
JOB CRAFTING AND INTENTION TO STAY AMONG UNIVERSITY ACADEMICS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

Literatures suggest that job crafting as bottom-up employee-initiated job design is a contextual resource that enhances acquisition of personal resources thus, creating resource gain spiral. Drawing from resource gain spiral and investment of more resources features of conservation of resources theory, this study examined the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between job crafting and intention to stay among university academics in Nigeria. 248 university academics were surveyed in the study. Data was analyzed via SPSS 22 and PROCESS Macro v4. The study found full mediation effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between job crafting and UAs' intention to stay. The study recommends for the institutionalization of job crafting behavior to enhance UAs' retention in Nigeria.

Key words: job crafting, job satisfaction, intention to stay, university academics, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Academics' (individuals teaching in universities) turnover becomes an issue of concern in Nigeria especially because it incurs extra costs such as decreased research output, quality of teaching, and loss of talent. Turnover among university academics (UAs) in Nigeria is on the high side. UAs simply quit anytime opportunity knock (Kanu et al., 2022). UAs possess higher degrees, expertise and knowledge. This means that inability of Nigeria's educational system to retain these talents is detrimental to both organizations and the economy (Naidoo et al., 2019) because countries look up to universities to provide expert workforce needed in industries (Niyi & Musa, 2020). Batt and Valcour (2003) stressed that the cost of turnover is particularly higher for professionals like academics because it is difficult to replace their knowledge and skills.

Intention to stay (ItS) is employees' willingness to stay and continue with their present employer (Johari et al., 2012). According to theory of reason action, intention is a key predictor of behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) such that the stronger the intention towards a behavior, the more likely the behaviour will be exhibited (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, enhancing employee ItS enhances their actual stay and strengthen their retention. However, employee ItS has received little attention from scholars (Pressley & Garside, 2023).

Studies show that job crafting (JC) is key to enhancing employees' ItS (Cinar & Basim, 2022; Vanbelle et al., 2017). JC is a self-initiated change to one's job in order to align better with the job according to own preference, skills, and ability (Tims et al., 2022). JC is believed to enhance job satisfaction and provide a sense of work meaningfulness (Mousa & Chaouali, 2022; Chen et al., 2021). Khan et al. (2021) argue that JC is a preferred tool adopted by cotemporary organizations to motivate employees towards positive outcomes.

JC could motivate UAs because it offers them with opportunities to decide the “when and how” of their job. Therefore, JC could enable UAs derive more meaning from their job and give them a higher sense of autonomy since they can change their job to suits their preference, which could in turn enhances their ItS because of the fear that they may not get the same opportunity elsewhere. Accordingly, understanding the role of JC in UAs’ ItS in Nigeria’s educational systems will provide new insight to UAs retention. Particularly, understanding the mechanism that underline this relationship will provide broader perspective. A study on JC by Tims et al. (2022) acknowledged dearth of studies on mechanisms (mediators) through which JC affects outcome variables and called for future studies to address this literature gap. Consequently, the current study examines mediating role of job satisfaction (JS) on the relationship between JC and ItS among UAs in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Underpinning Theory

Resources conservation theory which posits that employees strive to gain, retain, and protect perceived valuable resources (Hobfoll et al., 1989) underpins this study. The study particularly leans on the resources gain spiral (resources facilitating resources) and investment of more resources features of the theory. Resources may be internal (personal resources) or external (contextual/organizational resources) (van Wingerden & Poell, 2017). Contextual resources reflect resources available within a social system that can facilitate the acquisition of other resources, hence create resource gain spiral (Kim & Beehr, 2021).

This study perceives that opportunity to craft one’s job to suit ability, preference, and create more meaning will enhance UAs satisfaction with their job. Resources conservation theory holds that losing resources is more salient than gaining resources, hence, individuals strive to conserve and protect resources from loss by investing more resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Therefore, employee tend to stay with the organization as investment of more resources to protect acquired resources against loss.

