

**EVALUATING OF JOB CRAFTING INTERVENTION  
FOR EMPLOYEE'S WELLBEING SUPPORT –  
A CASE STUDY OF ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEES  
AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION**

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**Purpose:** The aim of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention designed to enhance motivation and competencies in job crafting, and to identify selected factors that may influence the outcomes. The study examined the extent to which participation in a one-day workshop would enhance levels of task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting, as well as verifying whether employees' engagement would increase, and perceived work-related stress would decrease.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quasi-experimental procedure was used to achieve a goal. The procedure includes several stages, one of which was participation in a one-day workshop. Sample size of the intervention group (with workshop) was  $n = 23$  of administrative employees from a private higher education institution, and control group  $n = 21$  employees from the same organisation with comparable job characteristics.

**Findings:** The results showed that the level of job crafting is related to individual characteristics such as self-efficacy and proactive attitude. In contrast, it does not depend on job characteristics such as autonomy and skill variety. In the conducted studies, no positive effects of the workshop on employee well-being were confirmed; however, it was noted that the workshop might act as a buffer protecting against a decline in well-being due to organizational factors.

**Research limitations/implications:** The limitations of the research result from both the small size of the research sample and the narrow specialization of the surveyed employees. There is a need for research on other professional groups and in other sectors.

**Practical implications:** Due to the pilot nature of the study and the limitations of the study mentioned above - no practical implications are identified.

**Originality/value:** The research represents the first attempt in Poland to verify effects of the organizational intervention related to job crafting among administrative university employees.

**Keywords:** job crafting, well-being, engagement, stress, organisational intervention.

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

## 1. Introduction

The past decade, particularly the experiences of the pandemic period, has led to a significant increase in managers' awareness of the necessity of ensuring employee well-being. Current social and economic conditions (described as the BANI world - B rittle, A nxious, N on-linear, I ncomprehensible) create a situation where implementing initiatives aimed at improving employee well-being requires research to identify the key factors determining the effectiveness of such actions. To address the current challenges faced by organisations, it is worth turning to the body of knowledge in positive psychology, which encompasses a range of research problems related to building a positive workplace (Luthans, Youssef, 2007). Among these, significant attention is given to considerations of the sense of meaning in work (Rosso et al., 2010).

It is noteworthy that, although the discussion on the role of perceiving one's work as important and meaningful is not new in the field of human resource management (it emerged in the 1970s, particularly due to the seminal works on the Job Characteristics Model by Hackman and Oldham (1976)), the continuation of this thought can be found in the concept of job crafting. Job crafting, as a method to enhance the sense of meaning in work, essentially aligns with the classical understanding of the importance of tasks assigned to employees for their attitudes and well-being. However, it simultaneously shifts the perspective of HR practice from an organisational (where the responsibility primarily rested with the organisation and managers) to an individual one (where the significance of intrinsic motivation and employee proactivity is emphasised).

Therefore, the question arises as to whether, and if so, to what extent, these activities can be taught to employees, and to what extent an increase in knowledge and self-awareness translates into positive outcomes in terms of perceived stress and engagement. The aim of this article is to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions that enhance motivation and competencies in job crafting, as well as to identify selected factors that may influence the outcomes achieved. The realisation of this aim involved a quasi-experimental study conducted on a group of administrative employees at a private higher education institution (HEI). Such a research design not only contributes to understanding the significance of the job crafting concept for building employee well-being but also helps to reduce the knowledge gap observed in the area of implementing and measuring the effects of organisational interventions in the health domain (Basińska-Zych, Springer, 2021).

## 2. Theoretical background

To date, quite a number of studies on the meaning at work have identified a variety of its predictors, both those of an individual nature, e.g. job fit, sense of coherence, need for autonomy or self-efficacy (Martela et al., 2021; Schnell et al., 2013; Scroggins, 2008), and those of an organisational nature, e.g. work flexibility or the implementation of CSR concepts in organisation strategy (Akdoğan et al., 2016; Jena et al., 2019). Additionally, meaning of work has been describe as a significant predictor of numerous positive organisational attitudes, such as commitment, turnover intention, engagement, job satisfaction, and even life satisfaction in general (Allan et al., 2019; Rosso et al., 2010). Thus, it can be considered a key component of employee well-being.

The relevance of work meaning, both for the employee and the employer, is undeniable; however, the methods of enhancing the work meaning still require analysis. One of the suggested methods that help employees find meaning in their work is job crafting (JC), a concept introduced into the human resource management literature in the early 21st century by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). JC not only enhances the meaning of work (Berg et al., 2008; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, 2001), but also subsequently increased engagement, satisfaction and work performance (Tims et al., 2015).

