0699, .4644]. As the confidence interval does not include zero, the null hypothesis can be rejected. Therefore, expansion-oriented relational job crafting significantly mediates the relationship between the amount of challenge stressors experienced by managers and their enactment of informational justice. Therefore, hypothesis 3a was supported.

Hypothesis 3b suggested an indirect relationship between the hindrance stressors experienced by managers and their enactment of interpersonal justice through contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Indirect effect of hindrance stressors on interpersonal justice through contraction-oriented relational job crafting is significant (ab = -.08, 95% CI[-.2008, -.0072]. Therefore, hypothesis 3b was supported.

Supplemental analyses were conducted with the inclusion of age, gender, and tenure as alternative explanations. The analyses yielded similar outcomes when controlling for these variables. Therefore, the reported outcomes were based on the analyses without control variables (Becker et al., 2016).

Table 3. *Summary of analyses for Hypotheses 3a & 3b*

Indirect effects of job stressors on interpersonal justice through expansion and contraction RJC				
	Indirect Effect	Boot SE	*95% LCI*	*95% UCI*
CS =>ERJC => IJ	0.23	.1147	0.0699	*.4644*
HS=>CRJC => IJ	-.0844	.0506	-.2008	-.0072

Multilevel Analysis:

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted a multilevel mediation between managerial contraction and expansion-oriented relational job crafting and employee stress through managerial enactment of interpersonal justice. The cross-level interaction hypotheses were tested using MPlus version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998- 2018). I had a two-level model with employees (N = 254) nested in managers (N = 64). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an advanced statistical tool, to test the hypothesized interactions between the endogenous and exogenous variables (Lei & Wu, 2007). Given its ability to identify the confirmatory and theory driven relationships (Byrne, 2016), SEM is deemed adequate for testing the multilevel 2-2-1 mediation hypotheses. Multilevel Structural Equation Model (MSEM) was used to perform a path analysis in Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, Los Angeles, CA, USA). The CLUSTER command accounted for the nested data structure. Intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) or the amount of dependence among observations within groups was determined to ensure nonindependence of the dependent variable (i.e., employee stress) and that the data supported team-level aggregation (Bliese, 2002). ICC1 of 0.109 indicated that 10.9% of the variability in the employee stress can be attributed to group level variability in the first model. On the other hand, ICCI of 0.135 indicating 13.5% of

the variability in employee stress was recorded for the second model suggesting evidence for substantial clustering in data.

Given that the current model employs path analysis in SEM (rather than latent variables), the constructs were assumed to have been measured without error; therefore, the analysis is focused more on path estimates than model fit. The traditional resampling approaches (e.g., bootstrapping) is not considered adequate for multilevel models, therefore, Monte Carlo method of resampling was applied to create bias corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effects (Seligman & Preacher, 2008). Tests of the indirect effects demonstrated that the indirect effect of managerial expansion-oriented job crafting on employee stress via interpersonal justice was not significant $b = -0.082$, 95% CI[-0.221, 0.056]. On the other hand, tests of the indirect effects demonstrated that the indirect effect of managerial contraction-oriented job crafting on employee stress via interactional justice was also not significant $b = 0.041$, 95% CI[-0.025, 0.108]. Given that the confidence interval for the indirect effects included zero, the results did not support full or partial mediation. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Table 4. *Summary of analyses for Hypothesis 4*

Indirect effects of expansion and contraction RJC on stress through Interpersonal Justice			
Indirect Effect	Boot SE	*95% LCI*	*95% UCI*
ERJC=> IJ = > Str	-0.082	0.227	-0.221	0.056
CRJC = > IJ => Str	0.041	1.231	-0.025	0.108

Hypothesis 5:

Hypothesis 5 predicted a negative relationship between managerial enactment of interpersonal justice and employee stress such that a manager's enactment of interpersonal justice would lower employee stress. The relationship was tested in using linear mixed-models in SPSS. The level 2 nested identifier was placed in the subject box while identifying stress as a level-1 dependent and interpersonal justice as a covariate variable using restricted maximum likelihood estimation (REML). The final output indicated the negative relationship between managerial implementation of interpersonal justice and employee stress was significant (SE = .10456, β = -.135, t = -3.6, p < 0.01). The analysis was replicated in R using 'lme 4' package using lmer function. The outcome of the additional analysis confirmed the initial results. Therefore, hypothesis 5 was supported.

Hypothesis 6:

Hypothesis 6 predicted expansion relational job crafting is negatively while contraction relational crafting is positively related to employee stress. The hypotheses were tested separately using liner mixed-models in SPSS. Level 2 nested identifier was used to build nested terms using REML estimation. Both analyses were replicated in R using 'lmer' function to confirm the results. The outcome of this cross-level effect indicated managerial engagement in expansion-oriented relational job crafting was negatively related to employee stress t = -1.9, SE = .0459, β = -.125, 95% CI[-.1821, -.0012], p < 0.05. On the contrary, managers' engagement in contraction-oriented relational job crafting was positively related to employee stress t = 2.3, SE = .0452, β = .143, 95% CI[.0148, .1929], p < 0.05. Therefore, hypothesis 6a and 6b were supported.

Hypothesis 7a & 7b:

Hypotheses 7 predicted the quality of LMX as reported by employees is directly related to managerial relational job crafting orientation such that (a) LMX is positively related to expansion-oriented; and (b) negatively related to contraction-oriented managerial relational job crafting. Both hypotheses were tested separately using liner mixed-models in SPSS and lmer function in R. As predicted, managerial engagement in relational contraction-oriented job crafting is significantly (and negatively) related to LMX as reported by employees (β = -.1164, t = -2.1, SE = .05, p < .05). However, the relationship is not significant for expansion-oriented relational job crafting (B = -.003, p > 0.05). Further to this, contrary to theorization, the direction of this relationship was also negative. Supplementary analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between relational job crafting composite and employee perceptions of LMX. Interestingly, the outcome was significant, and showed a negative relationship between LMX and RJC composite, t = - 2.0, β = -.114, SE = .10, 95% CI[-.4175, -.0276], p < 0.05. Therefore, hypothesis 7 was partially supported.

Hypothesis 8 a & b:

Hypothesis 8 predicted the relationship between LMX quality and employee stress is moderated by expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Moderation analysis examines the "*when*" and "*for whom*" component of research questions such as *when/for whom* does a predictor determine an outcome (Hayes, 2012). Fairchild and MacKinnon (2009) noted a moderating variable (Z) can strengthen, weaken, or not change the effect on the independent variable (X) on the dependent variable (Y). The present study suggested as the expansion-oriented relational job crafting increases, the relationship between LMX and employee stress gets stronger. In that sense, expansion-oriented relational job crafting has the strengthening effect on LMX and stress. On the

other hand, the relationship between LMX and Stress is also enhanced with the decrease in contraction-oriented relational job crafting. In other words, contraction-oriented relational job crafting has an attenuating effect on the relationship between LMX and employee stress.

The analysis conducted to examine the relationship using contraction and expansion-oriented relational job crafting. Level 1 variables were group mean-centered. Because relational job crafting comprises of two orthogonal subscales (i.e., expansion and contraction), I tested the interaction effects separately. This is also consistent with previous research on cross-level moderation as it allows for "more statistical test validity, more power, and more clarity in the meaning of results" (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018, p. 343). The interaction between LMX and expansion-oriented relational job crafting was significantly related to employee stress (SE = 0.0822, t = -3.0, 95% CI[-.4703, -.1461]). Simple slopes, plotted in figure 3.1, demonstrate the negative relationship between employee perceptions of LMX and stress strengthens as the expansion-oriented relational job crafting increases (Υ = -.24, p < 0.01). The significance of the moderating effects was determined based on the p-value. Therefore, hypothesis 8a was supported.

The interaction between LMX and contraction-oriented relational job crafting was also significantly related to employee stress (SE = 0.0656, t = 3.2, 95% CI[.1332, .3918]). Simple slopes, plotted in figure 3.2, demonstrate the negative relationship between employee perceptions of LMX and stress strengthens as the contraction-oriented relational job crafting decreases (Υ = .21, p < 0.001). Therefore, hypothesis 8b was also supported.

Figure 3. *Interaction Effects*

Figure 3.1. *Moderating relationship between expansion-oriented relational job crafting*
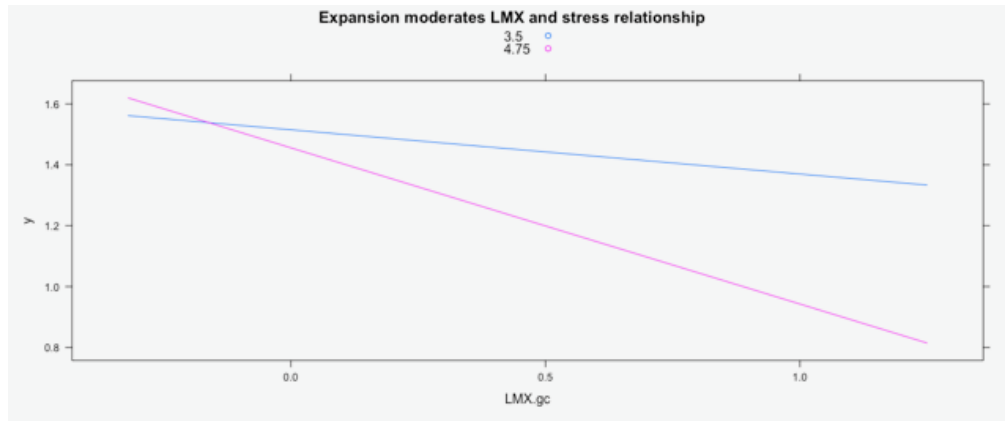
on LMX and stress

Figure 3.2. *Moderating relationship between contraction-oriented relational job crafting*

on LMX and stress
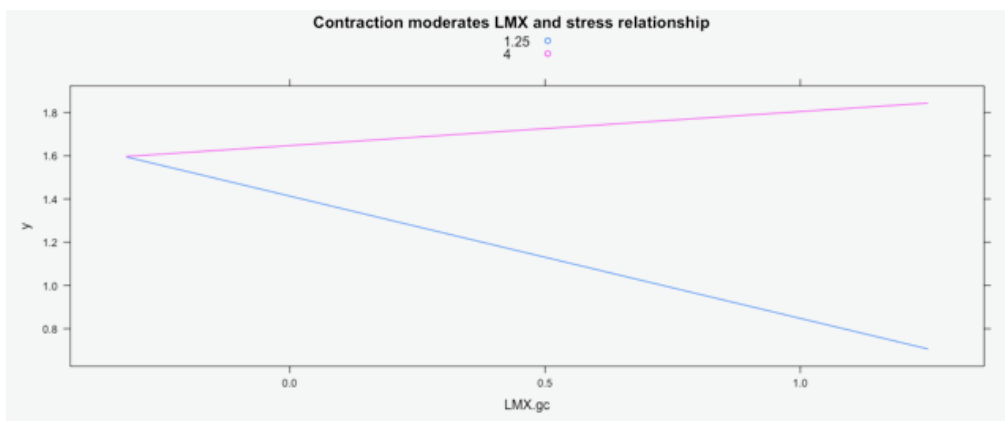
Table 5. *Summary- Tests of Direct Effects and Interaction Effects*

	Hypothesis 1a	Hypothesis 1b	Hypothesis 1c	Hypothesis 2a	Hypothesis 2b	Hypothesis 5	Hypothesis 6a	Hypothesis 6b	Hypothesis 7a	Hypothesis 7b	Hypothesis 7c	Hypothesis 8a	Hypothesis 8b
	Relational Job Crafting	Expansion-Oriented RJC	Contraction-Oriented RJC	Interpersonal Justice	Interpersonal Justice	Employee Stress	Employee Stress	Employee Stress	LMX	LMX	LMX	Stress	Stress
Job Demands	.379** (.105)												
Challenge Stressors		.218**(.014)											
Hindrance Stressors			.11*(.12)										
Interpersonal Justice						-.38*(.104)							
Relational Job Crafting									-.22*(.10)				
Expansion-Oriented RJC				0.493**(.088)			-.09*(.045)			-.003(.052)			
Contraction-Oriented RJC				-.24**(.086)	-.240**(.086)			.10*(.05)			.12*(.05)		
LMX x Expansion-Oriented RJC												-.308**(.082)	
LMX x Contraction-Oriented RJC													.2625**(.0656)
R Square Adjusted	0.09	0.107	0.089	0.245	0.085	0.014	0.012	0.017	0.009	-0.004	0.011	0.109	0.209
Standard Error in parenthesis	*p<0.05	**p<.01	***p<.001										

Figure 4. *Model with unstandardized parameter estimates.*

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001
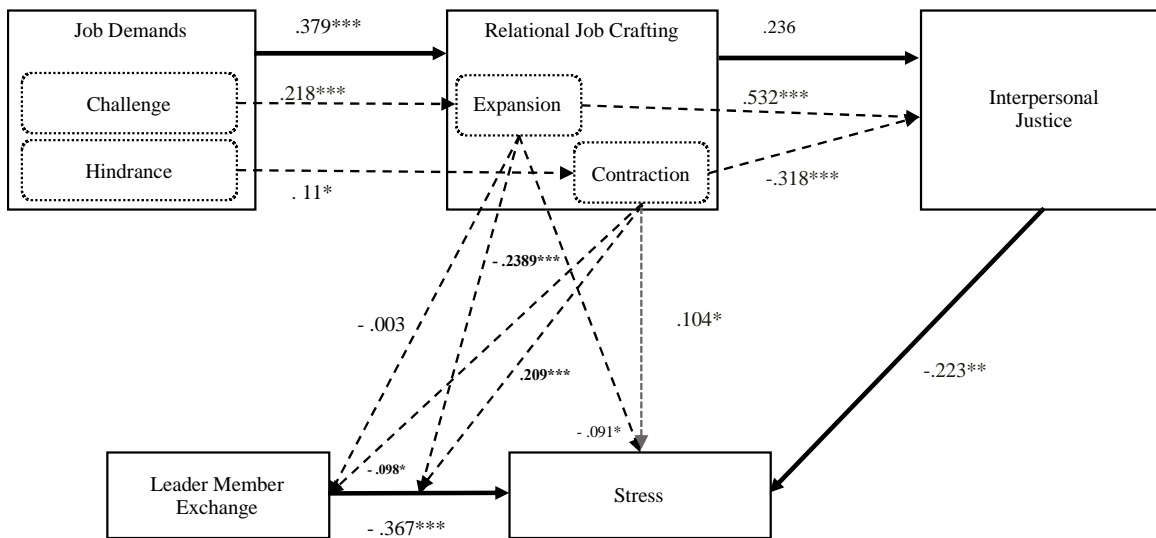
Ethical Considerations

Cargan (2007) noted that scientific research needs to be conducted in a systemic,

procedural, and skeptical- yet an ethical way. To maintain the systemic and skeptical

components, the current research follows the evidence-based approach to planning and executing

research design and rigorous statistical analyses. In keeping with the Human Rights Research Committee guidelines, several considerations were outlined while making decisions about the design of the current research. Reasonable actions were taken to address potential ethical issues involved in the inclusion and involvement of the study respondents. Throughout the study, I was mindful of the fact that collecting employee data in conjunction with their managers with the prospect of matching the two responses might make either or both parties uncomfortable – particularly in a small team setting. Therefore, to assure participant confidentiality, no identifying information was collected from the employees. Further, once the data was collected and the unique identifiers were quantified, no identifiable information was retained in any way. The unique identifier contained last three letters of the managers' surname. However, this information was also stripped once the data was prepared for analyses. The names and/or identities of all participants were prohibited from appearing in any reports or publications. The electronic surveys were stored in a password-protected cloud server. As noted above, the entire research was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, to minimize contact and to guard against the spread of the contagion, only web-based survey instruments were used.

Although I did not anticipate any physical, emotional, or economic risks, I understand that reporting the levels of perceived stress in relation to the interpersonal exchanges with one's direct supervisor may be a sensitive topic for some- particularly the victims of abusive supervision. I acknowledged the potential difficulties related to emotions such as stress, anxiety and income insecurity some participants might experience. To minimize risk, the survey respondents were notified of the research objectives and core intentions of the current study. To avoid any potential harms that may come to the survey respondents, particularly considering the nature of the subject area, I also identified and listed the professional resources that they can

contact for any support. Further, I had identified and included support resources for mental health in the research information and consent form for each participant. The survey design deliberately outlined respondents' right to privacy and confidentiality. The respondents were also debriefed on the voluntary nature of the present study while outlining the participants could withdraw their participation from the study at any point in time.

The contact information of my dissertation supervisor and myself were included to the consent forms. Finally, to demonstrate my sensitivity to any potential issues, I was transparent and respectful about the collection, analyses, and reporting of the data.

Study 1 Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative study was to develop a better understanding of the work-related mechanisms that inform the level of stress experienced and reported by employees. I had focused on the manager-employee interdependence to demonstrate that when managers experience stressful job demands in the form of challenge and hindrance stressors, it directly impacts their interactions with others at work. In particular, I studied managerial engagement in relational job crafting to demonstrate its unique impact on managers' ability to be interpersonally fair towards their employees, which can then determine employee stress. Given the orthogonal sub-dimensions of relational job crafting (i.e., expansion and contraction-oriented), I had expected some very distinct interaction effects in determining employee stress.

The findings of the present study outlined a direct association between managerial job demands and relational job crafting. The relationship between job demands and job crafting has long been established (see e.g., Berdicchia, & Masino, 2019; Harju et al., 2021; Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013). In particular, this relationship has been studied at employee-level. For example, Nielsen and Abildgaard (2012) noted the relationship between

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job demands and job crafting within blue-collar workers. Further, they noted controlling the frequency and quality of social resources is something subjected to worker discretion. It was demonstrated that social interaction can both be a resource and a taxing demand at the same time (Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012). Given the idiosyncrasies associated with different forms of job crafting, scholars had invited further research on various forms of job crafting (such as relational job crafting) within different populations (see e.g., Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012).

In that regard, the current research establishes a new line of inquiry by investigating the role of challenge and hindrance-based job demands on managerial engagement in relational job crafting. Managers make a suitable sample for studying relational job crafting as they enjoy comparatively more control and autonomy over their work relationships. In that regard, they also enjoy the power differential over their employees and can freely initiate or exit a social interaction. Therefore, it was interesting to examine the relationship between challenge and hindrance stressors and different forms of relational job crafting behaviors demonstrated by managers. The current research outlined a unique relationship between managers' propensity to engage in expansion and contraction-oriented job crafting in the wake of stressful specific job demands. In particular, it was revealed that challenge stressors are directly associated with managers' tendency to expand their social and interpersonal networks. Cavanaugh and colleagues (2000) noted that challenge stressors are often associated with personal growth such that challenges are applied to meet individuals' achievement needs including workload, tight schedules, scope of work, and job complexity. In that sense, the current findings on expansion-oriented relational job crafting and challenge stressors uphold the fundamental assumptions of the existing literature.

Findings of the current research also illustrated a direct relationship between hindrance stressors and contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Scholars described hindrance stressors as the kind of job demands that are perceived to be taxing and seldom have positive impact on one's personal and professional development (Cavanaugh et al., 2000; Webster et al., 2010). Common examples of hindrance stressors include: office politics, red tape culture, and job insecurity. Given the inherent purpose of engaging in contraction-oriented relational job crafting in avoidance crafting (Zhang & Parker, 2019), where individuals actively shift their job demands to avoid negative or unwanted job outcomes, it would make sense for the managers to contract their social network in the presence of hindrance job demands.

Another notable finding of the current study is the relationship between managerial engagement in relational job crafting and their enactment in interpersonal justice. In particular, the current study predicted a positive relationship between expansion-oriented relational job crafting and interpersonal justice, whereas, a negative relationship was proposed between contraction-oriented relational job crafting and interpersonal justice. The results supported the proposed hypotheses in the predicted directions. Colquitt (2001) noted that interpersonal justice determines the extent to which individuals are treated with respect, dignity, and politeness. Therefore, individuals' day-to-day encounters within organizations make interpersonal justice both relevant and meaningful (Bies, 2005; Fassina, Jones, & Uggerslev, 2008).

The current study also examines the indirect relationship between challenge and hindrance stressors and interpersonal justice through expansion and contraction-oriented job crafting. In particular, it was hypothesized that the expansion-oriented relational job crafting mediates the relationship between challenge stressors and interpersonal justice. On the other hand, contraction-oriented relational job crafting mediates the relationship between hindrance

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stressors and interpersonal stressors. The quantitative findings supported these two hypotheses. Previous research depicts a negative relationship between managerial workload and justice enactment through prioritizing technical tasks unless managers are actively rewarded for being fair (see e.g., Sherf et al., 2019). The current research examines this relationship on a social domain to demonstrate that certain types of job demands (as triggered by challenge stressors) can, in fact, result in managers being more interpersonally fair than expected. Johnson, Lanaj, and Barnes (2014) noted not all justice behaviors are draining. In fact, it was contended that interpersonal justice could even be restorative (Johnson et al., 2014). In that regard, the findings of the current research meaningfully add to the existing literature on managerial job demands and justice implementation.

