Examining the Impact of Job Crafting on Work Engagement: A Multigenerational Workforce Perspective

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Abstract

The research investigated the relationship between job crafting behaviors, generational cohorts, and work engagement in the modern workplace. Guided by William A. Kahn's Employee Engagement theory and the Job Demands-Resource (JD-R) model, this study explored how employees from different generational cohorts engage in job crafting activities and how these activities influence their levels of work engagement. The study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design, collecting data from a sample of 205 individuals representing Generation X (Gen X), Millennials, and Generation Z (Gen Z) across various industries. Standardized questionnaires were used to collect data - the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Crohnbach's alpha - 0.8) and the Job Crafting Questionnaire (JCQ) (Crohnbach's alpha - 0.94) to measure work engagement and job crafting behaviors, respectively. Findings revealed significant differences in job crafting and work engagement across generations. Gen Y reported higher levels of job crafting and work engagement than Gen X and Gen Z. A positive correlation was found between job crafting and work engagement. Moderation analysis indicated that job crafting significantly predicted work engagement, while age had a negative effect. However, the interaction between job crafting and age was non-significant. Further analyses

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revealed that the positive impact of job crafting on work engagement was more substantial for younger individuals.

Keywords: job crafting, work engagement, multigenerational workforce, workplace dynamics, cross-sectional study

The modern workplace is diverse, spanning multiple generations, each with distinct values, motivations, and approaches to work (Brown-Crowder, 2017). Understanding how to engage and empower such a workforce is crucial for organizational success. Significant transformations concerning increasing globalization, automation, and technological advancements have presented unique challenges and opportunities. Organizations need employees who can be resilient in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world (Peeters et al., 2019). Internal employability is defined as "the ability to keep the job one has or to get the job one desires' within the internal labor market (their current organization)." (Sameer & Priyadarshi, 2023; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). In this context, job crafting emerges as a strategy that involves shaping one's job tasks, relationships, and cognitive processes (Melo et al., 2020). Existing research demonstrates the positive impact of job crafting on employee well-being, performance, and work engagement (Harju et al., 2021). Job crafting is primarily an individual process and one of the most important characteristics of creative behaviors (Jafri et al., 2016). Several factors, such as job autonomy (Demerouti et al., 2015; Oldham & Hackman, 2010), provide job crafting opportunities.

Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001) and Tims & Bakker (2010) both studied job crafting but have different conceptual understandings of the topic. The former defined the approach in terms of task, cognitive, and relational crafting, and the latter used the JD -R model as a framework and concluded that increasing social and structural resources and challenging and increasing job demands facilitate job crafting (Harju et al., 2021). Work engagement embodies a passionate state of work that has emerged as a critical concern for organizations seeking to cultivate productive and thriving employees.

In a workplace populated by Generation X (Gen X), Generation Y (Gen Y) or Millenials, and Generation Z (Gen Z), maintaining high levels of engagement across diverse groups necessitates more than a one-size-fits-all approach (Nyamboga, 2025).

William A. Kahn's Employee Engagement theory (Kahn, 1990) focuses on the psychological conditions that influence individuals' personal engagement and disengagement at work. Kahn's theory emphasizes that employees can use varying degrees of their physical, cognitive, and emotional selves in their work roles, impacting their work experiences and performance (Kahn, 1990). The theory identifies three psychological conditions that influence personal engagement at work:

1. Meaningfulness - Employees feel personally connected to their work and find it significant and valuable.

2. Safety - Employees feel psychologically safe to express and employ their personal selves at work without fear of negative consequences

3. Availability - Employees are psychologically available to engage at work, being present both physically and mentally

Kahn's theory highlights the importance of recognizing and supporting employees' emotional and cognitive involvement in their work roles to enhance overall job satisfaction and performance (Kahn, 1990).

