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Crafting Creativity: How A Climate for Cooperation Fosters Creative Performance through Job Crafting

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Abstract
This study examines how a climate for cooperation is associated with creative performance in coworking spaces through job crafting and whether job control modifies these associations. Drawing on a sample of 153 coworking users, we test a moderated mediation model in which cooperative climate is related to four job crafting dimensions, which are in turn associated with creative performance. Results show that increasing structural resources, social resources, and challenging demands mediate the positive associations between cooperative climate and creativity. Job control amplifies the positive effects of cooperative climate on three job crafting behaviors. Findings clarify the micro-level associations between cooperation, proactivity, and creativity in coworking spaces.

Keywords: Climate for Cooperation, Creative Performance, Job Crafting

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1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, work organization has transformed significantly (Spinuzzi et al., 2018). Coworking spaces have emerged as hybrid environments that combine autonomy and cooperation, attracting freelancers and independent professionals seeking both flexibility and community arrangements (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2020; Bouncken et al., 2018).

Since their early appearances in San Francisco and London in 2005 (Waters-Lynch & Duff, 2019), shared workspaces have proliferated worldwide, with nearly five million users across 50,000 locations classified as coworking spaces before the COVID-19 pandemic (Rese et al., 2020). Their widespread diffusion and persistence may derive from a configuration that enables autonomy, creativity, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and innovation, merging social and professional resources without hierarchical boundaries (Bouncken et al., 2022). Their success is also rooted in three defining characteristics that represent a new concept of "organizationality" (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2020; Blagoev et al., 2019; Garrett et al., 2017): openness, which allows diverse professionals to coexist and interact; inherent relationality, which fosters spontaneous and planned encounters among peers; and a challenging nature, which grants workers autonomy while demanding self-management and initiative (Bouncken et al., 2018; Bueno et al., 2018; Rese et al., 2020).

Coworking spaces typically provide shared facilities, extended access, and community events, services and amenities designed to foster interaction and flexibility (Garrett et al., 2017). A coordinating figure often balances structure and informality, maintaining both autonomy and social exchange (Bouncken et al., 2020). In doing so, they respond effectively to the emerging needs of knowledge workers, who often seek both independence and community to overcome isolation and foster a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Because of these distinctive features, coworking spaces are often portrayed as open-source environments (Bouncken et al., 2022) that stimulate entrepreneurial and creative behaviors (Bouncken et al., 2018). They represent co-created experiences (Garrett et al., 2017) in which users actively shape their roles, relationships, and modes of participation within the framework designed by providers. Yet, as Merkel (2018) reminds us, mere spatial proximity is not enough: without proactive engagement, the coworking experience risks turning into a "working alone, together" situation (Spinuzzi, 2012).

Despite the growing scholarly attention to coworking spaces, most studies have focused on their new organizational archetype (Blagoev et al., 2019; Bouncken et al., 2020; Jakonen et al., 2017) and their functioning (Bouncken et al., 2021; Rese et al., 2020). The behaviors of users have been mostly overlooked in the available literature. However, an understanding of the fundamental ingredients for an optimal coworking experience is needed, since coworking users' participation implies a specific effort to take advantage of the setting offered by providers (Butcher, 2018).

2. Research objectives, questions, and framework

This study aims to advance the understanding of how coworking users can make the most of their professional experience by actively leveraging the cooperative and flexible environment in which they work. Specifically, we address the following research questions: Is a climate for cooperation associated with the four dimensions of job crafting among coworking users? Does job control moderate the positive association between climate for cooperation and job crafting behaviors? Are job crafting behaviors positively associated with creative performance in coworking spaces? To answer these questions and contribute to filling a gap in the literature, we propose a moderated mediation model in which we expect that the climate for cooperation positively influences each dimension of job crafting, with job control strengthening these effects. In turn, job crafting behaviors are expected to increase users' creative performance.

By integrating organizational culture (climate for cooperation), psychological (job control), behavioral (job crafting), and performance (creative performance) factors, this study contributes to the literature on coworking spaces and organizational behavior in three main ways. First, it highlights how psychological climates shape proactivity within non-traditional workplaces. Second, it clarifies the boundary conditions under which the benefits of cooperation may be enhanced. Finally, it provides empirical evidence of the mechanisms that connect proactive behaviors to creative performance.

Overall, this research contributes to the literature on coworking as hybrid work environments by clarifying how contextual and psychological factors are jointly associated with creativity (Berdicchia et al., 2024[1]; Blagoev et al., 2019; Bouncken et al., 2020).

3. Literature review and research hypotheses development

3.1 The relationship between climate for cooperation and job crafting

Cooperation has been conceptualized as coordinated joint action toward shared objectives (Lu and Argyle (1991). At the organizational level, cooperation has also been analyzed through the social and organizational conditions that enable or constrain collaborative processes (Simpson & Willer, 2015). In this regard, the concept of organizational climate (Schneider et al., 2013) reflects shared norms emphasizing collective goals over individual gain (Collins & Smith, 2006, p. 547). Such

[1] The current study is part of a wider research project on organizational dynamics in coworking spaces, with a specific focus on the relevance of job crafting for creativity in coworking spaces. A previous study (Berdicchia et al. 2024), explored the motivational pathways linking job crafting to creativity through meaningfulness, conditional on knowledge sharing. This study, instead, explores an organizational pathway by investigating whether a cooperative climate translates into creative performance via job crafting, with job control acting as the critical enabling boundary condition.

climates foster trust, support, and knowledge exchange while reducing opportunism (Ding & Chang, 2019). In coworking spaces, cooperative climates tend to arise less from formal organizational arrangements and more from the informal, community-based interactions that characterize these decentralized work settings.