Overall, the novelty of the current study is the provision of new perspective on how JC leads to UAs retention within the realms of resource gain spiral and investment of more resources of resources conservation theory. Ragsdale and Beehr (2016) acknowledge that extant literature scantily address resource gain spiral perspective of resources conservation theory in workplaces. Thus, the present study contributes in this aspect. Similarly, observing the role of JS as a mediating variable sheds light on the underlying mechanism through which JC leads to employee retention. To the best of our knowledge, no prior study has examined the model of this study, especially among UAs in Nigeria.

Job crafting and job satisfaction

JC describe cognitive and physical changes employees make to their job tasks or relational boundaries of the work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). It is a bottom-up job design based on self-initiated changes to the job by employee in order to align better with the job according to own preference, skills, and ability (Tims et al., 2022). Therefore, employees who are motivated to craft their job proactively change certain aspects of their job tasks (such as changing the numbers or activities to finish one’s job e.g., changing scope, type of task, aims etc.), relationship at workplace (discretion on frequency and quality of interaction with colleagues), or job cognition (enhancing how one sees their job in order to make it more personally meaningful) (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2013).

In this perspective, employees move from this-is-how-you-do-it form of work to a more self-initiated job that align with preference and ability thus, experiences more job meaning and satisfaction (Berg et al., 2013). Consequently, Liu et al. (2022) posits that JC is a means to acquiring more resources which is consistent with how the present study theorized the construct.

JS is defined as positive emotional state as a result of employee’s appraisal of their job experiences (Locke, 1976). Satisfied employees tend to exhibit positive attitude towards the job. According to Rayton and Yalabic (2014), JS reflects how employee feels about the job (affect) and how they think about the various aspects of the job (cognitive). Studies have shown that JS improves employee

morale and positively influences their loyalty (Dhir et al., 2020). Therefore, JS is relevant to organizations and important for successful human resources management (Skelton et al., 2020).

Prior studies have established positive link between JC and JS (Chen et al., 2021; Cheng & Yi, 2018). When employee crafts their job they redefine the job and this enhances their sense of wellbeing because of the increased control over the job (Chen & O-Yang, 2018). A recent meta-analysis by Boehnlein and Baum (2020) concluded that JC significantly and positively affects JS. These findings are consistent with resources gain spiral perspective that resources enhance acquisition of more resources; thus, the study hypothesized that:

H₁: Job crafting has significant positive effect on university academics intention to stay.

Job satisfaction and intention to stay

ItS is employees' cognitive state of wanting to stay and continue in their current job (Mowday et al., 1979). Similarly, Chew and Chan (2008) perceived ItS as employees' intention to remain in their organization. ItS is key to employee retention (Xie et al., 2020). Studies suggest that happy employees that are contented with their job have higher chances to stay with their current employer (Presbitero et al., 2020). Based on these suggestions, we argue that highly satisfied UAs tend to be more contented, thus will be willing to stay since JS is a key variable that affect employee psychological wellbeing (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009). Studies report significant positive link between JS and ItS (Li et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2020).

The tenets of resources conservation theory suggests that individuals invest more resources to secure and protect acquired resources against loss (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Positive evaluation of UAs' job aspect(s) reflects acquired resources due to resource availability within the system which they would not want to loss. Thus, this study perceived that JS has tendency to influence UAs' ItS as resource investment to conserve and protect the positive state of wellbeing they enjoy from the job. Therefore, the study hypothesized that:

H₂: Job satisfaction has significant positive effect on university academics intention to stay.

Job crafting and intention to stay

Opportunity to craft one's job is a resource which employee would not want to loss because they may not get similar opportunity elsewhere. Therefore, employee tend to stay in their organization as resources investment in order to forestall losing crafting opportunity. Prior studies establish positive significant effect of JC on ItS. Cinar and Basim (2022) found significant positive effect of JC on ItS among employees in Turkey. Arguably, JC enhances employee inclination to stay and continue the relationship. Accordingly, this study expects JC to influence UAs' ItS and boost their retention hence, it is hypothesized that:

H₃: Job crafting has significant and positive affect on university academics intention to stay

Mediating effect of job satisfaction

Although studies have examined the link between JC and ItS however studies on the underlying motivational mechanisms that explain how JC influences ItS is limited. Noticeably, the role of JS as a vital form of motivation through which JC translates in to ItS is ignored by existing studies. The present study opted for JS as mediator for two reasons. First, opportunity to craft one's job enhances individuals' wellbeing which affect their experience with the job positively (van Wingerden & Poell, 2017). As such, employees that have the opportunity to craft their jobs tends to be more satisfied with the job (Yeşilkaya, & Yildiz, 2022). Therefore, the current study perceived that JS could elaborate on the influence of JC on desirable outcomes such as employee desire to remain in relationship.