Topa & Carmena (2022) studied the relationship between job crafting and work engagement and concluded it to be cyclical, where both influence each other. The influence may vary on workers' age and the effects are more prominent in the younger workforce. The study employed longitudinal research, and the findings did not agree with the hypotheses. The relation between work engagement at time 1 and changes in job crafting across time was negative.

The relation between job crafting and workers' age did not have a significant impact on work engagement at time 3 (Kooij et al., 2017). However, there was a negative effect through an increase in job crafting affecting aged workers. Organizations should implement job crafting interventions to improve work engagement and this study also posits that human resource management practices should

be customized for different age groups to fulfill employee needs and motives.

A longitudinal study on job crafting and job performance by (Tims et al., 2014) found that job crafting intentions and work engagement predicted actual job crafting activities and the former predicted work engagement. The study concluded that the relationship between job-crafting intentions and actual job-crafting behaviors was strongly significant, indicating that employees with job-crafting intentions were more likely to engage in job-crafting activities in the future (Kooij et al., 2017). Work engagement was predictive of job crafting resources and challenging job demands, highlighting the importance of work engagement for proactive behaviors and job-crafting activities.

Another research by (Singh & Singh, 2018) assessed work engagement's mediating effect on how job creating relates to job performance. Also, the study introduced coworker support as a moderator within this relationship. The findings showed that the definite positive relationship between job crafting and job performance was indeed fully mediated by overall work engagement. This positive association was stronger in the time when coworker emotional support was high and weaker in the time when coworker instrumental support was high (Singh & Singh, 2018). The moderator can further influence both job crafting and also job performance through work engagement(Harju et al., 2021). Engaged employees displayed positive emotions, had a wider range of thoughts as well as actions, and effectively integrated various diverse ideas into their work. The dedication as well as the deep absorption of actively engaged employees motivated them quite substantially to spend additional energy on their work. This consequently increased their job performance. The study implied that job crafting is important in job interventions to gain sustainability and competitiveness in dynamic and complicated business environments.

Understanding the cyclical nature of job crafting and engagement helps organizations foster both effectively. The positive impact on performance and well-being highlights the value of promoting job crafting. The effect of age moderation requires further investigation. More research is needed to understand the long-term

effects of job crafting and engagement and how to sustain them (Szőts-Kováts & Kiss, 2023).

As explored job crafting in the Indian context. The paper examines the relationship between proactive job crafting and workplace happiness among millennials in the Indian service sector (Moulik & Giri, 2024). The subjects were 310 employees from IT and ITES, telecom, and banking services. The study concluded that job crafting has a positive influence on driving employee happiness. Job crafting predicts job satisfaction and work engagement, thereby driving productivity and motivation, especially during times such as the global COVID-19 pandemic as mentioned in this study(Moulik & Giri, 2024; Szőts-Kováts & Kiss, 2023). Crafting associated with social resources and challenging demands is positively related to commitment and engagement, which addresses employee happiness and well-being during challenging times.

This link to employee well-being underscores the human dimension of work design and its impact on individuals. More research is needed to understand the long-term effects of job crafting on well-being and its potential downsides.

Jindal et al., (2022) examined the interactive effects of work engagement and work autonomy on job-crafting behavior and performance in an Indian manufacturing companyData from study participants included 320 white-collar employees, and the study reviewed organizational limits on employee autonomy to encourage job crafting and maximize performance. It has been found that job crafting peaks when work engagement and work autonomy are high. This means that organizations should promote employee autonomy for encouraging job crafting and higher performance(Moulik & Giri, 2024).

As studied by (Karatepe & Kim, 2023) explored the relationship between job crafting and work role performance among frontline workers in the hotel context and also tested work engagement as a mediator. They further tested leader-member exchange (LMX) as a moderator of the relationship between thematic dimensions of job crafting and work engagement (Karatepe & Kim, 2023). The results show a positive and significant relationship exists between job crafting and work role performance through work engagement as a

mediator. It was found that LMX strengthened the relationship between job crafting and work engagement. Higher work engagement positively correlated with work role performance.