Given its focus on employee stress, the current research also examines a multi-level mediation between managers' proclivity to engage in expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting and employee stress through interpersonal justice enacted by managers. This relationship was not supported by the analysis. However, employee stress was shown to have a direct relationship with managerial enactment of interpersonal justice. This is in line with the previous research on interpersonal justice and stress (see e.g., Reb et al., 2019). Employee stress was also directly related to expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting. In particular, managerial expansion -oriented relational crafting was marginally yet negatively whereas contraction-oriented relational job crafting was positively associated with employee stress. This was particularly interesting as the between-level effects of job crafting has not been studied at manager-employee levels. This is an important oversight as it is important to consider the effect of managerial engagement in job crafting on employee stress.

Another notable finding of the current research was the relationship with LMX and expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting. It was shown that LMX has an overall negative relationship with relational relational job crafting composite. This is an important advancement as distinguishing managerial relational job crafting from LMX is meaningful given the social relevance of both constructs. The relationship is significant (and negative) for cross-level interaction effect between contraction-oriented relational job crafting and employee stress. In essence, it suggests managers' engagement in contraction-oriented relational job crafting can directly impact their ability to maintain high-quality LMX as reported by employees. In other words, a manager who makes him or herself unavailable through engaging in contraction-oriented relational job crafting is not able to maintain a good quality exchanges with his or her employees. However, this relationship was not significant for expansion-oriented relational job crafting and employee stress. While a positive relationship was expected between these two variables, the lack of significant findings may be attributed to limited sample size. Another explanation for the lack of support could be that the scope of expansion-oriented relational job crafting (e.g., friends, clients, patients, and external contacts including stakeholders) may not significantly impact the quality of exchanges one maintains with their direct reports. In particular, social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964) is also explained through the principle of rationality, which contends employees deem their relationship to be high quality once they understand the underlying motives of such treatment. Further, employees are inclined to trust the rules of interactions will not be betrayed in future (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Meeker, 1971). This is based on the presumption that employees care not only about the treatment they receive but also the way their co-workers are treated (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011). In that regard, even the employees who experience more attention through their manager's expansion-oriented

relational crafting may not necessarily report lesser levels of stress. This can be ascribed to the fact that managers typically do not offer a rationale behind their engagement in relational job crafting (Wang et al., 2018).

Finally, the current research shows that an interaction between managers' relational job crafting and employee perceptions of LMX, can considerably inform employee stress. In particular, it was revealed that expansion-oriented relational job crafting strengthens the relationship between LMX and employee stress while contraction-oriented relational job crafting has an attenuating effect on the relationship between the two variables. This is in line with the previous research on the perceptions of LMX and stress whereby employees receiving support from their supervisors are less likely to report stress (Reb et al., 2019). An alternative explanation to this relationship can be approached through Hui and colleagues (1999) research, which states, "if a person tends to view life negatively, this person may be less likely to build effective work relationships with others" (p.8). Notably negative affect is closely related to stress and even LMX quality (see e.g., Bernerth et al. 2007; Hochwarter 2005; Hui et al. 1999; Reb et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be assumed that stressed out employees would have poor perceptions of the quality of LMX they enjoy with their managers, which can further be reinforced through managers' engagement in expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting.

CHAPTER FIVE: QUALITATIVE DESIGN AND ANALYSIS

Context and Overview

Chapter 4 presents the results of the statistical analysis of the 254 employees nested within 64 managers. The present study advanced thirteen hypotheses that focused on the nature of the relationships between managerial job stressors and employee stress. To account for the limitations posed by multi-source, cross-sectional dataset comprising of self-report measures (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986), a follow-up qualitative study was conducted. Participants from Phase I, quantitative study were asked if they were interested in a follow-up interview. Those interested had an opportunity to leave their contact information for further correspondence. The interviews were conducted at a separate point in time.

I found significant evidence for managerial stressful job demands impacting their ability to implement interpersonal fairness among employees, which then results in employee stress. Nonetheless, the quantitative model limited the scope of analysis by focusing on the variables of interest only (i.e., managers' engagement in relational job crafting either through expanding or contracting their social network), their ability to demonstrate interpersonal fairness, and employee reports of leader-member exchange. I acknowledge the limitations of my quantitative study in uncovering the complexities associated with manager-employee interactions in the workplace. I also recognize that this study was conducted during one of the most significant pandemics in the human history. Evidence shows that working during the pandemic is extremely stressful with an initial estimate of over 81% Canadians reporting extreme stress adjusting to their new work demands (see e.g., Morneau Shepell, 2020; Treasury Board of Canada

Secretariat, 2020). Therefore, to account for employee stress that emanates particularly as a result of manager-employee interpersonal exchanges, a follow-up qualitative study was designed. Taking these limitations into account, I explored three specific research questions:

1. How do managerial stressors transform into employee stress?

2. How do stressed-out managers interact with their direct subordinates?

3. How do manager-employee interactions impact the level of stress experienced and reported by employees?

Researchers have long noted the significance of qualitative interview technique in theory-building. Such technique offers a more meticulous acumen to pre-existing quantitative results (Mazzola, Schonfeld, Spector, 2011). Finally, qualitative research is appropriate in answering the "how" questions based on research inquiry (Whetten, 1989). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) noted job crafting as a complex phenomenon with significant methodological challenges to capture the actual process. In particular, it was contended that "studying narratives of work may be a better way to study job crafting, for crafting takes many forms and directions, involving how people see their work and themselves in their work" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, pp. 196-197).

In what follows, I will outline the research epistemology and paradigmatic orientation, qualitative methods, managing biases, reflexivity, and quality criteria of the current research. I start by identifying the theoretical lens with the associated paradigm, followed by a description of the research design that was chosen to address the research inquiry of choice. Following this, I will briefly discuss my personal and social relevance to this study and how I managed the associated biases. Next, the data collection, sampling, and analytical techniques will be described

in detail. The chapter is concluded with outlining the quality criteria of the study and ethical considerations.

Theoretical Framework: Research Paradigm

Interpretivism is an important research paradigm that assumes there is no objective reality and all experiences are subjective (Nyein et al., 2020). In particular, "multiple realities exist (ontology) and are created or constructed through life experiences and social interaction" (Nyein et al., 2020, p. 91). Interpretivism assumes knowledge is generated by the research participants whereby researchers' job is to discover, highlight, and document that knowledge (Schwandt, 2003). In particular, interpretivism outlines the effects of both social and cultural contexts to understand and, therefore, interpret individual experiences (Schwandt, 2003). This creates a platform for consideration of individuals constructing their realities based on their experiences (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 1994).

The depth and the breadth of the descriptions that are offered within interpretive paradigm allow individuals to construct a phenomenon (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In that way, value is placed on interpretation of the described phenomenon where both researcher and participants play an active role in knowledge generation (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Therefore, the use of interpretivist lens is appropriate in understanding how managers' stressful job demands impact their interactions with other organizational members including their direct subordinates. Given interpretivism can handle "multiple subjective realities and perspectives" (Nyein et al., 2020, p. 92), it is an appropriate paradigm to a pluralistic approach in uncovering how managerial interactions are interpreted by their direct reports. In particular, I paid special attention to the mechanisms through which managerial interactions accentuate (or mitigate) employee stress. Indeed, participants in interpretivist paradigm are considered "*knowledge agents*", who can not

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only make sense of their interactions with others but are also able to effectively make attributions about their sources of stress. Therefore, the current research can particularly benefit from interpretivist lens as it provides insights into manager-employee interpersonal experiences and how they could potentially account for employee stress.

Paradigmatic Orientation. As noted earlier, data collection for the qualitative research phase was guided by the rules and recommendations for interpretive research (Klein & Myers 1999; Sarker, Xiao, Beaulieu, 2013). Such guidelines help researchers attain the required integrity for data interpretation, providing transparency during data analysis and generating findings. As noted, interpretivism assumes that individual reality is socially constructed and any given event may offer multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In that regard, phenomenology is deemed as an appropriate guiding methodology for the current research. Phenomenology refers to examining a phenomenon whereby a phenomenon represents something that is consciously experienced and described by a participant (Moran, 2000). Giorgi (1997, 2009) descibed the goal of the phenomenological method is to capture the essense of the phenomenon as it surfaces in participant consciousness. Phenomenology adds value to this research as it incorporates the use of interviews to extract the essence of the questions while flexibly adjusting to the study needs as it develops. Qualitative data is typically characterized as something that can be collected through words, as Merriam (2009, p.85) noted "data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment". In that regard, interviews, focus groups, and even meaningfully detailed informal conversations are deemed useful data. Patton (2002) identified the value of qualitative data collected through conversations to gain insights into individuals' perspectives particularly for phenomena that cannot be observed directly.

Research Design

Rationale. While the survey questionnaires were useful for capturing managerial engagement in relational job crafting in the face of increased job stressors and demands, which could then inform their ability to be interpersonally fair towards their employees. The actual relationship between managerial relational crafting and interpersonal stress was counterintuitive. Based on the implications of social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964), I expected a more complex explanation to the relational interdependence between manager and employees. Therefore, a qualitative inquiry was implemented to explain the quantitative findings. In light of the complex relational dynamics between manager and employees along with the power differential, I was prompted to further explore the depth of individual experiences in regards to their relational exchanges at work.

Procedure. A total of 52 participants consented to be contacted for a follow-up interview. Only 37 responded to my follow-up emails at a later stage. Out of those, five dropped out and did not respond to the scheduling request. In the end, 33 interviews were conducted. Out of thirty-three interviewees, one declined to be audio-recorded. The final dataset comprised of 14 managers and 19 employees (N = 33). Out of the 33 interview responses, 29 were successfully matched with their manager/employee counterparts thereby offering an opportunity to conduct an additional nested analysis as well. In total, 20 employees were nested in 9 managers. Table 6 demonstrates the characteristics of all participants including their age, education, and gender.

Table 6. *Socio-demographic data for manager-employee nested dataset (n = 33),*

Managers (n= 14), Employees (n= 19)

Socio-Demographic Characteristics	Total	Managers	Employees
Age			
< 25	2	0	2
26 – 30 years	8	1	7
31 – 35 years	1	0	1
36 – 40 years	4	1	3
41 – 45 years	6	3	3
46 – 50 years	6	4	2
51 – 55 years	3	2	1
56 – 60 years	2	2	0
61 – 65 years	1	1	0
Education			
High School	2	0	2
Post – Secondary Diploma	5	1	4
Undergraduate Degree	7	5	2
Master's Degree	14	9	5
Doctoral Degree	4	3	1
Post – Doctorate	1	1	0
Gender			
Male	11	8	3
Female	21	6	15
Other	1	-	1

Sampling Strategy. Evidently, there are no clear instructions on the sample size when it comes to conducting qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A research conducted by Mason (2010), who reviewed over 500 qualitative studies, proposed a mean sample size of (N=31) participants. Others have insisted that several degrees of "meaning saturation" is possible with the sample size of (N =25) interviews (see e.g., Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2019) identified a sample size of (N= 21- 23) interviews for qualitative studies. In that regard N=33 participants in the present study was deemed acceptable. Of these 14

were managers and 18 were employees representing various industries such as education, banking, engineering, and government.

Another important consideration of the current qualitative study was the ongoing COVID-19 context and the extent to which it could impact interpersonal relationships at work. It is evident that the pre-formed rapport with individuals at work could be maintained in the alternative work arrangements such as remote work. Therefore, it was important to control such relational dynamics between managers and employees.

While all interviewees were drawn from Phase I, the following inclusion criteria were used to select the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) for Phase II:

A) *Control Criterion:* To control for the pre-existing rapport between manager and employees as a potential confound, I focused on individuals who started a new role during the pandemic. This entailed employees and managers forming a new work relationship during the pandemic. As such managers were asked to describe their interpersonal experiences with a new employee and vice versa. If the criterion of new relationship was not fulfilled, the participant was deemed unqualified for nested analysis.

B) *Diversity*: The selected interviewees represented different age ranges, genders, industries, and levels of organizational tenure within the dataset.

C) *Nature of work*: Despite varying occupations, all interviewees were a part of non-essential service industry.

Interview Guide

The interview guides (see Appendix B) for each level (i.e., managers and employees) were designed to encourage participants to share their opinions on their interpersonal experiences at work.

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Managers. In particular, managerial interview guide was designed to measure the extent to which they believed their job demands had changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The emphasis was placed on whether the new(er) work expectations were deemed as challenging or hindered managers' ability to perform their core tasks. The follow-up questions comprised of the strategies managers tried to adjust to the new job demands with an emphasis on work interactions. In particular, questions were asked on how managers' interpersonal interactions with other organizational members vs. direct reports had changed as a result of "the new work normal". While some managers commented on maintaining their interpersonal relationships positive, others openly acknowledged their job demands hindered their ability to maintain frequent interactions with their employees. Therefore, a viable next question was on their evaluations of employee mental wellbeing. Managers were also asked questions on how their "adjusted interpersonal exchanges" impacted their ability to demonstrate fairness towards their subordinates. A probe was added with an explanation on interpersonal fairness and examples were provided where needed. While this question was completely arbitrary, it allowed managers to reflect on how their interpersonal exchanges with their employees impact their employee wellbeing. The participants were also asked if they were comfortable with providing an example on their ability to demonstrate interpersonal fairness towards their subordinates as a result of the [added] stressful job demands. Managers were asked a question on how their interpersonal exchanges with their direct reports would vary if they are able to control their job demands. This question spoke directly to managers' tendency to craft their relationships at work. The follow-up question was adapted from Berg and colleagues (2010), which entailed a scenario on how individuals sometimes change their scope of interpersonal relationships at work solely to perform better. Participants were encouraged to tell a story based on their interpersonal exchanges during

the COVID-19 crisis. Managers were also asked to reflect on whether any of the changes in the interpersonal exchanges at work, a result of their own initiative.

Employees. The purpose of this qualitative research was to add plurality of views on how managers' stressful job demands transform into employee stress. The idea was to capture a well-rounded view on the variation of the experiences between managers and employees and the extent to which the accounts between the two parties or converge overlap vs. part ways or diverge. Therefore, the interview questions for employees were also in line with the guiding research questions of the current study. For example, the employees were encouraged to start with the narrative based description of their work experiences during the COVID-19 crisis.

Participants were also asked questions on how they would describe their relationship with the managers, followed by what were some of the reasons in their opinion for enjoying the quality of relationship with the managers. Participants were probed on how their interactions with their direct manager impacted their wellbeing at work. A follow-up question was asked on whether participants thought their supervisors were interpersonally fair to them. The definition of interpersonal justice was provided to the participants along with examples. Participants were also encouraged to provide an example to support their response. Since one of the control factors was the beginning of a new work relationship during the COVID-19 pandemic, a question was asked on whether the COVID-19 related work restrictions impacted their relational exchanges with the managers at all and how that impacted employee wellbeing at work. Finally, the interviewees were asked what the ideal relationship looked like between manager and employees.

Interviewing Technique. Following the guidelines of the semi-structured interviewing technique, I was flexible with asking questions in a way that allowed the recommended interview protocols to be fulfilled. While all questions were asked at some point, they were not presented

in a particular order to allow for a free flow of conversation between the researcher and the respondents. Respecting the conversational paths between the researcher and the respondents, an environment was created where the respondents felt encouraged to speak their minds as the researcher carefully navigated through the conversations. Scholars noted semi-structured interviews are particularly useful in outlining the issues related to interviewers and interviewees (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). In that vein, semi-structured interviews are considered appropriate for obtaining both retrospective accounts and real-time perspectives. Such approach also requires facilitating conversations to make sure discursively justified knowledge is produced through a natural flow of conversations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

I acknowledge the process of interview can trigger a thought process and interviewees' willingness to open-up about their personal views and judgments can determine the depth and breadth of the data collected. Therefore, letting employees reflect on how their interpersonal experiences varied in relation to various external factors (including managers' stressful job demands) was an insightful process as it enabled the respondents to explore their interpretation of how they were treated as a result of managerial job demands as they shifted at various points in time. Similarly, letting the managers reflect on who they could rely on when their job demands get stressful and how it may impact the other members of the teams, was promoted through narratives and storytelling techniques.

Interview Protocols. The interviews were conducted between September 2020 and September 2021. Given the strict COVID-19 protocol requirements, all interviews were conducted either online or over the phone. Interviews were recorded by a digital audio recording device. The interview was initiated with an overall worker narrative on who they are, what they do, and how their work was impacted due to the COVID-19 crisis. This was followed with open-ended

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primary questions such as, "Please describe the nature of your work and how it got impacted during the pandemic", and "Describe your interactions with your manager, "and "Please comment on the extent to which these work interactions have impacted your mental wellbeing." It was continued with more probing questions, such as, "Could you elaborate on that?" or "Could you provide me with an example?" Interviews lasted approximately 40 - 75 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants. All participants agreed to be audio recorded with an exception of one, who was willing to take part in the interview but declined to be recorded. I took rigorous interview notes (about 8 pages) for this participant. This included verbatim quotes of the participants as well as summaries of the participant responses to the interview questions. Following this interview, I reached out to the respondent, read them my notes and asked for clarity where needed. During the process of data analysis, I made use of these notes for relevant themes. However, I refrained from including quotes from this particular interview. The rest of the interviews were transcribed verbatim for further analysis. The data collection process continued until the point of theoretical saturation with no new themes emerging.

Transcription:

All interview participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their privacy and confidentiality. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and later screened and edited for speech fillers. For example, any non-verbal cues and utterances such as stuttering, non-verbal hesitations, and involuntary vocalizations were captured to the extent possible (Oliver, Serovich, & Mason, 2005). Intuitively, capturing such utterances is an important step in immersing with data. Nonetheless, the purpose of the current research was to capture stress as a "trickle-down" process through manager-employee interactions, therefore, a denaturalized approach to data

transcription was deemed appropriate (Oliver et al., 2005). A denaturalized transcription entails the removal of verbal utterances and other unique elements of speech to shift the focus from how one articulates perception to the perception itself (Oliver et al., 2005). Therefore, words such as "umm", "you know", "right", "duh!" were excluded to focus on the gist of the conversation. For further analysis, a denaturalized version of the transcripts was used.

Throughout the transcripts, square brackets were used where words were needed to add clarity or eliminate any slangs or grammatical errors. In most cases, the original expression of the participants was maintained. Square brackets were also used to mask participant identity (in certain cases gender), nature of work, employer's name, and/or location.

Data Preparation and Analysis:

Given the data of the current study were collected through the interactive means in a way that I came to the analysis with prior knowledge of the data content and some analytical insights and perspectives (Nowell et al., 2017). I had maintained my thought log and notes during the process of data collection. These initial notes, interpretations, comprehension, and comments became the beginning of the data analysis process (Tuckett, 2005).

Second, I paid particular attention to how manager respondents described their interactions in response to work stressors. I also connected this information to how the employees interpreted these interactions with their managers. As a result, I maintained my notes, reflections, thought-logs, and memos as my respondents explained the lived realities of dealing with workplace stressors and their consequent interpersonal experiences. The actual process of data analysis was conducted with a help of computer assisted data analysis software called QSR Nvivo 12 (a qualitative data analysis software) for documenting the analysis and identifying the emerging themes through initial nodes (Jones, 2007). I also referred to my notes, memos, and

thought logs in conjunction with the interview transcripts to (i) generate nodes; and (ii) identify the emergent themes. This was an iterative process. During the final step, I organized and classified the emergent themes from each category i.e., (i) employees; (ii) managers; and (iii) employees nested in managers, to evaluate and revisit my proposed theoretical model. The detailed process of data analytics is described below.

Analytic Approach

The interpretive approach involves the techniques of interviewing and analysis to be not only intertwined but also iterative (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Locke & Golden-Biddle, 1997). To investigate how managerial job stressors transform into employee stress through compromised interactions, I employed a hybrid thematic technique (Braun & Clarke, 2012) to condense data into interpretable chunks. Thematic analysis is a highly flexible approach as it can be modified to meet the demands of different studies, offering a rich and in-depth account of complex data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Thematic analysis allows a straightforward process of coding individual narratives through conversations thereby providing theoretical freedom to its researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is considered deductive if it relies on an existing theoretical framework (Boyatzis, 1998). This part of analysis was guided through template analysis or a technique that "balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study" (King, 2012, p. 426). Template analysis is a form of thematic analysis and is deemed particularly useful as it provides researchers with: (i) a sense of structure as they analyze data; (ii) flexibility in maintaining the coding hierarchy (King, 2012).

Although, this study succeeded a positivist research, testing a developed theoretical model, I also allowed the themes to naturally or inductively emerge during data analysis.

