E-ISSN: 2981-1686

Journal of Studies in Language Learning and Teaching

www.jsllt.yazd.ac.ir

JSLLT, Vol. 3, No. 2, 71–83.

Paper Type: Original Article

The Interplay of Meaningful Work, Job Crafting, and Proactive Motivation: Moderating Roles of Age, Rank, and Tenure Among Iranian EFL Faculty

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Received: 22 April, 2026 Revised: 22 October, 2026 Accepted: 24 July, 2026

Abstract

Despite the recognized importance of meaningful work as a key human resource factor to enhance employee motivation and organizational quality, empirical research examining its role among university teachers in the Iranian higher education context remains scarce. This study investigates the relationships between meaningful work, job crafting, and proactive motivation among Iranian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) faculty members, while examining the moderating influences of age, academic rank, and tenure. A purposive sample of 150 faculty members from public universities in Iran participated in the study. The data were collected via online surveys using three validated measures including the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), the Job Crafting Scale (JCS), and the Proactive Motivation Scale (PMS). Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) revealed that meaningful work significantly predicts both job crafting ($\beta = 0.262$, $p = .001$) and proactive motivation ($\beta = 0.282$, $p < .001$). Job crafting strongly predicts proactive motivation ($\beta = 0.590$, $p < .001$) and partially mediates the relationship (indirect effect $\beta = 0.154$, 95% CI [0.052, 0.268], Variance Accounted For = 35.4%). The model explained 7.9% of the variance in job crafting and 78.9% of the variance in proactive motivation. Age, academic rank, and tenure did not significantly moderate the relationships. These findings highlight the importance of cultivating meaningful work environments and encouraging job-crafting strategies to enhance faculty motivation and organizational effectiveness in higher education.

Keywords: Meaningful work, Job crafting, Proactive motivation, PLS-SEM, EFL faculty members.

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I | INTRODUCTION

Meaningful work refers to professional activities with significant value and purpose, producing a sense of fulfillment and well-being for individuals (Steger et al., 2012). As Frankl (1946) observed, the search for meaning is a primary human drive, and individuals often extend this pursuit into their professional lives (Collins & Porras, 1996). When people find meaning in their work, it profoundly boosts their satisfaction and overall quality of life (Steger, 2019). Blustein et al. (2023) argue that meaningful work offers important insights into the nature of employment and the complex interactions between macro-level and psychological factors that affect work quality. Research has shown that individuals who view their professions as meaningful tend to experience greater

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Cite this article: Roshani Ghale Sheikhi, Sh., Mohammadi, A.M., (2026), The Interplay of Meaningful Work, Job Crafting, and Proactive Motivation: Moderating Roles of Age, Rank, and Tenure Among Iranian EFL Faculty, *Journal of Studies in Language Learning and Teaching*, *3*(2), 71-83. doi: 10.22034/JSLLT.2026.24476.1126.

psychological well-being and job satisfaction (Arnold et al., 2007). Additionally, meaningful work is a key indicator of work quality (Van der Deijl, 2024), as it fosters motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and organizational commitment (Grant, 2008; Hu & Hirsh, 2017; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Those who see their work as purposeful are more likely to dedicate time, effort, and energy to their roles, ultimately boosting their organizations' productivity (Allan et al., 2019; Tan et al., 2023).

In modern professional environments, job crafting, which is a proactive approach in which individuals intentionally adjust their tasks, relationships, and cognitive perceptions, is made an increasingly important strategy through the pursuit of meaningful work (Laker et al., 2020; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). By engaging in job crafting, employees align their roles more closely with their personal values, interests, and strengths. This behavior exemplifies agency and adaptability, which are crucial in today's dynamic workplaces (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Research consistently demonstrates that job crafting enhances job satisfaction, engagement, and overall well-being (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Vermooten et al., 2019; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Teaching is widely regarded as one of the most meaningful professions (Madalińska-Michalak, 2016) and offers educators frequent opportunities to engage in job crafting. Teachers can modify curricula, innovate classroom practices, or strengthen relationships with students and colleagues (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). Such proactive efforts allow educators to express personal values and creativity in their work (Bruning & Campion, 2019). These self-initiated adaptations contribute to enhanced job satisfaction, self-efficacy, and professional growth (Alonso et al., 2019; Dreer, 2022).