More studies have also explored the connection between cooperation and proactive behaviors, examining constructs such as helping behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, and altruistic behavior (e.g., Grant & Ashford, 2008). The concept of job crafting was first introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who described it as the self-initiated, proactive modification of the task and relational boundaries by the employees to better align their job with their preferences, strengths, and values. Through these changes, employees actively shape the way they perform their jobs, reinterpret their work roles, and redefine the meaning associated with them. Later developments grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework (Tims & Bakker, 2010) conceptualized job crafting as a group of intentional behaviors through which workers modify their job characteristics, either by expanding resources or by managing demands, to achieve a better person–job fit. Within this perspective, four main forms of job crafting can be distinguished: individual behaviors aimed at increasing one's structural resources (e.g., autonomy, responsibility, opportunities for development), increasing one's social resources (e.g., seeking feedback, support, or collaboration), increasing one's challenging demands (e.g., engaging in complex or stimulating tasks that foster growth), and decreasing one's hindering demands (e.g., minimizing stressors that impede performance) (Tims et al., 2012). These behaviors allow workers to balance effort and reward, promote engagement and satisfaction, and prevent exhaustion and disengagement (Rudolph et al., 2017; Zhang & Parker, 2018).

According to Tims and Bakker (2010), the work environment represents a critical source of stimuli that can encourage personal initiative and enhance the possibility to make changes in the job design. In coworking spaces, which are structured around both autonomy and interaction (Bouncken et al., 2018), the climate for cooperation is a key component of the work environment since workers are not "coworkers" under the same organization but "coworking users" who need to proactively leverage the contextual opportunities provided by the environment to satisfy their social and professional needs and ensure a fulfilling work experience.

Because job crafting involves risk-taking beyond formal job boundaries, individuals must perceive psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999). A cooperative climate reduces interpersonal threat, encouraging experimentation, feedback seeking, and skill development.

By lowering the perceived costs of proactivity (Parker et al. (2010), cooperation facilitates increases in structural and social resources. In coworking spaces, the psychological safety derived from a cooperative climate encourages users to explore, learn, and take initiative. For this reason, we argue that coworking users may perform the proactive behavior of increasing structural resources by looking for more autonomy, responsibility and knowledge motivated by their willingness to strengthen their ability to navigate a self-directed and dynamic work context.

Job crafting behavior aimed at increasing social resources is inherently related to cooperation. A cooperative climate encourages individuals to seek feedback, request advice, and build networks of support. In coworking spaces, this process is amplified by spatial proximity.

A cooperative climate may also stimulate proactive efforts aimed at modifying job demands. From a Self-Determination Theory perspective (SDT, Deci & Ryan, 2000), cooperative climates are likely to support autonomy, competence, and relatedness, strengthening intrinsic motivation. In cooperative coworking spaces, the presence of mutual support may create a sense of competence and relatedness that may make users feel more inclined to take on stimulating tasks, explore new projects, or assume greater responsibilities, thus increasing their challenging job demands. Furthermore, according to SDT, contexts that satisfy basic psychological needs allow individuals to act with authenticity and self-regulation, reducing controlled or externally driven forms of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In cooperative climates, users may feel empowered to set boundaries, reject requests that produce stress, or restructure their workload in ways that sustain well-being and effectiveness. In this sense, climate for cooperation may provide the motivation necessary to amplify challenges that bring mastery and satisfaction while minimizing obstacles and hindering demands that deplete energy.

In summary, a climate for cooperation promotes all four dimensions of job crafting by providing both the social and psychological foundations for proactive self-regulation in work design. In coworking spaces, where collaboration is both an organizing principle and a source of individual value, cooperation acts as an enabling condition for users to continuously reshape their work.

3.2 The relationship between job crafting and creative performance

In literature, creativity is generally defined as the generation of useful and new ideas, where both novelty and usefulness are fundamental characteristics since neither, without the other, is sufficient to identify a truly creative process (Amabile, 1983). In organizational research, creativity is conceptually linked to innovation, which refers to the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization (Amabile, 1988). Thus, creativity represents the cognitive and motivational foundation of innovation processes. Amabile's "Componential Model of Creativity and Innovation" (1988) was recently reformulated (Amabile & Pratt, 2016), introducing four new elements: the dynamism of creative processes, the importance of affect, the key role of synergistic extrinsic motivation, and the relevance of work meaningfulness. These aspects are particularly relevant in coworking environments, where affective engagement and perceived meaningfulness are key drivers of individuals' creative behaviors and idea generation. Creative performance refers to "the extent to which employees generate novel and useful ideas regarding procedures and processes at work" (de Stobbeleir et al., 2011, p. 811).