Therefore, the current study was guided through by the principles of 'hybrid' technique of coding. I encouraged a free flow of conversations on how managerial job demands were impacted at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and how it had impacted their interactions with others. In that sense, this approach was deemed appropriate in analyzing nested qualitative data with an open perspective, while still maintaining structure during the analysis.

Given the iterative nature of this process, the data analysis helped me refine my interviewing technique. Throughout the interview process, managers discussed the evolution of their interpersonal experiences in relation to their job demands and other work-related stressors. Keeping a list of the initial nodes in relation with the emergent themes and refining this list throughout the process helped me engage with my data. This process not only helped me familiarize with my data but also enabled me to relate with the participants and add probes where needed as they discussed their interpersonal experiences at work.

The emergent themes from the dataset represented the nature of content. At that point, I revisited the existing literature to outline where the themes converged and diverged from the existing scholarship on stress through interpersonal exchanges. Where there was convergence, it was acknowledged and accounted for. Where the themes diverged from the existing theory, I reviewed the existing scholarship to account for potential explanation. The purpose of this step was to gain insights on how various theoretical viewpoints collected through an iterative process of sequential qualitative data analysis can both confirm the existing theoretical evidence and create new knowledge at the same time.

As noted, all transcripts and their supplemental notes were analyzed in QSR NVivo. During the first step, I familiarized myself with the data by listening to the set of first few interview audios and further read the transcripts as collected from the first three dyads. The goal

of this step is to actively engage with my qualitative data. In particular, I paid attention to the pieces of conversations, phrases, and sections outlining the study objectives. In this stage, I created nodes based on my predetermined understanding of the research. In that regard, I had codes from the initial coding scheme or started generating new codes. Where coding outline did not reflect the dataset, passages representing similar excerpts were assigned the same code. The codes generated were then combined into categories and subcategories based on the main questions on the interview guide. These codes were then compared across interviews to outline any similarities and differences. This step further led to theme identification. All interviews were coded by the principal investigator yet the coding structure was revisited and modified after each interview. In this way, this process was repeated for analyzing the interviews conducted at the two levels, as well as, the nested qualitative analysis.

Analytic Strategy. As COVID-19 situation was rapidly evolving, I controlled for this context at the beginning of the conversation and focused on the core questions for the rest of the interview. A way to control for the COVID-19 pandemic was to focus on the relationships built between managers and employees during the pandemic.

I identified the concepts of fairness and wellbeing are often understood in relation to others ("…possible meanings and fluid interpretations potentially shared between people"; Cunliffe, 2011, p.659). I then drew on my knowledge of job stressors, fairness, job crafting, and stress literatures to group categories into themes. Thus, the aggregated (2nd stage) data subthemes were grounded in my pre-existing theoretical knowledge of managerial job stressors and employee stress, research conducted during phase I, and the conceptual framework (Creswell, 2003; Thomas, 2006). In that regard, the data analysis became deductive during the later stages. As the subthemes start to fit into a pre-existing coding framework, it allowed for a

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variable-oriented technique (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). This technique helped me compare the interviews conducted during the different waves of the COVID-19 pandemic and proved to be extremely helpful during later stages of analysis.

Process. The qualitative data were analyzed in six steps while maintaining the trustworthiness criteria outlined by Nowell and colleagues (2017).

Phase 1- Familiarizing with data: Since all qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviewing technique, I came to the analysis with some previous knowledge and assumptions of the data including some initial analytic perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). I therefore, documented those thoughts in the form of notes and memos throughout the data collection process. These reflective thoughts represented my view of world, values, interests, and growing insights on the research question (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sandelowski, 1995). Further, upon conducting each interview, I wrote a reflection on each participant. That marked the beginning of my data analysis process as I tracked my initial thoughts, notes, reflections, and interpretations (Tuckett, 2005). Braun and Clarke (2006) noted the significance of researchers immersing themselves with the qualitative data to become familiar with the depth and breadth of the content obtained. Immersing in the data requires an iterative review of data in an active manner while searching for meanings, connections, and patterns. Scholars recommend the qualitative researchers to read through the entire dataset at least once starting the coding process as that may shape the formation of the subsequent patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I was fairly familiar with my dataset as I had personally interviewed all research participants. Further, the transcription process also helped me gain familiarity with the dataset. At that point, I read the full transcript of the responses collected from each level i.e., managers

and employees. While the initial codes were free-flowing, certain categories started to emerge based on the aggregated subthemes. These subthemes were data-driven based on the initial nodes. Participants often made multiple statements to describe their interactions with their managers. When statements comprised varied interpretations, different portions of a response were coded under different nodes as deemed appropriate.

Phase 2- Generating Codes: During this phase, I started creating codes from the dataset having a good understanding of what was in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding is a process of transforming unstructured data to generating coherent ideas (Morse & Richards, 2002). Following King's (2004) recommendation I reviewed and labeled chunks of text to a subtheme or theme as it emerged within the data. It is important to note that a "good code" tends to showcase the qualitative richness of a phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). Generating codes is an iterative process that requires researchers to keep revisiting data (Nowell et al., 2017). At that point I had not only created codes for the two levels (i.e., managers and employees) but also started to note the similarities and differences in their responses. Savage (2000) noted qualitative coding to be a way of interpreting data while interacting with it. As I interacted with the data collected at two levels, I was able to outline the similarities and disparities that emerged in the data collected from managers and employees. During this stage, I engaged in the systemic process of coding data (Creswell, 2014), which allows the statements to be analyzed and grouped into a theme that represents a phenomenon.

Phase 3 – Searching for Themes: By this stage, the dataset had already been coded and collated. At this point, I started the process of sorting the relevant codes into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). "A theme is an abstract entity that brings meaning and identity to a recurrent experience and its variant manifestations. As such, a theme captures and unifies the nature or basis of the

experience into a meaningful whole" (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 200, p. 362). In other words, themes are outlined by capturing certain segments of ideas and experiences, which might not make much sense if reviewed on its own (Aronson, 1994).

As noted above, thematic analysis provides researchers with the flexibility to generate themes in several ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In particular, I relied on tables and visuals to approach the themes that emerged in my dataset. An important consideration during the process of generating themes was to understand the use of pre-defined codes (King, 2004). While I relied on a few pre-defined codes, I was careful not to use every single code generated during the earlier stages to answer my research question. I also came across certain codes that did not belong with the rest of the data but instead of ignoring them, I created a "miscellaneous" theme called "narratives" to avoid the loss of information (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004).

Phase 4- Reviewing Themes: During this phase, I began the process of refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I reviewed the coded data to make sure the themes were telling a coherent story. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted the validity to themes is reflected in the meanings that could be extracted from the dataset as a whole. This phase also allows to look for any inadequacies that might have occurred during the earlier phases especially the code generation (King, 2004). As I started to refine my themes, I revisited my dataset to recode certain fragments that were overlooked or were "miscoded" during the earlier stages. This is often expected as coding is an ongoing iterative process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The other important change that occurred during this process is that I realized how certain themes significantly overlapped with one another. For example, I noticed two of my themes in the managerial dataset were, in fact, telling the same story. In fact, one was the elaboration of the other. Further, I had a theme called "skill development" in the employee dataset. However, as I

continued to refine themes, it became apparent that this theme simply did not hold enough information to be a "stand-alone" theme. Upon much consideration, I decided the data supported another category called, "opportunity to grow".

Phase 5- Defining and Naming Themes: During this phase, I evaluated that information that was offered by each theme and how it is interesting or relevant (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For each theme identified, I tabulated a few supporting statements to guide the readers how I came about the idea. In the results section, I have included at least one detailed representative statement to support each theme. Braun and Clarke (2006) noted the themes names should be punchy and easy to understand. Therefore, I relied on slightly elaborated way theme names. For example, one of my themes is called, "Managerial job demands impact relationship-formation". This could have been broken down into an aggregate, "Managerial Job Demands". However, I wanted each theme to tell my readers a story. Therefore, I decided to add some detail to naming themes.

Phase 6- Producing the Report: This was the final step in the process of data analysis. By now, I had created a visual for each theme, along with the supporting information. During the process, I prepared to present my data in a concise, interesting, and coherent manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006), to capture the gist of the (i) dataset at each level; (ii) nested dataset.

The data analysis converged with the existing scholarship while outlining the areas where new theoretical insights had surfaced. The final themes and sub-themes are outlined in Table 7. The trustworthiness of this process was considered to validate the results.

Table 7. *Thematic Analysis between managerial, employee, and nested dataset.*

Managers Only	Employees Only	Manager and Employees Interactions Commonalities	Manager and Employees Interactions Disparities
Theme 1: Stressed out managers create stressed out workforce	Employee Theme 1: Employee Trust in Manager-Employee Relationships	Theme 1: Interpersonal complexity	Theme 1: Perceived support offered (by managers) vs. received (by employees)
Theme 2: Managerial job demands impact their relationship-formation	Employee Theme 2: Managerial Support and Employee Stress	Theme 2: The need to respond immediately	Theme 2: Differences in monitoring employee wellbeing
Theme 3: Manager-employee relationships impact how employees get treated	Employee Theme 3: Perceived Interactional Fairness and Stress	Theme 3: Engagement in relational job crafting as a Trickle-Down Effect	Theme 3: Differences in Perceived vs. Implemented Fairness
Theme 4: Managerial relational job crafting can directly impact their ability to be interactionally fair	Employee Theme 4: Rationalizing Managerial Stress	Theme 4: Relevance of personal factors	Theme 4: Stress as a Trickle-down Phenomenon
-	Employee Theme 5: Stress as a trickle-down phenomenon	-	-

Managing Biases

Morrow (2005) noted the potential for biases in all research methods, which could occur at any stage of the research process. Bias can be understood as individuals' systemic propensity to experience a phenomenon they have limited knowledge of in a certain way (Gadamer &

Linge, 1977). Similarly, "cognitive bias is a type of bias that generally refers to systematic patterns of thinking that deviate from a standard of rationality and deliberately invoke information-processing shortcuts" (Buetow, 2019, p. 10). While these shortcuts can certainly be convenient and time-saving, if left unaccounted, such biases can generate misinterpretations and faulty judgments (Buetow, 2019). For example, researchers may inadvertently prompt participants to see and value the phenomenon of interest. In a way, no researcher is entirely bias-free (Buetow, 2019).

As noted earlier, interpretivism allows both researchers and participants to co-construct meaning to a given phenomenon, bias management should be an important consideration in data analysis in such research paradigm (Morrow, 2005). One such bias in identifying patterns is called "apophenia" or interpretation of a phenomenon in an unrelated context typically outside of one's conscious awareness (Buetow, 2019). Given the highly interpretive nature of this research, it is prone to the phenomenon of apophenia. Apophenia poses the risk of unconscious bias in which social categories such as race, gender, socio-economic status may unduly impact researchers' judgment (Buetow, 2019). Scholars noted unconscious bias is often an outcome of dealing with individuals of out-group or the ones you do not actively identify with (see e.g., Buetow, 2019).

Buetow (2019) noted the use of reflexivity and dialogue in addressing unconscious biases like apophenia. In keeping with the requirements of methodological rigor in qualitative research, I have actively incorporated the practices of reflexivity and dialogue into this research. In the following sections, I will transparently reflect on my personal experiences and perceptions about manager-employee work dynamics. I will also comment on how my personal perceptions might have affected my role as a principal investigator throughout this research process.

Reflexive Bracketing/ Epoché. Unique to phenomenology, the strategy of reflexive bracketing or epoché, which entails a mindful awareness of researchers' prior assumptions and/or interpretations that may inhibit them from focusing on the actual research phenomenon. Giorgi (1997, p.212) noted that reflexive bracketing is more than just an acknowledgement of one's previous knowledge but is a process in which "one simply refrains from positing altogether; one looks at the data with the attitude of relative openness."

As a female member of a visible minority, who was raised in a first-generation immigrant family in Canada, my experiences at workplace have been unique. Throughout my life, I have been reminded to put in extra effort into everything I do in order to "get noticed" or even get a chance at the things I thought I deserved getting access to. As an undergrad student at a Canadian post-secondary university, I hardly witnessed any representation of brown women in any of the instructional roles let alone the leadership positions. I personally thought most of my white professors had no interest in understanding my academic struggles or career paths of interest. Overall, I felt there was minimal support outside of the classroom for students like me. Such academic experiences shattered my confidence and my self-esteem as I was getting ready to enter the world-of-work.

As I transitioned into the job market, I noticed a clear gap in the employability skills required by the employers and what I had to offer. Not surprisingly, I had struggled immensely and failed miserably in the job market as a job candidate. Nonetheless, in my short, fragmented industry experience, I had yet again witnessed an extreme discrimination and differential treatment based on the "out-group" phenomenon. Needless to say, I decided to transition into the academic career and was lucky enough to work with several like-minded scholars, who studied topics I was passionate about. I was also fortunate enough to have worked with mentors who

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never failed to encourage me and offered consistent support. There were instances when I felt I received a preferential treatment based on the people and places I had access to. In that regard, I can relate to the process of receiving both preferential and differential treatment from authority figures. Notably, the current research only focused on the interpersonal domain of work stress as triggered by work-related stressors while paying little attention to other sources of stress such as work-life balance.

The current research posed a challenge by putting me back at the intersectionality of gender, race, and treatments received at work (particularly from authority figures). While my research does not highlight the demographic dynamics such as gender, age, race, family, etc., my personal awareness of the interconnectedness of intersectionality and work relationships has always been present throughout the process of conducting this research. In essence, I have been hypersensitive to my personal experiences of receiving differential treatment from those in power. I had admittedly become a product of my insecurities about receiving differential treatment, often times associating it with my intersectionality and identity. This impacted my choice of study variables (i.e., interpersonal justice and leader-member exchange). To me, it is important to outline the complexities around the process of receiving the differential treatment. In doing so, I am also interested in giving voice to the members in the position of power or authority (i.e., managers or supervisors or leaders in the current study). Moreover, I was also interested in some of the work-related factors that result in the initiation of the said differential treatment towards others (e.g., stressful job demands).

Collecting quantitative data was a useful start to this process as I inevitably found evidence related to my research queries. The research process became more immersive as I started to converse with my participants during the second phase of the study. I started to reflect

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on my personal experiences. I inadvertently paid attention to irrelevant details such as accents, and other demographics such as gender and age. This impacted the study in a sense that I had longer conversations with certain individuals solely because I could relate to them more. In certain instances, some of these participants also helped me identify other suitable candidates so indirectly, it impacted selection process of the interview participants. I also happened to know some of the interviewees personally, which had a positive and a negative impact on the present research. Inevitably, the familiarity with the research participants allowed a free flow of conversation and in-depth data collection. Nonetheless, I acknowledge the potentially negative impact of paying attention to stories and descriptions, which did not necessarily relate to the research inquiry.

As a researcher I considered the prior assumptions and inferences based on my personal work experiences within organizations and teams. During the course of this study from writing the proposal to analyzing interviews, I was cognizant of my prior assumptions within this domain. Therefore, I engaged in extensive memo writing and note-taking to systemically bifurcate myself from participant experiences as I reflect upon my insights.

Dialogue:

The process of reflexive bracketing can continue and be reflected through a dialogue with the trusted peers. Engaging in dialogue essentially enhances the process of trustworthiness of qualitative findings (Devers, 1999). The dialogue, however, needs to be structured to receive an effective and "egalitarian" feedback (Buetow, 2019). This may require setting up such dialogues in professional communities where participants can actively "turn on the light" (Pyrko, Dörfler, & Eden, 2017). The process of dialogue elimination allows researchers to identify unconscious bias and, therefore, mitigate the effects of apophenia (Buetow, 2019).

The initial findings of the current research were presented at a scholarly conference (Academy of Management) to gain feedback on the process. As a principal investigator, I also discussed the current research design at a professional development workshop by Society of Advancement of Management. The goal was to receive feedback on the rigor of the proposed methodology and how to best capture the phenomenon of interest. Through much reflection and iterative feedback, the potential apophenia threats were ameliorated within the current research.

Maintaining Research Quality

Scholars agree that qualitative and quantitative research methods cannot be assessed on the same metrics given the inherent differences between the two approaches (see e.g., Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, & Locke, 2008). While quantitative research emphasizes the use of validity and reliability to establish trustworthiness, applying the concepts of construct validity make little sense in qualitative research (Symon & Cassell, 2012).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) established the assessment criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research. The criteria entailed "credibility", "transferability", "dependability", and "confirmability". *Credibility* refers to attaining an acceptable fit between "constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). It essentially evaluates whether or not the research has captured the phenomenon of interest appropriately (Symon & Cassell, 2012). To promote credibility, a record of initial constructions and how they evolved based on research understanding was kept in researcher notes. Further, interview transcripts and related interpretations were sent to the interviewees who expressed interest in reviewing them. In this way, respondents were given a chance to review the accuracy of transcripts to ensure the interpretations were accurately captured.

Transferability is the process of "the researcher providing enough detail about the

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specific research case that the reader can judge what other (similar) contexts - and particularly whether their own situation - might be informed by the findings" (Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 207). The transferability can be enhanced by through an in-depth description of the research characteristics. In the current research, a description on the examples of interpersonal justice, and relational crafting were provided to increase the transferability.

Dependability refers to "demonstrating how methodological changes and shifts in constructions have been captured and made available for evaluation" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). Symon and Cassell (2012) noted the changes in research constructions are fundamentally important in the process of qualitative research. The current research increased dependability through note-taking and documenting. Records were maintained on why certain nodes were refined or eliminated during the data analysis phases. For example, the interview transcripts while directly highlighted the phenomenon of interpersonal justice sometimes captured the construct of informational justice, which is a closely related construct to information justice. Nonetheless, both informational and interpersonal justice fall within the category of interactional justice. Therefore, the code on interpersonal justice was modified to interactional justice to capture the gist of the phenomenon. Finally, I kept the initial and final templates of the constructs of interest as they emerged through data analysis (King, 2012).

Confirmability refers to the information on "where the data came from and how such data were transformed into the presented findings" (Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 208). Simply put, confirmability requires further information on the processes of data collection and analysis. The goal is to provide reader with an assurance on that "data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and personas apart from the researcher and are not simply figments of the researcher's imagination" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). The confirmability of

the present research was enhanced through including detailed descriptions of the data collection

and analysis methods. Further, criteria to outline the trustworthiness and maintaining quality

were also included. Finally, all records of the raw data were archived to provide an audit trail and

benchmark for testing data for adequacy (Halpren, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

As noted earlier, research ethics is an important topic of interest for researchers. In

particular, it is important to consider the potentially negative effects of study on research

participants (Holt, 2012). Chapter 4 outlined the ethical considerations in the quantitative phase

of the current study. Additional considerations were made to address the qualitative aspect of the

current research study. First, given all interviews were audio-recorded for the purpose of

transparency and confirmability, it was imperative to maintain participant confidentiality. With

an approval of Office of Research Ethics (Human Participants Research Committee), the audio

recordings were kept in a password-protected device and on a password protected cloud server.

Accordingly, the transcripts generated were also archived in a secure password protected device,

as well as, the cloud-based secure server. These records will be destroyed upon the completion of

the current project (anticipated data of completion 2025).

Given the interpersonal nature of the current study, the interviewees were transparently

informed of the study objectives and the relationship between the researchers and research

participants. This was an important aspect of the informed consent. Each interviewee was

approached because they had left their contact information on the survey form of phase I of this

study. The interviewees were also informed of their ability to withdraw from the research

process at any point in time without jeopardizing their relationship with the researchers.

Furthermore, the issues of confidentiality vs. anonymity were also actively addressed prior to

conducting interviews. The interviews were asked to provide consent to being recorded at the beginning of the interview. The respondents were also given an option to decline being recorded. With an exception of one participant, all others agreed to be audio recorded. As I asked the questions, I was mindful of the participant time. I also informed the participants when I asked my final question to voice any comments, questions, or concerns they might have had about the research. One participant was concerned that I kept addressing them with their given name. They were assured of the confidentiality of the research process and the fact that their name would not appear anywhere in the transcript.

The participants who expressed interest in reviewing their transcript were given an opportunity to do so. None of the participants who chose to view their transcripts suggested any modifications to the data.

CHAPTER SIX: QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Chapter Overview

A follow-up study was conducted to uncover the complexities associated with manager-employee interactions through semi-structured interviews. Over 32 hours of qualitative data was collected using one-on-one interviews at Time 2. Chapter 5 outlines the qualitative design and analysis of the current research. In particular, the research design, paradigmatic orientation, data analytics, maintaining rigor, and managing research bias were outlined. In this chapter, the qualitative findings based on semi-structured interviews conducted at manager and employee levels are presented followed by a detailed review and discussion. In particular, attention was paid to the following:

i)   The changing COVID-19 context

ii)   Similarities and dissimilarities between manager and employees work attitudes

iii)   Discussion of the notable findings: Convergence and divergence

I.   ***The changing COVID-19 context:*** The present research was conducted during the various waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we understand COVID-19 has been an evolving situation and largely impacted not only our personal, but also the professional lives (Masood & Budworth, 2021). Tourish (2020, p.261) contended that the current COVID-19 crisis is also a crisis of leadership theories and practices "since an environment of radical uncertainty means that leaders have less information, expertise, and resources to guide them than is often assumed". To account for this extreme context, participants were asked to reflect on whether and how work experiences during the COVID-19 crisis impacted their interpersonal exchanges at work. As discussed in chapter

5, one of the recruitment criteria for employees was the initiation of a new relationship during the pandemic. In other words, I had talked to individuals who established and maintained a new relationship with others either through accepting a new role or having a new employee onboard. Nonetheless, the changing waves of the COVID-19 and the associated work-related restrictions impacted the process of relationship- development. Questions were asked throughout the interview about the extent to which the COVID-19 context accounted for the nature of interactional exchanges. This context has been accounted for and is reflected throughout the findings.

