



8. Job Crafting: An Emerging HR Strategy for Organizational Excellence

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ABSTRACT:

Organizational excellence is a continuous long term goal for any organization and important for its well-being and sustainability. Proactivity of employee in the recent years is receiving attention in organizational behavior research as it leads to improved employee performance and enhanced organizational productivity. In 2001, researchers Amy Wrzesniewski and Jane E. Dutton coined a new term 'job crafting'. "They defined job crafting as actions that employees take to shape, mold and redefine their jobs. In other words, it refers to the proactive steps and actions taken by members of an organization to redesign their work and change task relationships and perceptions about their jobs". They referred to it as "socially innovative and self-initiated changes made by employees to make their job more meaningful". Traditionally, research in the area of organizational behavior has mainly concentrated on understanding and determining the influence of contextual and organization related factors on employee's attitude and well-being. But recent research also emphasizes on the proactive behavior of employees in enhancing individual well-being and performance. Job crafting enables the employees to tap into their own strengths and experiences for enhancing both their individual as well as organizational welfare. "The current paper aims to study the inter-relationship between job crafting as the proactive behavior of employee's on the outcome variables-. job satisfaction and work engagement. The study discusses the overview of conceptualization of job crafting and job crafting interventions that encourage job crafting performance. For the purposes a detailed review of the existing literature was done extensively which clearly establishes the need and importance of job crafting in the present organizational environment which requires a healthy and a meaningful work culture".

KEYWORDS: Job crafting, Proactive behavior, Job crafting interventions, Work engagement and Job satisfaction.

Introduction

Organizations today are operating in dynamic and continuously changing environment. In a knowledge driven and service economy the nature of the jobs have changed drastically due to emergence of global work, telework, self- management teams, reengineering etc. In light of these changes, static jobs are now replaced with dynamic jobs. “The current pandemic situation of COVID-19 also dramatically altered the work structure, making the job more challenging. In such dynamic work environment, it is difficult for organizations to design favorable jobs that fit all employees (Grant and Parker, 2009)”. Therefore, “recently organizations are now recognizing the importance of employee-oriented job redesign (bottom-up) to make the workplace more adaptable and proactive (Grant and Paret, 2009)”.

In 2001, Wrzesniewski and Dutton introduced the notion of “Job Crafting” as “the changes employees make to shape, mold and redefine their jobs”. “Job crafting is characterized as self-initiated, individualized, bottom-up approach to job design as against the top-down, ‘one size fits all approach’ to job design that is initiated by management and organizations”.

In the literature, there is gaining evidence that job crafting outcome in positive individual and organizational outcomes that helps the organization to excel. In the present study, we support the argument that promoting bottom-up job redesign and encouraging job crafting behavior of employees leads to increase in well-being of employees related to job satisfaction and work engagement.

Job Crafting

“Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) developed the notion of job crafting as an extension to the concept of job design, which is defined as the top-down function of supervisors or managers to design the tasks of their subordinates”. They underlined the need of employees taking the initiative to make changes or modifications to tasks that are already designed to better suit their interests, tastes, preferences, and qualifications. Individual and group job crafting are both possible. “Job crafting is a self-initiated, proactive strategy to change the characteristics of one's job to better fit it with personal requirements, goals, and talents. There are two conceptualization of job crafting that has been widely used and accepted in the literature. One conceptualization is from the seminal work of Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001)”.

According to them job crafting is “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relationship boundaries of their work”. As per them, “employees change the boundaries of their work in three ways i.e. task crafting, relational crafting and cognitive crafting”.

Job crafting is identified to have three components namely- task crafting, relational crafting and cognitive crafting. Task crafting refers to modifying the job's content by changing the scope, number, nature, and technique of execution. Employees may either change the task they carry or the way they perform it. Relational crafting is changing the quality and quantity of employee relationship at work and cognitive crafting refers to changing one's perceptions

and view of the entire job so as to derive more meaning at work. Among them job cognitive crafting is considered the most easier as changing perceptions about the job is much simpler than actually changing the job tasks and relationships. Work cognition can easily enhanced by just changing employees' perceptions of their work, whereas changing tasks or relationships requires employees to change their work behaviors and actions.

“Another conceptualization of job crafting is derived from Job-Demand Resource theory. The JD-R theory and defined job crafting as the changes that employees may make to balance their job demands and resources with their personal abilities and needs”. According to the approach, “every job has two characteristics Job demand and Job resources. Job demands refers to those aspects of a job that require an employee’s efforts, and job resources refer to those aspects of the job that helps in the achievement of work goals”.

In addition “four types of job crafting behavior were also identified - increase the job resources like new skills and initiatives, increase the social job resources- training and development, increase the challenging job demands- challenging projects and new assignments and reducing hindering job demands – jobs which make work less stressful and intense”.