Job crafting has been recognized as a critical behavioral pathway through which individuals translate their proactive orientation into creative performance (Li et al.,

2018). Proactive behaviors stimulate learning, enhance autonomy, and broaden the scope for experimentation, all essential antecedents of creative performance. Parker et al. (2010) proposed that proactive processes are motivated by a future-oriented, change-focused mindset that can promote innovative outcomes. Job crafting has also been found to promote positive motivational states, identified in subsequent studies as intrinsic motivation and role-breadth self-efficacy (Chen et al., 2013), that initiate constructive changes (Jiang & Gu, 2015) which, in turn, lead to increased individual creativity (Gong et al., 2012). Through job crafting, individuals engage in continuous cycles of exploration and refinement, transforming their motivational energy into concrete creative outcomes. In this sense, job crafting represents a mechanism through which workers actively construct the psychological and environmental conditions that sustain creative performance. Moreover, such behaviors require individuals to question established routines, envision alternative ways of working, and experiment with new approaches to task execution or collaboration. Although these actions are not aimed at producing novel and useful ideas in the strict sense of creative output (Amabile, 1988), they nonetheless reflect a process of exploration and boundary redefinition that leads to creative performance. In this regard, job crafting can be viewed as an antecedent that fosters the same psychological conditions, mental orientation, and adaptive skills (such as cognitive flexibility, openness to experience, and tolerance for ambiguity) that are known to support creativity, while also involving exploratory and change-oriented actions consistent with proactive motivation models (Parker et al., 2010).

More specifically, in line with the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Tims & Bakker, 2010), through job crafting behaviors aimed at increasing structural and social resources, individuals gain autonomy, feedback, and informational diversity that support creative engagement (Amabile, 1988; Zhang et al., 2018). In coworking spaces, where users operate in loosely structured, non-hierarchical environments, these two forms of resource crafting may play a decisive role in sustaining creativity. The proactive expansion of structural resources enables users to self-direct their work and explore new approaches to problem-solving, while the cultivation of social resources nurtures mutual learning and the cross-fertilization of ideas among diverse professionals. Together, these processes provide the motivational and cognitive foundations that allow coworking users to transform proactive behaviors into creative performance.

Prior research has shown that job demands can significantly impact employee creativity (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). More specifically, we argue that the behavior of increasing challenging demands is positively associated with creativity for two main reasons. First, stimulating tasks provide learning (Zhang & Bartol, 2010), experimentation, problem solving, and excitement about one's work (Shalley et al., 2004), key characteristics needed for developing creative ideas (Sun et al., 2020). Second, taking on new projects, acquiring unfamiliar skills, or assuming complex responsibilities exposes workers to diverse knowledge domains and encourages divergent thinking and the discovery of new ways of performing their job, contributing to the generation of novel and useful ideas (Sun et al., 2020). In coworking spaces, such behaviors may be particularly salient, as users autonomously

choose projects and collaborations that align with their personal goals and interests, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation and creative engagement.

Conversely, decreasing hindering demands allows individuals to manage or eliminate aspects of work that consume cognitive energy without contributing to learning or performance (Sun et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2012). Reducing these kinds of demands allows workers to conserve their finite energy and mental resources that can be redirected toward creative problem-solving. In coworking environments, where individuals must self-regulate their workload and boundaries, such proactive efforts can preserve mental energy and sustain the focus required for creative activity. Through these two complementary forms of demand crafting, workers can optimize their resource allocation, enabling a balance between challenge and manageability that supports sustained creativity and innovation. In coworking spaces, where users autonomously structure their work and interactions, job crafting behaviors represent an effective strategy to support this dynamic process. By expanding challenging demands and minimizing hindering ones, coworking users can sustain the optimal level of stimulation and focus that enables creative engagement. Thus, job crafting not only provides the structural and social foundations for creativity but also facilitates the ongoing adjustment and energy regulation required for creative performance to emerge.

For all the above-mentioned reasons, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: The effect of climate for cooperation on creative performance through H1a) increasing structural resources, H1b) increasing social resources, H1c) increasing challenging demands, and H1d) decreasing hindering demands is positive.

3.3 The moderating role of job control

Job control refers to the perceived ability to influence one's work environment and to make choices regarding how tasks are carried out, to make work more rewarding and less threatening (Ganster, 1989). It encompasses the degree of discretion and decision-making opportunity individuals possess over the organization and execution of their work activities (Fernet et al., 2004). Previous research has analyzed the positive outcomes of job control, such as improved performance, increased job satisfaction, and mental health (Hackman & Lawler, 1971) and decreased anxiety, psychological distress, and burnout (Terry & Jimmieson, 1999).

From a motivational standpoint, job control fulfills the basic psychological need for autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000), enabling individuals to experience a sense of agency and ownership over their work. Autonomy is conceptualized as the discretion that individuals have in designing their work and its procedures (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), therefore, it may be viewed as a similar construct to job control. Within job design theories such as the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), the Job Demand–Control Model (Karasek & Theorell, 1990), and the Job Demands–Resources model (Tims & Bakker, 2010), autonomy is recognized as a central job resource that supports motivation, learning, and performance.