Despite growing global attention to meaningful work and proactive motivation, empirical research on these constructs among university educators in non-Western, particularly Iranian, higher-education contexts remains scarce. Most of the existing studies have been conducted in Western organizational settings, leaving a gap in understanding how cultural values, institutional structures, and career-stage factors shape the meaning-crafting-motivation pathway among EFL faculty members. The Iranian higher education context presents unique cultural and institutional characteristics that may influence how faculty members perceive meaning, autonomy, and engagement. Therefore, this study investigates the interrelationships among meaningful work, job crafting, and proactive motivation among Iranian EFL faculty members and examines the moderating roles of age, academic rank, and tenure.

Research Questions

RQ1: How does meaningful work influence proactive motivation among Iranian EFL faculty members?
RQ2: Does job crafting mediate the relationship between meaningful work and proactive motivation?
RQ3: Does age moderate the relationship between meaningful work and job crafting?
RQ4: Does academic rank moderate the relationship between job crafting and proactive motivation?
RQ5: Does tenure moderate the indirect effect of meaningful work on proactive motivation through job crafting?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is grounded in three complementary theoretical frameworks. First, the self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) posits that the satisfaction of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness fosters intrinsic motivation and well-being. Meaningful work is expected to satisfy these needs and, thereby, energizes the proactive forms of motivation. Second, the job demands-resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) conceptualizes job crafting as a bottom-up resource-building strategy that employees use to optimize their work environment. Third, the proactive motivation model (Parker et al., 2010) identifies "reason to", "can do", and "energized to" motivational states that drive proactive behavior. Together, these frameworks provide the theoretical foundation for hypothesizing that meaningful work predicts proactive motivation both directly and indirectly through job crafting, and that demographic and career-related resources may moderate these pathways.

2.1. Meaningful Work and Proactive Motivation

Proactive behavior represents self-initiated, future-oriented actions aimed at fostering change within the work context or in personal development (Crant, 2000). Parker et al. (2010) define it as employees taking self-directed steps to influence and enhance their circumstances. It encompasses a continuous cycle of

anticipation, planning, and effort (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Even routine behaviors can be proactive when driven by deliberate, change-oriented goals (Griffin et al., 2010).

In dynamic work environments, proactive behavior has been linked to job performance, innovation, and career advancement (Thomas et al., 2010; Tornau & Frese, 2013). Its persistence under challenging conditions (Frese et al., 2007) suggests that deeper motivational forces sustain it. One such force is meaningful work, namely the perception that one's work contributes to a greater purpose or aligns with personal values (de Boeck et al., 2019; Rosso et al., 2010). Meaningful work both enhances intrinsic motivation and strengthens employees' desire to act proactively by linking present actions to long-term purpose and impact (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

The relationship between meaning and proactivity is bidirectional. Employees may experience meaning through proactive behaviors, and meaning itself may fuel such behaviors (Allan et al., 2019; Lam et al., 2016). When individuals actively shape their work environments, they reaffirm their sense of agency and purpose (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For example, a teacher who redesigns a curriculum not only addresses a pedagogical need but also reinforces their identity as an effective educator (Huang & Lai, 2020). The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) offers a valuable lens through which to understand this connection. Consistent with SDT, proactive engagement fulfills needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, each of which enhances meaningfulness. Consequently, meaningful work is expected to positively predict proactive motivation. Building on this line of inquiry, Roshani Ghale Sheikhi et al. (2025) examined the motivational aspects of meaningful work among Iranian EFL faculty members and found that it fosters proactive motivational states, particularly when it satisfies needs for autonomy, competence, and purpose. Their findings, suggest that cultivating meaningfulness in academic work contexts can serve as a foundation for faculty-initiated motivation and engagement, thereby reinforcing the link between perceived meaning and proactive behavior posited in H1.

