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Impact of Job Crafting on Employee Engagement with special reference to the Statistical Officer at the Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka

Marliyas^{a*}, Salfiya Ummah^b and Gunapalan^c

^{abc}Department of Management, Faculty of Management and Commerce, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

ABSTRACT

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Job crafting and employee engagement are dynamic and innovative concepts in this domain that gained importance in recent years. This study assesses the impact of job crafting on employee engagement, reference to statistical officers at the Department of Census and Statistics. The study gathered qualitative data from twenty-five statistical officers who were selected randomly covering nine provinces of Sri Lanka. Ninety-eight per cent of the participants underscore the substantial influence of job crafting on employee engagement, highlighting its positive contributions to commitment, autonomy, job performance, job satisfaction, and innovation. The implications of these findings are twofold: first policymakers can shape the strategies to enhance human resource development within the public sector, and second, academically contribute to raising the body of existing knowledge and awareness of job crafting and its impact on work engagement. Furthermore, there are certain limitations coupled with this study. Specifically, data collection was confined to a singular designation within a single institution.

*Corresponding aliyarmarliyas@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary global marketplace, enterprises encounter fierce competition in their quest to attract and retain the most highly skilled and talented workforce. This has driven a need for innovation in human capital management, which has had a significant impact on improving the quality of life for people around the world.

With recent challenges brought about by the pandemic and technological advancements, the importance of flexibility in job design has become increasingly clear. Job crafting, or the practice of employees making self-initiated changes to perfect their job design, has appeared as an effective solution for improving employee engagement and performance. Employee work engagement is a vital Key Performance Indicator for gauging human resource efficiency. Unlike other resources, human resources own unique vitality and drive, making them the catalysts for translating possibilities into reality (Opatha, 2016). Achieving organizational goals hinges on active employee contribution and engagement. Therefore, strategic investments in employee engagement and job crafting are imperative for success in today's competitive landscape. This study aims to evaluate the influence of job crafting on employee engagement, focusing on Statistical Officers within the Department of Census and Statistics. It also provides recommendations for effective initiatives to enhance employee engagement and departmental performance. Job crafting holds immense value for both employees and organizations. Numerous empirical studies have proved that job crafting behaviors are highly beneficial for employees, leading to enhanced work engagement, improved well-being, and a greater sense of work meaning (Puchalska-Kamińska 2019).

Job crafting has also been found to promote person-job fitness, essential for employees to feel satisfied with their work and for organizations to benefit from their full potential (Tims Derks, & Bakker, 2016). In addition to these employee-centred benefits, job crafting has also been linked to positive organizational outcomes. Research has consistently revealed that job-crafting behaviors are linked to superior work performance, decreased absenteeism, and a decreased inclination to leave the organization (Rudolph et al., 2017). These findings highlighted the potential of job crafting to improve organizational productivity and reduce costs associated with employee turnover. Employee engagement is a critical factor that influences the success of an organization. Engaged employees tend to go the extra mile in achieving organizational goals, and they also tend to speak positively about their organization to others, thereby enhancing its reputation (Aon, 2018). Nevertheless, according to Gallup's 2017 studies, the employee engagement landscape in Sri Lanka paints a less optimistic picture, with only 38% of workers reported as engaged, while a majority of 54% were found to be disengaged, and a concerning 8% were actively disengaged.

The Department of Statistics, as the primary official body responsible for providing statistical data, faces significant challenges in adapting to a digitalized work environment. According to Field Management Records (2023), 24% of Field Officers have surpassed the age of fifty and are expected to retire soon. These officers encounter several difficulties, including age-related limitations, language barriers, network connectivity issues, fear of making errors, and the diverse nature of fieldwork. Consequently, they are reluctant to engage in paperless work processes such as email communication, virtual meetings, and digital data collection methods. This reluctance is adversely impacting the Department's ability to effectively implement and manage digitalized data collection processes, thereby threatening overall performance. Moreover, prior research is scarce on the impact of job crafting on work engagement particularly within the context of Department of Census and Statistics. This gap in the literature underscores the novelty and relevance of the proposed study, not only for the Department but also for other public and private institutions in Sri Lanka as they navigate the

