

Job Crafting: A Pathway To Understand Work Engagement and Well-Being among Teachers

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Educational institutions, like school settings are dynamic. Teachers need to employ effective strategies to combat such challenges for their personal growth and maintain a healthy environment for the students as well as positive learning environment. Teachers can proactively craft specific aspects of their job keeping the core structure of the job as it is, and fit their jobs with their own skills, abilities and motivation. Thus, the present study aims to explore using a qualitative design whether job crafting is used by teachers to help to adapt their roles to suit their skills, abilities, motivation and well-being. Moreover, we aim to identify themes regarding job crafting behaviours and its impact on their engagement and well-being across cultures using Focus Group Discussions (FGD). 48 teachers participated in the study and eight focus group discussions were conducted. The analysis indicated that teachers cross culturally engage in job crafting (task crafting, relational crafting and cognitive crafting). These adjustments not only increased teacher's engagement with their work but also contribute to their well-being. In essence the study indicates that the proactive measures teachers take to render their responsibilities, ultimately lead to more fulfilling professional experience.

Keywords: job crafting, work engagement, well-being

Today's employees have numerous opportunities as well as pressures in every organization due to their dynamic nature. Traditionally employees have relied upon a more conventional top-down approach wherein the employers design the job roles for their employees. However, research indicated that this approach fails to recognize individual differences effectively (Oldham and Fried, 2016). Studies have revealed that a more flexible and beneficial strategy is job crafting, where employees proactively craft specific aspects of their job while maintaining the core structure. Thus allows the employees to align their roles with their own, skills, abilities and motives leading to better performance. This proactive bottom-up approach is called job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) conceptualized job crafting into three categories task crafting (changing the nature of job tasks), relational crafting (altering

interactions with others) and cognitive crafting (modifying perception of the job). Later Tims and Bakker (2010) expanded the concept by focusing on how employees balance job demands and resources to optimize their work environment. Research evidence revealed that job crafting not only benefits employees by making their roles more meaningful but also enhances overall organizational performance through seeking resources, seeking challenges and reducing demands (Petrou et.al., 2012). Recent researches have reported that job crafting is significantly linked to positive work-related outcomes across cultures, including enhanced engagement, performance, satisfaction and well-being (Tims et al., 2014; Bakker, 2015; Demerouti et.al., 2015; Slemp et.al., 2015; Kim et.al., 2020; Zhang and Parker, 2021). These findings reinforce the fact that job crafting contribute to making work more satisfying and meaningful and promote

well-being (Tims et.al., 2016; Harbridge et.al., 2022; Signore et.al., 2024). Though the global relevance and positive impact of job crafting has been reiterated, very few studies have attempted to uncover culture specific approaches and outcomes of job crafting (Gordon et.al. 2015; Kim et.al., 2020; Zhang and Parker, 2021; Ghazzawi et.al, 2023)

One field wherein work engagement and overall well-being are of pivotal importance for an effective and productive system is educational institutions (Aulén et.al., 2024). Teachers face increasing pressure due to various changes in educational environment including technological advancements, policy shifts, diverse student needs and effectiveness (Westphal et.al., 2022). Through crafting their jobs on various domains for instances skill, relations and cognition, the teachers can enhance engagement and well-being in effective manner (Oubibi et.al., 2022; Ciuhan et.al., 2022). More recently Aulén et.al., (2024) observed that job crafting act as a buffer against stress and which in turn strengthens well-being among teachers. However, earlier studies have also reported that job crafting can have a detrimental outcome such as emotional exhaustion, work overload and burnout (Harju et.al., 2021; Li et.al., 2022). Despite these findings, majority studies, corroborate that job crafting by and large acts as a buffer against stress and burnout fostering a healthier environment (Ciuhan et.al., 2022; Signore et.al., 2024; Aulén et.al., 2024).