A cooperative climate provides clear signals that shape interpersonal perceptions and expectations, fostering a sense of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) and thus facilitating proactive behaviors. However, these opportunities for proactivity are not automatically activated. To translate a cooperative climate into actual proactive behaviors, workers must also perceive that they have sufficient discretion and control over their work to take initiative. In line with previous literature, we argue that autonomy acts as an enabler of individual initiative (Grant & Ashford, 2008) and as a key contextual element enabling job crafting opportunities (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) because it provides workers with the discretion and confidence necessary to transform motivational drives into behavioral initiatives.

In this study, we argue that job control may amplify the strength of the relationship between climate for cooperation and job crafting behaviors by increasing individuals' sense of agency and the perception of having psychological permission to act. Conversely, under conditions of low job control, even a supportive and collaborative environment may remain unexploited, with fewer possibilities to act according to the individual's will. Workers may perceive constraints, deadlines, or a lack of freedom that limit their ability to move beyond prescribed routines, resulting in a form of passive adaptation rather than active crafting. The perception of agency plays a pivotal role: a cooperative climate signals that proactivity is socially safe, while job control ensures that it is effectively feasible. This mechanism aligns with previous theories of proactive motivation (Parker et al., 2010) that underline that positive interpersonal climates and social processes (such as the support of coworkers), together with "can do" motivational states created by perceptions of control, contribute to producing proactive goal generation and striving.

Concerning the four specific job crafting behaviors, when job control is high, individuals are more likely to transform the positive energy and psychological states derived from a climate for cooperation into increasing structural resources. This happens because cooperating with peers while having discretion over one's work processes may direct personal choices toward experimentation. Workers who feel free to influence their own work processes are more likely to use collaboration as enrichment by experimenting with new methods, acquiring skills, and seeking information. Similarly, workers with job control may be more open to increasing social resources. The positive climate promoted by cooperation reduces perceived interpersonal threats and competition, fostering reciprocal learning and support, while job control makes workers perceive the freedom to increase their social resources even more.

High job control may also enhance the likelihood of increasing challenging demands. On the one hand, a cooperative climate can normalize challenge-seeking and mutual assistance, but, on the other hand, only under high job control conditions, workers may feel authorized to redefine their boundaries. Through perceived autonomy, individuals balance challenge and manageability, channeling the social and motivational support of cooperation into adaptive regulation of their demands. Finally, job control may facilitate the transformation of cooperation into decreasing hindering demands, as greater flexibility enables individuals to set boundaries, prioritize effectively, and maintain focus and well-being. Even if feeling safe in a

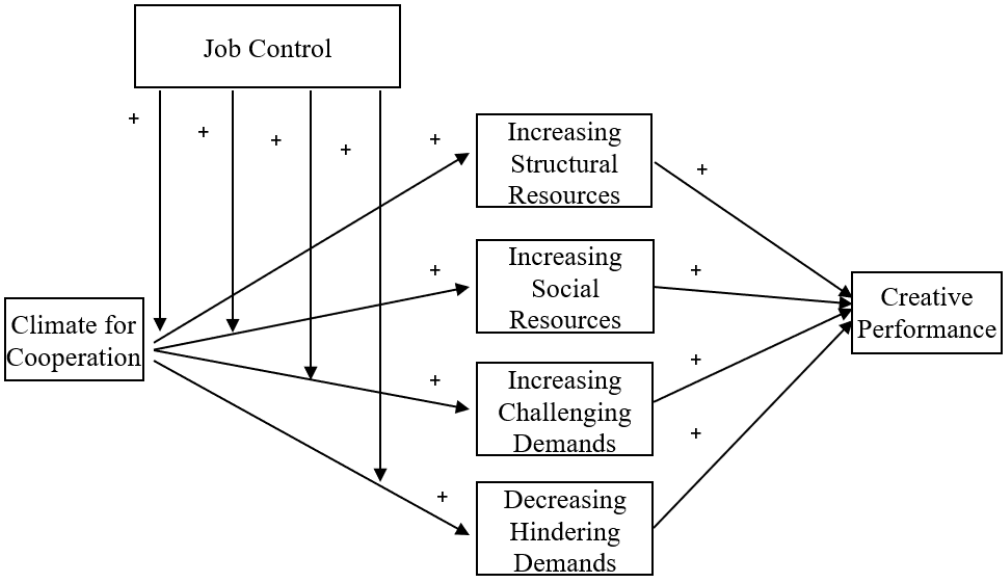
cooperative climate reduces the perceived judgment of delegating or postponing tasks, with job control, the possibility of decreasing hindering demands becomes feasible.

In coworking spaces, this moderating mechanism becomes particularly salient. Although these environments are structurally designed to promote autonomy and flexibility (Garrett et al., 2017), not all users equally perceive or utilize this potential. When coworking users experience high job control, they tend to interpret the cooperative climate as a network of possibilities through which they can improve their professional activity through the increase of resources or the regulation of demands. The sense of discretion and influence over one's work amplifies the motivational and informational value of social exchanges, allowing individuals to translate cooperation into proactive initiatives. Conversely, when job control is perceived as low, even a cooperative atmosphere can lose its activating potential. Users may feel socially connected, but not empowered or free enough to modify or enrich their work practices. In these cases, professional constraints (such as client deadlines or project pressure) can override the cooperative affordances of the space (Jakonen et al., 2017). As a result, cooperation may remain at a relational level, resulting in fewer opportunities for proactivity. Thus, in coworking contexts, the cooperative climate provides the why (motivation and safety) for proactive behaviors, while job control provides the how (means and possibility) that allows users to act upon it.

