

## EMPLOYEE SUPPORT FOR HRM COVID-19 STRATEGIES AS A FACTOR SHAPING JOB REDESIGN INFLUENCE ON JOB PERFORMANCE

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**Purpose:** The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been complex and disruptive at the organizational level. It has prompted organizations to implement many necessary changes to continue organization operations. The maintenance of employee performance became the main factor of interest of human resource experts and resulted in the design of HRM strategies that support employees through these changes. It seems important to investigate factors that influence job performance. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between job redesign and employee performance and the mediating effects of employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies on this relationship.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study was conducted among 378 organizations operating in Poland during the 2nd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. To verify the hypothesis, a mediation analysis was performed using model 4 of the SPSS macro-PROCESS.

**Findings:** The results showed that redesigning the work environment during a crisis in accordance with the preferences and resources of the employees will increase their job performance if they support the changes implemented by the organization.

**Practical implications:** The knowledge gained from this study can be used by employee development practitioners to design various training programs on job crafting, which can contribute to stress reduction, increased well-being and engagement in the tasks at hand, and consequently employee and organizational performance.

**Originality/value:** The study advances the HRM literature on HRM explaining how HRM practices have changed and have been adopted to the changed nature of the work during COVID-19. The study revealed that the redesign of the job is a key HRM strategy in the times of COVID-19 and it seems to remain the same importance for the future.

**Keywords:** job redesign, job crafting, job performance, COVID-19, HRM strategies.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, it became obvious that the nature of work has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 created an urgent need to redesign the entire work environment to ensure continuous performance efficiency. As response organizations created policies to enable employees to work from home or in the hybrid mode. That new mode of work created increased demands for employees to adjust to the new work environment. This change caused more long-term consequences. Employees are expected to contribute to create their own working environment. They will no longer be given a specific list of defined duties and tasks that remain fixed over a long period of time. The new paradigm in the workplace is based on continuous employee motivation in creating their own tasks to ensure high performance. Therefore, the redesign of the job became one of the key HRM strategies used to increase employee efficiency.

Several studies revealed a positive influence of job redesign on employee performance (Pila-Ngarm, Siengthai, 2017). However, it is crucial to understand the conditions to create its positive impact.

This study aims to provide more information into the literature on the importance of job redesign, especially in a time of crisis such as the one caused by COVID-19. There are no previous studies which have identified the mediating role of the employees support for HRM COVID-19 related strategies. To fill in this gap in this study, the author asserts the mediating role of employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies on the relationship between job redesign and employee performance.

In this context, the author argues that the current crisis provides scholars with the opportunity to reflect on established HRM approaches, as well as future directions for research. Specifically, the author posits the need for a greater focus on job redesign as a practice and a long-term investment in human resources.

The objective of this paper is threefold. First, it presents an overview of job redesign conceptualizations. The second purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between job redesign and employee performance through the mediating role of employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies. Next, based on findings from the literature, this article has attempted to underline the importance of job redesign in predicting positive individual and organisational outcomes. The implications for managers and researchers are discussed at the end of this paper.

## **2. Review of the literature**

### **2.1. Job performance**

In the human resource management literature, there are numerous definitions of job performance (Darvishmotevali, Ali, 2020). Campbell et al. (1993) argued that perceptions of employee's job performance may be determined by one's point of view. This results in understanding employee's job performance as outcomes or as behaviors. Job performance perceived by outcomes assesses the results of employee's behavior in the organization, hence the perception of employee's job performance in the context of outcomes is expected to remain mostly related to the behavioral aspect (Darvishmotevali, Ali, 2020). Therefore, an employee's job performance in the human resource management literature is most often defined in terms of the expected by company employees' behaviors (Campbell, Wiernik, 2015; Kell, Motowidlo, 2012).

Motowidlo and Kell (2012) argue that job performance is the total expected value to the organization, which is represented by a set of certain behaviors that an individual performs during the lifetime in the organization. This set of behaviours determines a high level of job performance. Hence, it is crucial to define them (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, 1997; Smith, Organ, Near, 1983). Some researchers also indicate that job performance is shaped by the knowledge, skills, and characteristics that an employee has and manifests them through behaviours (Campbell et al., 1993). Therefore, these behaviors affect not only the organization's value being generated, but also its goals being achieved (Cambell, Wiernik, 2015). It can be measured through the outcomes of the organization, such as productivity and company performance. The others also add employees' motivations to perform the job better (Pila-Ngarm, Siengthai, 2017).

The impact of job performance on organizations highlights how important this factor is to organizational performance. Therefore, there is still a need among researchers to verify the phenomenon of job performance and recognize the components that shape it.