Focusing on work engagement, a longitudinal meta-analysis by Frederick & VanderWeele (2020) reported the positive benefits of high levels of work engagement on outcomes such as reduced burnout, better health, and a greater sense of purpose and meaning in work. People who are highly engaged in their work are more likely to achieve positive outcomes in both their professional and personal lives. In fact, the meta-analysis reported a standardized effect size of d = 0.37 for the association between job crafting and later work engagement.

Vogt et al. (2016) investigated the relationship between job crafting, psychological capital, and work engagement, as well as the reverse causation of psychological capital and work engagement on job crafting. The findings suggest that job crafting predicts future levels of work engagement, but prior levels of work engagement do not predict job crafting behavior (Szőts-Kováts & Kiss, 2023). Overall, the results indicate that self-initiated job crafting can create a resourceful and challenging work environment, ultimately benefiting employee health and well-being (Moulik & Giri, 2024).

(Kooij et al., 2017) examined the influence of future time perspective (FTP) on job crafting, work engagement, and job performance and found that employee with an increased open-minded FTP engaged in more job crafting - increasing job resources and challenging job demands. Job crafting behavior was associated with higher levels of work engagement and job performance. Employees with a limited FTP did not proactively reduce job demands, and there was no indirect effect of changes in limited FTP on changes in work engagement and performance (Karatepe & Kim, 2023; Kooij et al., 2017). The study highlights the importance of considering FTP and job crafting in understanding work outcomes.

Ghadi (2023) conducted a study in UAE, investigating the relationship between job crafting, organizational happiness, and work engagement across different industries. The study concluded that job crafting positively and directly influences organizational happiness and work engagement. The former variable was found to

mediate the relationship between job crafting and work engagement partially.

Jaleel & Sarmad (2023) examined the relationship between inclusive leadership and job crafting dimensions, mediated by work engagement in the hospitality sector of Pakistan. The study also included the moderating role of job autonomy. The results found a predictive relationship between inclusive leadership and job crafting dimensions, mediated by work engagement and established the moderating role of job autonomy in the relationship.

Job crafting varies across various generational cohorts. The study by Sesen & Donkor (2023) showed that the relationship between job crafting and job boredom is differentiated by generational cohorts, especially Gen X and Millennials. This distinction is due to the attributes, priorities, desires, and motivations that influence their behavior.

Understanding the nuances of job crafting allows for targeted interventions. Highlighting generational differences helps customize job crafting strategies to specific workplace demographics. More studies are needed to explore job crafting across diverse industries, cultures, and job types.

Autonomy and strong leadership relationships empower employees to engage in job crafting effectively. These findings highlight the importance of organizational structures and leadership styles in fostering job crafting. Bashir et al. (2021) studied the impact of an age-diverse workforce on an organization's performance and the mediating role of job crafting. A significant relationship exists between age groups (classified as young and old employees) and organizations' financial and non-financial performance. The study shows that job crafting partially mediates the relationship between the two age groups and organizations' performance. The findings suggest that the impact of job crafting may vary depending on the age group of employees. The study also explains age-related insights into organization performance, which can help organizations manage their workforce effectively and improve their overall performance.

The literature highlights the nature of job crafting and its positive impact on individuals and organizations. While significant progress

has been made in understanding its components, relationships, and contextual factors, clarity is lacking in the multigenerational workforce perspective. Understanding how job crafting behaviors and preferences impact the relationship between job crafting and work engagement across generations is still lacking.

Existing literature lacks clarity on how job crafting practices vary across generations, particularly among Generation X (Gen X), Millennials, and Generation Z (Gen Z), and how these generational differences influence the relationship between job crafting and work engagement. Additionally, less research is done across other demographic and organizational variables, such as gender, tenure, job level, and organizational size, limiting our understanding of the contextual factors shaping job crafting behaviors.

Objectives

- Examine the relationship between overall job crafting behaviors and work engagement

- Examine job crafting trends across Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z.