shift towards digitalized work environments. In today's highly competitive business world, employee engagement has become critical for organizations. Companies are looking for ways to enhance employee engagement, as it has a significant impact on the bottom line. Iddagoda and Opatha (2020) conducted an empirical study focusing on employee engagement among management staff within publicly listed companies. This research sheds valuable light on the significance of this topic in the contemporary business landscape. The study addressed several gaps, and findings have important implications for companies looking to improve employee engagement. Through investigations of Iddagoda and Gunawardana (2017), and Iddagoda and Opatha (2020), they provide valuable insights into the factors that affect employee engagement and highlight the need for organizations to prioritize employee engagement as a key driver of successful accomplishment and take proactive measures to promote it.

2. Literature Review

Job Crafting

Globalization has transformed the business model and presented a wealth of new opportunities while also reshaping the way employees work. Rather than simply completing assigned tasks, modern workers are increasingly expected to be adaptable and capable of transforming their roles to meet changing needs. As cited by Mandaviya (2020), job crafting proactively shapes their work to meet their unique needs and preferences, while also enhancing organizational performance by improving employee satisfaction, engagement, and overall effectiveness.

Job crafting is a novel concept and has started debates in academic and industrial contexts all over the world as a dynamic theory. The job crafting theory was initially introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) with the idea of designing jobs. The perspective of job crafting has been different for different authors and researchers across various domains.

Leana, Appelbaum, and Shevchenko (2009) suggested that there are two forms of job crafting, individual crafting and collaborative crafting. Wrzesniewski et al. (2001) classified job crafting into three natures namely, cognitive, relational and task crafting. The concept of job crafting was classified into four types by Tims, Bakker, & Derks, (2012), accordingly First, improving structural. The second is improving social employment resources. Third, enhance demanding work requirements and fourth, reduce demand.

Job crafting carries substantial significance for both individual employees and organizations. Empirical research has consistently proved its positive associations with various aspects of employee well-being and organizational performance. Specifically, job crafting behaviors are positively linked to employee work engagement, well-being, and work meaning (Puchalska-Kamińska, 2019), as well as person-job fit (Tims, et al. 2016). Additionally, job crafting exhibits negative correlations with job boredom (Harju, Schaufeli, & Hakanen, 2018). Importantly, it is also associated with superior work performance, reduced absenteeism

(Ghitulescu, 2006), and decreased turnover intentions (Rudolph, et al. 2017). These findings collectively underscore the manifold advantages of fostering job crafting within the workplace.

Proactive work behavior is defined as the actions employees take to initiate changes in their job roles or work environment without being prompted by external factors. This behavior forms the foundation for employees to take the initiative in altering the characteristics of their work (Kooij et al., 2017; Zhang & Parker, 2022; Yang et al., 2022; Kim & Beehr, 2022). Job crafting, defined as the individualized modifications employees make to their job tasks, interactions, and cognitive perceptions of work, reflects the unique ways in which employees shape their workplaces. This process is influenced by factors such as regulatory focus (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019), personality traits, self-evaluations, efficiency, and competencies (Bruning & Campion, 2022). According to Kooij et al. (2017), job crafting is particularly driven by the alignment of work with the employee's strengths and interests.

job crafting leverages an employee's strengths and interests. In more specific terms, job crafting stands for a constructive means of tailoring job roles to align more closely with an individual's skills, values, and goals. This practice is particularly effective within an organizational framework that adopts a bottom-up management style, empowering employees to take initiative, exercise creativity, and enjoy increased autonomy in their work. This approach stands in contrast to the traditional top-down management approach, emphasizing a more participatory and employee-driven method of job design.

Kooij et al. (2020) further identify three forms of job crafting: adaptation, utilization, and developmental job creation. Based on scientific theory, it can be inferred that for an employee to engage in active job crafting, there must be a strong alignment between the employee's relationship with the work and the nature of the tasks being performed. When work resonates with an employee's interests or even becomes a hobby, it is generally accepted that the quality of work improves. A crucial factor in transforming work into a fulfilling endeavor is the ability to utilize one's strengths.

