Work Engagement as Predictor and Outcome of Job Crafting: A Conceptual Integration

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine and conceptualize the reciprocal relationship between work engagement and job crafting. Despite the fact that both constructs are essential for comprehending employee motivation and proactive work behaviors, the existing research has examines their relationship in a fragmented fashion, either positioning work engagement as a predictor of job crafting or by examining its consequences. This paper integrates empirical evidence to explain the bidirectional association between the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theories.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A literature review was performed including papers published from 2010 to 2024. The search was conducted in Scopus employing the terms "job crafting," "work engagement," and "reciprocal relationship." After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 20 empirical studies were examined. The research were categorized into three groups: work engagement as a predictor of job crafting, job crafting as a predictor of work engagement, and a reciprocal relationship.

Findings: The review reveals that work engagement plays a dual role in relation to job crafting. Work engagement serves as a predictor that fosters proactive behaviors, prompting employees to reconsider their activities, relationships, and cognitive perceptions. Consequently, job crafting improves psychological empowerment, job resources, and meaningful work, all of which promote work engagement. A positive gain spiral is created by this cyclical interaction, whereby motivated workers create actions that increase their resources, which in turn boost engagement and support long-term performance and well-being.

Originality/Value: This research significantly contributes by bringing together disparate information and providing a reciprocal analysis of the relationship between work engagement and job crafting. It expands JD–R and COR theories by emphasizing the reciprocal development of professional and personal resources. The outcomes of the study suggest groundwork for future longitudinal and intervention studies, providing employers with valuable insights into how to enhance employee engagement over the long term through job crafting initiatives.

Keywords: Job Crafting, Work Engagement, JD-R Theory, COR, Reciprocal Relationship.

Introduction

In modern workplaces, where job responsibilities are becoming more flexible, employees need to be proactive and take the initiative in order for the company to run successfully and for employees to be happy. Work engagement and job crafting are two concepts that have drawn a lot of attention in this

context. A key concept for comprehending employee motivation, wellbeing, and performance is work engagement. Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagement as a positive, fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees bring energy, enthusiasm, and a deep interest to their work, which improves things like commitment, creativity, and productivity for both the individual and the organization (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job redesigning is getting more and more attention as an active, employee-driven way to shape one's work experience. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) conceptualized job crafting as the self-initiated changes employees make in their task, relational, and cognitive job boundaries to improve meaning and person–job fit. Similarly, Tims et al. (2012) advanced this framework by emphasizing that job crafting involves altering job demands and resources to optimize work conditions. By making these kinds of changes, workers make the workplace more inspiring and long-lasting, which improves health, happiness, and engagement (Rudolph et al., 2017).

While both constructs are conceptually distinct, their relationship has been extensively explored over the past decade, in fragmented ways. Although both constructs, work engagement and job crafting have been extensively examined, most studies have analyzed their relationship unidirectionally, treating one as an antecedent or an outcome. On one hand, work engagement has been identified as a predictor of job crafting where engaged, energized and intrinsically motivated employees, are more likely to modify their job characteristics to align with personal goals and strengths (Bakker et al., 2012; Petrou et al., 2012). On the other hand, empirical evidence supports the reverse relationship between job crafting and work engagement. Job crafting is studies as an antecedent of work engagement where employees reshape their jobs to enhance resources and meaning subsequently experience higher engagement levels (Tims et al., 2013; Harju et al., 2016).

There is a positive feedback loop or "gain spiral" in the link between job crafting and job engagement that strengthens each other over time, according to new longitudinal research (Lu et al., 2014; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019). This cyclical process can be explained through the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989). The JD–R theory suggests that job resources, including autonomy, feedback, and support, enhance engagement, subsequently fostering proactive behaviors such as job designing. COR theory suggests that individuals strive to obtain and conserve resources, resulting in resource gain spirals where work engagement and job crafting enhance each other's outcomes (Hobfoll, 2011).

Despite increasing empirical evidence for this bidirectional relationship, comprehensive conceptual models that incorporate the reciprocal dynamics between engagement and job crafting are still scarce. Instead of synthesizing the mutual reinforcing process that maintains long-term motivation and well-being, previous research has frequently focused on discrete routes (Lesener et al., 2019). Furthermore, little research has examined the ways in which human resources like emotional stability, psychological empowerment, or self-efficacy modulate this link and may affect the engagement–crafting cycle's strength and trajectory (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

In order to position work engagement and job crafting as both predictors and outcomes within an ongoing, mutually reinforcing process, the current research attempts to propose a conceptual integration of these two concepts. The paper conceptualizes how engagement influences crafting behaviors and how crafting enhances engagement, drawing on the JD–R and COR frameworks. Furthermore, in contemporary work environments, this reciprocal mechanism supports performance outcomes and long-term well-being.