Despite extensive in the western context on the relationship between job crafting and work engagement and well-being among professionals including teachers (Aulén et.al., 2024), there is a dearth in literature exploring this relationship within the Indian settings. To address this gap the present study aims to investigate the relationship between job and work engagement and well-

being among teachers in India and to identify the culture specific factors of job crafting that contribute to enhanced work engagement and well-being in this context.

Objectives

1. To explore an in-depth understanding of how various dimensions of job crafting influence work engagement and overall well-being of teachers across cultures through the use of qualitative method of focus groups.
2. The study aims to identify the specific elements within the task, relational, and cognitive dimensions of job crafting that most significantly enhance work engagement and well-being among teachers in the Indian context.
3. The study aims to document and analyze the personal experiences and narratives of teachers as they engage in job crafting providing insight into the practical implications and issues in this process.

Method

Sample

The study was conducted in two towns: Shimla in Himachal Pradesh and Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh. A total of 48 teachers participated with 24 teachers from Shimla and 24 teachers from Gwalior. The participants were selected using a convenient sampling procedure. Detail characteristics of the sample are provided in table 1.

A structured schedule was developed to ensure consistency and comparability in the focus group discussions. Four focus groups, each consisting of six participants, were held in both Shimla and Gwalior. Each discussion lasted between 40 and 45 minutes. The qualitative data collected was recorded, transcribed for analysis, and key themes were identified.

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Variable	Shimla	Gwalior
Gender		
Males	9	11
Female	15	13
Age		
Mean±SD	40.2±4.76	41.4±4.99
Educational Qualification		
Graduate	14	16
Post graduate and above	12	8
Marital status		
Married	18	21
Unmarried	6	3

Results

The teachers responses during the focus group discussions revealed several themes. The findings indicated that job crafting behavior enhanced work engagement and well-being among teachers. Table 2 illustrates the themes related to the job crafting dimensions utilized by teachers in Shimla to support their work engagement and well-being.

Table 3 illustrates the themes and corresponding job crafting dimensions used by teachers in Gwalior to enhance their work engagement and well-being.

Table 2: Themes and Job Crafting Dimension Utilized by Teachers in Shimla

Themes	Categories	Responses	Job crafting behaviour	Consequences
Autonomy	Restructuring tasks	<i>"I stay updated and engaged in class." "I complete my duties in a way that suits me best."</i>	Task crafting Developing skills and oneself professionally, Altering nature of tasks, Simplifying tasks	Satisfaction; Work-life balance; Engagement; Well-Being
Relatedness	Increasing social resources	<i>"All the staff members are very cooperative and accommodating." "I can always seek guidance from my seniors and colleagues."</i>	Relational crafting Building supportive relationships, peer and supervisors assistance	Peer and Supervisory Support; Job Satisfaction
Competence	Role reframing	<i>"Every challenge is an opportunity for growth." "I understand my duties and boundaries as a teachers."</i>	Cognitive crafting Foreseeing positive outcomes, accepting challenges, aligning expectations,	Resilience; Improved Performance; Job Satisfaction

Table 3: Themes and Job Crafting Dimension Utilized by Teachers in Gwalior

Themes	Categories	Responses	Job crafting behaviour	Consequences
Autonomy	Reducing hindering job demands	<i>"Incorporate new technology to make my teaching more effective and my work efficient." "I fulfill all my duties that are required."</i>	Task crafting	Occupational Commitment; Satisfaction; Work-life balance; Engagement; Meaningfulness; Well-Being

Relatedness	Building personal relationships	<i>"We manage most of the activities as a team." "We share most things with each other. It's like one family."</i>	Relational crafting	Social Support; Team Cohesion; Job Satisfaction
Competence	Work-life balance	<i>"It is stressful but at the end it is a rewarding job to impact children in a positive manner." "I don't take work matters home."</i>	Cognitive crafting	Resilience; Enhanced Performance; Job Satisfaction

Discussion

The focus groups yielded insightful themes regarding job crafting behaviours and their consequences, revealing how employees actively reshape their work experiences to enhance satisfaction, commitment and well-being.