Hypothesis 2: Job control strengthens the positive relationship between climate for cooperation and H2a) increasing structural resources, H2b) increasing social resources, H2c) increasing challenging demands, and H2d) decreasing hindering demands.

The model we tested is reported in Figure 1.

Figure n. 1 - Proposed model



Source: our elaboration

4. Method

4.1 Participants and Procedures

Data collection was conducted by contacting owners of coworking spaces across the country. After presenting the purpose of the study, their consent to participate was obtained. The questionnaire was initially reviewed with several owners, allowing minor adjustments to reflect characteristics specific to these work settings. In total, surveys were administered in 42 coworking spaces out of the 239 contacted. Within each location, questionnaires were delivered to community managers, who were asked to distribute them to users. Participation was voluntary and anonymous.

A total of 153 fully completed questionnaires were returned. The sample mainly consisted of startup founders, independent professionals, and consultants operating in diverse sectors. Respondents had an average age of 40.56 years and reported a mean job tenure of 9.35 years. Approximately 57% of the sample were women; 11% had a high school diploma, almost 63% had a university degree, and the remainder had a postgraduate certificate or a PhD.

4.2 Measures

Since the study was conducted in Italy, all instruments were translated into Italian and then back-translated into English with the support of a professional translator following the procedure outlined by Brislin et al. (1973), in order to preserve conceptual equivalence between versions.

Climate for cooperation. This construct was measured using the scale proposed by Chatman and Flynn (2001). A representative item is "It is important for us to maintain harmony within our coworking space." Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .90.

Job control. Job control was operationalized through an adaptation of the Job Content Questionnaire (Karasek et al., 1998). A sample item is "I have a lot of say about what happens on my job." The reliability coefficient for this scale was .79.

Job crafting. The four job-crafting dimensions (increasing structural resources, increasing social resources, increasing challenging demands, and decreasing hindering demands) were assessed using the subscales introduced by Tims et al. (2012), adapted for coworking spaces. The adaptation consisted of minor wording changes aimed at contextualizing the original items to the coworking setting, mainly by adding expressions such as "in my coworking space" where necessary. No conceptual changes were made to the original meaning of the items. Given the absence of formal supervisory roles in coworking spaces, items capturing behaviors aimed at obtaining support from supervisors were omitted from the increasing social resources dimension. Example items include: "I try to develop my capabilities" (increasing structural resources); "I ask colleagues for advice" (increasing social resources); "When an interesting project comes along in my coworking space, I offer myself proactively as project coworker" (increasing challenging demands); and "I make sure that my work is mentally less intense" (decreasing hindering demands). Internal consistency coefficients were .84, .92, .90, and .87, respectively.

Creative performance. Self-reported creative performance was assessed with the instrument developed by Shalley et al. (2009), including items such as "The work I produce is creative." The Cronbach's alpha observed for this scale was .75.

Control variables. Age, gender, education, and job tenure were included as controls to account for demographic influences that may relate to innovative outcomes (Zhao et al., 2022).

4.3 Findings

Prior to hypothesis testing, a set of preliminary analyses was carried out. Given that all variables were measured at the same time and based on self-reports, steps were taken to limit the risk of common method variance (CMV) using both procedural and statistical approaches. On the procedural side, the study employed psychometric instruments with prior empirical validation and ensured participant anonymity (Podsakoff et al., 2012). On the statistical side, common method bias was examined through Harman's single-factor test. An exploratory factor analysis including all measurement items showed that the first unrotated factor explained 25% of the

overall variance, a value below the commonly accepted cutoff, indicating that CMV is unlikely to represent a serious issue in the data. We then examined the structural validity of the measures through confirmatory factor analysis conducted in AMOS. The hypothesized measurement model specified seven distinct latent factors: climate for cooperation, increasing structural resources, increasing social resources, increasing challenging demands, decreasing hindering demands, job control, and creative performance, with all indicators loading on their respective constructs. This model showed an acceptable fit to the data [χ^2 /DF = 1.80, CFI = .91, IFI = .91, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .06]. Inspection of the measurement model indicated that all items loaded significantly on their intended constructs and exhibited acceptable standardized factor loadings. Furthermore, the examination of modification indices did not reveal substantial misspecification or cross-loadings that would justify item deletion or model respecification. Therefore, all original indicators were retained in the final model.

We compared this specification with alternative nested models. First, we estimated a six-factor model in which increasing structural resources and increasing social resources were combined into a single factor [χ^2 /DF = 2.45, CFI = .79, IFI = .79, TLI = .76, RMSEA = 0.10]. Second, we tested a four-factor model in which all four job crafting dimensions were collapsed into one latent construct [χ^2 /DF = 3.95, CFI = .56, IFI = .56, TLI = .52, RMSEA = .14]. In both cases, model fit deteriorated relative to the hypothesized seven-factor solution, supporting the discriminant validity of the proposed structure.