Job crafting might facilitate employee innovation (Bindl, 2019), and organizational citizenship behavior (Harari, Reaves, & Viswesvaran, 2016). More scientists point to the significant role of job crafting in increasing employee autonomy (Rudolph, et al. 2017), creating a climate for innovation (Jiang, & Wang, 2019), creativity (Wang, & Long, 2020) and motivation (De Beer, Tims, Bakker. 2016).

Job crafting is a proactive approach that allows employees to customize their job roles to enhance their satisfaction, engagement, and performance. It involves employees taking the initiative to reshape the boundaries of their work by modifying tasks, relationships, and perceptions to better align with their strengths, interests, and values. Job crafting represents a dynamic and personalized approach to work that empowers employees to take charge of their roles. By actively engaging in tasks, relational, and cognitive crafting, employees can create a more fulfilling and productive work experience, benefiting both themselves and their

organizations. This concept is particularly relevant in today's rapidly changing work environments, where adaptability and individual engagement are crucial for success.

Employee Engagement

The concept of employee engagement was first proposed by Kahn (1990), who defined employee engagement as the harnessing of employees' selves to their work roles. In this context, engagement employee involves employees expressing themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Kahn emphasized that engaged employees are those who fully invest their energies and identities in their work, demonstrating a deep connection with their job tasks and actively participating in their work environment. This definition highlights the multidimensional nature of engagement, encompassing an individual's psychological presence in the workplace.

Employee engagement is more than just being present at work, it is a measure of an employee's enthusiasm and dedication to their job and the organization. According to Tharika, Iddagoda & Bulińska-Stangrecka (2021), engagement is reflected in employee's mental, emotional, and behavioral commitment. Engaged employees are more likely to perceive their work environment positively and are less likely to take sick leave or consider leaving the organization, as noted by Graça, et al., (2019). These employees are also known to exceed expectations in their efforts to achieve organizational goals and are more inclined to speak positively about their work when interacting with members of the community, as emphasized by Aon (2018).

Employee engagement is defined as the level of enthusiasm, dedication, and involvement an employee exhibits towards their work and organization. Employee engagement is measured by the degree to which employees report positive attitudes towards their job, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (Jiang & Wang, 2020). It is also measured by the frequency and intensity of behaviors that demonstrate creativity, innovation, and problem-solving (Meng et al., 2020). Furthermore, engagement is operationalized through the extent to which employees take initiative and engage in extra-role behaviors actions that exceed their formal job requirements and contribute to organizational success (Kim & Lee, 2020). These behaviors include volunteering for additional tasks, offering innovative ideas, and actively participating in team efforts.

Employee engagement can function as a mediator between transformational leadership and employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Jiang, & Zhang, 2021). A positive work environment, supportive leadership, and job autonomy are key factors that contribute to employee engagement (Jiang, & Wang, 2020).

A comprehensive review of the literature reveals that employee engagement can be defined as the extent of emotional commitment and devotion displayed by employees toward their jobs and the organization. Engaged employees show enthusiasm for their work, take satisfaction in their achievements, and show motivation to

go beyond their prescribed job responsibilities to contribute to the organization's success. Employee engagement emerges as a pivotal factor in the prosperity of any organization due to its association with heightened productivity, enhanced job performance, and reduced turnover rates. Additionally, engaged employees tend to develop a keen sense of loyalty, often resulting in extended periods of tenure within the organization. This synthesis underscores the multifaceted benefits of fostering and nurturing employee engagement within the workplace.

Indeed, organizations can actively cultivate and nurture employee engagement through a range of strategic initiatives. These include establishing a positive work environment, offering avenues for professional development, career growth, and encouraging a culture of transparent communication. Effective leadership and supportive management practices, along with consistent feedback mechanisms, are pivotal in cultivating an engaged workforce. Engaged employees are typically distinguished by their attributes such as loyalty, creativity, innovation, and a customer-centric orientation, all of which give them highly valuable contributors to the organization's success.

The Empirical Study on Job Crafting and Employee Engagement

Contemporary businesses are placing a growing emphasis on the prioritization of employee engagement. This shift is driven by expanding awareness of the robust correlation between engagement and positive employee outcomes, including improved job performance, higher-quality work, increased customer satisfaction, and enhanced financial performance (McLean, 2006; Saks, 2011; Wickramasinghe and Perera, 2014; Iddagoda and Opatha, 2020). This recognition underscores the pivotal role that employee engagement plays in achieving both employee well-being and organizational success.