H1: Meaningful work positively predicts proactive motivation.

2.2. The Mediating Role of Job Crafting

The connection between meaningful work and proactive motivation is often mediated by job crafting, a process through which individuals actively shape the boundaries and conditions of their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Job crafting comprises task crafting (altering tasks or responsibilities), relational crafting (modifying interactions), and cognitive crafting (reframing perceptions of work).

When individuals experience meaningful work, they are more inclined to engage in job crafting to maintain or enhance that sense of meaning (Berg et al., 2013; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013). This aligns with Frankl's (1946) notion of meaning as a primary motivator. In educational contexts, EFL faculty members who find purpose in teaching may redesign instructional methods, strengthen student relationships, or rethink curriculum design (Esmaeilee, et al., 2025; Steger et al., 2012).

Job crafting fulfills basic psychological needs for autonomy and competence, which reinforce meaningfulness and engagement (Pimenta de Devotto et al., 2024). Proactive individuals who craft their jobs often influence leaders and work environments, creating ripple effects that enhance collective performance (Bajaba et al., 2021). Thus, job crafting functions as a bridge that translates internal meaning into an outward, goal-directed behavior.

H2: Job crafting mediates the relationship between meaningful work and proactive motivation.

2.3. Moderating Roles of Age, Academic Rank, and Tenure

The effects of meaningful work and job crafting on proactive motivation may vary according to demographic and career-related factors. Age, academic rank, and tenure shape motivational orientations and available resources, potentially moderating how meaning translates into proactive engagement.

2.3.1. Age as a Moderator

Older employees often derive greater meaning from work due to accumulated achievements and a deepened sense of purpose (Truxillo et al., 2012). The socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen, 2021) posits that, as individuals age, they prioritize emotionally meaningful goals. Consequently, older faculty members may be more inclined to engage in job crafting that aligns responsibilities with personal values, such as mentoring or curriculum development (Haneda & Sherman, 2018). However, subjective age perceptions also matter; faculty members who feel older may exhibit less job-crafting behavior (Nagy et al., 2019).

H3: The positive effect of meaningful work on job crafting is stronger among older faculty members.

2.3.2. Academic Rank as a Moderator

Academic rank reflects institutional authority, autonomy, and influence (Trevor-Roper, 2023). Senior faculty members typically enjoy greater decision-making freedom, enabling them to translate crafted ideas into concrete action. Junior faculty ones may possess high enthusiasm but face structural limitations such as rigid evaluation criteria and administrative oversight (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017). According to the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), individuals with more job resources are better able to transform job-crafting efforts into proactive outcomes.

H4: The relationship between job crafting and proactive motivation is stronger for higher-ranked faculty members.

2.3.3. Tenure as a Moderator

Tenure provides job security and professional stability that may facilitate proactive behaviors. Tenured faculty members are often more confident in experimenting with new approaches (Pérez et al., 2024). This stability reduces fear of failure and encourages long-term commitment to innovation (Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2017). From an SDT perspective (Deci & Ryan, 2000), tenure enhances autonomy and competence, reinforcing both meaningfulness and proactive motivation.

H5: The indirect effect of meaningful work on proactive motivation through job crafting is stronger for faculty members with longer tenure.

III. AIM OF THE STUDY

The present study examines the relationships among meaningful work, job crafting, and proactive motivation among Iranian EFL faculty members in higher education. Specifically, it investigates how perceptions of meaningful work influence faculty members' proactive motivation and explores the mediating role of job crafting. By focusing on the Iranian educational context, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature and seeks to clarify how faculty can reshape their work to align with their values and strengths. The findings are expected to contribute to enhancing faculty motivation, job satisfaction, and professional effectiveness within higher education institutions.