### **2.2. Job redesign influencing job performance**

There are many job performance models in the contemporary literature in the field of management science (Schmitt, Chen, 1998; Campbell et al., 1993; Borman, Motowidlo, 1993). Many researchers try to answer the question of which factors have a significant impact on employee job performance (Rich et al., 2010). Undoubtedly, one of the main factors is the way how the job is designed, mainly how the tasks and roles are structured and modified to meet individual, group, and organizational outcomes.

The pandemic has caused many changes in the way work is done and approached. The pace of adoption of modern technology has been greatly accelerated by the pandemic. Previously performed tasks have been transferred in large part to the virtual world. Working from home

forced employees to create their own work environment, the architecture of offices, and the nature of tasks also has changed. These changes have often led to the loss of the sense of work. Therefore, to better support employees and maintain work efficiency, managers needed to know not only how to manage remote teams, but above all, they needed to rethink work requirements and expectations. This required planning how work should be done so that employees' needs and expectations were considered more than ever before. Therefore, the redesign of the job as an HRM practice became especially important during the pandemic period.

Job design describes how the job, tasks, and roles are structured and modified to meet individual, group, and organizational outcomes (Grant, Parker, 2009). Job redesign is a process of changing the job together with its tasks and roles; however, it requires new job requirements, tasks, knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Hackman and Oldham (1980) stressed the person-job relationship as a major factor in organizational improvement. They claimed that many problems in the organization can be solved by proper design of the work (Mayrowetz et al., 2007). Redesign of the work creates greater meaningfulness in employee work due to using variety of skills, accomplishing a unique and identifiable task, stressing significance of the task and job. In addition, employees should feel more responsible for their work due to the autonomy that is given to them. Finally, employees will know the results of their work as long as they are provided with feedback related to their work (Mayer, Bardes, Piccolo, 2008).

Recently, the concept of job crafting gained popularity in the job redesign literature (Rai, 2018; Kapica, Baka, 2021). It is an employee-initiated behavior aimed at transforming working conditions in order to increase job satisfaction and match it to the needs and abilities of employees. The concept of job crafting was introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, 2001). According to the researchers, the purpose of the job crafting in its definition was primarily to give meaning and relevance to work, to increase job satisfaction, and to increase engagement, resilience, and productivity. Job crafting is an innovative and spontaneous practice to create a different job within the context of the jobs already defined. Employees can take the actions to redefine jobs through changing the meaning of their work. They can change the scope, quantity, or nature of the task to emphasize tasks related to one's passion, alter one's opinion about his job to redefine the purpose of the work or change beliefs about the job, or change the quality or frequency of interactions with other people at work to build meaningful relationships (Rai, 2018). Employees can change their job and environment to ensure an optimal fit between the job and themselves to enhance the level of well-being for better individual and organizational performance.

In later years, more models of job crafting have been proposed (Kapica, Baka, 2021). Tims and Bakker (2010), the creators of the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, recognized that the classic view does not consider the role of job demands and resources in the context of both the nature of job crafting itself and its determinants and consequences (Tims, Bakker, 2010).

In order to deal with risk factors at work, resources are needed, e.g., task resources, social resources, organizational factors (Baka, 2018). These resources stimulate learning, personal development, and are a source of positive attitudes towards work. Job crafting occurs in the situation of high job demands and lack of resources to cope with them. Therefore, job crafting can be seen as a specific form of proactive behaviour in which the employee initiates change in the level of job demands and job resources (Tims, Bakker, 2010). According to the authors of the model, job crafting restores the balance between demands and resources, which results in increased job involvement, job satisfaction, and increased productivity.

One of the more recent approaches to job crafting is the model proposed by Kooij et al. (2017). According to the authors, job crafting aims to adapt the way work is performed to the employee's resources, which results in better job performance. This is done by making changes within the job tasks to fit not only the passion of the worker but also their resources.

Today's researchers emphasize that job crafting is a systemic activity and involves adapting the way work is done to the individual's preferences, abilities, motives, or passions (Tims et al., 2012). Most recently, work design researchers are recognizing that jobs, roles, tasks, and projects are embedded in interpersonal relationships, connections, and interactions (Grant, Parker, 2009).

The redesign of the job seems to have an important influence on job performance. Various studies have confirmed this positive impact (Pila-Ngarm, Siengthai, 2017). Redesigning jobs reduces job dissatisfaction by changing the meaning of routine tasks and work and improving motivation to act.