Empirical Studies and Findings

Based on the above-mentioned empirical evidence table, it appears that over the last five years, there has been consistent empirical evidence indicating that job crafting has a positive impact on employee engagement. For example, Weiwei Shang (2022), who conducted a study among 536 ideological and political education teachers in China found that job crafting has a positive impact on work performance with a mediation effect of work engagement and work meaning.

The findings from the study conducted by Letona-Ibañez, Martinez-Rodriguez, Ortiz-Marques, Carrasco, and Amillano (2021), which indicate a positive impact of job crafting on both work engagement and work meaning, underscore the significance of employees proactively shaping their job roles to better align with their skills, interests, and values among a group of 814 white-collar women workers in Spain. Elham Ebrahimi, Roya Safari, and Mohammad Reza Fathi's (2021) study discovered a noteworthy positive relationship between self-efficacy and work engagement, as well as self-efficacy and job crafting, within a sample of 224 professors at Shiraz University of Medical Science.

Further, earlier research has proved that job crafting can significantly contribute to employee engagement, job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, employee performance, and professional success (Tims et al., 2012; Vogt, Hakanen, Brauchli, Jenny, & Bauer 2016; Petrou 2017; Wang et al., 2019). In addition, improving employee engagement has been shown to reduce harmful employee outcomes such as burnout and intentions to leave the organization (Maslach and Leiter, 2008; Shankar and Bhatnagar, 2010; Rudolph et al., 2017; Bruning and Campion, 2018). As such, employee engagement is viewed as a critical factor in achieving business success. Consequently, organizations are increasingly adopting job-crafting strategies to cultivate and retain an engaged workforce.

Author /Year	Variables		Targeted Sample	Result of the Study
	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable		
Mushtaq A Siddiqi (2015)	Work Engagement	Job Crafting	203 service employees and 540 customers of several branches of four prestigious banks in northern-most parts of India	Significant positive impact
Leon T De Beer, Maria Tims, Arnold B Bakker (2016)	Job Crafting	Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction	470 Mining and Manufacturing employees in South Africa	Significant positive impact
Bhargkavi A.P Pari (2016)	Job Crafting	Job Performance MV – Work Engagement	Four hundred Secondary School Teachers in Kedah State Malaysia	Positive impact
Wilda Puspita Sari, Winny Puspasari Thamrin (2019)	Job Satisfaction and Job Crafting	Work Engagement	Eighty-four women working in Jakarta and Depok with twenty-one - 60 years and 1 year of experience	Significant positive impact
Letona-Ibañez, O. Martinez-Rodriguez, S. Ortiz-Marques, N. Carrasco, M. Amillano, A (2021)	Job Crafting	Work Engagement MV – Work Meaning	814 White Collar Women Workers Average Age of 41.68. Spain	Positive impact
Elham Ebrahimi, Roya Safari, Mohammad Reza Fathi (2021)	Self-efficacy	Work Engagement MV – Job Crafting	224 professors Shiraz University of Medical Science	Significant positive impact
Weiwei Shang (2022)	Job Crafting	Work Performance MV – Work Engagement and Work Meaning	536 Ideological and Political Education Teacher in China	Positive impact

Source: Researcher (2024)

3. Research Methodology

The study aims to evaluate the influence of job crafting on employee engagement among Statistical Officers working in the Department of Census and Statistics. As Saunders et al. (2018) posited, the research design serves as the overarching plan that outlines the systematic approach to addressing research questions. In this study, a descriptive method was employed to achieve the research purpose, case study method was applied as a research strategy to provide an in-depth analysis. Data were collected using a cross-sectional timeframe, with respondents being informed of the study's purpose and they were asked a set of qualitative structured questions to gather relevant data, ensuring consistency and alignment with the research objectives.

A sample of twenty-five Statistical Officers was randomly selected to represent all nine provinces. The collected data underwent a thorough analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis were employed to explore the relationships within the data. The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights into enhancing employee engagement, contributing to both academic understanding and practical application within the Department.