IV. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

This quantitative study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to explore the connections among meaningful work, job crafting, and proactive motivation, as well as the moderating effects of age, academic rank, and tenure. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0 (Hair et al., 2021). PLS-SEM was chosen for its suitability for predictive modeling, theory development, and analysis of complex models with latent variables and non-normal data distributions.

4.2. Participants and Sampling Procedure

A purposive sample of 150 EFL faculty members was drawn from public universities in various regions of Iran (Arak, Khuzestan, Yazd, Ilam, Tehran, Shiraz, and Isfahan). The sampling strategy ensured that the participants were actively engaged in teaching and research and could reflect meaningfully on their professional experiences. All the participants held doctoral degrees (PhD) in applied linguistics, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), or related disciplines. Participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained electronically, and confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed.

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample. Of the 150 participants, 68 (45.3%) were male and 82 (54.7%) were female. The academic ranks included instructors (n = 28, 18.7%), assistant professors (n = 62, 41.3%), associate professors (n = 42, 28.0%), and full professors (n = 18, 12.0%). The participants ranged in age from 30 to 65 years (M = 44.6, SD = 8.2) and reported 5 to 25 years of teaching experience (M = 14.3, SD = 5.7).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants (N = 150)

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	68	45.3
Female	82	54.7
Academic Rank		
Instructor	28	18.7
Assistant Professor	62	41.3
Associate Professor	42	28.0
Full Professor	18	12.0
Age (years)	M = 44.6	SD = 8.2
Teaching experience (years)	M = 14.3	SD = 5.7

Note: The percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. The sample size of 150 met the 10-times rule for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2021).

4.3. Instruments

Three validated instruments were employed. All the items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The complete survey contained 42 items and required approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

4.3.1. Meaningful Work

The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI; Steger et al., 2012), a 10-item self-report scale, was employed to assess the employees' perceptions of meaningful work. The instrument measures three interrelated dimensions including positive meaning in work, meaning-making through work, and greater-good motivations. The participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Absolutely Untrue*) to 5 (*Absolutely True*).

4.3.2. Job Crafting

The Job Crafting Scale (JCS; Tims et al., 2012), consisting of 15 items, was used to capture the employees' proactive efforts to modify the tasks as well as the relational and cognitive boundaries of their jobs. The responses were provided on a 6-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*Hardly Ever*) to 6 (*Very Often*).

4.3.3. Proactive Motivation

The Proactive Motivation Scale (PMS), adapted from Parker et al. (2010) and comprising 16 items, was administered to assess the intrinsic and controlled motivational orientations that underlie proactive work behavior. In addition, demographic information (age, gender, academic rank, and tenure) was collected.

4.4. Instrument Reliability and Validity

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR); all the constructs exceeded the recommended .70 threshold. Convergent validity was evaluated through average variance extracted (AVE), with values exceeding .50. Discriminant validity was verified using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT; Henseler et al., 2015); all the HTMT values were below .85.

4.5. Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected online through Google Forms between December 20, 2023, and March 12, 2024. A cover page explained the study's purpose, assured confidentiality, and included an informed-consent statement. Of the 220 distributed questionnaires, 150 were completed (response rate = 68%). The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's α) from the full sample were meaningful work = .909, job crafting = .858, and proactive motivation = .886 (see Table 2).

4.6. Data Analysis

Following the two-step PLS-SEM procedure (Hair et al., 2021), the measurement model assessment examined the indicator loadings, Cronbach's alpha, CR, and AVE. the indicators with loadings above .70 were retained. Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT criteria. The structural model assessment tested hypothesized relationships and moderating effects via bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The model quality was assessed using standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normed fit index (NFI).

V. RESULTS

The data were analyzed using PLS-SEM via SmartPLS 4.0 (Hair et al., 2021). Both the measurement and structural models were assessed.