Conceptual Background and Theoretical Framework

- **Work Engagement**

Work engagement is a central construct in positive organizational psychology, representing a fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engagement is a sustained motivational state in which workers devote their physical, mental, and emotional energies to their work tasks, as opposed to fleeting emotions of job satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2012). According to empirical research, job resources and a number of favorable outcomes, including performance, creativity, and well-being, are critically mediated by work engagement (Deci et al., 2001). The JD–R hypothesis, which emphasizes job and personal resources as important drivers of engagement, has been used to analyze the antecedents of work engagement in great detail. According to Deci and Ryan (2008), job resources like autonomy, feedback, and supportive leadership meet fundamental psychological needs and promote engagement by giving workers chances for development and purpose. Employees' ability to mobilize job resources and maintain engagement under pressure is

further enhanced by personal resources such as optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). From a conceptual standpoint, job engagement functions as a prelude to proactive work behaviors as well as a result of good work environments. High levels of energy and enthusiasm are experienced by engaged workers, and these feelings result in self-initiated behaviors that optimize their work settings, namely job crafting (Bakker et al., 2012). Therefore, in addition to being a consequence of the availability of resources, engagement also acts as a motivating factor that encourages workers to actively mold their work in order to achieve meaningful and long-lasting engagement.

- **Job Crafting**

Job crafting, first introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), refers to employees' proactive behaviors aimed at reshaping their job tasks, interactions, and cognitive perceptions to make their work more meaningful and better aligned with personal strengths and values. Job crafting is a bottom-up approach that emphasizes employees as active agents in shaping their work environment, in contrast to conventional job design, which is top-down and driven by managerial decisions. In the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework, Tims et al. (2012) operationalized job crafting by identifying three primary dimensions: increasing structural and social job resources (autonomy, feedback, social support), increasing challenging job demands (taking on extra responsibilities or new projects), and decreasing hindering job demands (minimizing emotionally or mentally draining aspects of the job). Employees can establish more motivating and resourceful work environments by engaging in these behaviors. Various positive outcomes, including enhanced well-being, increased performance, improved person–job fit, and stronger organizational commitment, have been associated with job crafting (Tims et al., 2013). It allows employees to establish a more effective alignment between their personal objectives and job characteristics, thereby enhancing their sense of purpose and control in the workplace. Empirical research has also demonstrated that job manufacturing is associated with a sustained level of work engagement and overall life satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020).

Proactive motivation theory (Parker et al., 2010) is the foundation of job crafting, which suggests that individuals act to influence their surroundings in a manner that promotes independent targets. It is indicative of both self-regulatory and proactive processes, in which employees not only respond to work conditions but also actively alter them. By engaging in crafting, individuals can enhance their autonomy, task significance, and skill variety—all of which are critical factors in intrinsic motivation and engagement (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). Research has shown that job designing has a positive impact on a variety of outcomes, such as work engagement, meaning at work, and well-being (Rudolph et al., 2017). Additionally, job crafting functions as a resource-acquisition strategy that is in accordance with COR theory, enabling individuals to increase their resource reservoirs, which in turn sustain long-term motivation (Hobfoll, 2011). Consequently, work engagement lays the foundation for a reciprocal relationship by acting as both an antecedent and a consequence of job crafting.

- **Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory**

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory is a fundamental framework for understanding the motivational behaviors that underlie both job crafting and work engagement. In accordance with Bakker and Demerouti (2007, 2017), each occupation is characterized by its own set of job resources (autonomy, feedback, support) and job demands (workload, emotional pressure). Job demands deplete both psychological and physical energy, while job resources promote motivation and engagement, resulting in enhanced performance and overall well-being. The model differentiates between two critical processes: the physical impairment process and the motivational process. The latter emphasizes the role of personal and professional resources in promoting work engagement (Lesener et al., 2019).