Second, JC is contextual factor based on employee perceived autonomy or opportunity accorded them by the organization to craft their job (van Wingerden & Poell, 2017) which leads to acquisition of other resources (Liu et al., 2022). Thus, JC signifies availability of resources within social context since not every job give employee opportunity or autonomy to craft. Therefore, based on perspective of resources gain spiral, the present study speculates that opportunity to craft one's job result in satisfaction with the job as personally acquired resources.

Furthermore, since losing resources is more salient than gaining, employee tends to invest more resources to protect resources acquired (Hobfoll, et al., 2018, 1989). Accordingly, the present study perceived that employees tend to stay and maintain an existing relationship as a mechanism to conserve and protect acquired resources against loss. Therefore, the study hypothesizes that:

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between job crafting and intention to stay.

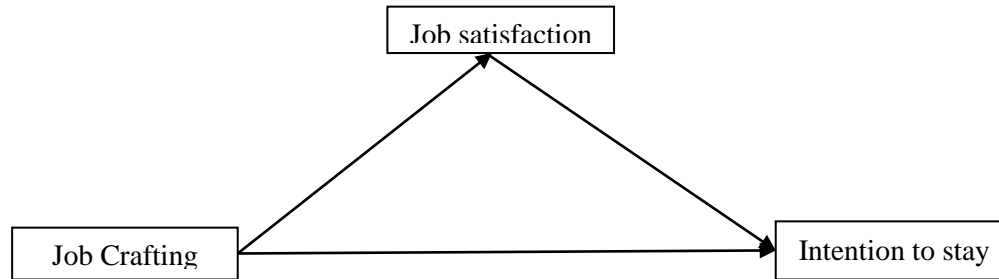


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey method. The population of the study consists 422 academic staff of Yusuf Maitama Sule University Kano, Nigeria (Directorate of Academic Planning, 2020). The study employs G*Power 3.1.9.7 to determine the sample size considered sufficient for the study. A minimum sample of 144 was recommended based on t-test, two independent means, power of 80%, α of 0.05, and effect size of 0.5 as suggested by Kang (2021). 251 academics participated in the study.

However, after data cleansing, 248 responses were used for data analyses. 75% of the respondents were male and 25% were female. While 81% were married, single was 19%. Majority of the respondents were less than 46years (73%). Specifically, respondents' tenure in the academics' environment span between 1year to 10years (77%) which emphasizes the need for this study because findings showed that UAs that are less than 7years in the system have higher tendency to leave for better offers in Nigeria (Arachie et al., 2020).

The variables of the study were measured on five-point Likert scale. While JC was from 1 for "never" to 5 for "all the time", JS and ItS were from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree". JC was measured using 9items scale developed by Niessen et al. (2016). However, the scale was shortened to seven items due to poor factor loadings of some items as shown in figure 2. As such, JC4 (I usually limit the amount of time I spend with people I do not get along well with, and only contact them for things that are absolutely necessary), and JC7 (I try to look upon the tasks and responsibilities I have at work as having a deeper meaning than is readily apparent) were deleted. Cronbach alpha is 0.92.

JS was measured using 5-items shorter version of index of JS scale. The shorter version was developed by Judge et al. (2000). Sinval and Marôco (2020) ascertained the validity and reliability of the scale across different cultures and sex. Example item is "I feel fairly satisfied with my present job". Cronbach alpha is 0.93. ItS was measured using 7items scale developed by Mayfield and Mayfield (2007). However, some phrases such as "current employer" were changed to "this university". Example item is "I would like to work for this university until I retire". Cronbach alpha is 0.92. Consistent with Ka and Aboobaker (2020), compounding effect of age and gender were controlled.