II.   ***Relational Interdependence between Manager and Employees:*** The design of this nested qualitative study accounts for the relational interdependence between managers and employees. In particular, the employee responses were compared to those of managers for similarities and disparities. Findings are presented below.

The following section captures the findings of the data analysis. Theoretical saturation was confirmed with no new themes emerging during the final three interviews. I will provide the findings of thematic analysis in the following order:

1. Analysis from Managerial Dataset

2. Analysis from Employee Dataset

3. Nested Qualitative Analysis for both Managers and Employees

III.   ***Discussion of the notable findings: Convergence and divergence.*** In chapter 4, notable findings of the quantitative study were presented along with an interim discussion. As I present and discuss the findings of the qualitative study, I will attempt to triangulate the findings of the two studies to note the convergence and divergence. Aarons and colleagues (2012) described convergence as the degree to which different methods

produce similar results. Divergence, on the other hand, is defined as the degree to which a method produces unanticipated findings, which may or may not be explained by the other method (Aarons, Fettes, Sommerfeld, & Palinkas, 2012). It is important to note the convergence and divergence of the mixed-methods research, to outline the future avenues of research (Brimhall & Palinkas, 2020; Harrison et al., 2020). To investigate convergence in (QUAN → QUAL; Padgett, 2012) design, data were vetted to examine whether the qualitative responses generated the same understanding of interpersonal justice, manager-employee relationships to determine employee stress as the quantitative dataset. Full convergence meant the qualitative data was in full agreement with the quantitative data. Partial convergence referred to the situation where parts of the quantitative model were supported through interview responses. Non-convergence or divergence refers to the situation where none of the quantitative model was supported through the qualitative research.

Analysis from Managerial Dataset

As noted, this dataset reflected managerial responses to how their job demands impact their work interactions including the interpersonal exchanges with their direct reports. Questions were asked about the common strategies, managers resort to when experiencing extra-ordinary job demands. Follow-up inquiries entailed whether managers believed their interactions with the employees to be fair. The following themes were generated using the six-phase protocol outlined by Nowell et al., 2017.

Figure 5. Nodes, Sub-themes, and themes for managerial dataset
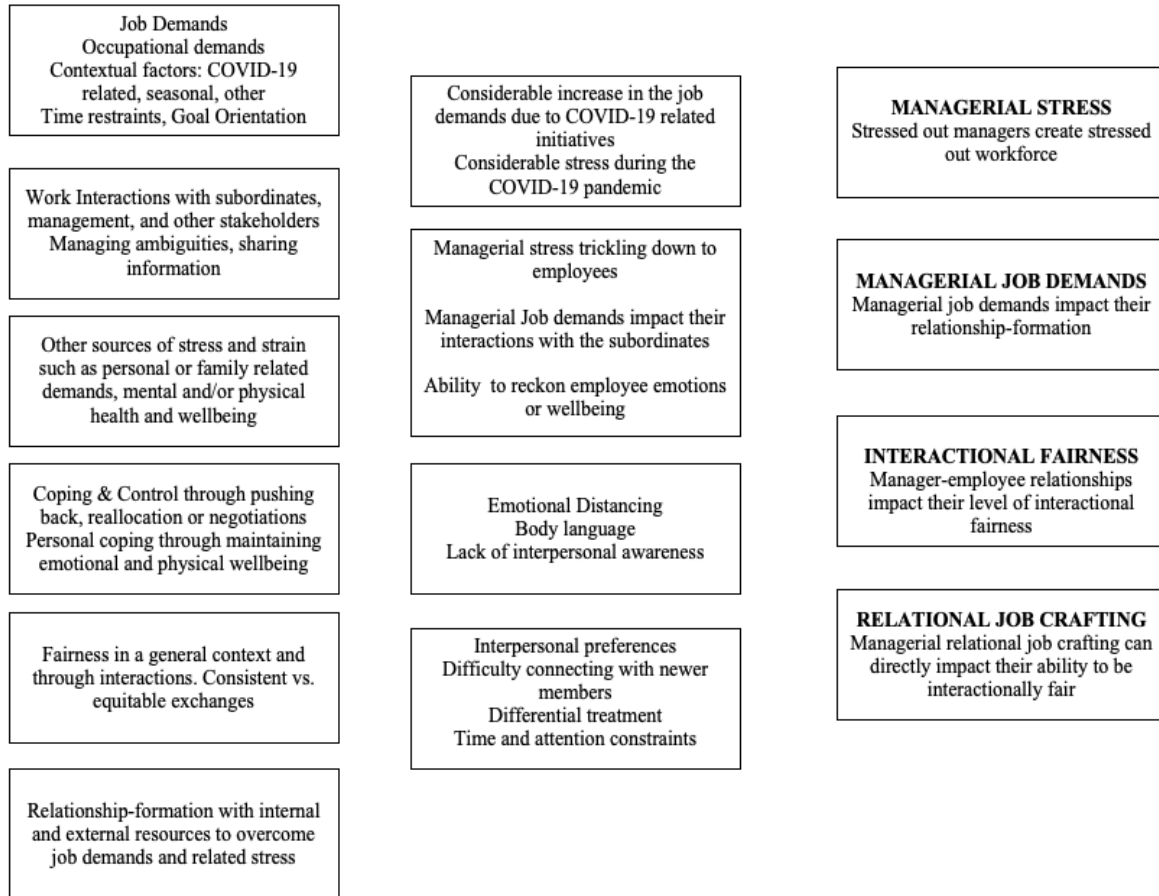
Theme 1: Stressed out managers create stressed out workforce

This theme was based on several codes and subthemes such as, "No time to unwind", "Job demands due to COVID-19 related initiatives", "Ad-Hoc Responsibilities, different procedures, and changing policies", "Ability to control job demands", and personal wellbeing.

For example, one of my respondents (female, 56) with over two decades of work experience, emphasizes on the need to finish in time to meet the required deadlines regardless of what it takes.

"I would never ask someone to do something that I would not do. Having said that, if I am

staying up all night and then I ask someone to help me and they cannot offer that because either

they cannot stay all night or there are other constraints. I would not be happy. If I am working

on a transaction that requires me to work for longer hours, I would expect my employees or

direct reports to work the same number of hours." (Delta_M)

Table 8. *Stressed out managers create stressed out workforce*

Theme 1: Managerial Stress- Stressed out managers create stressed out workforce	
Subthemes	Representative Quotes
Job demands due to the COVID-19 related initiatives	*"I just worked more hours - a lot more hours. I think the reality of many of us who are in global roles that expand multiple geographies is that, you spend much of your day in meetings, and then also at a certain level you spend much of your day on the phone, on Zoom calls, and so the time where you actually produce work is amplified, and so, my work day, has for the last year extended well beyond normal work hours." (Ollie_M)* *"I just find myself work for really long hours without even realizing because, you know, you have the attitude to get the job done. Then you just sit down and you completely lose track of time and before you know half the day is gone and guess what, you are still in your pajamas." (Nancy_M)*
Stress during the COVID-19 pandemic	*"By the end of June, I was mentally done. I was honestly not in the position to do anything more. So, I definitely shifted gears and then I started paying attention to my mental and physical wellbeing." (Lorna_M)*
No time to unwind	*"The thing that had changed was that before the pandemic, you would wake- up early in the morning, take a shower and start working at 8:30/9:00 [am]. Around 4:30 [pm] or so you would leave your workplace, drive for an hour or so to get to work. Now you start at 7[am] in the morning, shower in the middle of your work day and by the time you are done, it is 9 [pm] or so. That is what is happening. Either we are so engrossed in what we do or there simply isn't downtime for us to be able to buffer ourselves from our work." (Charlie_M)*

Dwindling work-life demarcation	*"My kid has virtual classrooms so I have to sit with him or he gets distracted. So, I do my own work at night. I spend about five hours a day with them. I have to help them do his assignments and other work. I do my own work at night." (Simon_M)*
Managerial stress trickling down to employees	*"I would never ask someone to do something that I would not do. Having said that, if I am staying up all night and then I ask someone to help me and they cannot offer that because either they cannot stay all night or there are other constraints, I wouldn't be happy. If I am working on a transaction that requires me to work for longer hours, I would expect my employees or direct reports to work the same number of hours." (Delta_M)*
Ad-Hoc Responsibilities, different procedures, and changing policies	*"I think in the initial period, while no one said, there was an expectation to check your emails or respond to me but I felt people felt the pressure to maintain this image of them working and checking their work emails around the clock. That happened – I felt like after we checked the expectations and our VP was on the same page, the job demands I would say were about the same. The way we were doing things were a bit different but not the demands itself." (Peter_M)*
Ability to control job demands through push back have less stressed out employees.	*"I push back and have been doing that for a while and it seems to work for me. Everyone needs translation and everyone needs it like yesterday. Well, yeah- not going to happen. Every department whether it is marketing, finance or HR, everyone is in dire need of translation services and everyone needs it right away. […] From operations viewpoint, to be able to accommodate every request that we receive is virtually impossible. This is because I have been working over my capacity and so are my direct reports." (Nancy_M)* *"We need to do this by this date, and you know, the organization doesn't impose timeframes on us to do these things, but we, as a leadership team, [determine a goal] with each of teams just to have these done by a certain date. We self-impose a little bit, but it's a good things because we want to make sure, you know, each team is on the same wavelength. You don't want one team to feel like, 'Hey, my leader did these things with me.' and another team to feel like, 'Well why didn't my leader do that with me on our team.' You want to make sure that they have all had a similar experience across the different functional teams in our group." (Ollie_M)*

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Personal Wellbeing	*"I wish I had exercised- gone out for walks because I saw a lot of people doing that in my neighbourhood but I had to, in fact, stay at home, and focus on my work. Now that I look back, I guess I didn't engage in any type of exercise. In fact, I wasn't even physically active at all. I almost worked too hard and for too long to deliver, which is a huge component of the type of work I do. I have targets to deliver on and I also need to keep track on whether I have achieved a target and what do I need to go to over-achieve them." (Lorna_M)*

Theme 2: Managerial job demands impact relationship-formation

I found evidence on how managerial job demands impact their interactions at work. Important to note, managers referred to their interactions with various other organizational members including internal and external stakeholders and not just their subordinates. Sub-themes that emerged during this process included, "Job demands, escalations, and workload directly impact the level of managerial support towards the subordinates", "Time crunched, always on a schedule, trade-offs with manager-employee relationship formation", and "clashes between personal and professional demands".

For illustration, refer to Basil's (male, 37) statement, who is responsible to oversee the tasks and functions of diagonal employees as well. It is evident that added tasks, responsibilities, and deadline interfere with managers' ability to form meaningful relationships with their employees.

> *"Without the additional work, I would be out there with my employees, paying more attention to them, spend more time, cater to their work and learning needs. The new demands don't affect the amount of work they are doing, it is just me taking on some extra workload – so it impacts me more than them but it does impact the amount of time I get to spend with them" (Basil_M)*

Table 9. *Managerial job demands impact relationship-formation*

Theme 2: Managerial job demands impact relationship-formation	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Work demands and interactions	*"If I could change the amount of extra work that I am doing – typically done behind the desk in my office. That is the amount of extra work that I have taken on. It has reduced the amount I am out there on the floor and be able to engage in meaningful interpersonal relationships with my employees." (Basil_M)*
Job demand, escalations, and workload directly impact the level of managerial support towards the subordinates	*"I know we are friends, and I am happy to give you a helping hand but given all the responsibilities I have, I now have to cut the cord with how we work. When you start giving ideas, it starts with the why and then how and you need to understand what you are going through." (Charlie_M)*
Time crunched, always on a schedule, trade-offs with manager-employee relationship formation	*"The nature of my role is to get out in front of my clients, and to get out in front of my team, and to be the conduit between the two of them, so that work gets delivered efficiently and effectively, and in a cost-effect manner. If I had more time in the day, I could do more of that. I think, because my day is already so full of meetings that I end up having to do the work at night, I feel there is always a sacrifice that I have to make, and unfortunately the sacrifice is usually my time and my wellbeing. Like, I put those interactions first, ahead of even my responsibilities at home, and, and other things from outside of work. I just wish I had more hours in the day, so that I could feel like I am doing my job effectively, and I am having richer interactions with the people that I face with day and day out.*
	I would like to have less time constrained interactions. I am always on a schedule, it's like, 'Ok we got thirty minutes, we got to get through this in thirty minutes.' Sometimes, you can't get through it in thirty minutes, you need more time because you do want to do that check-in with people, see what's going on in your life, how are your kids, how's your family, but then, you're down to twenty minutes, you got to get it done. I would just have longer, and richer interactions I think." (Ollie_m)
Clashes between personal and professional demands	*"If my kids were going to school, my life would have been easier. I don't know, it has been difficult. I wouldn't say demands change the interactions but you are strained and that impacts your interactions with others." (Anna_M)*
	"I would stop working at five, make dinner with my kids, get them split away for the evening, and then I'm back on my desk till seven-eight a clock at night, and I'm working until eleven or twelve most nights, just to, and it's not even about getting ahead, it's just semi-staying-on-top of the work that has accumulated over the course of the day because I've been on conference calls all day long. (Ollie_M)

Theme 3: Manager-employee relationships impact their level of interactional fairness

One of the indicators that surfaced during the interviews was pre-existing manager-employee relationships. While as a defining criterion, I relied on the "newer" relationships, it was evident that managers bond with their employees on certain factors including but not limited to food, sports, movies, personal characteristics, family, etc. While this is often understood in terms of leader-member exchange in literature, it interestingly appeared as a dominant theme in my qualitative dataset.

For example, Charlie (male, 50), a manager of a large communications industry identified how he inadvertently engages in what he referred to "interactional differentiation" where he prefers certain individuals over the others while being transparent to all. Important to consider the use of hybrid technique of approaching this dataset where the final themes were determined using deductive thematic approach. Hence, the use of terms like interactional fairness. The subthemes that appeared during this process include, "Compromising interactional justice to "protect" employees or for employee wellbeing", "Ability to reckon employee emotions or wellbeing", "Preferential vs. differential treatment", "Need-based accommodating relationship, mentoring, coaching, guidance".

> *"There might have been a hint of interactional differentiation. I pay attention to some of the factors that need to be addressed. With the new one[employee], you need to be careful with what the outcome would be. For example, one needs to be transparent but you don't know how that would be deciphered on the other side of the screen. I never look at things on the emotional front, there are items that need to be addressed. I think*

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several of my employees question why I am a certain way with some but not the others.

This might be a yikes moment instead of a yahoo moment." (Charlie_M)

Table 10. *Manager-employee relationships impact their level of interactional fairness*

Theme 3: Manager-employee relationships impact their level of interactional fairness	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Compromising interactional justice to "protect" employees or for employee wellbeing Interpersonal vs. informational justice	*"Am I keeping information from them? Sometimes I do withhold information from them if I feel it may confuse them. Often times if I try to give an elaborate explanation to a defect, it just comes across as a threatening act to certain employees. In that instance, I try to withhold bits and pieces of information from them. The total time I spend interacting my employees is less. I still have the time to be friendly in terms of buying them donuts or asking them about their day. I just don't have enough time for them. I do share less information with them than I have to. It comes down to how relevant that information is to them." (Basil_M)*
Ability to reckon employee emotions or wellbeing	*"Those are some of the things I have been [doing] as a line manager. For example, a person who is a high performer suddenly changes, their attitude toward work changes, the way they work is different. Apparently, that is not even work-related. This person is now experiencing work-related issues that they are trying to deal with so having this person open -up definitely helps a lot. I believe as a manager, it is easy to see the career progress and even physical wellbeing of a person but one must check into the emotional wellbeing of their employee as well. That is the thing that can bridge the gap – while I cannot do this for all my employees but I try to have this connection with most of them." (Charlie_M)*
Preferential vs. differential treatment	*"I have had to determine who I need to invest more time in, like be them subordinates, be them clients, or other stakeholders within the organization. I have had to figure out, where's the noise, where's the demand. Where is, perhaps, a relationship that I need to spend more time, and it's kind of crappy to have to make that decision, but I don't think that is real. I don't think that the pandemic has any kind of*

	role to play in that decision-making it's all about work demands from the business, and because of those demands, where I need to invest more time in those interpersonal relationships. And the other people, I'll get to them when I get to them." *– (Ollie_M)*
Need-based accommodating relationship, mentoring, coaching, guidance	*"When we have some people, some direct reports in the same office, and then other direct reports who are kind of on the outskirts and somewhere else. And so, the people who are in office, would have the benefit of like, 'Let's go get a coffee and chat something though' versus a person sitting in Ottawa or in Houston, who I don't get that FaceTime with. That's not the situation I am in. It is level playing field we are all remote you know, I make sure that spend one on one time with each of my direct reports every week, you know, to just to check in and see how they're doing see what roadblocks I can remove for them, you know share insights about what's going on in the business, what's coming as far as new initiatives. […] There are some people who, perhaps, demand more time, because they are junior in their careers, or their organization and their still finding their footing, and so I will spend more time with them as needed, and when I say as needed it's because they have requested it. It's not me sort of saying, 'I need to spend more time with you, you're not doing your job well.' It's them asking for more time, and me coaching them, and guiding them, and giving them more guidance, and telling them they are on the right track. – Ollie_M*

Theme 4: Managerial relational job crafting can directly impact their ability to be interactionally fair

This theme was built on the information extracted from the previously generated theme.

Interestingly, the extracted theme is in congruence with what was already predicted and

supported in the positivist phase of this research. However, it was a consistent pattern

throughout the qualitative dataset where managers argued how their responsibilities

create the need for (re)prioritizing their interactions with their employees. The subthemes

emerged during the phase included, "increased and decreased interactions based on the number of responsibilities" and "Reprioritization of interactions".

The representative statement from a Senior manager (male, 38) in communications indicates how having to excel in a certain aspect of their job required them to reduce contact with certain team members. The quote below shows an example of relational job crafting limiting a manager's ability to interact with all of their team members on equal and transparent terms.

"I was routinely doing the updates every week, however, there was a missing piece of puzzle, where I was not getting in touch with my customer counterpart as much. So, I had to increase that communication channel towards my counterpart because we needed to be in line before delivering the final product. As a result, in terms of lower priority tasks, I would prioritize meeting with certain individuals [of my team] just so I have enough time to meet with the key stakeholders." (Beta_M)

Table 11. *Managerial relational job crafting can directly impact their ability to be interactionally fair*

Theme 4: Managerial relational job crafting can directly impact their ability to be interactionally fair	
Examples:	Representative Quotes
Managerial responsibilities impact their interactions with the subordinates	*"Some example would be some discussions with the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs). I would leave the conversations to the SMEs so I don't have to worry about it for the time being. Typically for critical cases, we are supposed to be there and we are expected to work along. We need to either mitigate the issue so my presence would ideally help the workflow. But when I struggle with my own job demands, I would leave it up to them." (Beta_M)*

| Increased vs. Decreased Interactions | *"I have seen a little bit more of increase in interactions of those higher ups just because I think I am not the only person – they try to give an impression that they are not trying to blatantly punish anyone. My interactions in terms of my frequency and quality have changed on the day to day basis and it has gotten wider and broader with my leadership solely as a result of me trying to look out for myself and demonstrating my interest in the work that I do."- (Basil_M)* |
| Reprioritization of interactions | |

Analysis from Employee Dataset

As discussed earlier, employee interview guide comprised of the relationships and interactional interdependence between managers and employees. As a follow-up question, I probed the extent to which they felt their exchanges with the managers were fair. Emphasis was placed on how employee wellbeing is impacted by the interactional variation they experience from their managers. Below are the themes identified at employee-level.