The mean, standard deviation, and correlations of the variables used in the study are reported in Table 1.

Table n. 1 - Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of the variables

	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Age	40.56	7.75	–										
2	Gender[a]	0.43	0.50	0.04	–									
3	Job Tenure	9.35	6.79	0.65***	0.06	–								
4	Education[b]	3.16	0.59	-0.14	-0.02	-0.28***	–							
5	Climate for Cooperation	4.46	1.21	-0.02	0.01	-0.08	-0.00	(0.90)						
6	Job control	4.12	0.64	0.07	-0.03	0.06	-0.02	0.26**	(0.79)					
7	Increasing structural resources	4.21	0.50	-0.02	-0.18*	-0.03	-0.09	0.27**	0.29***	(0.84)				
8	Increasing social resources	3.30	0.97	-0.24**	-0.14	-0.17*	0.09	0.38***	0.02	0.28***	(0.92)			
9	Increasing Challenging Demands	3.28	0.89	0.01	-0.10	0.12	-0.12	0.47***	0.14	0.35***	0.60***	(0.90)		
10	Decreasing Hindering Demands	2.47	0.63	-0.09	0.02	0.04	-0.11	-0.06	0.04	0.10	0.06	0.02	(0.87)	
11	Creative Performance	3.19	0.70	-0.10	-0.03	-0.06	0.01	0.38***	0.36***	0.33***	0.47***	0.47***	0.12	(0.75)

Note: Overall sample, N=153; *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. Reliability estimates (Cronbach's alpha) are listed in parentheses on the diagonal.

[a]Gender: male = 1; female = 0;

[b] Education: 1 = middle school diploma or less; 2 = high school diploma; 3 = bachelor degree 4 = master degree or more

Source: our elaboration

4.4 Hypotheses testing

We tested our mediation hypotheses using Model 4 of the PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013). Results indicated that the climate for cooperation significantly predicted three forms of job crafting. Specifically, climate for cooperation was positively associated with increasing structural resources ($\beta = .11$, $p < .001$), increasing social resources ($\beta = .30$, $p < .001$), and increasing challenging demands ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$), while its association with decreasing hindering demands was not significant ($\beta = –.03$, $p = .50$). Analysis of indirect effects further showed that climate for cooperation exerted a significant total indirect effect on creative performance. Significant indirect effects emerged particularly through increasing structural resources ($\beta = .02$, BootCI [.01, .06]), increasing social resources ($\beta = .05$, BootCI [.01, .11]), and increasing challenging demands ($\beta = .06$, BootCI [.01, .12]). We tested the moderated mediation hypothesis using Model 7 of the PROCESS Macro (see table 2).

The indirect effect through decreasing hindering demands was not significant ($\beta = -.01$, BootCI [–.02, .01]). Results showed that job control significantly moderated the effect of climate for cooperation on three job crafting dimensions: increasing structural resources ($\beta = .13$, $p < .01$), increasing social resources ($\beta = .18$, $p = .05$), and increasing challenging demands ($\beta = .16$, $p < .05$). The moderating effect of job control on the relationship between climate for cooperation and decreasing hindering demands was not significant ($\beta = .08$, $p = .240$).

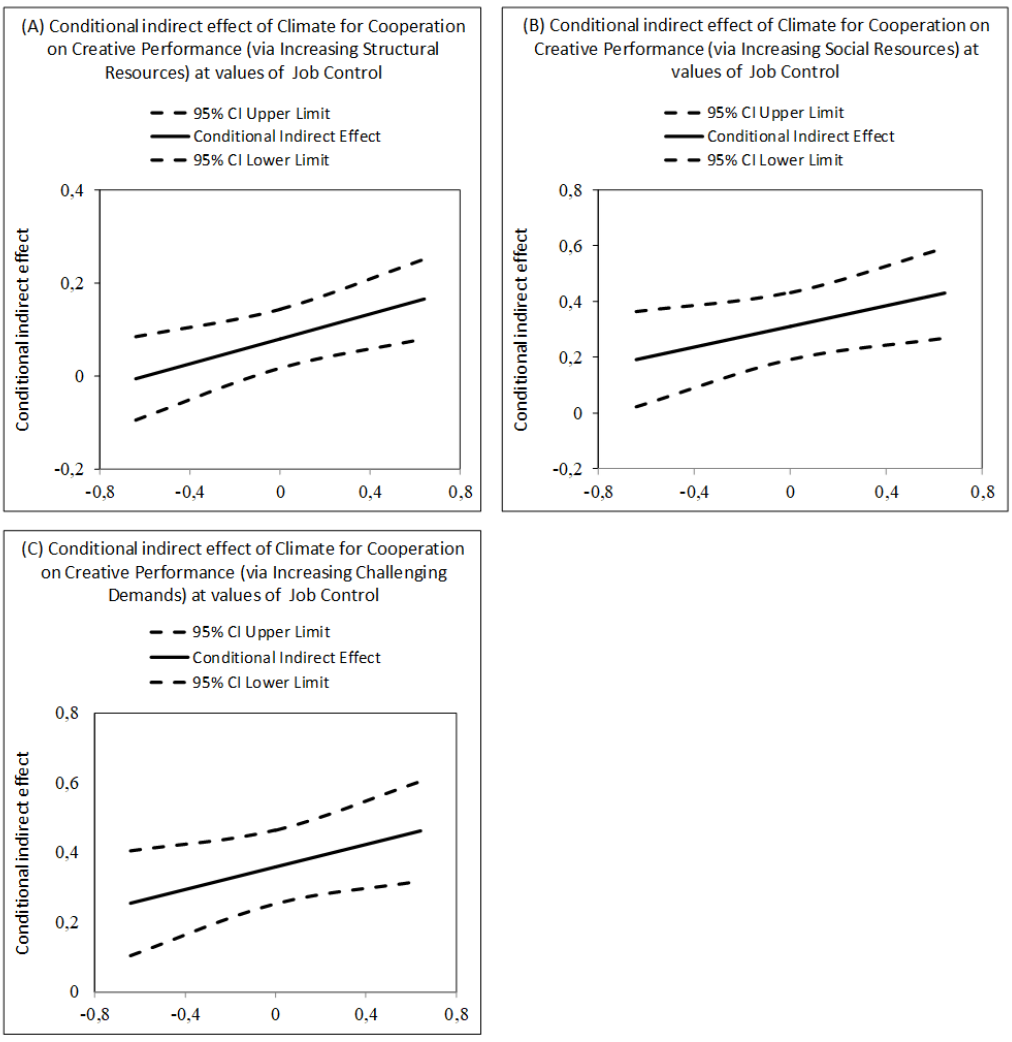
Table n. 2 - Results of regression analysis