In this framework, work engagement is induced when employees are provided with sufficient opportunities to meet their requirements and pursue personal development. Tims et al. (2012) and Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001) have reported that engaged employees are more inclined to invest effort and proactively improve their resource environment through job crafting, which involves self-initiated changes to adjust job demands and resources. These characteristics are characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). JD–R research is increasingly demonstrating a reciprocal relationship between engagement and crafting. Job crafting behaviors are stimulated by work engagement, which in turn reinforces engagement through the subsequent increase in job resources, thereby establishing a positive feedback loop (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The sustainable nature of engagement and the proactive role that employees play in influencing their work experience are underscored by this cyclical relationship.

- **Conservation of Resources (COR) theory**

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2011) complements the JD–R theory by explaining how individuals acquire and protect valued resources. According to COR theory, individuals work hard to acquire and preserve resources like energy, self-efficacy, and social support, and these gains can result in upward motivational spirals. People are more resilient and proactive when they have a surplus of resources, and they frequently take actions that increase their pool of available resources. In this way, it is possible to consider the concept of worker engagement as both a source and a representation of resource gain. According to Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2019) and Xanthopoulou et al. (2009), engaged workers are more likely to design their work to enhance control, competence, and meaning—all important types of psychological and social resources. These resources are then improved via job crafting, which increases engagement and starts a resource gain spiral. Personal resources including psychological empowerment, optimism, and emotional stability are also highlighted by COR theory as moderators and mediators in this relationship (Harju et al., 2016). By helping individuals maintain effort, confront challenges, and adaptively control their work behaviors, these resources improve the relationship between engagement and crafting.

Integrative Perspective

The integration of the JD–R and COR frameworks offers a thorough perspective on the reciprocal relationship between work engagement and job crafting. Engagement stimulates proactive crafting, while crafting activities cultivate and replenish resources that sustain engagement over time (Bakker et al., 2012; Lu et al., 2014). This gain cycle exemplifies a self-perpetuating motivational framework, providing a theoretical basis for treatments aimed at fostering sustained engagement and employee well-being. This conceptual integration enhances the theoretical comprehension of how employees actively influence their engagement trajectories by framing both constructs as interdependent and co-evolving. It emphasizes that cultivating a culture that encourages job creating can result in enduring engagement, adaptability, and performance in modern organizations.

Literature Review

- **Work Engagement as a Predictor of Job Crafting**

Work engagement has been recognized as a key antecedent of job crafting, driving employees' proactive behaviors to shape their work environments in ways that enhance meaning and personal fit. Defined as a positive, fulfilling, and work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002), work engagement serves as a motivational resource that fuels self-initiated changes in job designEngaged employees are characterized by their psychological resilience and high energy levels, which allow them to recognize opportunities to reduce job demands or increase job resources. Consequently, their work is in accordance with their personal strengths and values. This relationship is substantially supported by empirical research. Sharma and Nambudiri (2020) discovered that employees who are engaged are more likely to adjust their task boundaries and relational interactions in order to preserve their enthusiasm and motivation in their positions. Laguía et al. (2024) and Oprea et al. (2019) emphasized that work engagement increases intrinsic motivation and proactive tendencies, which in turn encourages employees to engage in task and relational crafts to improve work conditions. In contrast, proactive endeavors are typically diminished by emotional exhaustion or disengagement, while engagement encourages constructive modifications to one's behavior. Additionally, contextual and attitudinal factors, including attrition intentions, may affect the relationship between engagement and job crafting. Job crafting may be employed by employees who are experiencing high turnover intentions as a coping mechanism to enhance job contentment and reestablish engagement. Work engagement not only functions as a precursor to proactive job redesign but also as a motivational motivator that maintains adaptive behavior in the face of evolving job conditions. Collectively, these results bolster the hypothesis that work engagement triggers upward resource spirals, in which motivated employees allocate energy and effort to the development of their work environments in order to sustain engagement and well-being over time.

- **Work Engagement as an Outcome of Job Crafting**

According to Tims et al. (2012), work crafting is a proactive process that allows individuals to restructure their job duties, personal relationships, and cognitive views in order to better align them with their own goals and skills. In addition to improving the fit between workers and their workplace, this approach creates social and psychological resources that in turn promote employee engagement. The

fundamental components of work engagement—vigor, dedication, and absorption—are consistently stronger among employees who participate in job crafting, according to empirical research (García-Merino et al., 2023; Matsuo, 2019; Meijerink et al., 2018). Crafting enables people to produce more engaging and meaningful work environments, which over time foster intrinsic motivation and maintain engagement. Additionally, job crafting improves employability (Brenninkmeijer & Hekkert-Koning, 2015) and flexibility (Petrou et al., 2016), enabling workers to successfully handle changing job demands. Job crafting further strengthens engagement and positive affect by boosting personal resources like psychological capital, which includes optimism, hope, self-efficacy, and resilience (Vogt et al., 2015). Research has also connected job crafting to increased professional dedication (Kim & Beehr, 2017) and psychological and overall well-being (Luu, 2020; Kim & Beehr, 2020), suggesting that the motivating effects of working extend beyond working environments. Employees are more likely to demonstrate persistent engagement and affective attachment to their company when they perceive their employment to be self-congruent and meaningful (Matsuo, 2019).