RESULTS

SPSS 22 was used for descriptive analysis, reliability test, and correlation while PROCESS Macro v4.0 was used to test direct and indirect path relationship. PROCESS Macro is simple and easier to use for mediation analysis and the algorithm produces similar result with structural equation model (SEM) (Hayes et al., 2017). However, measurement model and fitness were assessed using AMOS 22. The data was first checked for missing value (MV) and they were <5% of the total cases with P-value of 0.37. Batista and Monard (2003) suggested that any treatment technique can be applied if the value is completely missing at random (i.e., $P > 0.05$). Therefore, the study applied expectation maximization (EM) technique for quantitative variables and mode technique for categorical variables to replace the MVs.

Outliers were also checked and three responses were deleted for having Z-score value > 3.29 (Field 2009). On the other hand, no multivariate outlier was found based on threshold of > 0.001 as suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). Normality of the data was assessed using skewness and kurtosis values. The data exhibited normal distribution based on threshold of $\leq \pm 2$ for skewed and kurtotic data (see table 1) (George & Mallery, 2010).

Table 1: Summary of Result of Normality Test

S/N	Construct	Skew.	Std. E.	Skwe./Std. E.	Kurt.	Std. E.	Kurt./Std. E.
1	JC	-0.071	0.155	-0.46	0.011	0.308	0.036
2	JS	-0.232	0.155	-1.50	-0.051	0.308	-0.17
3	ItS	-0.061	0.155	-0.39	0.428	0.308	1.39

Furthermore, Harman's one-factor method was employed to assess the presence of common method bias (CMB) based on recommendations by Podsakoff et al. (2012). The exploratory factor analysis (varimax and principal component) showed three factors explaining 71% cumulative variance with no single factor explaining more than 26% variance; hence, there is no issue of CMB. Table 2 shows correlations between the study variables. While gender does not correlate with any variable, age correlates significantly with JC and JS. Furthermore, JC, JS, and ItS were significant and positively correlated which ranges between 0.29 to 0.49 hence, negates concern for multi-collinearity based on threshold of < 0.75 (Singh & Loncar, 2010).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

S/N	Construct	1	2	3	4	5
1	Age	1				
2	Gender	0.01	1			
3	Job crafting	0.14*	-0.06	1		
4	Job satisfaction	0.15*	-0.12*	0.49**	1	
5	Intention to stay	0.11	-0.12	0.29**	0.41**	1

Note: ** = $P < 0.01$; * = $P < 0.05$

Measurement Model

Factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and HTMT were used to evaluate the measurement model (Hair Jr et al. 2019). All the indicators that remained (see figure 2) have good loadings based on recommended threshold of ≥ 0.5 (Hulland, 1999). However, some goodness of fit indices were poor hence, certain error terms were covaried at $MI > 20$ (see figure 2). Eventually, the model satisfied fitness requirement ($\chi^2/df = 2.049$, SRMR = 0.060, CFI = 0.958, TLI = 0.951, and RMSEA = 0.065) suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999). Two more models were proposed to ensure uniqueness of the main measurement model. The main model shows better fit (see Table 3).