Variable	Increasing structural resources		Increasing social resources		Increasing challenging demands		Decreasing hindering demands		Creative Performance	
	B	*SE*	B	*SE*	B	*SE*	B	*SE*	B	*SE*
Intercept	4.59***	0.30	4.27***	0.58	4.12***	0.51	3.30***	0.42	0.84	0.67
Age	-0.00	0.01	-0.03**	0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.02	0.01	-0.00	0.01
Gender	-0.20**	0.07	-0.30*	0.14	-0.22	0.13	0.01	0.10	0.07	0.10
Job Tenure	-0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03**	0.01	0.01	0.01	-0.00	0.01
Education	-0.08	0.07	0.12	0.12	-0.11	0.11	-0.11	0.09	0.04	0.09
Climate for cooperation	0.08*	0.03	0.31***	0.06	0.36***	0.05	-0.04	0.04	0.09	0.05
Job control	0.20**	0.06	-0.09	0.11	0.02	0.10	0.08	0.08		
Climate for cooperation X Job control	0.13**	0.05	0.18*	0.09	0.16*	0.08	0.08	0.07		
Increasing structural resources									0.22*	0.11
Increasing social resources									0.17**	0.07
Increasing challenging demands									0.16*	0.08
Decreasing hindering demands									0.11	0.08
R^2	0.21		0.25		0.30		0.22			
F	5.31***		6.73***		8.92***		0.05			

Note: Overall sample, N=153; *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, ***$p < 0.001$. *Source: our elaboration*

Conditional effect analyses further revealed that climate conditional indirect effects were significant for three mediators. The indirect effect through increasing structural resources ranged from β = –.001 (BootCI [–.02, .05]) at low job control to β = .04 (BootCI [.00, .09]) at high job control. The indirect pathway through increasing social resources ranged from β = .03 (BootCI [.01, .08]) to β = .08 (BootCI [.013, .15]). Similarly, the indirect effect through increasing challenging demands ranged from β = .04 (BootCI [.01, .09]) to β = .07 (BootCI [.01, .15]) across levels of job control (figure 2).

Figure n. 2 - Conditional indirect effect of Climate for Cooperation on Creative Performance through Job Crafting



Source: our elaboration

The indirect effects through decreasing hindering demands remained non-significant. These findings support all proposed hypotheses, except H1d and H2d.

5. Theoretical contribution

This study contributes to the literature on coworking spaces by addressing the call for deeper insights into their internal psychological and behavioral dynamics (Howell, 2022). Although previous research has explored structural and organizational aspects (Bouncken et al., 2021; Yacoub & Haefliger, 2022) (Rese et al., 2021), the micro-level processes through which individuals act, interact, and innovate within these communities remain largely unexplored. Our study is an attempt to shed light on the antecedents of creative performance and the circumstances that strengthen their effect. Coworking spaces, as hybrid work environments, represent a fertile context for examining these dynamics. Compared to traditional organizations, they lack formal hierarchies and standardized procedures, relying instead on self-regulation, and mutual collaboration as guiding mechanisms (Bouncken et al., 2020). Understanding the behavioral mechanisms that permeate these spaces is therefore essential to explain how coworking users make the most of their professional experience. By focusing on individual-level processes, we highlight that the same coworking context may lead to very different outcomes depending on how individuals interpret and act upon the opportunities it provides. In this sense, coworking spaces can be viewed as a new "archetype" of work-life organization in which a cooperative climate, with a consequent increase in proactive behaviors, plays a decisive role in shaping creative performance.