In the research on JC, two approaches can be distinguished. The first, mentioned above, identifies three aspects of JC: task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting (Rosso et al., 2010). The second approach conceptualised JC as an element of the Job Demands-Resources model (Van Wingerden et al., 2017). Both concepts are consistent in understanding its essence but approach the structuring of the process differently. In both approaches, organisational interventions based on JC have been verified as effective, regardless of the character of the tasks performed, and can benefit both clerical staff (Demerouti et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2013) and highly qualified specialists (Sakuraya et al., 2015). A broad meta-analysis published by Rudolph and colleagues (2017) identified key correlates of JC utilisation; however, examples of studies on the effects of using this concept among Polish employees are very few (Łądka-Barańska & Puchalska-Kamińska, 2022), making it reasonable to undertake research embedded in the Polish cultural context.

The ability to craft one's job is not uniform across all employees and depends on the nature of their tasks, particularly their complexity and the autonomy that allows employees to utilise various personal resources at work (Wingerden, Powel, 2018). Additionally, the use of JC also depends on individual factors. Among these, self-efficacy is notable, as this trait determines the perception of one's ability to achieve success (Bandura, 1993), as well as a proactive attitude, which enables individuals to adapt to changing environments and contribute to self-development (Bańka, 2015).

Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: The higher the (a) perceived task complexity, (b) perceived job autonomy, and the higher the (c) level of self-efficacy and (d) proactive attitude, the more frequently employees engage in job crafting activities.

Given that the concept of JC largely relies on the intrinsic motivation of the employee and knowledge of their personal resources (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, 2001), the potential of using workshop techniques to encourage employees to increase their interest in JC was recognised, leading to the formulation of the next hypothesis:

H2: Participation in the workshop increases the level of job crafting in terms of (a) task crafting, (b) relational crafting, and (c) cognitive crafting.

Simultaneously, considering that JC is a significant element allowing employees to better utilise organisational resources to cope with job demands (Bakker, Demerouti, 2017; van Wingerden et al., 2017), contributing to positive motivational and health-related outcomes, it was assumed:

H3: Participation in the workshop will (a) reduce stress and (b) increase engagement.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Research subject

The subjects of the research were, the administrative staff of the HEIs are, next to the research and teaching staff, a group that co-creates the activities of the HEIs. Their tasks include organising and supporting teaching and research activities carried out at universities. Among the motivations for taking up work at universities, administrative employees indicate: the social prestige of the university, the possibility of realising interesting projects and tasks, stability of employment, the ease of combining work with private life, and a good atmosphere at work (Anielska et al., 2020). Among the key characteristics of this work environment, the following are indicated: a low level of wages in relation to work in similar positions (e.g. customer service or specialist positions in corporations), the predominance of non-wage motivation (e.g. subsidised education, language courses), a relatively low level of control, the lack of comprehensive solutions in the sphere of employee evaluation and development, and the great importance of informal social ties that facilitate functioning in a hierarchical environment (Anielska et al., 2020). While academics employed in non-public universities assess the organisational culture as a market culture, in the perception of administrative employees it is hierarchical in nature (Cieciora et al., 2021), indicating the different vectors of the requirements of the work environment in relation to these two groups. A hierarchical culture oriented towards subordination to procedures and maximisation of efficiency, together with the increasing

professionalization of administrative positions related to the demands placed on universities, makes administrative employees feel undervalued in university structures. It is worth noting that despite being subject to numerous procedures, the work of this group allows for a degree of autonomy, enabling them to engage in job crafting activities. Additionally, the organisation under study declares values such as openness – understood as sensitivity to expectations and needs, alertness to signals of change, adaptability, and a willingness to collaborate and engage in dialogue. These conditions make the chosen university environment suitable for conducting a controlled organisational intervention in job crafting.

### **3.2. Research procedure**

The study was conducted using a quasi-experimental design. The research procedure received positive approval from the ethics committee of the WSB DSW Merito Scientific Federation and included the following steps:

- (1) Invitation to Participate: An invitation to participate in the project was sent to administrative employees (excluding managers) in the surveyed HEIs (November 2023). In this phase, participants were informed about the study's purpose and process, as well as its voluntary nature. Participants were asked to consent to participate by checking a box on the registration page. Out of 95 employees in these positions, 44 agreed to participate.
- (2) Initial Diagnosis (Pre-test): All individuals who signed up for the project completed psychometric questionnaires (November 2023). To assess the level of job crafting, the Polish version of The Job Crafting Questionnaire (Kasprzak et al., 2017; Slemp, Vella-Brodrick, 2013) was used. The level of perceived stress at work was measured using the PSwP scale (Chirkowska-Smolak, Grobelny, 2016), engagement was assessed using the UWES scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, 2003), proactive career behaviours were measured with the Proactive Career Behaviours Scale (Bańka, 2016), job self-efficacy was assessed using the SVOSES scale (Baka, Grala, 2022), and perceived autonomy and task complexity were measured with selected scales from the Job Characteristics Questionnaire, following two independent translations.
- (3) Division of Employees into Two Groups: Participants were divided into two groups: the intervention group, which participated in the workshops, and the control group.
- (4) Workshop Implementation: Workshops for the intervention group were conducted at the end of November and early December 2023, divided into two subgroups ( $n_{i1} = 11$  and  $n_{i2} = 12$  participants). The workshops lasted 6 hours and focused mainly on analysing the possibilities of adding meaning to tasks that might be perceived as burdensome obligations, increasing the employees' self-awareness regarding their potential, enhancing their sense of autonomy in planning and performing their duties, and developing action plans related to the physical work environment (e.g., identifying training needs, finding tasks where employees can use more of their resources), relationships (e.g., ideas for acts of kindness towards colleagues, sharing experiences),

and changes in thinking about their work (recognising and appreciating their role within the organisation in a broader context: purpose and meaning).

- (5) Measurement of Final Effects (Post-test): The effects were measured using psychometric questionnaires (job crafting, stress level, and engagement). In the intervention group, this measurement was taken twice: one week after the workshop (December 2023) and two months after the workshop (February 2024). In the control group, the measurement was taken only two months after the workshop (February 2024).

### 3.3. Research sample

The research sample consisted of 44 administrative employees of a higher education institution, including 2 men and 42 women, reflecting the typical employment structure within this group. The average age of the participants was 37 years, and the average tenure at the organisation was 7.8 years.

## 4. Results

In order to verify the first hypothesis indicating a relationship between job characteristics (autonomy and skills variety) and individual characteristics (self-efficacy and proactive attitude), a linear regression model was used in which the dependent variable was the overall level of job crafting. Analyses was made based on pre-test results taken at time  $T_0$  (Table 1). Significant predictors of job crafting were self-efficacy ( $\beta = 0.46$   $p < 0.01$ ) and proactive attitude ( $\beta = 0.43$   $p < 0.01$ ), the other predictors were found to be insignificant. The model is a good fit to the data  $F(2,42) = 24.75$  and explains 55% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.55$ ). These results support the hypothesis 1 only for its parts c and d.

**Table 1.**

*Mean, standard deviation and Pearson's correlation coefficients for the variables at time  $t_0$  ( $n = 44$ )*

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1-JC tasks	20,5	5,4	1								
2-JC thinking	21,3	5,2	0,393**	1							
3-JC relations	19,9	5,3	0,368*	0,187	1				,		
4-JC general	61,7	11,7	0,801**	,707**	,705**	1	,				
5-autonomy	3,6	0,8	0,238	,362*	0,185	,353*	1				
6-skills variety	3,7	0,9	0,372*	0,296	0,103	,349*	,432**	1			
7-self-efficiency	25,7	5,3	0,544**	,435**	,395**	,621**	,556**	0,283	1		
8-proactivity	40,1	10,3	0,597**	,330*	,396**	,600**	0,040	0,091	,365*	1	
9-engagement	3,7	1,0	0,449**	,500**	,300*	,563**	,315*	,329*	,491**	,318*	1
10-stress	17,5	8,1	0,000	-0,108	-0,170	-0,124	-,341*	0,044	-0,272	-0,027	-,392**

M – mean SD – standard deviation; \* p value 0.005 \*\* p value <0,01.

To verify Hypothesis 2, analyses were conducted to examine changes in job crafting (JC) within the intervention group across three time points:  $t_0$ ,  $t_1$ , and  $t_2$  (Table 2). Subsequently, differences between the intervention and control groups in JC changes from  $t_0$  to  $t_2$  were compared (Table 3). It is important to note that prior to analysing the significance of differences between the intervention and control groups, it was established that there were no significant differences in JC between the groups at  $t_0$ . In this analysis, JC levels within the intervention group were assessed at three distinct time points. The mean and standard deviation were calculated, and paired T-tests were performed to determine the significance of changes in JC over time.