5.1. Measurement Model Assessment

All the factor loadings exceeded .70. As summarized in Table 2, all the constructs achieved α and CR values above .70 and AVE values above .50, establishing internal consistency and convergent validity. The discriminant validity was confirmed via HTMT ratios below .85 (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 2. Reliability and Convergent Validity of the Constructs

Construct	α	CR (ρ_a)	CR (ρc)	AVE
Job crafting	0.858	0.873	0.881	0.539
Meaningful work	0.909	0.912	0.925	0.556
Positive meaning	0.952	0.953	0.965	0.875
Proactive motivation	0.886	0.887	0.914	0.639
Cognitive crafting	0.908	0.908	0.931	0.730
Greater-good motivation	0.873	0.877	0.922	0.798
Intrinsic motivation	0.887	0.888	0.922	0.746
Meaning-making through work	0.823	0.824	0.894	0.739
Relational crafting	0.892	0.904	0.920	0.697
Self-efficacy	0.885	0.885	0.916	0.684

5.2. Structural Model Assessment

A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was practiced to compute the path coefficients, t values, and p values. Table 3 presents the results of the direct, indirect, and moderating effects.

Table 3. Direct, indirect, and moderating effects

Path	β	t	p	Result
Meaningful work → Job crafting	0.262	3.180	.001	Supported
Meaningful work → Proactive motivation	0.282	3.686	< .001	Supported
Job crafting → Proactive motivation	0.590	8.037	< .001	Supported
Meaningful work → Job crafting → Proactive motivation	0.154	2.964	.003	Supported
Age × Meaningful work → Job crafting (H3)	0.041	0.612	.541	Not supported
Rank × Job crafting → Proactive motivation (H4)	0.028	0.445	.656	Not supported
Tenure × (MW → JC → PM) (H5)	0.019	0.331	.741	Not supported

Note: MW = meaningful work; JC = job crafting; PM = proactive motivation. The 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval for the specific indirect effect was [0.052, 0.268]. Variance Accounted For (VAF) = 35.4%, indicating partial mediation (Hair et al., 2021).

Meaningful work significantly and positively predicted both job crafting and proactive motivation. Job crafting strongly predicted proactive motivation and partially mediated the relationship between meaningful work and proactive motivation. The individual moderating effects of age, academic rank, and tenure were not statistically significant (all $p > .05$).