This study also offers several contributions to the literature on cooperation, proactivity, and creative performance in coworking spaces. By empirically linking a construct based on group dynamics, such as a cooperative climate, and a highly personal behavior, such as job crafting, our study shows that when individuals perceive their social environment as trusting and supportive, they engage in self-initiated behaviors that help them manage and enhance their work experience. This suggests that cooperation, traditionally associated with coordination and cohesion, also functions as a trigger for autonomous proactivity.

Moreover, while the relationship between job crafting and creativity has been analyzed before, with mixed results (Demerouti et al., 2015; Wang & Lau, 2021), our study explicitly considers the four different dimensions of job crafting rather than a single, aggregated construct. The non-significant results for decreasing hindering demands further reinforce the importance of distinguishing among job crafting dimensions. In the coworking context, cooperation appears to support primarily expansive and approach-oriented forms of job crafting. By contrast, the behavior of decreasing hindering demands may be less central because coworking users are not usually exposed to the same formalized organizational constraints that characterize traditional employment relationships. Since many coworking users are independent professionals, consultants, or startup founders, they may already experience relatively high autonomy and fewer externally imposed hindering demands. As a

result, a cooperative climate may offer more opportunities to expand resources, relationships, and challenges than to reduce obstacles or constraints. This finding suggests that, in flexible and loosely structured work environments, job crafting may contribute to creativity mainly through resource expansion and challenge seeking rather than through the reduction of hindering demands.

In addition, the findings refine the understanding of job control as a boundary condition for the translation of a cooperative climate into proactive behaviors. High levels of perceived control strengthen the positive relationship between cooperative climates and the expansive forms of job crafting. This indicates that workers must not only perceive an environment that is socially safe but also believe they have the discretion to act upon it.

Taken together, these contributions shed light on the connections between a cooperative climate, proactive behaviors, and creative performance in coworking spaces.

6. Practical implications

This study offers several practical implications. First, the results highlight that a cooperative climate can be a powerful driver of proactive behaviors and creative performance in coworking spaces. Coworking providers should therefore design initiatives that intentionally foster collaboration while ensuring that users maintain a sense of individual discretion and job control. Our findings show that the positive effect of cooperation on proactivity is strengthened by the perception of control. Consequently, in line with previous literature (Yacoub & Haefliger, 2022), our results underline the importance of balancing the protection of individual objectives and inclinations (necessary to preserve job control) and the tendency to be active members of the community (a prerequisite for a climate of cooperation). To do this, they may want to develop policies and spatial or organizational arrangements that preserve individual autonomy while promoting mutual exchange (e.g., by offering flexible work configurations, co-designed projects, or participatory decision-making processes). Training sessions or community-building events could also be structured to strengthen users' awareness of their freedom to shape their work experience and to encourage proactive engagement with others. This balance between social belonging and individual discretion appears crucial to maintain both the collaborative culture and the self-directed nature of coworking.

Second, our findings also provide insights for managers in more traditional organizations. Although coworking spaces represent a distinct work environment, the mechanisms identified may be relevant in any organizational setting that seeks to foster creative performance. Managers and HR professionals could take inspiration from coworking practices by cultivating a climate of trust and cooperation, reducing unnecessary hierarchical barriers, and expanding the employees' perceived control over their work.

Finally, our results also suggest practical takeaways for individual workers and coworking users. Creativity and proactive work behaviors are not only a product of

context but also of intentional self-regulation. Workers who consciously leverage cooperative opportunities while exercising control over their goals, relationships, and workload are more likely to experience satisfaction, development, and creative outcomes. In this sense, the ability to balance social participation and individual agency may represent a key competence for thriving in flexible and collaborative work environments, and a central skill for professional growth in the emerging era of hybrid work.

Taken together, these implications emphasize that fostering cooperation and autonomy in parallel is not only a design principle for coworking spaces but also a managerial challenge relevant to the future of work.

7. Limitations and Future Research

This study presents some limitations that open new avenues for future research.

First, all variables were measured using self-reported data collected at a single point in time. While this approach is consistent with the organizational nature of coworking spaces (where objective indicators and supervisory evaluations are typically unavailable), it prevents causal inference and may expose the findings to common method bias (CMB). However, several procedural and statistical remedies were applied to minimize this risk, and the literature suggests that interaction effects, such as those tested in this study, cannot be attributed to CMB (Siemsen et al., 2010). Future studies could adopt longitudinal or multi-wave designs to better capture how cooperative climates and job crafting behaviors evolve over time and influence creative performance.

Second, the study was conducted exclusively in Italian coworking spaces. Hence, cultural and institutional factors may have influenced how job control and cooperation are experienced. Future research could replicate the study in different countries or cultural contexts.

Finally, our model did not include other potential mediating or moderating mechanisms that may further explain how cooperative climates foster creative performance. Variables such as psychological safety, trust, or work meaningfulness (Amabile & Pratt, 2016) could represent relevant paths for future studies. Multi-level approaches could also clarify how individual perceptions of cooperation interact with collective practices and shared norms within coworking communities.

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