Job crafting enhances workplace thriving (Wang et al., 2024), fosters flow experiences (Ji et al., 2023), and aids in effective emotional regulation (Yang et al., 2022); however, in certain contexts, excessive crafting may elevate the risk of emotional exhaustion (Döbler et al., 2022). Longitudinal studies demonstrate that job crafting forecasts future work engagement levels over time (Guo & Hou, 2022; Kooij et al., 2017; Shin et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2023; Harju et al., 2016; Cheng & Yi, 2018; Walk & Handy, 2018). These research collectively indicate that job crafting generates upward motivational spirals, wherein proactive alterations in work design produce resources and meaning that maintain engagement. Based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) hypothesis, this relationship highlights how people who proactively shape their occupations convert their work settings into sources of energy, development, and psychological satisfaction.

- **Reciprocal Relationship Between Work Engagement and Job Crafting**

The relationship between work engagement and job crafting has evolved from a unidirectional understanding to a more dynamic, reciprocal perspective. Traditionally, work engagement has been viewed as a predictor of proactive work behaviors, such as job crafting, while more recent research emphasizes that job crafting also serves as an antecedent to work engagement (Tims et al., 2013; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Vogt et al., 2015). This bidirectional relationship highlights the mutual reinforcement between motivational states and proactive behaviors, forming a cyclical process that sustains employee well-being and performance over time (Bhopal & Devi, 2025).

Drawing upon the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model, work engagement and job crafting can be understood as interconnected elements within the motivational process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Engaged employees actively mobilize job and personal resources through job crafting to maintain or enhance their engagement levels, while crafting behaviors, in turn, increase the availability of resources that further fuel engagement (Petrou et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2012). This interaction creates a gain cycle, where each construct amplifies the other through continuous resource accumulation. The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) further supports this mechanism, positing that individuals invest their existing resources (energy, motivation, optimism) to acquire additional ones, thereby initiating resource-gain spirals that enhance resilience and well-being.

Empirical studies provide consistent support for this reciprocal pattern. Tims et al. (2015) and Bakker et al. (2020) found that higher levels of engagement predicted greater job crafting behaviors, which in turn reinforced subsequent engagement. Matsuo (2019) and García-Merino et al. (2023) reported longitudinal evidence that job crafting activities such as seeking challenges or increasing job resources lead to sustained engagement and psychological empowerment. This evidence underscores the dynamic reciprocity of the relationship: engaged employees craft their jobs to sustain meaningfulness, and crafted jobs, in turn, sustain or enhance engagement.

Conceptually, this reciprocal framework underscores a resource-based loop operating through both personal and contextual mechanisms. On the personal level, engaged employees leverage psychological resources such as self-efficacy, optimism, and emotional stability to proactively shape their work experiences (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). On the contextual level, job crafting expands job resources—such as autonomy, feedback, and social support—which subsequently strengthen engagement (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Tims et al., 2013). Together, these interactions form a self-perpetuating motivational cycle consistent with the dual principles of JD–R and COR theories.

This theoretical integration provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how work engagement and job crafting co-evolve over time. Rather than viewing engagement as merely an outcome or job crafting as a static behavior, this reciprocal model conceptualizes both as dynamic, mutually reinforcing processes. Such a framework not only advances theoretical understanding but also has practical implications for organizations seeking to enhance sustainable engagement through proactive job design and employee empowerment strategies.

Conclusion

This review highlights the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between work engagement and job crafting, demonstrating that each construct acts both as a predictor and an outcome in organizational contexts. Job crafting enables employees to proactively modify their tasks, relationships, and perceptions to better align with personal strengths and values, thereby fostering work engagement, enhancing well-being, and promoting career-related outcomes. Conversely, work engagement motivates employees to engage in job crafting by providing the energy, dedication, and absorption necessary to reshape their work environment effectively.