“Two recent job crafting approaches- “promotion and prevention-focused job crafting” and “approach and avoidance job crafting” (Burning and Campion, 2018), attempted to synthesize the various conceptualizations and perspectives on work crafting. Promotion Increased structural, social, and difficult job demands are examples of focused job crafting, whereas lowering impeding job demands is an example of preventative focused job crafting.

As a new HR practice tool, job crafting allows employees for a meaningful workplace by leveraging greater control over tasks by changing the outlook of the tasks performed and engaging in proactive behavior.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand & conceptualize Job crafting as a new-age HR practice;
- To highlight job crafting impact on organizational excellence;
- To identify job crafting intervention strategies for effective job satisfaction and work engagement.

Job crafting and Work engagement

One of the positive consequences of job crafting is work engagement. Employee Engagement is a construct that has received a lot of attention since 1990’s amongst both Practitioners as well as academicians. Kahn (1990) undertook the first work on employee engagement and since then many authors have contributed to the literature on employee engagement. Numerous researches have reflected the growing interest in employee engagement. “Kahn, 1990; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli et al, 2002; May et al., 2004; Saks, 2006, Saks, 2019). Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagements a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption”.

In literature several studies by researchers “Bakker et al., 2007; Crawford et al., 2010” have reported a positive and significant association between job resources and work engagement”. It suggests that proactive change in the work culture by employees makes them more imaginative and challenging, they create their job resources and will be more engaged.

In another study among 290 employees of a chemical plant found that “increasing structural and social job resources had a positive relationship with employee well-being, including high satisfaction, work engagement and low level of stress and burnout (Tims et al. 2014)”. Different aspects of job crafting have different relationship with work engagement.

“Studies have also confirmed a strong connection between rising structural job resources and work engagement. Among the prominent ones, “Brenninkmeijer & Hekkert-Koning (2015)”, Bakker. (2016), Rastogi and Chaudhary (2018) etc.” Studies on the correlation between increasing social job resources and work engagement have shown mixed findings, some reported significant association”.

Further, “the relationship between increasing challenging job difficulty and work commitment has been found to be conflicting in the literature. Many other research studies have also indicated a positive relationship between crafting challenges job demands and work engagement”.

While Demerouti et al. (2015) found no significant relationship. “Employees who are able to deal with challenging job demands experience high engagement as it triggers positive emotions. Challenging job demands require more efforts, but they encourage and motivate the employees to accomplish difficult goals” (Tims, 2012).

In addition, “the relationship between decreasing hindering job demands and work engagement has been found to be either negative or insignificant (Brenninkmeijer and Hekkert-Koning, 2015), Bakker et al., 2016; De Beer et al., 2016)”.

Hindering job demand triggers negative emotions and harms personal growth. Increased resources and hard demands are found to be positively connected to employee work engagement, whilst reducing impeding job demands is found to be negatively related. (Petrou, 2018). “Together, these studies provide pragmatic and theoretical evidence for the relationship between different dimensions of job crafting and employee engagement”.

Another dimension of a reverse association “between job crafting and work engagement, is equally likely. According to Lu et al. (2014), work involvement is a strong predictor of employees' job crafting behavior, which leads to an increase in the job's social and physical boundaries”.

Employees that are engaged at work feel good about themselves and are more willing to take initiative. Other studies such as “Parker et al. (2010), Bakker and Bal (2010), Hakanen et al. (2018) also provides support for this reverse link between work engagement and job crafting. In this study, we argued that employees who craft their job will be more engaged.”

Job Crafting and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is “the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one’s job values” (Locke, 1969). Employees craft their job to enhance their experience of the job and hence job crafting leads to a better appraisal of their job. Job crafting not only changes the concept of work by altering the work boundaries in terms of tasks and relations that allows employees to frame the but in addition also increases their level of job satisfaction. “Among many studies by researchers such as Tims et al., 2012; Crawford et al., 2010; Ghitulescu, 2007; De Beer et al., 2016; Cheng and Yang, 2018; Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo 2017; Zhang et al 2019 have found significant positive association between job crafting and job satisfaction”.

Ghitulescu (2007) “demonstrated that both relational and cognitive crafting were significantly related to job satisfaction among special education teachers. Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017) in their study among 247 lecturers in Nigeria found a positive significant correlation between job crafting and job satisfaction. De Beer et al., (2016)” among a sample of 570 employees of the mining and manufacturing industry in South Africa found that crafting social job resources leads to employee satisfaction. Considering the evidence from the literature it is argued that job crafting leads to job satisfaction. Burnout adversely influences the favourable association among employees' job crafting behaviour and job satisfaction, according to Cheng and Yang (2018), who studied 355 frontline hotel employees. Kim et al. (2018) “studied 327 customer-service personnel and discovered a favourable association between relational and cognitive crafting and job satisfaction, but no such relationship between task crafting and employee satisfaction”.