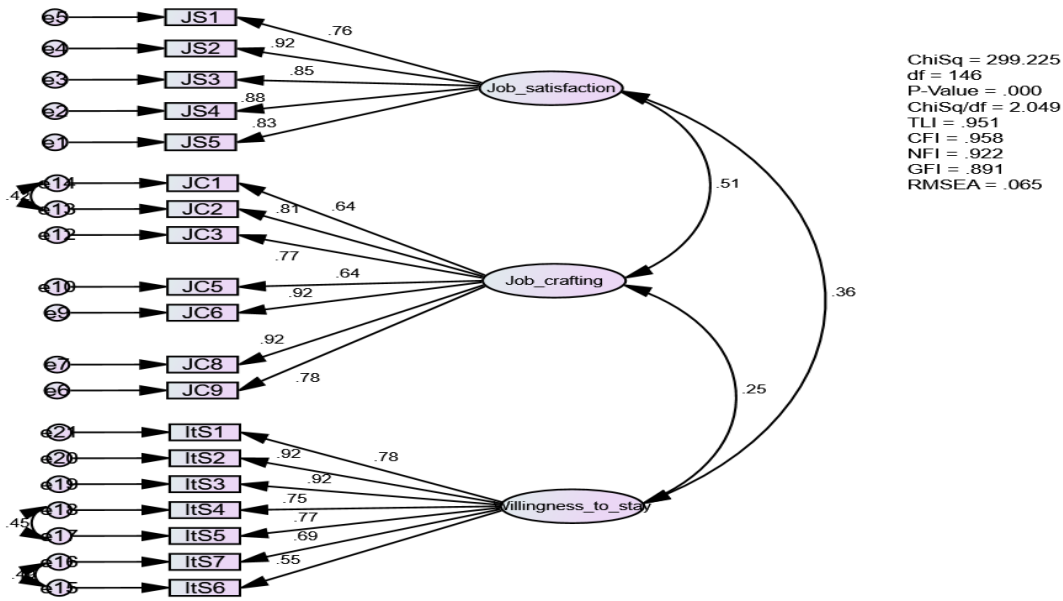


Fig. 2: Measurement model

Reliability and convergent validity were achieved since CR and AVE were all above recommended threshold of 0.7 and 0.5 respectively (see table 4) (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2019). Also, discriminant validity (DV) based on Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria was achieved since the square-roots of the AVE were greater than the correlation between any one variable with other variables (see table 4).

Table 3: Measurement Models Comparison

Model	Factor	$\chi^2/d.f.$	SRMR	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Main model	Three factors (JC, JS, ItS)	2.049	0.065	0.958	0.951	0.065
Model 1	Two factors (JC and JS merged)	6.933	0.132	0.762	0.724	0.155
Model 3	One factor (All factors merged)	11.972	0.185	0.553	0.490	0.211

Table 4: Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity

Construct	CR	AVE	Job crafting	Job satisfaction	Intention to stay
Job crafting	0.92	0.63	0.79		
Job satisfaction	0.93	0.72	0.51***	0.89	
Intention to stay	0.91	0.60	0.25***	0.36***	0.78

Note: *** P<0.001; bold value is square root of AVE

Test of hypotheses

Hayes (2017) approach that recommended for simultaneous analysis of direct and indirect paths over Baron and Kenny’s conditional entry analysis was adopted. However, to ensure uniqueness of the proposed model, an alternative model without control variable was conceived. The main model shows better fit (see Table 5).

Table 5: Path Models Comparison

Model	$\chi^2/d.f.$	SRMR	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
With control variable	1.827	0.061	0.96	0.95	0.058
Without control variable	2.049	0.065	0.96	0.95	0.065

JC to JS and JS to ItS were supported by the results at 95% confidence interval (C.I.) since zero does not fall between lower limit (LL) and upper limit (UL). However, JC to ItS path was not supported

because of the existence of zero between LL and UL. Specifically, the study found statistically significant positive effect of JC on JS ($\beta = 0.48$, LL=0.3648, UL=0.5860), and JS on ItS ($\beta = 0.24$, LL=0.1444, UL=0.3373) which supported H1 and H2, and statistically non-significant effect of JC on ItS ($\beta = 0.09$, LL= -0.0074, UL=0.1850) which did not support H3. Age and gender do not have any significant effect on JS and ItS.

Table 6: Direct paths

Variable	Job satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.25$)	Intention to stay ($R^2 = 0.18$)
Job crafting	0.48***	0.09
Job satisfaction		0.24***

Note: *** $P < 0.001$

Mediation was assessed by evaluating the significance of indirect path first then followed by the evaluation of significance of direct path. The indirect path (JC→JS→ItS) was found statistically significant since zero does not exist between LL and UL ($\beta = 0.11$, LL=0.0549, UL=0.1734) at 95% confidence level hence, the existence of mediation. Consequently, significance of direct effect of JC on ItS was checked but found not-significant, since zero exists between LL and UL ($\beta = 0.09$, LL= -0.0074, UL=0.1850). Therefore, full mediation exists. In sum, the study found full mediation effects of JS on the relationship between JC and ItS which supported H4.