Therefore, based on the previous studies, the following hypothesis is formulated:

*H1. Job redesign has a positive influence on job performance.*

### **2.3. The role of employee support for HRM Covid-19 strategies in shaping job performance by job redesign**

Employee performance is often investigated in relation to HRM practices in the organization. HRM practices determine how employees cope with the uncertain work environment, and therefore the role of HRM became critical during COVID-19 (Agarwal, 2021). It is especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic because many HRM practices have changed and have been adopted due to the changed nature of work.

Perhaps the most significant HRM challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic involve adjusting employees to altered work conditions. Shifting employees to remote work required organizations to redesign the working environment in the organization, as well as help employees create their own spaces in their homes.

However, the key to the successful implementation of new HRM practices is how employees support these changes. Employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies may have a significant meaning in allowing organizations to better adapt to the new working conditions forced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The engaging attitude of employee support in

implementing change in an organization is characterized by significant dedication leading the organization to the successful implementation of change and an employee's enthusiasm for change and promoting it to other employees (Herscovitch, Meyer, 2002).

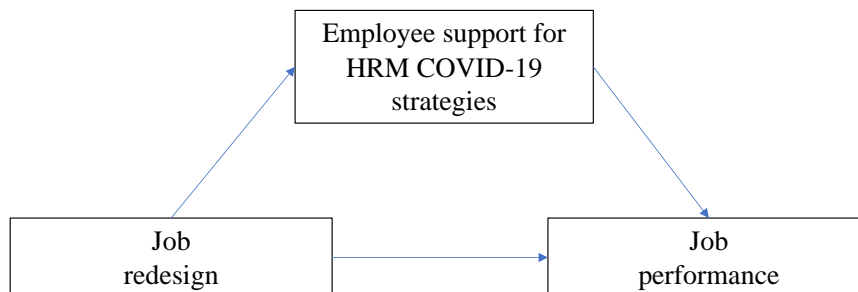
To stimulate a supportive attitude in employees towards the changes taking place in the organization and the introduction of new HRM practices, it is necessary to ensure that they understand the sense and purpose of the upcoming changes (Raeder, Bokova, 2019).

This understanding may be ensured by informing employees about the planned change process in the organization and making them aware of the meaning and purpose of the changes. These actions can reduce employee stress occurring due to the lack of a sense of stability and can lead to the employee's belief in acceptance of the changes (Aurelia, Momin, 2020). Additionally, an employee in turn identifies much more with its goals and with the organization itself (Agote et al., 2016).

In the view of COVID-19, the support of employees for changes implemented by the organization in terms of work nature and environment gained a significant meaning. Employers had to help employees find themselves in the new work conditions. Therefore, the way employees support proposed changes can have a positive impact on employee performance. Therefore, the author proposed the following hypothesis:

*H2: The effect of job redesign on employee performance is mediated by employee support for COVID-19 strategies.*

The model is presented in Figure 1:



**Figure 1.** Job redesign based model of job performance.

Source: own elaboration.

### 3. Research methodology and results

#### 3.1. Research sample

To verify the proposed hypothesis a questionnaire has been developed. The survey questions were related to organizational HRM practices and job-related attitudes. In the first stage, the pilot study has been conducted among 25 managers who played the role of competent

judges. The purpose was to determine the quality of the research tool. The comments allowed us to improve the questionnaire. The second stage has been conducted in the first quarter of 2021. Only one anonymous survey was carried out in one organisation, and it was completed by employees who had a broad view of the entire organisation. The only limitation of the sample was the geographical scope of the activity.

The data was collected from 378 organizations located in Poland using the CAWI method. The characteristics of the sample obtained are presented in Table 1, showing the sampling variability.

**Table 1.**

*Size and source of revenue of the organizations included in the sample.*

Organization size	Source of revenue			Total
	production	trade	service	
Micro (below 10 people)	10	12	8	30
Small (11-50 people)	29	56	33	118
Medium (51-250 people)	45	27	43	115
Large (above 250 people)	46	14	55	115
Total	130	109	139	378

Source: own elaboration.

### 3.2. Variables overview

The measures of the study constructs are adapted from previous studies. Respondents were asked to share their opinion about the behavior of the organization in response to COVID-19. All scales were measured on a five-point Likert scale where the responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Job redesign was measured with a two-item scale tested whether the organization offered employees during the COVID-19 pandemic alternative work location, such as work from home, hybrid, or rotation mode), flexible work hour arrangements. Moreover, the scale measured whether organization created new skill demands (Aurelia, Momin, 2020; Vardarlier, 2016).

Employee support for HRM Covid-19 strategies was measured with a 4-item scale that focused on employee engagement and willingness to contribute to the company's HRM Covid-19 strategies (Shen, Zhang, 2019; Chen et al., 2020).