One of the most prominent themes identified was autonomy, particularly in the context of restructuring job. Participants emphasized their commitment to professional development and personal skill enhancement. Quotes like, *"I stay updated and engaged in class"*, illustrates the proactive steps teachers take to tailor their roles. This task crafting reflects a desire for autonomy, allowing individuals to shape their work according to their strengths and preferences (Bakker and Oerlemans, 2019; Wu et.al., 2023; Liu et.al., 2023). Earlier research has demonstrated that strengths based job crafting wherein employees actively reshape their task align with their strengths, is associated with improved job efficacy and enhanced performance (Wood et.al., 2011). This improvement may be attributed to the self initiated changes employees make in modifying their job boundaries which enables them to better utilize their strengths and skills (Kooji et.al., 2017; Yang et.al., 2021). The implications of this autonomy are significant. By simplifying or altering task the employees report

increased occupational commitment and engagement. This suggest that when individuals feel empowered to craft their roles, they find greater meaningfulness and satisfaction in their work. This aligns with theories of job crafting which posit that employee proactive efforts in task management can lead to improved job satisfaction and overall well-being (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001)

Also, it was evident that teachers in Shimla participated in relational crafting wherein relatedness emerged as a key theme. As stated by a participant, *"I can always seek guidance from my seniors and colleague"* teachers shaped the social and interpersonal precincts of their job significantly increasing their job satisfaction, work engagement and commitment (Leana et al., 2009; Dash and Vohra, 2019; McNaughtan et al., 2022; Hascher et al., 2021; Noesgaard, and Jørgensen, F., 2023). Building relationships with others and increasing their social resources empowered workers to engage in more gratifying and supportive interactions, which fulfils their need for relatedness and well-being (Vogel et al., 2016; Hascher et al., 2021; Khan et.al., 2024).

The perceptions of their jobs were altered by teachers in Shimla, in a positive way which is reflected in the focus group discussions. Statements like *"Every challenge is an opportunity for growth."* provided a robust

backing for application of cognitive crafting by teachers. By engaging in cognitive crafting such as role reframing, positivity and work life balance teachers decreased role ambiguity by better understanding their role as a teacher facilitating well-being, job satisfaction and work engagement (Li and Yu, 2022; Hayes et al., 2022; Padmanabhanunni and Pretorius, 2023).

This confirmed that they reframed their roles and aligned their expectations to best fit their job and gave them a sense of purpose. Research has proven that cognitive crafting has a noteworthy effect on teachers as it added more meaning to their job, cultivated a positive identity at work, increased their commitment levels towards their jobs and organization (Ghitulescu, 2006; Wrzesniewski et al., 2013; McNaughtan et al., 2022).

Regarding teachers in Gwalior, focus group discussions revealed that they indeed modified task-oriented boundaries of their roles. A teacher quoted "*Incorporate new technology to make my teaching more effective and my work efficient.*" emphasizing autonomy as a key theme. They redesigned the parameters of their roles in accordance with their perception of tasks and the optimal way to achieve that fit. (Khan et al., 2024). They fulfilled their need for autonomy, by reducing hindering job demands. Task crafting acted as a significant antecedent in predicting various job satisfaction, job engagement, job performance, commitment and meaningfulness of work (Leana et al., 2009; De Beer et al., 2016; Karollah et al., 2020; Petrou et al., 2012; Siddiqi, 2015; Tims et al., 2015; Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). Their proactive approach towards crafting specific work aspects and efficiently tackling job demands, resulted a sense of self-efficacy, resilience, positivity, engagement and overall well-being (Hascher

et al., 2021; Westphal et al., 2022; Papazis et al., 2023; Aulen et al., 2024).