Figure 6. *Nodes, Sub-themes, and themes for employee dataset*

Meaning of work Organizational Culture	Employee Wellbeing Employee Narratives	**"STRESS AS A TRICKLE-DOWN" PHENOMENON** Seeing a stressed out manager would trigger a domino effect
Evidence for nepotism and favoritism Loss of information Sensemaking	Employees engaging in relational Job Crafting Employee individual differences	**MANAGERIAL SUPPORT** Managerial support can impact employee stress
Social Support at work Other interactions Enrichment Relationship Evolution		**PERCEIVED INTERACTIONAL FAIRNESS** based on interactional differentiation
Quality of Relationship with Managers Managers relationships with others	Employee-Manager Relationships Employee Workload Rationalizing managerial unavailability Ideal employee manager relationships	**PERCEIVED MANAGERIAL WORKLOAD** Perceived workload of managers can impact the perceived interactional fairness
Personal attributes of managers (e.g. authenticity, trust, kindness, transparency)	Managerial Competence Managerial Workload Employee Workload Work Expectations	**EMPLOYEE TRUST** Based on manager employee-relationships, there might be a varying degree of employee trust

Employee Theme 1—Employee Trust in Manager-Employee Relationships

The qualitative analysis revealed employee trust in managers to be an important determining

feature of the manager-employee relationship. The inverse was also true. This is one of the

examples of theme formation where the inductive technique dominated. Although, employee

trust in itself has not been a part of my earlier research, it was evident that certain managerial

characteristics impacted employee trust.

The identified sub-themes include, "Manager's personal attributes impact employee trust",

"perceived managerial competence", "alignment of values", and "managerial support on personal

factors". An example can be seen below by an education worker (37, female) who started her career during the pandemic and had never had a chance to meet with her manager in-person.

"I would say my manager has been very friendly and I am not confused about who the right person to contact is. He is extremely accessible so, that takes the stress out of the equation. I mean, even during the onboarding and negotiation process he mentioned whatever you need, just let us know. He did communicate that he wanted me to be very successful in the department. He kept mentioning I could contact him for anything. […] I reached out to my now manager about that to put my mind to ease. He was very reassuring and that set a good foundation for the quality of relationship I enjoy with him now." (Qiunn_E)

The opposite is also true i.e., the lack of communication and interpersonal exchanges led to decreased employee trust.

"It is difficult to understand each and every person. It is even harder during the pandemic. I prepared a plan to organize things and did the paperwork, that was helpful. My relationship with my manager hasn't really improved. Initially it got worse, I thought they were not organized enough and I wanted to come up with the solution. There was a clear communication gap. We are a lot more comfortable in one-to-one conversations. We have to deal with the conversation calls, it is not easy for me. Everyone has their own plan so initially it was difficult. When I proposed solutions, it wasn't really a part of my job but I needed a sense of structure yet the management kept questioning my authority. Once we got a hold of all the options, they started to trust me more and took my lead. There has been a gradual improvement in our relationship." (Feta_E)

Table 12. *Manager-Employee Relationships impact Employee Trust*

Employee Theme 1: Manager-Employee Relationships impact Employee Trust	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Personal attributes, caring, listening, understanding, compassion, personal interest impact employee trust	*"I feel my manager has a very good understanding of people's psyche. We are like members of a team and we are all very different and he is a very different person with each one of them. I noticed he can talk about anything from food to movies to weather- something is relevant to someone. He takes all the initiatives, we don't have to do anything, he treats us all like a family." (Una_E)*
Managerial competence	*"One of the causes of having a technical manager is that they are great at identifying your effort and overall work flow. They understand our technical challenges. They also show some support towards the customer. This made us closer to each other on a personal level. Also, the COVID situation made us closer to one another." (Alpha_E)*
Value Alignment	*"There was an employee from my team for who the entire leadership came together to save their job. We had to be mindful of saving employees and their lives. When it comes to the principles and values, it is something that binds us together. I ended up coming closer with the management because of the similar worldview. When we first met, this employee was a good performer. The CEO just let us know of him joining the team, it was nice to have such support. There were several follow up meetings. At least the staff is very interested building a bridge between the employees and the CEO. Those conversations would not have happened if we were not in the pandemic." (Jackie_E)*
Personal factors	*"I was working in a different time zone. I understand this was applicable on many other employees but that was the toughest part of my job. I received a lot of support from various managers and how I can manage my workload. At the end of the day, it takes its toll on you. I was impacted tremendously. I had lost my father to covid-19 and then fought from it personally. I was seeing doctor on a regular basis. My project manager would make regular check ins to make sure I was doing okay while I was in quarantine." (Alpha_E)*

Employee Theme 2: Managerial Support and Employee Stress

Throughout the employee dataset, various indicators of managerial support such as providing feedback, weekly check-ins, etc. Sub-themes extracted included "managerial approachability", "level of understanding between manager and employees", and "manager-employee interdependence". See, for example, the comments from a team lead (35, engineer) on how he appreciated his managerial support on not only providing a listening ear but also a great professional feedback.

"He was a great listener. He was very appreciative. In some cases, we had a tough target, I worked more than my assigned work hours. These are some bad habits I had. This manager had great skills of translating what we were doing in a visual flow chart and as a result would give us a thorough feedback. This made our lives easier. This manager was excellent in helping us meet our work goals without stressing us out. He tried to mitigate any stress we were experiencing and that helped the entire project not just us!" –(Alpha_E)

Importantly, this theme was also true in converse. For example, the lack of managerial support appeared to induce stress within employees. See below a representative statement from an employee who received minimal support from their managers. In this particular case, the respondent found comfort and support from external resources and coworkers.

"Seeing others deal with it also helped me. So I started my own YouTube channel on overcoming stress. I also want to start my own consultation and programs during the pandemic. I learned a lot throughout the pandemic, things eventually got better for me. I also wrote a lot of articles. I spent time with my family, I thought, I would work on several projects if only I could

buy myself some extra time. My manager didn't help me cope and initially I had to take care of

myself. In my personal experience, our boss would also induce anxiety [by asking questions] like

how would you manage if you lose your job due to the pandemic." (Fetta_E)

Table 13. *Managerial Support as a Stress Buster*

Employee Theme 2: Managerial Support as a Stress Buster	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Managerial Approachability	*"If we need something from him, he creates a welcoming space for reaching out to him for questions and such. He would never press us to do something we don't really want to do." (Quinn_E)*
Level of understanding	*"Whenever I have a problem, I directly ask him but I am also very curious about what he thinks of me. I cannot see him so I cannot guess what my impression is on him. I feel I have a good understanding with my manager because he himself reaches out to me, asks for my opinion on things, checks in with me to see if I am undergoing any stress. He always asks me if I need some time off, and am struggling with me. In that sense, I find him every approachable. It gives us a lot of strength just by knowing that he is very accessible. I had a surgery, was diagnosed with cancer, had a treatment, he allowed me to take some time off and work at my own pace." (Una_E)*
Interdependence	*"Supervisor, I know was very careful and mindful of the fact that everyone is experiencing a new kind of teaching environment. She was careful with not overly involving us with a lot of meetings. I remember, in the beginning, we have had only two! She kind of reminded us that it was a voluntary meeting, and she wouldn't take too much of our time and that she was grateful for all the work we did for her." (Ray_ E)*
	"My relationships with my direct managers have gotten better because they can see I can handle things that are important. They can see that I am able to cope with extra work load. They are also dealing with the same relative conditions with company slowing down in terms of the revenue. It just lets me be more understanding towards their situation and give them a benefit of doubt." (Nicole_E)
Need for Approval	*"I felt a lot of stress and anxiety so I had to have a helpful closure to reduce my own anxiety. I therefore engaged in efforts to build a good relationship with my manager and coworkers during the pandemic. I write up many things. I also write a lot of articles. I learned many things especially in disaster management." (Fetta_ E)*

Employee Theme 3: Perceived Interactional Fairness and Stress

This theme is a result of deductive technique where the common denominator of all my sub-themes was employee stress. Examples were shared on manager-employee exchanges and the extent to which it impacted employee wellbeing. While none of the employees used the word interactional fairness, certain examples of informational and interpersonal fairness emerged as employees their levels of stress or the lack of it. An example can be seen below where an educator (26, female) feels that she was offered a difficult course solely because of the lack of transparency (informational justice) and unfair exchanges preferring other colleagues (interpersonal justice).

"I was assigned a course, which had significantly more students. As you know it is much harder to teach a larger section. The educator who was initially assigned this course had a better relationship with the manager. So, I think she talked the manager into giving me the tougher section and she taught a lighter section herself. I think her judgment was guided by the relationship she had enjoyed for a long time. My manager honored that relationship. Their communication was stronger. They had a much better relationship than I did." (Frisco_E)

Table 14. *Interpersonal Justice and Stress*

Employee Theme 3: Interpersonal Justice and Stress	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Interpersonal fairness	*"Every manager has strengths and weaknesses. My manager tends to have a tendency to change tones and even attitudes. There are elements of body language that sometimes stand out in an iffy way. There are instances where you would question the level of politeness my manager has to offer to me. Nonetheless, he is more fair than most managers out there. Working as a team for so long, I do understand why he is reacting a certain way so while he is still unfair, I understand the underlying causes." (Jackie_E)*

Managerial interdependence	*"He was a great listener. He was very appreciative. In some cases, we had a tough target, I worked more than my assigned work hours. These are some bad habits I had. This manager had great skills of translating what we were doing in a visual flow chart and as a result would give us a thorough feedback. This made our lives easier. This manager was excellent in helping us meet our work goals without stressing us out. He tried to mitigate any stress we were experiencing and that helped the entire project not just us!" (Alpha_E)*
Lack of support	*"On the physical level, I experienced increased migraines, exhaustions after taking classes, and even grading. But, on a psychological level, I could feel much less social contact [...] On an interpersonal level, I felt there wasn't enough relationship developed for us to be able to work efficiently – no efforts made blatantly to get us to know each other. I felt they might have been even avoided because she did not want us to take too much of our time and that was her effort to minimize our workload and perhaps stress – but man the opposite was true. It was very nominal- you are in the course to do a certain job but then you are not offered the interpersonal resources to perform your job" (Ray_E)*

Employee Theme 4: Rationalizing Managerial Stress:

An important indicator of employee wellbeing and manager-employee relationships is their ability to rationalize manager's unavailability to managerial workload or stress. Subthemes include, "communication", "need for boundaries", and "identifying manager's workload" An example can be seen below where a healthcare worker (34, male) explains the reduced number of interactions with his manager. Although he has appeared to lose a significant source of support, it is evident that his healthy relationship with his manager allowed him to rationalize and even defend manager's position.

"He [the manager] got busier with the COVID meetings because he was also responsible for five other departments. I have been a part of those meetings a couple times and they are not very lively meetings. You don't get enough time to discuss your problems anymore and that's how it is. That took away the time for us to communicate on the interpersonal levels. I no longer

reached out to him for my personal issues. Sometimes this scenario stresses me out. It kinda

changes the way you work and interact but it is one of things you get used to. I only have to do

the core or technical work whereas this person has to deal with the actual managerial and

leadership related issues. That means lesser interaction time for us." (Zack_E)

Table 15**.** *Rationalizing manager's unavailability*

Employee Theme 4: Rationalizing Manager's unavailability	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Communication	*"There was a clear communication gap. We are a lot more comfortable in one to one conversation. We have to deal with the conversation calls, it is not easy for me. Everyone has their own plan so initially it was difficult. When I proposed solutions, it wasn't really a part of my job but I needed a sense of structure but the management kept questioning my authority. Once we got a hold of all the options, they started to trust me more and took my lead. There has been a gradual improvement in our relationship." - (Fetta_E)*
Need for boundaries	*"I would engage in more encounters with my managers. I thought it was difficult for me to manage a healthy relationship. I made myself available for my manager 24/7. There needed to be a healthy boundary. I had to do my own plan, there was a way for me to impose it through management. That was helpful for me and my work prospects in certain ways as well." – (Fetta_E)*
Identifying manager's workload	*"My manager tends to guide me a lot but she is consumed with a lot of other things. I know she is there. At least she tries and so I try my best to understand her position as well. It has been a few months since I am with my supervisor, she is encouraging. She is understanding and cooperative. I have no problem sharing my issues with her." - (Frisco_E)*
	"She [manager] was very appreciative of the difficulties we had encountered and we also understood her challenges since there were twelve of us tutoring for the same course so she was managing a huge class. […] she sounded very stressed out and even abrupt very unlike her – not the way she usually sounds in the meetings." – (Ray_E)

Employee Theme 5: Stress as a trickle-down phenomenon

Notable, the trickle-down effect of stress from managerial-level to employees was also

highlighted from employee viewpoint. Employees reported a fair amount of stress as they

witnessed their managers juggle several responsibilities or race against time. Sub-themes include "Added responsibilities due to managerial workload" and "Added strains and time crunch due to managerial job demands".

A statement from a human resources professional depicts how managerial workload induces a sense of urgency in employees.

 "We worked in the same area so he had to let me take the lead on some tasks. He just didn't have the time so he gave me a little bit of extra responsibility, which is actually a positive. I actually never felt that working from home limited our relationship at all. I think he was always a phone call away so that really helped. We ensured we had regular meetings and check ins- I actually made sure, in fact, we actually made sure that all managers had regular check ins. Because otherwise they would feel a little lost if they are just sitting at home and not interacting with each other. I also made sure that we scheduled a weekly call with all employees and gave them updates so they would know what is going on and if there were any changes so they would know what the head office is doing to make sure they didn't feel lost in any sense." – (Xavier_E)

Another example of employees acknowledging the managerial job-demands and stress can be seen below by a teaching assistant. It is evident that the respondent below recognizes the amount of stress experienced by their manager and voluntarily agreed to so extra work although it eventually stressed her out.

"I felt that when there was high peak workload, she [the manager] appeared to be a bit defensive, not really resourceful- more like this is what I need. I actually needed it yesterday but okay just send it as soon as you can. One time I actually had to redo my grading – she followed up on my grades and raised the concern of them being too high. I explained to her [my]

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rationale- she said, okay, if you see it that way, I just need you to provide me with a rationale.

Although she gave me that option but the way she questioned with me made me question my own

judgment. I voluntarily went back and re-evaluated very single one of the final exam. I did re-

calibrate my grades thinking from my communication with her I could sense that she was not

happy about the higher grades. That made me go back and kind of lower my internal bar and do

the same for each one of my students. I am not sure if it is fair grading but I decided to spend

less time than I initially had on student work. It took me an additional 20 hours or so to spend at

least 20 minutes on a 8 page essay. She did say you don't have to do it if you think that is correct

but from the way she phrased it, I got the hint that she is okay with me thinking that way but she

is certainly not okay herself with the my grading procedure. So, to please my supervisor, I

decided it was safer and better for me to rethink my own work and evaluation criteria. After the

midterms and finals, I experienced extensive migraines that I had never experienced before while

teaching online." (Ray_E)

Table 16. *Stress as a trickle-down phenomenon*

Employee Theme 5: Stress as a trickle-down phenomenon	
Sub-Themes:	Representative Quotes
Added responsibilities due to managerial workload	*"Sometimes I even felt that she did not even read what I was writing to her. And I felt guilty for overloading her with my so many questions because I felt that the other Teaching Assistant might also just be asking something similar. I can only imagine the number of students reaching out to her for different reasons." (Ray_E)*
Added strains and time crunch due to managerial demands	*"The issue is time is treated as a monopoly. I have to work between 10 [am] and 5 [pm]. I have to be back by 5:30 [pm] if I had gotten to work in person. Since you work from home, you are expected to work at any hour of the day. The assumption is that you are working from the comfort of the home. Your manager takes it very lightly. They don't consider your own personal time or commitments. I think the whole idea of work-from-home is exploited. There were instances I refused work because it was my time off but my manager advised me otherwise as the client needed the content immediately. It is hard to retaliate. I explained if I had to work on something, they need to give me at least*

> *a few hours. I don't think it's his fault because that is the nature of the job. We work in a high-pressure environment If I am not able to deliver, he is the one who looks bad. He is the one on the receiving end. He would have to pay the cost of my inefficiency." (Tammy_E)*

Relational Interdependence between Manager and Employees: A Nested Analysis

Using the phenomenological lens, the current study was guided by qualitative analysis of themes of employee accounts nested within those of their managers. One of the important ways to understand the manager-employee relational interdependence is to get a sense of how their views on relational exchanges overlap and deviate. In this section, I will report the findings of the nested thematic analysis reporting the commonalities and disparities between managers and their direct reports.

Common Themes between Managers and Employees

Theme 1: Interpersonal complexity

This theme speaks to the context of COVID-19 and how it has drastically impacted the manager-employee interactions. Subthemes extracted were "changes in the interpersonal relationships", "reluctance in accessing others", and "fear of botheration or wasting time". For example, we have a line manager who is unsure of the extent to which his directives get registered by the employees solely due to the assertion that technology adds an added layer of interpersonal complexity for work relationships.

"I mean, there are so many other pictures around it and that is a challenge. I mean, right now we are talking through Zoom. How do I know that I am getting across this information and you actually understand what I have to say? I mean I have to continuously look at the camera but I do not have the impact that I would have had, face-to-face. Those are some of the things that might have changed along the way during the pandemic." (Charlie_M)

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Interestingly, one of Charlie's direct reports also mentioned the challenges associated with remote work connections. For Nord, an engineer who relocated and started working under Charlie during the pandemic explains:

"Before COVID, it was easy to interact because if you are in same workplace, go and meet with your manager at any time in case of a problem or requirement. Within the same workplace– there no formality or requirement of arranging a meeting. For example, you can have informal watercooler conversations and such. With COVID [work dynamics], because you have to book a meeting, there is a new formality in schedules and arranging a meeting. And obviously the informalities have faded out of equation. So, it became a bit of a challenge. I would say the challenges were grave especially in the beginning, because working from home and working remote was new to people." (Charlie's Employee)

Theme 2: The need to respond immediately

While speaking directly of the consequences of working during the pandemic, a consistent theme that emerged at both managerial and employee dataset is the need to respond immediately. Subthemes include, "sense of urgency", "feeling lost", "impression management", and "the trickle-down effect". For example, one of the managers in healthcare explained how the onset of the COVID-19 resulted in changed work attitudes although it was quite contrary to the expectations.

"People started to work around the clock. Someone would send out an email in the middle of the night and the people would think they were obliged to respond to it immediately. No matter what time it was. Our senior leaders were also working around the clock to send us the updates. This really created a shift in the expectations of the work norms for us really."(Peter_M)

Interestingly, Peter's employee thought otherwise and discusses how they thought it was expectation of them to respond immediately.

"It was a kind of work environment where everyone was expected to work very hard. […]. It was also the amount of emails I was receiving. I think, I had anxiety just trying to ignore them. It was kind of expected at that point. There was obviously a lot going on at that point. It was also the environment and sometimes the expectation. So, I almost always responded as soon as I received an email. They were really nice but they really expected you to work your a** off." (Peter's direct report)

Theme 3: Engagement in relational job crafting as a Trickle-Down Effect

Interestingly, stress was not the only thing that trickled-down from management to employees. Several employees (and their direct managers) reported engaging in relational job crafting. Subthemes include, "job crafting", "relational interdependence", and "relational job crafting" For example, a mid-level advisor explains:

"It is more of a personal initiative. If before all this, I was focused on my own goals and family situation, I now have opened up to my colleagues. It is not something I am required to do as part of my job. It hasn't really impacted my work outcomes but definitely my personal wellbeing. […] People I interact more with now, do not have the capacity to impact my work outcomes. We do not depend on one another for work." (Nicole_E)

Nicole's immediate manager discusses her interdependence on Nicole as she struggled through difficult situation. She confirms Nicole's proactive involvement with several of her clients to keep the work going in the statement below.

"She [the employee] took on a lot of my work to help me out – more than she needed to. She ensured that my files were moving forward and that my clients had been taken care of and honestly, I cannot help but to appreciate the kind of support she provided at the time I needed it the most. Again, she absolutely did not have to go through that kind of hassle neither was it a part of her job." (Nicole's manager).

Similarly, in an alternative industry, we have an employee who was also leading a team, shifted his workflow to connect with several of his team members better.

"When we had tough targets while some of us were working from quarantine. I changed the workflows- I made my team work in two shifts. This also had to do with the fact that some of them were in different time zones. So, through changing the workflow, I created a sequential work dependency to meet our goals. I did that at my own initiative and discretion. That was the only way I could have met my goals. The outcome had to be shared with another manager within a tight timeline." (Alpha_E)

At another point, Alpha's manager also explains his dependence on his direct reports to handle the conversations with the clients.

"I would leave the conversations to the SMEs so I don't have to worry about it for the time being. Typically for critical cases, we are supposed to be there and we are expected to work along. We need to either mitigate the issue so my presence would ideally help the workflow. But when I struggle with my own job demands, I would leave it up to them." (Apha_E's manager)

Theme 4: Relevance of personal factors

Throughout the nested dataset, there was evidence that interactions between manager and employees impact employee wellbeing and occasionally managerial wellbeing. In particular, manager and employees appeared to bond on the relevance of personal factors.