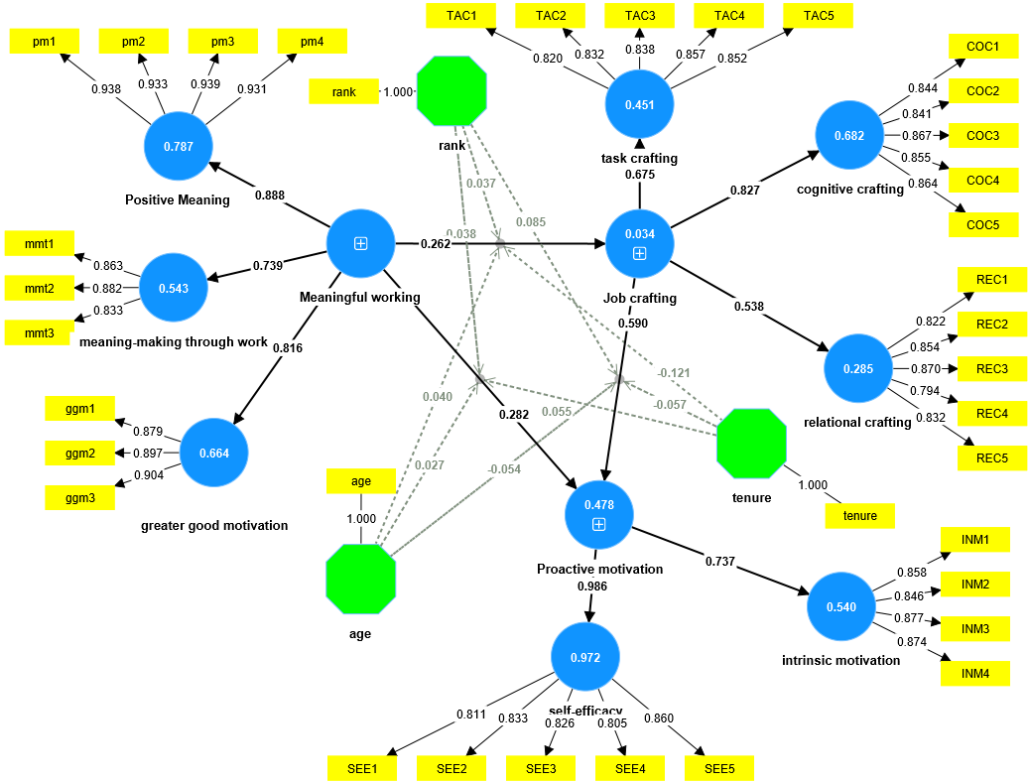


Figure 1. Structural model with path coefficients and t values

5.3. Effect Sizes and Explained Variance

The explanatory power of the model was assessed through the Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Effect Size (f^2) statistics.

Table 3. Coefficient of determination (R^2) and effect sizes (f^2)

Dependent variable	R^2	f^2	Effect strength
Job Crafting	0.079	0.078	Small
Proactive Motivation	0.789	0.643	Large

The R^2 values suggest that the model explains 7.9 % of the variance in job crafting and 78.9 % of the variance in proactive motivation. Based on Cohen's (1988) guidelines, the effect size of job crafting on proactive motivation is large ($f^2 = 0.643$), the effect of meaningful work on proactive motivation is medium ($f^2 \approx 0.15$), and its effect on job crafting is small ($f^2 = 0.078$). Overall, the model demonstrates substantial predictive power for proactive motivation.

5.4. Predictive Relevance and Model Fit

Stone-Geisser Q^2 values were all greater than zero (meaningful work = 0.464, job crafting = 0.267, proactive motivation = 0.767), confirming satisfactory predictive relevance. The SRMR value was 0.155, above the ideal threshold of 0.08, indicating moderate rather than excellent fit. Nevertheless, the high R^2 and Q^2 values, together with significant path coefficients, support the theoretical and predictive utility of the model.

Table 4. Predictive relevance (Q^2) of the constructs

Construct	Q^2
Meaningful Work	0.464
Job Crafting	0.267
Proactive Motivation	0.767

VI. DISCUSSION

This study investigated the interplay between meaningful work, job crafting, and proactive motivation among Iranian EFL faculty members, examining the potential moderating effects of age, academic rank,

and tenure. Using SmartPLS 4.0 and the PLS-SEM approach, the findings provide insights into how meaning, autonomy, and motivation interact within Iranian higher education.

6.1. Meaningful Work, Job Crafting, and Proactive Motivation

Meaningful work significantly predicted both job crafting and proactive motivation, supporting H1 and aligning with prior research that positions meaningful work as a psychological catalyst for self-driven behavior (Bruning & Campion, 2019; Grant, 2007; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Faculty members who find meaning in their work are more likely to adapt teaching strategies, develop new courses, or mentor students, i.e., actions that enhance both personal satisfaction and institutional contribution. These findings are consistent with recent evidence that meaningful work fosters engagement and organizational commitment across diverse occupational groups (Allan et al., 2019; Blustein et al., 2023). More importantly, the present results extend this literature to the Iranian EFL higher-education context. Qualitative studies with Iranian EFL faculty members have shown that teachers experience meaning primarily through beneficence (positively affecting students' lives), competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Roshani Ghale Sheikhi et al., 2025). When these needs are satisfied, teachers are intrinsically motivated to act proactively, redesigning courses, mentoring colleagues, or reframing bureaucratic constraints as opportunities for professional growth. Thus, meaningful work does not merely correlate with engagement; it also supplies the "reason to" motivational state (Parker et al., 2010) that energizes self-initiated change.