The participating teachers shared that they often collaborate on activities as a team with statements, such as "*We share most things with each other. It's like one family.*". These reflections clearly illustrate the concept of relational crafting – an approach where employees shape their roles through the relationships they build with colleagues. By engaging in such job crafting, teachers create a supportive social network that foster social support, team cohesion and job satisfaction. Research highlights that developing strong interpersonal connections at work enables employees to feel a sense of belongingness and emotional connection which is vital for overall well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Zhang et al., 2022).

The focus group discussion revealed that teachers in Gwalior actively engage in Cognitive crafting by reforming their jobs to reduce stress or derive meaning from their work. As one participant put it "*It is stressful but at the end it is a rewarding job to impact children in a positive manner*" while another said that "*I don't take work matters home*". These statements highlighted how teachers focus on positive outcomes of their work shifted their mindset to appreciate the rewards even in the face of stress. This approach helps them maintain a healthy work-life balance which in turn fosters resilience, job satisfaction and improved performance. This aligns with existing literature on cognitive crafting, which suggests that reinterpreting work challenges for growth can enhance both job satisfaction and resilience (Laker et al., 2020; Westphal et al., 2022; Aulen et al., 2024)

The themes identified in Focus Groups with teachers in Shimla and Gwalior revealed both similarities and differences in how job crafting behaviours manifest in different

contexts. Despite the geographical and cultural differences between the two locations, teachers in both areas engage in job crafting to enhance their autonomy, relatedness and competence. However, the specific ways in which they engage in these behaviours vary based on local needs, challenges, organizational structure, culture and cultures in non-work domains (Wang et.al., 2020). Both groups emphasize task crafting as a way to enhance autonomy, but the methods were found to be different. Shimla teachers seem more focused on personal skill development and simplification of task, while teachers in Gwalior prioritize on technological integration and efficiency. Although both strategies aim to improve autonomy but Shimla teachers focus on personal growth, whereas Gwalior teachers aim to reduce external challenges and optimize working conditions. This reveals while both groups share the same goal of autonomy, their approaches reflect differing priorities: one centered on individual traits and capabilities and the other on external tools and systems to improve.

In terms of relational crafting both the groups engage in relational crafting, the nature of relationships and the emphasis on social support differs. Shimla teachers are more focused on seeking guidance and support from peers and supervisors, indicating a more hierarchical or mentorship based approach. In contrast, Gwalior teachers emphasize team cohesion and a sense of being a part of family-like structure suggesting a more horizontal, collaborative approach to building relationships. Although both approaches contribute to job satisfaction and social support but the structure and dynamics of relationship vary across two contexts. The differential pattern in relational crafting between Shimla and Gwalior can be attributed to the varying

socio-cultural, geographical and organizational context of these two locations. Shimla's traditional rural based environment encourages hierarchical, mentorship-based relational crafting, while Gwalior's more modern, township based context foster horizontal collaborative relationships. This difference is consistent with research that links social support structures to rural vs urban settings, hierarchical vs egalitarian cultures. While rural and traditional setting often prioritize hierarchical social structures where mentorship and support is sought from experienced individual (Quick et.al., 2022). Studies from rural teaching environments in India and elsewhere also highlight how teachers from such settings are more likely to rely on mentorship from senior educators and administrative leaders (Varanasi et.al., 2024).

Approaches to competence in the two groups reflect different coping mechanisms. Shimla teachers adopt a more growth-oriented mindset, viewing challenges as opportunities for personal and professional development. Meanwhile, Gwalior teachers focus on maintaining work-life balance and managing stress through reframing their roles. While both approaches lead to job satisfaction and resilience Shimla teachers seem to prioritize professional development and embracing challenges. Gwalior teachers however, focus more on maintaining balance and well-being off the job.

Overall, core job crafting behaviours (task, relational and cognitive) are similar in both locations. However specific behaviour and strategies differ based on local needs and cultural dynamics on and off the job. However, both approaches seem to contribute positively to overall well-being and engagement at personal and professional level.

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