- Examine work engagement levels across generations

- Assess whether the generational variable has a moderating effect on job crafting and work engagement

Operational Definitions

Job crafting refers to the

"proactive changes employees make to their job designs in order to align their work with their preferences, strengths, and passions. Job crafting is seen as a self-initiated strategy by employees to optimize their work environment and enhance their engagement and performance."(Tims et al., 2014)

Work Engagement as defined by Kahn, (1990):

"Work engagement denotes the degree to which a person shows self-preference in job tasks to promote connections between self and job, which can increase role performance through cognitive, emotional, and physical self-investment"

Method

Research design

This study employs a cross-sectional and quantitative research design to investigate the relationships between job crafting behaviors, generational cohorts, and work engagement. The use of a cross-sectional design allows for the collection of data at a single point in time, examining the relationships under investigation.

Participants and Procedure

Participants were employed across several industries, including education, finance, manufacturing, and technology, representing different job roles such as managers, line employees, and engineers. The sample included individuals from three generation cohorts: Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z. To be included in the study, participants were required to be employed full- time, have at least one year of work experience, work in India and belong to one of the three target generational cohorts. Participants were recruited via electronic surveys, and stratified random sampling was utilized to ensure adequate representation of each generational group. The sample size was 205 participants. Data was collected spanning across three months through Google Forms. This platform was chosen to ensure ease of access for participants and to promote high response rates. Surveys were distributed electronically, and strict quality-control measures were applied, including filtering for missing data or non-purposeful responses. Inclusion criteria required participants to belong to Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980), Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996), or Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012).

A total of 210 participants were initially invited to participate. After applying data cleaning procedures such as eliminating responses with missing data 205 valid responses remained for analysis. The final sample was demographically diverse: 53.20% were male, 27% were Gen X, 46.79% were college-educated, and the participants worked an average of 38.5 hours per week (SD = 7.2). Participants were aged between 22 and 59, with an average age of 37.6 years (SD = 9.8).

Given that the study included multiple generations and spanned different industries, demographic information such as age, gender, job role, and years of experience were collected to understand the

sample fully. Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the study, with participants receiving informed consent forms outlining the research's purpose, risks, and benefits.

Participation was voluntary, and all participants had the option to withdraw at any time. All data were securely stored, encrypted, and accessible only to the researcher and supervisor, ensuring participant confidentiality.

Measures

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES):

Developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova in 2006, the UWES is a widely used self-report measure designed to assess work engagement across three dimensions: vigor, dedication, and absorption. The scale demonstrates good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients ranging between 0.7 and 0.8. Its validity is further supported by evidence of both item convergent and item discriminant validity.

Respondents rate their experiences using a Likert scale, and the total score obtained provides an indication of their overall level of work engagement.

Job Crafting Questionnaire (JCQ):

Authored by Slemp and Vella-Brodrick in 2013, the Job Crafting Questionnaire (JCQ) assesses proactive task, cognitive, and relational crafting behaviors within the workplace. This questionnaire is specifically designed to measure how individuals actively shape their own work experiences. It exhibits a high level of reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.94, confirming its internal consistency.

The validity of the questionnaire is supported by evidence of convergent validity. Responses are collected using a Likert scale, and subscale scores provide insights into the extent to which individuals engage in task, cognitive, and relational crafting behaviors in their professional roles.

Results

JCQ - Job Crafting Questionnaire

UWES – Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

Age groups – Generation X (Gen X), Generation Y (Gen Y), and Generation Z (Gen Z)

Table 1: Descriptive statistics based on the three age categories. Job Crafting and Work Engagement

	Age	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Shapiro-Wilk W	p
JCQ	1	55	63.1	69	18.56	28	89	0.891	<.001
	2	80	70	73	9.28	37	90	0.926	<.001
	3	68	70.1	73	11.15	28	85	0.882	<.001
UWES	1	55	72.3	80	18.9	30	102	0.88	<.001
	2	80	77.5	81	11.66	38	97	0.922	<.001
	3	68	73.1	76	11.76	46	100	0.964	0.044

From table 1, the average job crafting is 63.1, 70, and 70.1 for Gen X, Gen Y, and Gen Z respectively. The average work engagement levels are 72.3, 77.5, and 73.1 for Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z, respectively. The normality scores indicate that the data for job crafting is not normally distributed, $W = 0.891, 0.926, 0.882, p<.05$. The data is not notmally distributed for Generations X and Y in work engagement, $W = 0.88, 0.922, p<.05$, but is normally distributed for Gen Z, $W = 0.964, p>.01$.