Job crafting strongly predicted proactive motivation and partially mediated the meaningful work-proactive motivation link, supporting H2. This mediation is consistent with the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and with empirical work showing that job crafting fulfills needs for autonomy and competence (Pimenta de Devotto et al., 2024; Tims & Bakker, 2010). In the Iranian EFL setting, faculty members who cognitively reframe their teaching role or expand relational networks appear to convert a sense of purpose into concrete proactive energy. Recent Iranian studies confirm that EFL teachers deliberately use the task of relational and cognitive crafting to enhance both personal well-being and instructional effectiveness (Esmaeilee, 2025). The VAF of 35.4% indicates partial rather than full mediation, suggesting that meaningful work also exerts a direct motivational influence beyond the crafting pathway. This is an observation that resonates with Parker et al.'s (2010) "reason to" motivational state. In other words, the perception of purpose itself can energize proactive behavior even when structural opportunities for crafting are limited.

6.2. The Moderating Roles of Age, Rank, and Tenure

Unexpectedly, age, academic rank, and tenure did not significantly moderate the hypothesized paths (H3-H5). The positive relationships among meaningful work, job crafting, and proactive motivation appear relatively stable across demographic and career-stage categories. This finding may reflect cultural and professional homogeneity within the Iranian EFL community, where shared values, namely dedication to student development, collective responsibility, and professional identity as language educators, override demographic distinctions (Roshani Ghale Sheikhi et al., 2025). It is also consistent with the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which posits that intrinsic motivation arises primarily from autonomy, competence, and relatedness rather than from external or demographic factors.

VII. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

This research provides empirical evidence that meaningful work significantly enhances proactive motivation, both directly and indirectly through job crafting, among Iranian EFL faculty members. Those who find purpose and value in their teaching are more likely to engage proactively in shaping their professional environment, thereby improving personal fulfillment and institutional outcomes. The demographic factors did not moderate these relationships, underscoring the overarching role of meaning as a motivational driver across career stages.

7.1. Theoretical Contributions

The study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, it integrates SDT, the JD-R model, and the proactive motivation framework to explain how meaningful work translates into proactive engagement via job crafting in a higher-education setting. Second, it extends the research on job crafting and meaningful work, predominantly conducted in Western organizational contexts, to Iranian EFL faculty

members, addressing a documented geographical and disciplinary gap. Third, by testing age, rank, and tenure as moderators and finding non-significant effects, the study suggests that the meaning-crafting-motivation pathway may be more universal than previously assumed, at least within relatively homogeneous academic communities.

7.2. Practical Implications

University administrators and department chairs can apply these findings by (a) fostering a sense of purpose through mission-aligned teaching and research opportunities, (b) providing structured support for job crafting (e.g., curriculum flexibility, mentoring programs, collaborative teaching teams), and (c) designing professional-development workshops that help faculty members identify and enact tasks and relational, and cognitive crafting strategies. Because the benefits of meaningful work appear consistent across career stages, interventions need not be age- or rank-specific; rather, they can be offered broadly to enhance faculty motivation, retention, and educational quality.

7.3. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal or experimental designs would strengthen claims about directionality. Second, the purposive sample of 150 faculty members from public universities limits generalizability to private institutions or other national contexts. Third, all the data were self-reported, raising the possibility of common-method bias, although the HTMT and measurement-model results mitigate this concern to some extent. Fourth, the SRMR value indicated only moderate model fit. Future studies should recruit larger, more diverse samples, incorporate multi-source or multi-wave data, and examine additional moderators (e.g., organizational support, cultural values) and mediators (e.g., work engagement, psychological empowerment).

Use of Generative AI: An AI-based language model was used exclusively to assist in editing the language and improving the clarity of the manuscript. No AI tools were used for the data analysis, data generation, or scientific interpretation. All the scientific content, results, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

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