Table 7: Mediation Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Lower Limit (95% C.I.)	Upper Limit (95% C.I.)	Result
H4	JC→JS→ItS	0.20***	0.09(NS)	0.11***	0.0549	0.1734	Full Mediation

Note: *** = $P < 0.001$; NS=not significant

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Attempts were made to provide mechanisms that could enhance retention of UAs in Nigeria particularly the role of JC (see Arachie et al., 2020). However, the underlying mechanism through which JC affects UAs’ ItS is grossly underexplored. More precisely, the role of JS as personal resource has not been examined. Consequently, the present study developed and tested a model that examined influence of JC on ItS via mediating role of JS among UAs in Nigeria. Four hypotheses were conjectured and tested and three were supported by the results while H3 was rejected.

The study found significant positive affect of JC on JS which is consistent with the findings by Boehnlein and Baum (2020). This mean that ability of UAs to craft their job to suit their preference and skills enhances their satisfaction with the job. The finding is also supported by tenets of CoR theory that JC as initial resources facilitate accumulation of other resources. Similarly, the present study found significant positive effect of JS on ItS. This finding is consistent with the findings by Xie et al. (2020).

JS as positive evaluation of one’s job aspect(s) reflects personally acquired resources facilitated by resource availability which employees strive to maintain and protect by investing more resource. Therefore, UAs’ JS nurtures their ItS as a mechanism to protect acquired resources (JS) against loss because leaving the system culminates to losing these resources. On the other hand, the hypothesis that JC has direct effect on ItS was not supported. This finding contradicts the findings by Cinar and Basim (2022). However, this can be attributed to the introduction of JS as mediator.

The postulation of a mediating role of JS was supported. Specifically, JS was found to fully mediate the relationship between JC and ItS. This means that the influence of JC on UAs’ ItS is accounted by UAs’ satisfaction with the crafting behavior and is supported by CoR tenets. The findings proved that JC as resources availability within a social context enhances UAs’ JS as personally acquired resources

thus, creates resource gain spiral. The findings further proved that since losing resources is more salient than gaining, UAs' decision to stay is influenced by their desire to protect acquired resources against loss. This finding concurs with the findings by Sánchez-Cardonaet et al. (2021) that job resources have indirect effect on employee ItS.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

The present study enriches existing literature in some novel ways. Previous studies explored antecedents of ItS (e.g., Sánchez-Cardonaet et al., 2021), however very little attention has been paid to the role of JC especially among UAs in Nigeria. Hence, this study offer empirical evidence on the interplay between JC, JS, and ItS. Second, the current study adds to existing literature regarding mechanism through which JC influence positive employee attitudes and behaviors.

Specifically, the study addresses the call by Tims et al. (2022) for studies on the mechanisms via which JC influences positive outcomes. Third, the study's findings reveal how JC as contextual and initial resource facilitate acquisition of personal resource thus, create resource gain spiral which in turn enhance UAs' intent to stay, in order to conserve and protect resources acquired against loss. Hence, the present study enriches CoR theory from the perspectives of both resource gain spiral and investment of more resources.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION

Actual behavior is often predicted by behavioral intentions (Cinar & Basim, 2022). Thus, understanding what enhance UAs ItS will aid university management to predict academics actual stay and retain them. Findings of this study demonstrate that opportunity to craft UAs' job enhances their job satisfaction, which they strive to conserve through intent to stay. Therefore, universities should provide work climate that not only provides opportunity for academics to craft their work but also encourage it.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated mediating mechanism through which JC influence ItS. The study draws from the perspectives of resources gain spiral and investment of more resources of CoR theory to unravel how JC as contextual resources enhances employee JS as personal resources hence, creates resources gain spiral which in turn enhances employee ItS as mechanism to conserve and protect the resources. In sum, the study found full mediation effect of JS on the relationship between JC and ItS among UAs in Nigeria.

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