Table 2: Association between job crafting and work engagement

Variables		`JCQ
UWES	Spearman's rho	0.604*
	df	201
	p-value	<.001

Note: *p<.01. * significant at .01 level

From table 2, there is a significant correlation between job crafting and work engagement ($\rho = 0.604, p<.001$). Hence the alternate hypothesis H1(There is a positive relationship between overall job crafting behaviors and work engagement) is accepted.

Table 3: Moderating effects of age on the relationship between job crafting and work engagement

	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper	Z	p
JCQ	0.6793	0.0621	0.558	0.8009	10.94	<.001
Age	-2.1795	0.9611	-4.063	-0.2958	-2.27	0.023
JCQ * Age	-0.0823	0.0684	-0.216	0.0518	-1.2	0.229

From table 3, the results indicate that job crafting significantly predicted work engagement, b = 0.6793, SE = 0.0621, 95% CI, Z = 10.94, p<.001. Age was found to have significant negative effect on work engagement, b = -2.1795, SE = 0.9611, 95% CI, Z = -2.27, p<.05. The interaction between job crafting and age was not significant, b = -0.0823, SE = 0.0684, 95% CI, Z = -1.2, p = 0.229.

Table 4: Simple Slope Estimates for the effect of job crafting on work engagement at different age levels

Estimate		SE	95% Confidence Interval Lower	95% Confidence Interval Upper	Z	p
Average	0.679	0.0622	0.557	0.801	10.91	<.001
Low (-1SD)	0.743	0.0626	0.62	0.866	11.88	<.001
High (+1SD)	0.615	0.0974	0.425	0.806	6.32	<.001

Note. shows the effect of the predictor (JCQ) on the dependent variable (UWES) at different levels of the moderator (Age)

From table 4, for an average level of age, job crafting has a significant positive effect on work engagement, b = 0.679, SE = 0.0622, 95% CI [0.557, 0.801], Z = 10.91, p<.001. At a low level of age (1 SD below the mean), job crafting had an even stronger positive effect on work engagement, b = 0.743, SE = 0.0626, 95% CI [0.62, 0.866], Z = 11.88, p<.001. At a high level of age (1 SD above the mean), the positive effect of job crafting on work engagement was still significant but somewhat reduced, b = 0.615, SE = 0.0974, 95% CI [0.425, 0.806], Z = 6.32, p<.001.

Discussion

The present study investigated the impact of job crafting on work engagement and the moderating role of a multigenerational workforce in this relationship. The moderation analysis and simple slope estimates offer insight into differences in job crafting and work engagement among age groups.

As previous research has shown, job crafting has a strong positive impact on employee engagement. These results confirm that employees who actively shape their job roles and tasks to align with their strengths and interests tend to be more (Tims et al., 2014). This perspective highlights job crafting as a proactive behavior that fosters work engagement.

The moderation analysis found that age does not significantly moderate the relationship between job crafting and work engagement. This suggests that while job crafting positively influences work engagement, its impact remains consistent across different age groups. However, the simple slope analysis revealed that job crafting had a stronger effect on work engagement for younger employees compared to older employees. Specifically, the effect of job crafting on work engagement was notably greater for employees at lower age levels (1 SD below the mean). This suggests that while the interaction between job crafting and age is not statistically significant, younger employees may experience more substantial benefits from job crafting in terms of work engagement.