"I have always had a very open relationship with my employees. It is never one way and it is always a two-way street. This is also because I have done their job at some point in time. […] I know that my colleague that supports me – I know her life circumstances as well. She has two young kids. […] I know for her- the household is a lot more chaotic than mine because my kids have grown and are much older. I would always ask her, what do you have going on, what do you need help with, and what are some of the issues you are dealing with? Just be honest and let me know what you cannot do and I will take care of it. […] She was fantastic, I mean. She worked long days intermittently. She had to take some time off to give her kids lunch, or breakfast, to just to soothe them. And of course, the kids would be with us on the zoom call all the time. You know they were always around and I understand you cannot put your kids away in the closet." (Lorna_M)

Lorna's direct report confirms the support she receives from her manager and the relevance of personal factors in connecting individuals at work.

"Talking about even the family situation would mean everyone is doing alright and if anyone needed any support, making sure they receive it. Probably lots of things we learned from each other. It brought us all together" (Lorna_M's direct report).

Disparities between Managers and Employees based on Nested Analysis

As with the similarities, there were stark differences between manager and employee accounts of their interpersonal exchanges and subsequent interdependence.

Theme 1: Perceived support offered (by managers) vs. received (by employees)

Another consistent pattern within the nested qualitative analysis was the differences in monitoring employee wellbeing. For example, one of the managers reported:

"Normally what you do as a line manager is you basically help people. Remember these people also have a huge leadership potential. They can problem solve on their own you just have to empower them. That is hard to achieve when you are remote because they do not have that safety net or confidence to do it on their own without the guidance of their line manager or leader. That is a huge change right there – I personally feel when you share some authority with people, they can achieve to a large extent. But really you need to give people some authority and agency – something along the lines of letting them make a mistake and giving them an opportunity to learn from it. This gives them an opportunity to understand what drives them to be successful." (Charlie_ M)

On the other hand, Charlie's direct report had a very different account on the relational exchanges between the two as can be seen below.

"I don't get a recognition as much as I work because we don't talk quite often. So I feel the same way, where I feel the line manager doesn't really recognize my efforts as he should […] I believe discussions should be open, both parties should be able to reach out to each other whenever they want. There shouldn't be any fear to discuss and both parties should be able to share their feelings openly – but I think it's very difficult to achieve." (Charlie_M's employee)

Theme 2: Differences in monitoring employee wellbeing

There was evidence for managers overestimating the support they were providing to their employees. For example, one of the managers explains how they had maintained a constant level of support and a positive environment for their employees.

"We are positively exchanging our emotions. We try our best to perform with as little stress as possible. It is us against the problem- it is not us against each other. We are also very mindful of the personal issues we might be facing on the personal fronts. People co-operate with me and I have no problem. My colleagues are generous and accommodating and have a problem-solving approach. […] I have had certain staff members who never worked with me directly but they took the initiative to introduce me to certain technologies" (Emma_M)

On the other hand, Emma's direct report presents a very different picture.

"That was the most stressful part but it also gave me a sense of being able to rely on one another. The guidance from the management was almost non-existent. We had to set our own boundaries. I had to organize things for my department and make my management aware of the available online platforms as well." (Emma_M's direct report)

Theme 3: Differences in Perceived vs. Implemented Fairness

Another theme outlining the disparities between managers and employees entailed the stark contrast between the level of interpersonal fairness implemented (as reported by managers) versus received (as reported by employees). For example, one of the employees describes their interactional exchanges with their immediate manager outlining the nature of relationship to be unfair.

"My manager did not help me cope and initially I had to take care of myself. In my personal experience, our boss would also induce anxiety like how would you manage, you would lose your job. I am on contract, which expires on May 31st – due to the pandemic, the management told us that we had to wind everything up by March 31st. That was surprising considering it was premature."- (Fetta_E)

On the other hand, Fetta's manager while acknowledges the comprised informational fairness, insists they have been interpersonally fair towards their employees.

"I tried my best to communicate everything with my employees, my students and other staff members. I try to give out detailed instructions. It definitely helped me connect with my employees more because we were always looking for solutions. We adopted a problem-solving approach to the issue. Overall, better interpersonal interactions. I became used to interacting better with my employees and students. They would send their pictures, reports, attendance to maintain a sense of fairness and consistency. I tried my best to make them understand." (Fetta's Manager)

Theme 4: Stress as a Trickle-down Phenomenon

There was consistent evidence for stress as a trickle-down phenomenon within the manager-employee interactions. For example, one of the managers identifies the need to work around the clock as a work-related stress.

"At least your expectations or schedules should not occupy your entire day and week. You should not have to be in meetings for all your work hours. You need to craft your job demands. You just completely on and off meetings at all times. If you govern that in an optimal manner. I don't think the workload would go away just like that, it would remain as in. It is the extra layer of work task would certainly be controlled. That certainly is something you can control to an extent but you cannot go beyond that." (Beta_M)

On the other hand, their direct report also reports a fair amount of work-related stress for similar reasons. In particular, the trickle-down aspect is associated with the amount of workload and the associated interpersonal dependence.

"We were online and our official work platform was Microsoft Teams- I would receive many messages either from my team members or my managers. It absolutely impacted the work flow where I was impacted too much from those messages. They might be trivial questions that could be answered in less than a minute, in-person but the context and having to answer those questions online did take its toll on me. At other times, it was evident that these questions won't be asked of you because someone else would be available to answer them on your behalf but the online shift made it possible for the employees to reach out to their managers for all kinds of

queries. It made the managers seem more accessible to them and therefore added work for us.''

(Beta_M's direct report)

Table 17. *Nested Analysis*

Similarities		Disparities	
Theme 1: Interpersonal complexity		**Theme 1: Support offered vs. received**	
Most people would who work for you would want an acknowledgement that there work is up to the part. In a physical space, it is easier where ----giving that nod is easier in a workspace than over the phone. Virtually, it is not easy to acknowledge the achievements. I don't think we can do it on an individual level. (Beta_M)	It was unclear to me whether the project manager was happy with my work or not. Not having to see him due to the COVID-19 situation made it even harder. For example, there were instances when I knew my manager was unhappy but I had no way to confirm it without confronting him. In certain instances, I would seek further feedback but again it was at the risk of losing his approval often times. Although he would tell us to relax and take our time, the entire process of having to work with him was fairly stressful. (Beta's direct report)	For most cases, you have to be the one taking the initiative although that is not a part of my job description, that is something I like to do. I like to learn about what my people are going through, what would energize them, what would motivate them. If you were to put yourself in someone's shoes, what would this journey look like. This is how I understand it anyway. Even when I deliver a difficult message to one of my team members, the question is how would you feel if this message was being delivered to you. Should I need to be blunt, polite or critical. (Charlie_M)	In our organization, we have 1 in 90 rule, our line manager has a formal discussion with us (once in 90 days where we discuss our performance objectives, awards, recognition, and other aspects). Due to similar difficulties as discussed now– 1-in-90 is absolutely ridiculous. It is very formal and you need to have a lot more touchpoints. In office, you can talk easily and talk offhand with your manager. (Charlie's direct report)
Theme 2: The need to respond immediately		**Theme 2: Differences in monitoring employee wellbeing**	
"People started to work around the clock. Someone would send out an email in the middle of the night and the people would think they were obliged to respond to it immediately. No matter what time it was. Our senior leaders were also working around the clock to send us the updates. This really created a shift in the expectations of the work norms for us really." (Peter_M)	"It wasn't always the case that they expected an email at around midnight. It was mostly the circumstances. At least at the beginning of COVID, that was expected because no one had a clue what was going on and everybody was freaking out." (Peter's direct report)	I tried my best to make them understand the new protocols and the demands. I used my best judgment to support my subordinates. We are positively exchanging our emotions. We have taken this challenge. (Emma_M)	It induced stress in me and I thought that I should leave work. I was burned out. I was anxious and aggressive [...] I kept asking how would things be organized and what would happen if they don't? I realized I had to do something. (Emma's direct report)

Table 17. *Nested Analysis (Contined)*

Theme 3: Engagement in Relational Job Crafting – Trickle-down Effect		Theme 3: Disparity in perceived vs. implemented fairness	
"A majority of my interactions are a result of my own initiatives. I have to find information I need, entails a fair amount of information that requires time. Mean suppliers, customers, diagonal management, accounting team- all these people I have nothing to do with but I choose to work in conjunction with them to perform better." (Basil_M)	*"Everyone has to reach out to others to get their job done. If you know someone has done the kind of work you are doing, all you have to do is reach out to them. […] I have to rely on relationship building to get my job done. When I work on the project of my own, I have to reach out to all the external and internal stakeholders to see what resources are available. I like to know what information is available, I am very particular about that, sometimes the materials are available you have to ask for them, scan them through, but it required taking an initiative." (Basil's direct report)*	*"I tried my best to communicate everything with my employees, my students and other staff members. I try to give out detailed instructions. It definitely helped me connect with my employees more because we were always looking for solutions. We adopted a problem-solving approach to the issue. Overall, better interpersonal interactions. I became used to interacting better with my employees and students. They would send their pictures, reports, attendance to maintain a sense of fairness and consistency. (Emma_M)*	*I would engage in more encounters with my managers. I thought it was difficult for me to manage a healthy relationship. I made myself available for my manager 24/7. There needed to be a healthy boundary. I had to do my own plan, there was a way for me to impose it through management. That was helpful for me and my work prospects in certain ways as well. (Emma's direct report)*
Theme 4: Relevance of personal factors		**Theme 4: Stress as a Trickle-Down Phenomenon**	
As you can appreciate, everyone is at home at that time. [...]On top of that, you got an enormous amount of work to get through so it was challenging, it was difficult certainly […] I know that my colleague that supports me – I know her life circumstances as well. She has two young kids. […], I know for her- the household is a lot more chaotic than mine because my kids have grown and are much older. So, I could – I would always ask her, what do you have going on, what do you need help with, and what are some of the issues you are dealing with? (Lorna_M)	*Just having the open communication with the manager, supportive, willing to accommodate, understanding and being willing to help. All of that has been huge. She has always been supportive and encouraging. If I need to be with my family, it is not considered against me. Maybe there is a part where she could relate to me. She does bring it up that she has been there so she supports it and can accommodate me as well. (Lorna's direct report)*	*I wouldn't say it is easier or difficult, per se. It is entirely new. I think with the passage of time, we would have to adjust with this system. Sometimes, it is difficult, sometimes it is boring, at times it is interesting. It is a learning curve for us. We are learning the new work systems, a new life style, a new method of teaching and learning. The situation in itself is difficult. We are trying our best to overcome this situation. (Emma_M)*	*When your manager is always after you, there is this fear that it is not handled well. You don't want to make mistakes. You want to get things right the first time. Right now, I know even if I make mistakes, she would understand. I don't want my manager to think I am not prepared to advance in my career. So, I tend to ask a lot of questions. I would say it is important to have the managerial support for professional and personal wellbeing. (Emma's direct report)*

Discussion of the Notable Findings: Convergence and Divergence

The findings of the qualitative study support existing research, which on a broader level acknowledged stressed out managers foster stressed out employees. Nonetheless, the differences between the quantitative and qualitative research findings can add great value to the researchers (Mazzola et al., 2011),

In particular, it was noted that managers' stressful job demands not only impact their relationships with their direct reports but also other organizational members such as co-managers, internal and external stakeholders, and in certain instances, the clients. In that sense it is inevitable for the relationships between the managers and their subordinates to get strained. This is congruent with the hypothesis 1, which suggested when managers experience stressful job demands through challenge and hindering stressors, they tend to modify, adjust, and even manipulate their work relationships. The novelty of these qualitative findings is our understanding of the nature of job stressors that managers encounter. For example, while one of the limitations of the quantitative study was overlooking myriad of other stressors (such as personal lives, wellbeing, and other struggles) that may contribute to managers' overall responsibilities, several of these factors surfaced in the interviews. Existing evidence suggests that qualitative research can often highlight the reactions to work stressors such as strains and coping reactions (Mazzola et al., 2011). Given all respondents of the current research were service employees, they all experienced comparable challenges such as having to work from home while wearing several other hats.

Nonetheless, the focus of this research is the relational dimension of manager-employee dynamics, which had traditionally been overlooked in the leadership studies (Ruiz, Ruiz, & Martínez, 2011). Bass and Stogdill (1990) noted that leadership, in general, is essentially a relation, which is often transactional. In that sense, the current research focuses on managers' proclivity to adjust their relationships with others at work solely to cope with job demands. Interestingly, the nature of this relationship adjustment is often informed by the nature of stressors. For example, if the managers feel time- crunched, they might choose to rely on certain subordinates they feel could "fill-in" on their behalf. This creates a void within the workplace

relationships in a sense that subordinates who managers could rely on when the going gets tough tend to enjoy more time, information, and preferential treatment from managers. On the other hand, subordinates who are unable to "step-up" either because of their limited expertise, or nature of relationship with their managers, end up getting pulled into a differential treatment. This was particularly highlighted in the nested analysis where while managers acknowledged offering support to their subordinates, a number of employees denied receiving the level of support, and transparency they were anticipating from their immediate managers. Theoretically, these qualitative findings are in agreement with hypotheses 2 and 3. Interestingly, the conversations during the qualitative study naturally unrolled the descriptions of interactional justice (i.e., the higher dimension of interpersonal justice such as politeness and propriety and informational justice such as explaining the rationale behind decision-making, Colquitt, 2001). In particular, the fragmented relationship between managers and employees resulted not only interpersonal justice (i.e, providing a proper day-to-day treatment) but also the informational justice (i.e., providing explanations necessary for decision-making in a timely, transparent, and candid way; Bies & Moag, 1986). This was interesting given the elaborated findings on another dimension of justice surfaced within phase 2. Both managers and employees provided clear examples of the two distinct forms of justice in relation to their relational exchanges with their immediate supervisors. This further confirms the existing literature on justice that identifies managers as a lynchpin in the process of adhering to the interpersonal and informational justice rules (see e.g., Koopman, Matta, Scott, & Conlon, 2015; Scott, Garza, Conlon, & Kim, 2014).

Another noteworthy finding of the current research is managers' awareness of the outcomes of their engagement in relational job crafting. Distinct examples were provided by managers that outlined relational job crafting behaviors such as meeting with the manager

counterparts more frequently, increasing the depth and breadth of interactions with the leadership team, and increasing the number of interactions with the clients. In most instances, managers shared an awareness on the compromised nature and frequency of interactions with their employees as an outcome of their own relational job crafting efforts.

The findings from the employee dataset also revealed some interesting findings. In particular, employee trust in managers came out as one of the notable findings. This is also in line with the previous findings in the literature on LMX and employees trust (see e.g., Dong, Jiang, Rong, & Yang, 2020). During the interviews, employees also articulated the predominant role of supervisory support in managing employee stress. In particular, employees identified supervisors' characteristics such as "great listener", "appreciative", "informative", and "respectful". All these characteristics align with managers' interpersonal justice rule adherence. Theoretically, this is in line with hypothesis 4, which suggested a cross-level effect between managers' interpersonal justice rule adherence and employee stress. Interestingly, one of the dominating themes in employee dataset was employees rationalizing their managers' unavailability. This was in contrast to an early presumption that employees are usually oblivious to managers' job demands (see e.g., Fiedler, 1992; Van Vugt et al., 2008). In that sense, the findings of the current study partially diverged from the existing literature. A possible explanation to that might be the technological prevalence in the workplace, where shared scheduling resources and virtual meetings keep the organizational members informed. Nonetheless, one of the most important findings in the employee dataset is the notable "trickle-down" phenomenon. Trickle-down effect suggests when a phenomenon is experienced at the manager-level, its effects are also felt at the employee-level. In conjunction with the previous theme on employees' ability to reckon managerial job demands, it was outlined that employees

reported experiencing higher levels of physical and emotional stress. Employees used phrases like, "abrupt", "unresponsive", and "inconsiderate" to demonstrate managerial treatment towards employees while experiencing heightened job demands. Theoretically, this theme answers the bigger research inquiry on whether and how managerial stress is passed down to the employees through interactional exchanges. Bruning and Campion (2018) noted that individuals can engage in avoidance role crafting by contracting the scope of their jobs through delegating work to assistants, looking for shortcuts, and even physically leaving office for some time to avoid any unfriendly exchanges with other organizational members. All these examples can explain how managerial stress is "trickled-down" to their direct employees.

Another novelty of the current research is that it studies these mechanisms during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, all participants of the current research had experienced some form of work disruption due to the COVID-19 context. To elucidate the manager-employee relational interdependence, a nested qualitative analysis of 20 employees nested in 9 managers was conducted. While thematic analysis of manager and employee dataset highlighted the broader themes at the two levels, a nested analysis allowed me to compare and contrast the narratives at the two levels. The commonalities of the accounts between managers and employees entailed the recognition of the interpersonal complexity due to the modified work stressors induced by the COVID-19 context. For example, having to email someone or following the formal protocol to ask a basic question (e.g., project update from managerial end and asking for clarity from employee end). Similarly, both managers and employees identified the need to respond to work-related inquiries immediately. It was clearly articulated that a sense of urgency was created at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic where both leadership and workers felt

the need to be responsive. While this subsided during the different waves of the COVID-19, the theme was prevalent across the two levels throughout the duration of this project.

Notably, both managers and employees reported engaging in relational job crafting. In a sense, there was a trickle-down effect of engaging in relational crafting between the two levels, where when employees witnessed their managers engage in the relational job crafting, they relied on a similar approach to cope with their job stressors. This can be explained through social learning theory (Bandura, 1969), where employees learn to engage in a phenomenon as they experience their supervisor benefiting from it. Another explanation for this phenomenon could be as employees experience the contraction-oriented relational job crafting aspect of their managers, it prompts them to seek the much needed support through creating or optimizing the existing relationships. This creates a novel line of inquiry within job crafting literature where the effect of witnessing one's supervisor engage in job crafting can facilitate job crafting behaviors in employees. Another common theme between manager and employee dataset is the relevance of the personal factors where the parties bonded on the relevance of personal factors such as, "parental duties", "gender", "elderly care responsibilities", etc. In particular, it was noted that bonding on the personal factors not only improved employee wellbeing but also managers' personal and professional wellbeing. Theoretically, this is close to the operationalization of LMX, where the quality of the leader-member exchange is contingent upon several personal factors. This is also in congruence with the existing literature on LMX and stress (see e.g., Reb et al., 2019).

Several disparities were also noted in the accounts of managerial and employee datasets. For example, the amount and level of perceived support offered by managers was not in accordance with what was reported by the employees. For example, certain managers noted that

they made an effort to not overwhelm their employees. However, their employees actively denied any such support offered and reported being "lost" and without a sense of direction. This can be explained by two factors. First, the fluctuating job demands with the different waves of the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, the reported confusion and frenzy was heightened at the beginning of the pandemic as opposed to a year later. Second, given the managers provided their accounts on behalf of the entire team, it is possible that certain individuals did not receive the support needed. In a way, this also strengthens the initial argument on managers making more contacts with the employees who are relevant, competent, or enjoy a positive overall relationship with them. In addition, the managers also appeared to be unaware of their employee wellbeing. It appeared, most managers believed their employees had the support they needed whereas the employees did not acknowledge any active efforts from their managers. This was also prevalent in distributing and receiving fairness between managers and their direct reports. Finally, both managers and employees had a different outlook on the distribution of the work-related stressors where the managers needed a control over the added work stressors to a certain degree. The employee on the other hand, actively reported no amount of managerial intervention made it easier for them and that they absolutely had to step-up and contribute in the wake of added job demands. In a way, this addressed the core research objectives of how managerial job demands impact perceived employee stress.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

The primary objective of this research was to generate knowledge on the manager-employee relational interdependence. I focused on developing an understanding of the complexities associated with how overworked managers and their stressful job demands impacted their subordinates. In particular, I asserted that job demand reduction strategies such as relational job crafting can directly impact managers' tendency to implement interpersonal fairness towards their employees. This can, in turn, add to stress experienced and reported by employees. Managerial relational job crafting was also studied as a boundary condition to the association between employee perceptions of leader-member exchange and stress.

To achieve my research goals, I tested and explored managers' ability to craft their jobs in the wake of stressful work demands. This was done using quantitative and qualitative research methods. An interesting characteristic of the present study was the COVID-19 pandemic context, which was accounted for throughout the study. By focusing on non-essential, service employees, who worked from home during the course of this study, I strived to gain deeper insights on manager-employee relational interdependence in determining employee stress as a trickle-down effect from managerial level.

In Study 1, both managers and employees were asked questions about their experiences of interpersonal exchanges with each other through quantitative questionnaires. Managers were asked additional questions on how their job demands impacted their ability to demonstrate fairness towards their employees. The employees were asked questions on their levels of perceived stress and how they viewed their exchanges with their immediate supervisors as captured by the LMX scale. Study 2, focused on how the two parties (i.e., managers and

employees) navigated through their interpersonal exchanges. This included an overall evaluation of their relational exchanges with each other and how it impacted their work outcomes. Managerial interview guide focused on managerial job demands and how it impacts other organizational members especially their direct reports. Employee interview guide navigated the perceived quality of interpersonal exchanges employees enjoy with other organizational members especially their immediate supervisors. Attention was paid to how these relationships impact employee wellbeing at work. Thematic analysis was conducted on (i) managers' dataset; (ii) employee dataset; and (iii) nested dataset. While the goal of conducting thematic analysis on manager and employee dataset was to look for common themes across the two levels. The goal of the nested qualitative analysis was to shed light on both similarities and disparities between the evaluation of relational exchanges as a result of increased managerial job demands on employees (i.e., between levels). Attention was paid to the similarities of accounts described by managers and their respective employees. Further, any disparities between the accounts of both managers and employees were also considered to explain any divergence of findings.