Job performance was measured with a 7-items sale that focused on the Task proficiency, Task meticulousness and work discipline (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Kwahk, Park, 2018).

## 4. Empirical Research Results

### 4.1. Variables scales analysis

All scales were tested using Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and factor analysis in order to assess whether conceptualized scales can be used for the study (Table 2). This approach seems to be sufficient due to the fact that the scales used have been previously validated by the creators (Bieńkowska, Tworek, 2020). The Cronbach's Alpha of all research variables is near or above 0.6. The acceptable value of Cronbach's Alpha that ranges from 0.55 to 0.81 (Taber, 2018). Hence, it maybe concluded that the existing questionnaire variables are reliable and are acceptable values and provided adequate support for the use of all proposed scales for further analysis of the measurement model and hypothesis testing (van Griethuijsen et al., 2015).

**Table 2.**  
*Reliability of scales*

Variable	No. of Scales	Cronbach's &	Factor Analysis
Job redesign	2	0,552	69.102
Employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies	4	0,767	58.939
Job performance	7	0,812	47.428

Source: own elaboration.

### 4.2. Mediation model

To answer the question about the mediating role of employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies in the relationship between job redesign and job performance, a mediation analysis was performed using model 4 of the SPSS macro-PROCESS (Hayes, 2013).

**Table 3.**  
*Correlations analysis between analysed constructs*

		EmplSup	JobPerf	ReDesiC
EmplSup	Pearson Correlation	1	.713**	.515**
	Sig.		.000	.000
	N	378	378	378
JobPerf	Pearson Correlation	.713**	1	.530**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	378	378	378
ReDesiC	Pearson Correlation	.515**	.530**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	378	378	378

Source: own elaboration.

The results obtained show that there is a statistically significant and high correlation between all variables analyzed. Such a conclusion enabled one to verify the mediation model of job performance. The MACRO PROCESS Model 4 has been employed to test the direct effect of job redesign on job performance and whether the employee engagement in HRM COVID-19 strategies mediates the effect of this relation (H2). The employee engagement in HRM COVID-19 strategies was tested in the model as the mediator. The results revealed that



the relation between job redesign and job performance is stronger when employees support HRM COVID-19 strategies (Table 4).

**Table 4.**

*Mediation effect of Employee support for COVID-19 strategies on predicting organizational commitment*

Mediator	Direct effect value	Indirect effect value	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	R <sup>2</sup>
Employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies	.1784	.2496	.1838	.3233	.5445

Source: own elaboration.

The regression model obtained with mediator is statistically significant. Furthermore, employee support for HRM COVID-19 strategies is a statistically significant mediator of the model ( $p < 0,001$ , coeff. = 0.5445, se = 0.0370). The mediating effect is also statistically significant, as can be observed in Table 5 (BootLLCI and ULCI are both above the value of 0).

## 5. Discussion

The article examined the role of job redesign in shaping employee job performance. The results of the research prove that the formulated model is correct and interesting to further develop. It is also important to consider other factors that influence the relationship. Due to the fact that employee performance is often investigated in the relation with HRM practices in the organization (Agarwal, 2021), hence it seemed natural to consider their support for HRM strategies implementation, particularly in the times of the crisis. The role of HRM became critical during COVID-19 because many of HRM practices have changed and have been adopted to the changed nature of the work.

The key to the successful implementation of some changes in HRM practices may be the support of employees for these strategies (Shin et al., 2012).

The results show that there is a direct relation between job redesign and employee performance, however the relation is stronger when employees support HRM COVID-19 strategies.

## 6. Conclusions

The redesign of the job revealed to be a key HRM strategy in the times of COVID-19 and it seems to remain the same importance for the future. The more contemporary approach to job redesign described in this article, namely job crafting, explains how employee-initiated behavior aimed at transforming working conditions may improve output of the work and job

satisfaction in turn. The proactive approach to shaping your own work environment and the meaning of work gained significance during the COVID-19 crisis. Organization may support employees providing them trainings on how to develop the job crafting attitude. Thanks to that, employees will be able to apply these interventions on the daily basis.

However, the study also has some limitations. First, there was a limited number of participating organizations, and second, all were operating in Poland.

Despite these imitations, the study has implications for researchers and practitioners. There is room to do research to investigate other factors influencing the relationship between job redesign and job performance. Further research may look for other benefits of job redesign and job crafting on organizational performance.

The knowledge gained from this study can be used by employee development practitioners to design various training programs on job crafting, which can contribute to stress reduction, increased well-being and engagement in the tasks at hand, and consequently employee and organizational performance.

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