The synthesis of empirical studies underscores that these reciprocal interactions create a positive feedback loop: engaged employees craft their jobs to optimize experiences, and these crafted experiences further reinforce engagement. Moreover, job crafting contributes to a wide range of well-being outcomes, including psychological capital, meaningful work, affective commitment, adaptability, and reduced emotional exhaustion. Together, these findings suggest that organizations can enhance employee performance, motivation, and well-being by fostering both engagement and proactive job crafting behaviors.

Future research should explore potential moderators and mediators—such as psychological empowerment, emotional stability, and job resources—that may influence the strength of these reciprocal relationships across different industries and cultural contexts. Overall, this review provides a comprehensive understanding of how work engagement and job crafting mutually reinforce each other, offering valuable insights for theory development, organizational interventions, and human resource practices aimed at promoting thriving, resilient, and motivated employees.

Implications

- **Theoretical Implications**

The proposed reciprocal framework between work engagement and job crafting contributes meaningfully to the theoretical advancement of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Traditionally, the JD–R model emphasizes how job resources stimulate engagement, which in turn leads to positive outcomes. However, the integration of job crafting highlights the proactive role of employees in shaping their work environments. This reconceptualization extends the model by portraying engagement not only as a result of favorable job characteristics but also as a catalyst for self-initiated job redesign behaviors (Tims et al., 2013; Bakker et al., 2020).

By positing engagement as both an antecedent and a consequence of job crafting, this framework supports the gain spiral perspective of the JD–R theory (Hakanen et al., 2008), wherein resources and engagement mutually reinforce each other over time. The model aligns with the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), suggesting that engaged employees satisfy intrinsic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—through job crafting behaviors, which subsequently foster sustained engagement. This cyclical relationship underscores the dynamic and self-perpetuating nature of motivation at work, moving beyond linear cause–effect models. Conceptually, it bridges the divide between reactive and proactive approaches to work design, situating employees as active agents in maintaining and enhancing their own well-being and performance

- **Practical and Managerial Implications**

From a managerial standpoint, the proposed model provides actionable insights for enhancing employee engagement and well-being. Organizations can implement job crafting interventions that empower employees to reshape their job tasks, relationships, and cognitive perceptions (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Encouraging such autonomy fosters ownership and purpose, thereby reinforcing engagement. Managers should focus on cultivating supportive leadership behaviors and providing developmental resources that enable employees to craft their jobs effectively (Van Wingerden et al., 2017).

Furthermore, HR policies can integrate engagement-based training programs, where employees learn to align personal strengths with job demands, leading to sustainable performance outcomes. Job crafting workshops, reflective coaching, and resource-building exercises can transform engagement from a static state to a renewable process. Practically, this framework suggests that when employees are provided with both structural support and psychological safety, their proactive engagement behaviors can reduce burnout, lower turnover intentions, and improve well-being across organizational levels.

Future Research Directions

Despite the theoretical promise of this integrated model, empirical research remains limited in capturing the dynamic reciprocity between work engagement and job crafting. Future studies should adopt longitudinal or experience-sampling methods to examine how these constructs influence each other over time. Cross-lagged panel designs can provide insights into causality and temporal order.

Future research could also explore boundary conditions that strengthen or weaken this reciprocal link. For instance, individual differences such as emotional stability, proactive personality, and psychological empowerment may moderate how engagement translates into job crafting behaviors. Likewise, contextual factors like transformational leadership, perceived organizational support, and team climate could shape the degree to which job crafting enhances engagement. Moreover, comparative cross-cultural studies can test the universality of this model, given variations in autonomy and power distance across societies.

Methodologically, scholars are encouraged to employ multi-level modeling and latent growth analysis to capture within-person fluctuations and developmental trends. Integrating qualitative insights through narrative or diary-based approaches can also uncover the subjective experiences underlying engagement–crafting dynamics.

This conceptual integration reaffirms the bidirectional relationship between work engagement and job crafting within the JD–R framework. Work engagement serves as both a psychological precursor and a resultant state of job crafting behaviors, forming a self-sustaining cycle of motivation and well-being. Through proactive job redesign, employees reinforce their own engagement, thereby fostering personal growth and organizational resilience.

By framing engagement as both an antecedent and an outcome, this model transcends static perspectives of employee motivation and underscores the dynamic, agentic nature of work behavior. The integration of engagement and job crafting not only enriches theoretical understanding but also offers a practical roadmap for organizations aiming to cultivate enduring employee well-being and adaptive performance in evolving work contexts.

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