Chapters 4-6 outline the research design and findings of both quantitative and qualitative strands of the study. In chapter 4, interim discussion on the quantitative findings was presented. Chapter 5 outlined the qualitative research design. Chapter 6 included a comprehensive discussion of the qualitative findings where the phenomena of convergence (i.e., the extent to which the two studies offer overlapping findings) and divergence (i.e., the extent to which the two studies offer disparate findings) were noted.

The current chapter integrates the two approaches to develop a consensus of the study outcomes. Such integration of the two methods is recommended particularly for explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach (Crespo, Curado, Oliveira, Muñoz-Pascual, 2021). After

integrating the two approaches, the implications for research, practice, and policy recommendations are discussed followed by subsequent avenues for future research. Finally, the strengths and limitations are outlined before presenting the final conclusion of this research.

Integration of Approaches:

As noted earlier, integration is the key element of generating rigorous mixed-methods research design. In particular, integration can facilitate the theory and policy development as it fosters the dialogue between context-specific and general characteristics of research (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Harrison and colleagues (2020, p.477) noted that integration of a mixed-methods study comprises of "more than a sum of its parts." This procedure is of significance particularly for sequential mixed methods approach (Venkatesh et al., 2013) in which the goal of the qualitative study was to offer an elaborated explanation of the manager-employee relational dynamics and how stress on the one level is perceived and experienced on another. Notably, the design of the explanatory sequential research requires investigators to first collect and analyze quantitative data before testing the research inquiry through the qualitative means (Harrison et al., 2020). Therefore, the nature of the current research design allowed the researcher to consider any contextual factors including having to work remotely and the experience of relationship development. Both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the current study were guided by the quality criteria suggested by mixed-methods scholars (e.g., Harrison et al., 2020).

Integration of the Notable Findings:

The first notable finding of the current research is that it highlights the relationship between stressful job demands and relational job crafting at managerial level. This was supported both quantitatively (hypothesis 1) through surveys and qualitatively through interviewing managers. In doing so, it adds a new avenue to a stream of scholarship that has predominantly

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focused on employees and blue-collar workers. Scholars have long suggested job crafting to be a viable outcome of stressful job demands (see e.g., Harju et al., 2021; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The novelty of the current research is in identifying different forms of stressors (such as challenge and hindrance) in predicting different approaches to relational job crafting (i.e., expansion vs. contraction-oriented relational job crafting). In particular, when managers register their job demands to be challenging, they tend to reach out to others for support. On the other hand, when these job demands are considered hindering managers' development, they tend to eschew unnecessary work contacts including their own direct reports. Quantitatively, this has been supported through hypotheses 1b and 1c. Qualitatively, several examples were presented by managers to identify the evolution of their work relationships as they experience tight deadlines, as opposed to a disgruntled client or office politics. In a way, the qualitative findings of the study were comparable to that of the quantitative findings.

By fine-graining the research focus to relational job crafting, the current research highlights the inadvertent nuances associated with relational job crafting, which is: (i) the compromised implementation of interpersonal justice by managers and; (ii) employee stress. In particular, a direct relationship was established between expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting and managers' adherence to interpersonal justice implementation. This was supported through quantitative analysis. Qualitatively, a small number of managers admitted that their engagement in relational job crafting impacted their ability to be fair towards their subordinates. This divergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings can be attributed to impression management concerns. Nonetheless, the analysis of the nested dataset, highlighted the disparity between managers' account of justice implementation and employee accounts of

justice received. Therefore, the findings of the nested qualitative analysis further converged with the initial quantitative findings.

The current research also considers manager-employee interdependence in outlining employee stress as an outcome of managerial job demands. In particular, attention was paid to employee reports of leader-member exchange and levels of perceived stress. Notably, there was no support for the relationship between managers' stressful job demands and employee stress either directly or through contraction and expansion-oriented relational job crafting, quantitatively. Nonetheless, the qualitative findings elucidated employee awareness of their managers' job demands (to a certain extent) and reported experiencing moderate to extreme levels of stress including compromised physical wellbeing as a result of the compromised relational dynamics with their managers. The analysis of nested qualitative dataset further reinforced these findings. Therefore, there was some divergence in the quantitative and qualitative findings in regards to manager-employee relationships and employee stress. Further, by outlining the relationship between relational job crafting as reported by manages and LMX as reported by employees, the current research outlines a unique mechanism that may uncover the disparity between managerial evaluation of their relationships with the employees as they experience increased work stressors and employee evaluation of the quality of relational exchanges. Quantitatively, this has been supported by hypothesis 8, which suggests the relationship between perceptions of LMX and stress is strengthened by managers' expansion-oriented while buffered by contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Qualitatively, this assertion was supported by employee accounts of the extent to which their wellbeing at work was determined by the relational exchanges with their supervisors thereby confirming a methodological convergence.

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In sum, the findings of both studies confirmed employee stress was highly contingent upon how managers treated their employees and more often than not, employees were able to reckon managers' job demands. Finally, although it was not a part of research inquiry, my qualitive study helped me build an understanding of the manager-employee relational dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the quantitative component of validity, the current research tests the pre-validated scales. In addition, the discriminant validity of the model is established through confirmatory factor analysis on each level. The sample size of the quantitative study is deemed appropriate as per the multilevel power analysis (Mathieu et al., 2012) outcomes. The quantitative findings are presented in an objective and accurate manner while assuring the inferential validities and measurement of the results (Cook & Campbell 1979; Cook, Campbell, & Shadish, 2002). I further confirmed the internal consistency using Chronbach's Alpha ensuring all items meet the reliability benchmarks (i.e., alpha > 0.7). Harman's single factor test was conducted on each level to account for the common method bias concerns. Therefore, for quantitative study, design validity (i.e., incorporating rigor in applied methodology) and analytical and inferential validities (i.e., rigorous data interpretation) had been taken into account (Venkatesh et al., 2013).

The qualitative study of this research incorporates a methodological approach that allows replication of the study findings by eliminating potential cognitive biases and enabling the internal validity of the current research (Maxwell, 1992). In particular, the design of the qualitative research allows for credible result interpretation. For example, the participants for the qualitative study were recruited from the initial quantitative study. Further, data analysis was conducted through analytical plurality (i.e., managerial dataset, employee dataset, and nested dataset). Finally, the results are presented in an interpretable format that can both be replicated

and validated by others. Considering the design validity and advance inferential techniques for both methods, the main accomplishments of the current research are listed and compared with previous notable findings in the literature in Table 18.

Table 18. *Comparison between the current research findings and the literature*

Results from this research	**Previous Contributions**
Managers tend to expand their relational network through relational job crafting as they experience challenge stressors. Managers are more likely to shrink their relational network as they experience hindrance stressors.	Berdicchia and Masino (2019) suggested managers should engage in participatory practices to mitigate their job stressors and enhance performance. Challenge stressors give rise to positive organizational outcomes such as increased organizational commitment and reduced intentions to turnover (Podsakoff et al., 2007). The kind of stressor experienced by individuals impacts work outcomes differently. (Yang & Li, 2021)
Managers' engagement in relational job crafting is directly related to their implementation of interpersonal justice such that expansion-oriented relational job crafting is positive while contraction-oriented relational job crafting is negatively related to interpersonal justice.	Individuals try to proactively engage with others and evaluate new ways to perceive their job (Bindl et al., 2019) Individuals may make active efforts to avoid unfriendly individuals or even physically leave their work space (Bruning and Campion, 2018)
Interpersonal justice and other relational exchanges significantly impacted employee stress through various pathways.	Interpersonal conflict is a persistent stressor across various occupations. (Mazolla et al., 2011)
Both expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting significantly mediate the relationship between challenge and hindrance stressors and managers' implementation of interpersonal justice.	Distinct challenging job demands such as workload and job complexity, can significantly impact employee wellbeing through job crafting (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013).
Expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting do not significant mediate the relationship between managers' job demands and employee stress.	While challenging job demands are usually linked with positive organizational outcomes (Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000; Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; O'Brien & Beehr, 2019; Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007), different types of

	challenge demands may impact employee well-being differently (Harju et al., 2021).
Employee stress and perceptions of LMX are negatively related to each other. Further, managers' relational job crafting moderated this relationship.	Individual perceptions of LMX is negatively linked to their levels of stress (Liang et al., 2021)

Limitations and Strengths

The following sections outline the limitations associated with the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods components of this study. The limitations of this study have the potential to provide useful recommendations for future research.

Research Design

While the two studies of the current research together provide an overall support for the proposed model, there are limitations that cannot be overlooked. The quantitative study comprised of a cross-sectional survey. In doing so, it predominantly relied on participant perceptions at one point in time. Although, the current study is based on multi-source data, a potential limitation of the current study is its reliance on self-reports. Therefore, the quantitative part of the research while comprised of perceptual self-reported data, it still entailed responses from multiple sources.

Although data collection using multiple sources alleviates the issues over single-source bias, this introduces concerns on construct operationalization (Koopman et al., 2015). For example, while the first step of my quantitative study evaluated the enactment of interpersonal justice by managers, no further information was collected on other-reports (e.g., employees).

In particular, the data may shape up differently based on the reporting source. For an instance, consider interpersonal justice. The current study gathers the information on justice through managers. It is possible that the information gathered on perceptions of justice from employees would yield different responses. However, Zapata and colleagues (2013) outlined a significant relationship between supervisor and subordinate reports of justice, it is expected that findings using either of the two sources would have generated similar responses. Similarly, consider leader-member exchange. The current study operationalized it at employee level as the research question was about how manager-employee exchanges impact employee stress. Therefore, employees were the best source to identify the quality of these exchanges. It is possible that the results of the current study might differ if LMX was operationalized as a manager-rated measure. However, the follow-up qualitative analysis on nested dataset allowed me to account for such disparities where each source described the nature of their relational exchanges with others.

In the current study, employees' report of LMX was considered to be a reliable predictor of employee wellbeing. On the other hand, the managers reported their interactions with other organizational members through relational job crafting and interpersonal justice. Future studies can consider other relevant measures to examine these relationships. Further to this, future research can also consider variation in the variables between the reports of two sources.

Finally, any concerns on common methods bias were dealt with suitable tests (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Spector & Brannick, 2010).

Data Collection Procedures

Quantitative. Generally, there is no rule of thumb when it comes to estimating the time frame within which a cross-sectional study needs to be conducted. Nonetheless, a general preference to data collection within a shorter frame of time. While the quantitative data was collected within

three months, the qualitative data for my research was collected over the course of a year (September 2020-September 2021) due to several issues namely work disruptions, organizational access, and participant availability. Data collection over prolonged periods of time may be subject to variance (for example policy, normative, and legislative changes, etc.), which may impact the overall results. For example, over the course of this study, non-essential workers had faced several work-related disruptions including work alternates due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the category of Canadian essential workers was broadened during the course of this study. In that regard, several work-related stressors that appeared significant (e.g., brainstorming the best way forward and overall viability of the project) became a mere after thought as the research progressed. Therefore, the current research captures the trickle-down effect of stressors during turbulent times, future studies can focus on this mechanism during stable times. Further, stress is believed to fluctuate over time (Mazzola et al., 2011). Therefore, future research can approach this research inquiry from diary methods viewpoint.

Finally, the cross-sectional design of the quantitative study questions the causal order of the proposed relationships. Nonetheless, these concerns are somewhat mitigated by qualitative data that consider the experiences of working with the stressors along with the process of appraising them as either hindrance or challenge stressor by managers. Since theory is not bound to a given source of measurement, therefore, the consistency of the findings across the two studies should offer some confidence in the proposed model. In that sense, the multi-method, multi-strand design of the current research tends to compensate for the limitations posed by individual study. The use of alternative approaches also allowed me to maintain the rigor and quality criteria of the current research.

Sample Size. The sample size for managers of level 2 was relatively small. Considering the within-level analyses were performed on level 2 dataset only to test a part of the model. Nonetheless, researchers noted that a small sample size is not inherently an issue given the margin of errors are reported in the study. Further, given all within level hypotheses were supported posing sample size to be less of an issue. The rest of the model was tested in step 2, where cross-level interaction effects and multi-level mediation and moderation were considered. The hypotheses were tested using a variety of approaches adding analytical plurality to the study.

In particular, the cross-level relationships in the current study offer an important avenue for future research (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000) as such interactions tend to add to the richness of theoretical models relevant to justice (Koopman et al., 2015). To elaborate, measuring the perceptions of LMX through employees within teams (as opposed to dyads) control for alleviating the bias associated with picking employees who enjoy a high-quality relationship with the supervisor.

Qualitative. An important strength of the current research is that it controlled for pre-existing rapport between managers and employees in the follow-up qualitative investigation. Future studies should consider a longitudinal design to outline how manager-employee relationships evolves overtime. This may involve appraising measuring the baseline rapport-building. In general, it would be useful for future studies to expand this research inquiry as it is apparent there may be differences in individual perspectives and experiences based on contextual factors beyond the scope of my quantitative study (e.g., trust) as indicated in the qualitative study.

While the qualitative study was conducted within the prolonged time frame, each participant response was captured in a single snapshot (i.e., without follow-ups). I would recommend for future studies to explore the manager-employee exchanges over time in a

longitudinal qualitative study. This would develop further insights into any changes to employee wellbeing in respect to manager-employee exchanges.

Methodology. While workplace wellbeing has been extensively studied in the past, its' correlation with the relational interdependence between individuals has been seldom considered. Further, the changing context of the COVID-19 continued to add disruptions and uncertainties within the workforce. Therefore, mixed-methods research was appropriate to further investigate this phenomenon. Collins and O' Cathain (2009) suggested investigators to be mindful of the skills and approach required for mixing different datasets and methods. This requirement was met with the consistent support and assistance from my dissertation committee, which comprised of experts in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

In mixed methodology, the order of quantitative and qualitative data collection is informed by research inquiry (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). The current research examined the effect of managerial job demands on employee wellbeing. This inquiry was then disintegrated into two different steps. Step one examined how managers' challenge and hindrance stressors impacted their quality to exchanges with others (including employees). Step two evaluated how those interactions impacted employee wellbeing based on employee reports of the quality of exchanges with their managers. Therefore, the findings from the two datasets were mixed sequentially (i.e., the qualitative study following the quantitative study and the qualitative inquiry supplementing the quantitative results). Future research can examine these mechanisms using a range of mixed-methods approaches (e.g., exploratory and convergent designs).

Variables of Interest. Another strength of the current study is the operationalization of relational job crafting as expansion and contraction-oriented relational job crafting. In particular, job

crafting literature has been studied using various approaches. For example, over the course of years scholars have operationalized job crafting behaviors as: job demands-resources (JD- R; (Demerouti et al., 2001), role based (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), resource based (Tims et al., 2012), approach and avoidance (Bruning & Campion, 2018; Zhang & Parker, 2019), and promotion and prevention (Bindl et al., 2019; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019) crafting. Nonetheless, quantitative research on behavioral job crafting has predominantly focused on the resource-based approach (Costantini, Demerouti, Ceschi, Sartori, 2021). Within resource based approach, the act of increasing the challenging job demands and resources are categorized as expansion job crafting while decrease in hindering job demands is considered contraction job crafting (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Given the current study relies on expansion and contraction relational job crafting, the operationalization of the construct uses the integrated approaches to relational job crafting (i.e., role and resource crafting). In doing so, it not only captures the multiple facets but also the outcomes of relational job crafting. Future research may consider the impact of using different survey instrument for the variables of interest in the current study.

Implications for Research and Future Directions

Existing research has adequately examined the sources of various forms of managerial and employee stress related to the work expectations and job demands. One such source of stress may take the form of technostress, which is a kind of stress that stems from increased or prolonged use of information, communication, and technologies (ICTs; Brod, 1984; Tarafdar et al., 2010). Nonetheless, the current scholarship is well positioned to initiate a dialogue on how managerial stressors impact employee stress. The quantitative study examined the role of managerial challenge and hindrance stressors in determining their propensity to engage in relational job crafting, which can then compromise managers' ability to be interpersonally fair

towards their employees. The results from the quantitative study provide evidence that both challenge and hindrance stressors result in increased forms of managerial relational crafting. Managers may choose to either expand their relational network in order to meet the demands of increased challenge and hindrance stressors or limit their interactions with certain members of the organization including their direct reports through contraction-oriented relational job crafting. Given the orthogonal nature of the two dimensions of relational job crafting, it is hard for managers to demonstrate the interpersonal fairness towards their employees. While my research shed light on the aforementioned relationships, the future research can focus on the exact mechanisms that result in managerial engagement in expansion-oriented job crafting as opposed to contraction-oriented job crafting.

The qualitative study provides a more in-depth investigation of how managers and employees evaluate their relational exchanges and how it impacts their work outcomes and wellbeing, respectively. In that regard, attention was paid to manager and employee accounts. At a later stage of analysis, nested qualitative themes were derived from the entire dataset to account for any similarities and dissimilarities between the two parties. The current study advances the literature in the following ways.

Job Crafting Literature

The current research contributes to the job crafting scholarship by extending considerations for the outcomes of job crafting efforts beyond within person approach. Previous literature has studied the impact of job crafting efforts on individuals across ranks (Berg et al., 2010), industries (Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012), and teams (Lyons, 2008). The current research studies job crafting within the nested context where the repercussions of job crafting on one level

are experienced on another. In doing so, it opens a new stream of research on "*nested crafting*"

or a nested approach to job crafting behaviors.

Tims and colleagues (2021) reviewed the job crafting literature between 2016 – 2021 and

noted that job crafting studies predominantly focus on obtaining better understanding of

individual job crafting behaviors in terms of its antecedents, processes, and outcomes (for meta-

analyses and reviews, see e.g., Bruning & Campion, 2018; Lazazzara et al., 2020; Rudolph et al.,

2017; Zhang & Parker, 2019). Recent studies focused on the perspectives of colleagues and

supervisors assessing and responding to witnessing others crafting their jobs, this process has

implications for the performance and wellbeing of the job crafter and their colleagues (Fong et

al., 2021; Tims et al., 2021). However, how crafting job on one level impacts the wellbeing

outcomes on another is rarely studied in the job crafting literature. This is an important oversight

as jobs, in general, and job crafting, in particular, is not performed in silos.

In their review of job crafting literature, Tims and colleagues (2021) noted that the

outcomes of different forms of job crafting (e.g., approach vs. avoidance) to be an interesting

avenue in job crafting scholarship. In that sense, the current research responds to this call of

developing job crafting literature by identifying the distinct outcomes of two different forms of

relational job crafting dimensions. In particular, the current research acknowledges that

contraction-oriented relational job crafting compromises interpersonal justice implementation for

managers. On the contrary, expansion-oriented relational job crafting tends to increase the

implementation of interpersonal justice by managers. This is an interesting finding as it could

open a new stream of research along the lines of "*justice crafting*", where individuals carefully

navigate through their work demands and interpersonal exchanges to create or restore their need

for workplace justice. This is similar to previous research inquiries where scholars coined terms

for different forms of job crafting (e.g., career crafting, Tims & Akkermans, 2020; time-spatial

crafting, Wessels et al., 2020; home crafting, Demerouti et al., 2020; leisure crafting, Petrou &

Bakker, 2016). Finally, the use of LMX as a boundary condition builds theory on a much-needed

understanding of the difference between relational job crafting and quality of exchanges between

supervisors and their direct reports. The implications of these findings help us understand that

boundary conditions in specific job crafting strategies may impact employee outcomes either

individually or in combination. Therefore, the application of these findings can help us attain a

better person-job fit in not only managerial but also employee positions. Further, this knowledge

can also inform the job crafting interventions as evidence suggests most interventions do not

result in a drastic increase in job crafting strategies (Oprea et al., 2019).

Manager-Employee Psychological Interdependence

The current research highlights several pathways that elucidate the psychological

interdependence between managers and their employees. The findings suggest that as employees

witness their managers struggle with their job demands, it has a deleterious effect on their own

mental wellbeing. This is particularly true of managers experiencing hindrance job demands. In

addition to the direct relationship, there are indirect relationships as well through relational

exchanges (i.e., relational job crafting and LMX) and interpersonal justice. While the

quantitative study of this research shared insights on the specificity of these relationships, the

qualitative study offered two distinct insights. First, it was discovered that as employees

experience the repercussions of their managers' engagement in relational job crafting, it

encourages them to engage in relational job crafting. Second, similarities and disparities noted

between the two datasets allow for between group effects. Given managers typically enjoy access

to more resources and information than employees (Erdogan & Liden, 2002), it is only intuitive

to expect employee dependence on their supervisors. Nonetheless, the findings of the qualitative study also indicated managers' benefitting from a positive rapport with their employees.