These findings align with the research of Topa & Carmena (2022), which found that job crafting positively correlates with work engagement, though its impact varies by age. Similarly, Ghadi (2023) reported a positive influence of job crafting, also examining its role in enhancing organizational happiness and work commitment. Additionally, Moulik and Giri (2023) explored job crafting in the Indian context, demonstrating its positive effects on employee happiness, job satisfaction, and work engagement. Our study further supports these findings, confirming a significant positive association between job crafting and work engagement.

Ng & Parry (2016) studied the significance of understanding how different generations perceive work. Gen X prioritizes job security and prestige, while Millennials value work-life balance and social

interaction. In the study, Gen Z is predicted to demand workplace security due to their experience with economic instability. The study also explored leadership preferences, which greatly influence job crafting. Gen X prefers a more collaborative leadership style, rejects rigid hierarchies, and wants a more decentralized organizational structure. The leadership styles that Gen Y and Gen Z prefer are more conducive to a work environment that employs job crafting. Gen Y prefers leadership styles that emphasize autonomy and flexibility and thrive in work environments that allow them to work independently and contribute ideas freely. Ng & Parry (2016) mention emerging leadership styles for Gen Z, where this workforce is likely to bring innovation, transparency, and team collaboration, all of which align with task, cognitive and relational job crafting.

Bashir et al (2021) indicates that younger generations, specifically Gen Z and Gen Y are more proactive in engaging with job crafting as they tend to take more initiatives to modify their work to fit personal strengths and skills. As mentioned before, they also favor autonomy and are generally more career and change-oriented and are eager to introduce new approaches and develop new skills. The same study notes that Gen X are generally less engaged in job crafting may be due to their stronger preference for stability, routine, and intrinsic job satisfaction, which are not as easily altered by job crafting.

Practical Implications

The results suggest that organizations should continue to promote job crafting to enhance work engagement, particularly among younger employees who may benefit more from such interventions. Tailoring job crafting strategies to different age groups may not be necessary, as the overall positive effect of job crafting on work engagement is consistent across age groups. However, organizations should remain mindful of the varying impacts of job crafting across different employee demographics.

Organizations should train leaders to adopt behaviors that encourage job crafting. Leaders can design a work environment that motivates employees to engage in job crafting by instilling confidence in abilities and encouraging participation in decision-making. Organizations could move toward flatter or more

decentralized structures that promote flexibility and increase autonomy to facilitate job crafting. Fewer hierarchical layers can encourage employees to actively shape their roles, leading to higher work engagement and job satisfaction. Candidates' core self-evaluation can be gauged during the recruitment process as individuals with high core self-evaluations are likelier to engage in job crafting. This can also be used to select employees likely to succeed in a job-crafting-friendly environment.

By implementing these practices, organizations can foster a culture where job crafting is encouraged, thereby increasing employee engagement.

Limitations and Future Research

The cross-sectional design limits causal inferences, and the findings may not be generalizable beyond the sampled population. Future research may consider using longitudinal design (Tims et al., 2014) to study the effects of job crafting on work engagement and explore other contextual factors, such as organizational culture and job characteristics, that may influence this relationship. Job crafting is primarily individualized and can vary across different roles and industries. This variability can make generalizing findings across different job types and sectors difficult. Sample representativeness is another challenge. A sample that is not representative may limit the generalizability of the study's findings. The interaction between job crafting and other variables, such as sector or years of experience, may involve various dynamics that have not been addressed in this study. Employing advanced statistical techniques, such as hierarchical modeling or structural equation modeling, can help deduce the effects of multiple interacting variables and give insights into how job crafting interacts with sectors and years of experience.

Further studies could investigate job crafting and work engagement across various sectors to understand sector – specific dynamics. By examining how job crafting influences work engagement in different industries, researchers can identify sector-specific patterns and discrepancies. This approach can provide insights into how industry-specific factors, such as job characteristics, organizational culture, and employee expectations, impact the effectiveness of job crafting interventions.

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