In a study of 78 labour union representatives, Villajos (2019) discovered a substantial significant and positive “relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction. Job crafting, according to Zhang et al. (2019), mediates the favorable link between job embeddedness and job happiness”.

Job Crafting Interventions

Although job crafting is a concept which is self-identified and initiated by employees, it can be promoted and facilitated by organizational interventions. In the literature, there is accumulating evidence that job crafting interventions help in promoting job crafting behavior among employees that results in positive work outcomes.” Employees could be encouraged to craft their jobs by assuming job crafting interventions in the organizations. Job crafting intervention takes the form of a training programme for employees that introduces them to the notion of job crafting and shows them how to engage in it on their own” (Berg, 2008).

“These job crafting interventions can be developed on the basis of job crafting exercise (JCE) developed by Berg et al. (2008)” or they can be customized by the organizations themselves. “Job crafting interventions facilitate the acquisition of job, social and personal resources through exercise and workshops targeted to increase awareness of resources and to highlight the opportunities to the extent these resources” (Bakker et al., 2012).

Many studies followed the job crafting interventions and found its positive consequences, study by Van Wingerden et al. (2017) using proactive goal-setting mechanism found that “job crafting intervention results in increasing the job crafting behavior, which in turn lead to the fulfilment of basic needs and work engagement of employees”. In a study (2015) conducted among 39 Dutch police district officers, wherein employees were given 1-day training explaining to them about job crafting, how they can alter their work resources and work demands based on the JD-R model (Bakker et al., 2014). The result of the study found that intervention resulted in enhancing employees self-efficacy, Leader-member exchange and positive affect. Further, another study in 2017 highlighted the long-term impact of job crafting interventions and found an increase in self-efficacy and performance of employees after 1 year. Job crafting – notably seeking resources and challenges – was linked to favourable results in meta-analytic analyses, such as job engagement and performance.

Comparable results were discussed by Van Wingerden, (2017) in their study, where job crafting interventions increased job performance of primary school teachers. Gordon et al., (2018) conducted a quasi-experimental study among medical specialist, intervention involved a three-hour workshop explaining employees about job crafting strategies. Results of this study found an increase in job crafting behavior, well-being and job performance of employees post-intervention. Kooij et al., (2017) also found that for 4 weeks job crafting interventions helped in increasing person-job fit. Sakuraya., (2016) on their study about Japanese employees including 120 minutes session with a two-week interval between the two sessions and found “that job crafting interventions results in an increase in work engagement and helps in decreasing psychological distress”. Thus, through these studies it can very well be established that “job crafting interventions are strategic in making the employees more aware of their task and help them to incorporate their interest, passion and strengths in the performance of their job”.

Table 1: Summary of Studies on Job crafting Intervention

Studies	Interventions	Sample	Results
Heuvel. (2015)	based on job crafting and intervention exercise (JCE): 1 day training	Employees of 39 Dutch police district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in employees self-efficacy • Increase leader-member exchange relationship • Positive impact
Van Wingerden et al. (2017)	based on job crafting exercise (JCE)	Primary School teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced work role performance • Work engagement
Sakuraya. (2016)	120 minutes session with two week interval	Japanese employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in work engagement. • Decreasing psychological distress.
Van Wingerden et al. (2017)	based on job crafting strategies developed by Berg et al., (2008)	41 teachers Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable work engagement • Enhanced need satisfaction

Studies	Interventions	Sample	Results
Kooij et al. (2017)			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing person-job fit
Van Wingerden. (2017)	One year long term intervention strategies	75 teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in Self-efficacy Increase in Performance
Gordon et al. (2018)	Three-hour workshop explaining employees about job crafting strategies	Medical specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in job crafting behavior Increase in employee welfare. work performance
Hur et al. (2019)	90 minutes workshop that emphasis on theory and practice of job crafting, 1-year long intervention	Employees of unemployment agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevented the decrease in work work engagement and employee empowerment during organizational change.

Conclusion

The current study highlighted the conceptualization of job crafting and its association with employee welfare in areas of job satisfaction and work engagement. The study also observed the literature on job crafting interventions and their positive consequences. A review of literature provides the support that job craftings interventions are significant in enhancing the engagement intensity of employees and their satisfaction. Beyond the usual top-down work redesign strategy, managers and organisations can consider bottom-up, employee-initiated job design to encourage employees' job creating behaviour. It is also required that challenging opportunities should be provided to the workers to connect themselves in self-driven behavior e.g. by increasing their autonomy and by empowering them. Providing job crafting training and conducting the intervention programs also seems to be a good way that overall develops the context that cultivates job crafting. Job crafting interventions ensure that individual job crafting goals are aligned with those of the organisation, allowing managers to promote useful crafting while avoiding crafting that is harmful to the business's interests.

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