Given the scarcity of research on occupational job demands and stress, the current research outlines an important phenomenon of relational interdependence within organizations. Another important implication of the current study is that job stressors is a significant source of stress for managers, which can be trickled-down to the employee level through relational exchanges. This is also in line with the previous research on occupational stress and interpersonal relationships at work (see e.g., Mazzola et al., 2011).

Workplace Stressors

There is a plethora of existing empirical evidence on stress process within various occupations and the related outcomes (see e.g., Willis et al., 2019). Scholars have noted the relationship between the association between job demands and individuals can be informed through individual appraisals (LePine et al., 2016; Willis et al., 2019). Relatedly, there has been some interest in uncovering the role of coping on the link between the occupational demands and wellbeing. Notably, job crafting itself has been studied as a form of coping behavior from several work-related adversities (see e.g., Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Masood, Karakowsky, & Podolsky, 2021). Willis and colleagues (2019) noted the need to highlight the inter and intra-individual differences in job demands and related wellbeing outcomes. In that sense, the current research advances the scholarship in job demands and stress management practices on an intersection of coping and employee wellbeing. Future research can focus on the impact of various forms of stressors on different forms of job crafting such as cognitive job crafting.

Interpersonal Exchanges

Scholars noted that identifying boundary conditions for theoretical correlations is crucial for advancing theoretical and practical interventions (Aguinis, 2004). The current study uses interpersonal justice and leader-member exchange as predominant indicators of the relational exchanges. In particular, it was shown that relational job crafting when used as a coping response against job demands, can significantly impact managers' interpersonal justice implementation. In that sense, the findings of the current research add value for leaders who value interpersonal justice. Further, steps can be taken by organizations to foster such values (Holtz & Harold, 2013; Sherf et al., 2019).

In particular, the current research suggests the relational exchanges between leaders and managers can have both direct and interactive effect on employee stress. Scholars have noted the role of LMX as a resource-based function of contextual factors (Liang, Liu, Park, and Wang, 2021). The current research considers relational job crafting as one such contextual factor as managers often engage in relational job crafting as a form of demand reduction. Future research can consider the role of LMX differentiation or the disparity of the quality of relationships. As perceived by various individuals of the same team (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden et al., 2006) as a boundary condition to the relationship between LMX and relational job crafting.

While predominant stream of literature on LMX adopts the leader-centric approach (Sin, Nahrgang, Morgeson, 2009; Zhou & Schriesheim, 2009), the current research operationalized the perceptions of LMX as reported by employees. This is because prior research has shown the impact of perceptions of LMX on employee stress (Liang et al., 2021). Liang and colleagues (2021, p.13) noted that

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"leaders may experience more negative work outcomes when mis-calibration exists between how much they provide to and how much they receive from followers (e.g., followers do not appear grateful or loyal after leaders invest intensively in them) or when mismatch occurs between the type of resource provisions and resource gains (e.g., leaders provide followers with instrumental support but receive followers' liking instead of improved work outcomes)." Future research may rely on multi-source data to investigate the disparity between manager and employee accounts of the quality of LMX. Further research can be conducted on the extent to which such exchanges are beneficial to managers' wellbeing.

Creating Psychologically Safe Workplaces

The relevance of the findings of the current study sheds light on the significance of promoting psychologically safe workplaces. Edmondson (1999) defines psychological safety as individuals' shared set of belief on whether or not it would be prudent to take interpersonal risks at work (also see, Edmondson, Dillon, & Roloff, 2007; Edmondson & Lei, 2014). Psychological safety within one's workplace allows employees to appreciate competence through constructive conflict and confrontations, take interest in others' project, maintain positive intentions towards each other (Edmondson, 1999; Newman, Donohue, & Eva, 2017). Psychological safety has also shown to encourage employees to engage in experimenting, taking risks (e.g. seeking feedback), and voicing work-related concerns (Newman et al., 2017; Pearsall & Ellis, 2011). Naturally, the psychologically safe workplaces lead to a variety of performance related outcomes (Edmondson & Lei, 2014).

The current research indicates when managers experiences challenging job demands, they seek to establish more ties as opposed to when they experience hindering job demands. This would have an important managerial implication through enabling managers to redesign their

work environment facilitating psychological safety not only for themselves but also their employees. Theoretically, the implications of the current research findings can help us advance scholarship on psychological safety in conjunction with different forms of job crafting strategies. Future research can test how managers' job stressors impact psychological safety within the workplace as reported by employees.

Implications for Managers:

The current research focused on the impact of managers' stressful job demands on employee stress through different pathways. Further the nature of job stressors can significantly impact the aforementioned relationships. In particular, challenge stressors may increase the interpersonal exchanges between manager and employees thereby lowering employee stress. On the other hand, hindrance stressors result in reduced interpersonal exchanges between managers and employees thereby increasing the employee stress. The results can be applied to the field of management in several ways. On a broader level, an important takeaway is that managers should rely on alternative approaches to job demand-reduction at least at an interpersonal level. Further, attention has been drawn to the negative outcomes of managers' engagement in relational job crafting. This is an important finding as the impact of managers' job crafting on employees has been predominantly overlooked. The current research also establishes a relationship between managers' engagement in expansion and contraction-oriented job crafting and employee stress both directly and indirectly through interpersonal justice. Further, LMX has shown to moderate this direct relationship such that LMX strengthens the relationship between expansion-oriented relational job crafting and employee stress while weakening the relationship between contraction-oriented relational job crafting and employee stress.

Consequently, the current research lends insight into the idiosyncratic individual experiences that propagate throughout workforce and can directly impact employee wellbeing. Therefore, there are several managerial implications that are offered through this research in shaping the organizational policy and decision-making. Human resource managers and practitioners are encouraged to apply the takeaways from the current study in several ways.

Effective Coping Mechanisms for Managers

Empirical evidence suggests that work is a major source of stressor for employed individuals and, therefore, efforts should be made to reduce overall stress levels in the workforce (Mazzola et al., 2011). The results of the current study show that different type of stressors lead to different ways of coping strategy in the capacity of relational job crafting. Therefore, human resource professionals should focus on effective management of employee stress. While this is line with previous research on the differential effects of stressors on workers' job flourishing (Yang & Li, 2021). Researchers noted both challenge and hindrance stressors to be affective events that can generate affective responses such us emotions and attentiveness (Rodell & Judge, 2009). Further to this, challenge stressors are shown to impact positive work attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, employee commitment, and reduced intentions to turnover; Podsakoff, Lepine, & Lepine, 2007). The current research also shows managers' engagement in expansion relational job crafting as they experience challenge stressors, which is positively related to LMX and negatively related to employee stress.

Empirical evidence shows human resource practices can directly impact individual job demands and wellbeing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018; Peccei & van de Voorde, 2019). With respect to organizational practices, human resource professionals can, therefore, carefully craft a

balance between challenge and hindrance stressors to improve employee wellbeing and achieve other positive organizational outcomes.

Stress management for all organizational members.

The current research also showed managers' contraction-oriented relational job crafting is negatively related to LMX while positively related to employee stress. In doing so, it is evident that when managers engage in avoidance relational job crafting, they inadvertently end up hurting their employees. For example, in avoidance role crafting, a manager may look for short-cuts to meet the deadlines or delegate work to subordinates to manage their workload (Bruning & Campion, 2018). On the other hand, avoidance resource crafting entails one's systemic removal from a person, situation or an event (Bruning & Campion, 2018). For example, individuals may decide to leave the office for a period of time. However, avoidance job crafting allows individuals to systemically and proactively move away from negative aspects of their jobs (Zhang & Parker, 2019) such as office politics. Therefore, avoidance job crafting is not always bad for the organizations or its members. In essence, to manage such coping response, the organizations can take several initiatives such as the ones described below.

    i.   ***Mentorship and Coaching Opportunities for Employees.*** It may be useful for organizations to focus on mentorship and coaching programs for employees to make up for any lost opportunities to connect with their managers as they engaged in relational job crafting with external organizational members.

    ii.   ***Rewarding Interpersonal Justice Implementation.*** Sherf and colleagues (2019) noted that managers are more likely to implement justice if they are rewarded for it. Therefore, initiatives that would facilitate managers' adherence to interpersonal

rule would give managers more reasons to be mindful about how they treat their

employees.

Policy Recommendations

The advent of technological intervention in the workplace along with the pressing need to

work remotely during the pandemic created an unanticipated shift in the work dynamics. The key

takeaway of the current research can be applied not only to managing workload but also

implanting policies around work expectations. Late in 2021, the *Working for Workers Act* or

Bill-27 was passed by the Ontario legislature. This allows the workers in the province of Ontario

a right to disconnect from work (Douglas, 2022). In particular, the workers are barred from

exchanging work-related communications such as emails, phone, etc. after the assigned work

hours (Douglas, 2022). While this Bill was suggested to be in effect in June 2022, it is admired

by worker wellbeing advocates. In particular, the organizations need to introduce some form of

written policy outlining how the employees can disconnect from work after hours (Douglas,

2022). The findings of the current research can take into account manager-employee dynamics

while implementing such policies. Indeed policies are implemented by managers. Therefore, by

having workload reduction policies at manager-level, organizations can see a remarkable

reduction in employee stress.

While policies and interventions are important steps to enable worker wellbeing at all

levels, a one-size-fits-all approach will not be useful in implementing these policies and

practices. Understandably, as organizations are open to introducing remote work opportunities,

the context of socio-economic concerns (including gender and class inequities) cannot be

overlooked (Jaga & Guetterman, 2021). Scholars noted that initiatives designed for a specific

segment of the population to be more plausible than those designed for the general population

(Griffiths, Steyvers, & Tenenbaum, 2007). Therefore, initiatives around the right to disconnect from work should take into consideration the vulnerable work populations as well as the changing dynamics of work. Future research should consider the role of these dynamics in perceiving and registering supervisory injustice towards employees and how that impacts employee wellbeing.

Conclusion

Based on social exchange theory, the current study elucidates distinct pathways between managers' challenge and hindrance stressors and employee stress. In particular, the link between these two pathways was examined through managers' engagement in relational job crafting and interpersonal justice implementation. Employee perceptions of LMX was used as a boundary condition to test the relationship between managers' engagement in relational job crafting and employee stress.

To the best of my knowledge, this research is the first to study the relationship between different forms of job stressors in conjunction with the kind of relational job crafting managers engage in. The results of the current research suggest that employees are likely to view their exchanges with the managers positively when managers engage in expansion-oriented relational job crafting and vice versa. The qualitative results of the current study outline several points of convergence, divergence, and a combination. In particular, it was outlined that managers' engagement in relational job crafting is often trickled-down to the employee level. This is an interesting finding as it suggests that stress is not the only thing that is trickled-down at the employee level but it is also the coping mechanism against stress that creates the domino effect. Finally, the current research notes that relational job crafting while useful remedy for managers

struggling with stressful job demands, may compromise managers' ability to implement interpersonal justice at workplace.

To conclude, it is asserted that managers' stressful job demands can play detrimental role in maintaining the wellbeing of the workforce. From a practical viewpoint, the current research highlights the differential effect of different types of stressors on employee wellbeing based on the coping mechanism adopted by managers. Therefore, suitable human resource programs and interventions can be implemented accordingly. Through offering novel lines of inquiry within managerial literature, the current research advances theoretical and empirical understanding of the relational interdependence between manager and employees. It is my hope that this research stimulates future research in this area.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: QUANTITATIVE SCALES

1) JOB DEMANDS: CHALLENGE VS. HINDRANCE STRESSORS

1	2	3	4	5
	Almost		Fairly	Extremely
Never	Never	Sometimes	Often	Often

1.1)   CHALLENGE STRESSORS:

For this section, reflect on how COVID-19 crisis has influenced your work experiences. On a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Extremely Often), state the extent to which the current pandemic has impacted the following:

1	Having to complete a lot of work.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Having to work very hard.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Time pressure.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Having to work at a rapid pace to complete all of my tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Performing complex tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Having to use a broad set of skills and abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Having to balance several projects at once.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Having to multitask your assigned projects.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Having high levels of responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5
10	A high level of accountability for your work.	1	2	3	4	5

1.2) HINDRANCE STRESSORS:

On a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Extremely Often), state the extent to which working during the COVID-19 crisis has resulted in the following:

1	Administrative hassles.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Bureaucratic constraints to completing work (red tape).	1	2	3	4	5
3	Conflicting instructions and expectations from your boss or bosses.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Unclear job tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Conflicting requests from your leader(s).	1	2	3	4	5
6	Inadequate resources to accomplish tasks.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Conflict with peers.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Disputes with coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Office politics.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Coworkers receiving undeserved rewards/ promotions.	1	2	3	4	5

2) RELATIONAL JOB CRAFTING

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

In the following section, we will ask you how you feel about your work interactions. Considering the change in your job demands as a result of COVID-19 crisis, state the extent to which you

agree with the following statements. Please rate the following on a scale from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 5 (Agree Strongly).

1	I expanded my relational network to effectively achieve my work goals	1	2	3	4	5
2	I increased the amount of communication I have with co-workers to get my job done effectively	1	2	3	4	5
3	I increased my opportunities to meet new co-managers to work effectively	1	2	3	4	5
4	I increased the extent to which I deal with other people including co-workers and clients	1	2	3	4	5

Considering the change in your job demands as a result of COVID-19 crisis, state the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Please rate the following on a scale from 1 (Disagree Strongly) to 5 (Agree Strongly).

1	I limited my relational network to effectively achieve my work goals	1	2	3	4	5
2	I limited the amount of communication I have with co-workers to get my job done effectively	1	2	3	4	5
3	I limited my opportunities to meet new co-workers to work effectively	1	2	3	4	5
4	I limited the extent to which I deal with other people including co-workers and clients	1	2	3	4	5

3) INTERPERSONAL JUSTICE

1	2	3	4	5
To a very small extent	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	To a very large extent

The questions below represent the way you treat this particular subordinate when carrying out decision-making procedures. On a scale of 1 (to a very small extent) to 5 (to a very large extent), answer the following questions:

1	Do you treat this subordinate in a polite manner?	1 2 3 4 5
2	Do you treat this subordinate with dignity?	1 2 3 4 5
3	Do you treat this subordinate with respect?	1 2 3 4 5
4	Has he/she refrained from improper remarks or comments?	1 2 3 4 5

4) PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

0	1	2	3	4
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often

Reflecting on your interactions with your manager during the COVID-19 crisis, indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. The questions below will address both positive and negative experiences. Please state your responses on a scale of 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often).

1	In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something (work related) that happened unexpectedly?	0 1 2 3 4
2	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0 1 2 3 4
3	In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"	0 1 2 3 4
4	In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems? (R)	0 1 2 3 4
5	In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way? (R)	0 1 2 3 4
6	In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	0 1 2 3 4

		0 1 2 3 4
7	In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0 1 2 3 4
8	In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things? (R)	0 1 2 3 4
9	In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	0 1 2 3 4
10	In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0 1 2 3 4

5) LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE (LMX)

Reflecting on your overall interactions with your manager/subordinate during the COVID-19 crisis, respond to the following questions. Please state your responses on a scale provided.

	Rarely Occasionally Sometimes Fairly Often Very Often	
1	Do you know where you stand with your manager i.e. do you usually know how satisfied your manager is with what you do?	1 2 3 4 5
	Not a Bit A Little A Fair Amount Quite a Bit A Great Deal	
2	How well does your manager understand your job problems and needs?	1 2 3 4 5
	Not at All A Little Moderately Mostly Fully	
3	How well does your manager recognize your potential?	1 2 3 4 5
	None Small Moderate High Very High	
4	Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, what are the chances that your manager would use his/her power to help you solve problems in your work?	1 2 3 4 5
	None Small Moderate High Very High	
5	Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority your manager has, what are the chances that he/she would "bail you out," at his/her expense?	1 2 3 4 5
	Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree	
6	I have enough confidence in my manager that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so?	1 2 3 4 5
	Extremely Ineffective Worse Than Average Average Better than Average Extremely Effective	
7	How would you characterize your working relationship with your manager?	1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Guide for Managers

Narrative: Tell me about yourself, what you do, and how your work has been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q1: How would you describe your overall job demands have changed as a result of COVID-19?

Probe: Work Expectations. Are these changes stressful (do you find them challenging or hindering your performance in anyway)?

Q2: What are some of the things you have done to adjust to the new job demands?

Probe: Interpersonal connections with others or how these interactions are impacted.

Q3: How would you describe your interpersonal interactions at work have changed as a result of the new job demands? *Probe: Organizational members vs. subordinates*

Q4: Are any of these changes a direct result of your own initiative (adapted from Berg et al., 2010).

Q5: How would you describe these "adjusted" interpersonal interactions impact your ability to demonstrate fairness toward your subordinates?

Probe: Interpersonal fairness. Explain what that is with examples. Ask for a potential example.

Q6: How would you describe the impact of your interpersonal exchanges with your employees affect their emotional wellbeing? *Probe: Morale, motivation, mental wellbeing*

Q7: How would your interpersonal exchanges with your subordinates vary if you could control your job demands?

Q8: Have you actively changed your relationships with others at work due to COVID-19 situation? For an instance, sometimes individuals decide to associate with certain contacts more than others in order to efficiently perform their jobs. Have you actively shaped your work relationships in any of these ways? If so, can you tell me a story of when, how, and with who did it occur? (adapted from Berg et al., 2010).

Interview Guide for Employees

Narrative: Tell me about yourself, what you do, and how your work has been impacted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q1: How would you describe your relationship with your manager?

Probe: Can you tell a story to corroborate with the response?

Q2: In your opinion, what are some of the reasons for the quality of relationship you have enjoyed with your manager?

Probe: ability to take initiative vs. managerial traits

Q3: How would you describe your relational encounters and exchanges with your manager impact your wellbeing at work?

Probe: Stress experienced, emotional wellbeing, physical wellbeing, psychological safety.

Q4: Do you consider your relational exchanges with your manager to be fair?

Probe: How does that impact you. Ask for an example/story.

Q5: Do you consider your manager's relational exchanges with others to be fair?

Probe: How does that impact their wellbeing/ stress?

Q6: Has your relationship with your manager changed during the different waves of the COVID-19 crisis? If so, can you provide me with a suitable example.

Probe: Associated restrictions during different waves of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q7: What does an ideal work -relationship look like between a manager and an employee?

APPENDIX C: CORRESPONDENCE

Sample Email Re. Invitation to Participate in a Research

Greetings:

Thank you for expressing interest in my research. The data will be collected in manager-employee teams. Each manager will fill out a survey and provide name/email of their subordinates, who would also fill out their counterpart survey. Here is the pitch for the respondents.

I write to invite you to take part in a research study investigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on individual work attitudes. The goal of the current research is to examine the interplay between the new work normal as triggered by COVID-19 and interpersonal experiences at work.

You will be asked to participate in an online survey. We do not foresee any risks or discomfort from your participation in the research. Through our survey questions, you might gain some insights that are interesting and potentially beneficial to you. Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Please note that you have the right to not answer any questions or even withdraw from the study. You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. The information you share will be kept completely confidential.

The survey should take about 5 minutes to complete and can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/managers

The link to the employee survey can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/employees

I am happy to discuss this further.

Kind regards,

Huda Masood
Ph.D. Candidate
School of Human Resource Management
York University

Call for participation for self-administered online surveys

Has the "new normal" eaten up all your work hours? Has having to work differently due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your work relationships? Has the new way of working taken its toll on your mental wellbeing? We would like to hear from you and your team!

We are seeking research participants for a study on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on managerial job demands and employee wellbeing. The findings from this study can advance our understanding of how the current pandemic has impacted the way we work and interact. The research findings would contribute to promoting a psychologically safe and healthier workforce. If interested, fill out a quick survey here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1R74g

Kindly note as part of this research, you will be requested to provide the email addresses of your team members. All responses collected as part of our research will be kept confidential.

If you would like to learn more about our study, feel free to email us at hudamas@yorku.ca

Sample Email: Invitation to Participate in an Interview

Greetings:

Thank you for taking the time in completing my survey on COVID-19 work experience and interpersonal attitudes. As part of this project, I am conducting interviews to deepen our understanding of the prevalent work-related issues during the COVID-19 times. I would like to invite you for a zoom interview. The interview would take about 45 -60 minutes of your time. **Participation is voluntary. Participant identity will be kept confidential.**

Here are some of the available time slots in the upcoming two weeks.

April. 6th - any time between 12:30 pm - 7:30 pm (ET)

April. 8th - any time between 10:30 am - 6:30 pm (ET)

April 9th – any time between 9:30 am - 12:30 pm (ET)

Kindly indicate a time of your preference and I will try my best to accommodate it. I can also accommodate some time slots over the weekend if you prefer.

I look forward to connecting with you.

Sincerely,

Huda