4. Analysis and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

Among the cohort of twenty-five respondents, a clear demographic distribution is discernible, with eighteen individuals identifying as male, and seven identifying as female. It is worth noting that the entire respondent pool proves a uniform status of marital commitment and educational attainment, with each member holding a degree qualification. Additionally, the collective experience level within this group is commendable, as eleven respondents have a wealth of professional expertise spanning more than five years. Moreover, fourteen statistical officers distinguish themselves by boasting a remarkable tenure of over ten years in their respective fields.

Findings and Discussions

The respondents have been sensitized to the concept of job crafting, and they were invited to express their sentiments about its potential implementation in the workplace, particularly in the context of the prevailing fiscal crisis and heightened pandemic-related stressors. This inquiry sought to gauge their attitudes and reactions toward incorporating job-crafting strategies during these challenging circumstances.

The unanimity with which all twenty-five respondents expressed admiration for the prospect of "permitting job crafting in their workplace is noteworthy." They all recognized its commendable attribute of enabling them to align their work with their passions and interests. This consensus among the respondents underscores the significance of job crafting as a means of fostering a more fulfilling and engaging work environment, particularly during challenging periods such as the economic crisis and the pandemic. Whereas the study of

Elham Ebrahimi, Roya Safari, and Mohammad Reza Fathi (2021) on white-collar workers has emphasized the same.

It is encouraging that the statistical officers in this study recognize job crafting as a valuable tool for enhancing employee engagement and creating a productive work environment. With 98 per cent of participants acknowledging its importance, there is a strong consensus on the positive impact of job crafting. The findings align with previous studies, adding credibility. Studies by Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2016) and Petrou, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2018) also support that job crafting contributes to employee well-being and engagement by reducing stress, promoting positive emotions, enhancing autonomy, and increasing the sense of meaningfulness in their work.

Altering work interactions can enhance commitment, autonomy, and innovation across departments, especially during financial stress, as noted by all 25 Statistical officers. The study aligns with previous findings, showing that employee engagement is positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Liu & Wang, 2020). High engagement levels reduce job stress and burnout (Liu & Wang, 2020) and boost creativity, innovation, and problem-solving (Meng et al., 2020). Engaged employees take initiative and engage in beneficial extra-role behaviors (Kim & Lee, 2020). Engagement also moderates the relationship between employee well-being, transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Zhang et al., 2021). Key factors contributing to employee engagement such as positive work environment, supportive leadership, and job autonomy (Liu & Wang, 2020).

The respondents discussed challenges with job crafting in their government institution. While recognizing its benefits, twenty-one respondents noted that top management could no longer fully engage in job crafting. Alternatively, others suggested it could be facilitated with the district head's approval. This highlights the evolving practices and different perspectives on job crafting within the institution.

5. Conclusion

In the contemporary global marketplace, businesses face intense competition to attract and retain highly skilled employees. Within this competitive landscape, job crafting and employee engagement have emerged as vital concepts, gaining significant attention, particularly in response to challenges such as the pandemic and financial crises. Job crafting, the practice of allowing employees to shape their roles, has proven to be a powerful driver of employee engagement. This practice has led to a range of positive outcomes, including improved job performance, higher job satisfaction, strengthened organizational commitment, reduced job-related stress and burnout, and enhanced employee creativity and innovation. The findings of this study confirm that enabling job crafting positively impacts employee engagement.

However, this study has some limitations. The data collection was limited to a sample of twenty-five statistical officers, which may not fully represent the broader population. Future research should aim for a more diverse and inclusive sample, considering factors such as cultural context, generational diversity, and professional

backgrounds to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. Additionally, this study's cross-sectional design captures employee perspectives at a single point in time, which may not fully reflect the evolving nature of job crafting and work engagement. Future research would benefit from adopting a longitudinal approach, allowing for a deeper exploration of how these concepts develop and sustain over time, across different career stages, or within varying organizational contexts.

By addressing these limitations, future studies can provide more robust insights into the relationship between job crafting and employee engagement, ultimately helping organizations better harness these concepts to achieve long-term success.

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