**Table 2.**

*Mean, Standard Deviation of JC Scores in the Intervention Group, and T-Test Results for Dependent Samples ( $n_i = 23$ ) at  $t_0$ ,  $t_1$ , and  $t_2$*

	$t_0$		$t_1$		$t_2$		$\Delta t_1-t_0$	p	d	$\Delta t_2-t_0$	p	d
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD						
1-JC tasks	18,9	6,3	19,2	5,3	16,6	6,9	0,38	0,31	0,11	-2,57	0,058	-0,34
2-JC thinking	20,7	5,5	21,5	5,5	18,0	7,9	0,86	0,09	0,30	-3,04	0,016	-0,48
3-JC relations	19,8	5,3	20,0	5,9	18,4	6,5	0,29	0,35	0,08	-1,39	0,114	-0,26
4-JC general	59,3	12,7	60,8	12,1	53,0	19,8	1,52	0,14	0,24	-7,00	0,026	-0,43

M – mean, SD – standard deviation.

One week after the workshop, participants had slightly higher levels in terms of JC, but the differences were not statistically significant. After two months, the results decreased significantly, and the extent to which JC was used decreased significantly, especially in terms of thinking about work. Being aware of the complexity of organisational processes that may be relevant to the activities undertaken by employees, in order to assess the role of the workshop, the significance of the differences in the extent to which participants from both groups changed in terms of JC was compared.

**Table 3.**

*Changes in the level of JC in the intervention ( $n = 23$ ) and control ( $n = 21$ ) groups between time  $t_2$  and  $t_0$ , Student's t-test result for independent variables*

	M( $t_2$ ) – M( $t_0$ )		p-value	d Cohen
	Intervention group	Control group		
1-JC tasks	-2.57	-6.43	0.03	0.58
2-JC thinking	-3.04	-7.10	0.02	0.62
3-JC relations	-1.39	-2.43	0.26	0.20
4-JC general	-7.00	-15.95	0.03	0.58

As in the intervention group, decreases in JC were also observed in the control group, but it should be emphasised: that in the case of the control group, these decreases were significantly higher than those observed in the intervention group. Thus, although there is no basis to support hypothesis 2 given the results obtained, at the same time a ‘buffering’ effect of the intervention can be observed to protect against a decrease in JC.

The third hypothesis was the effect of participation in the workshop on the employee's level of engagement and stress. This was verified by assessing the difference between the change in levels of engagement and perceived stress at work (Table 4).

**Table 4.**

*Changes in the level of engagement and stress in the intervention ( $n = 23$ ) and control group ( $n = 21$ ) between time  $t_2$  and  $t_0$ , Student's  $t$ -test result for independent variables*

	$M(t_2) - M(t_0)$		p-value	d Cohen
	Intervention group	Control group		
engagement	0.36	0.01	0.11	0.36
stress	4.39	5.48	0.65	-0.14

The intervention group experienced increased stress and engagement between November 2023 ( $t_0$ ) and February 2024 ( $t_2$ ), while the control group only experienced increased stress. For both variables, the differences between groups were statistically insignificant, which does not support hypothesis 3.

## 5. Conclusions

The project was a pilot study and was the first quasi-experimental attempt to put into practice an organisational intervention aimed at increasing the level of JC by university administrative staff. The results partially supported H1 (points c and d) and showed that the level of job crafting is related to individual characteristics such as self-efficacy and proactive attitude. In contrast, it does not depend on job characteristics such as autonomy and skill variety. However, it should be borne in mind that the employees participating in the study got hired in very similar positions, hence both variables had relatively low variation. Thus, although the research indicates the greater importance of individual factors over job description factors, given the pilot nature of the study, the discussion in this regard should still be considered open. In the case of intervention outcomes, the analysis of the results did not support hypothesis 2, but this situation is more complex. After minor positive changes in JC immediately after the workshop, there was a decrease in JC after 2 months however significantly greater in the control group. The conclusion that emerges from this analysis indicates that there were external factors in the work environment that significantly discouraged employees from undertaking JC. Interviews conducted with managers in February 2024 revealed that during the project, employees were informed about the amount of their pay raises. These raises were anticipated by the employees; however, their magnitude did not meet their expectations, given the country's economic context (including the government-announced increase in the minimum wage and the inflation rate). It can therefore be assumed that the measurement at time  $t_2$  (February 2024)



captured fresh disappointment with the level of raises, including a sense of relative income deprivation (Dudek, 2013).

The second observation concerns the fact that those who participated in the workshop experienced this decline to a lesser extent. It can thus be presumed that the workshop played a role in maintaining the level of job commitment (JC) despite unfavourable organisational conditions. Although there is no basis for accepting hypothesis 3, a connection between JC and the level of engagement can still be observed, including the significance of the workshop in sustaining this engagement. No such relationship was observed in the case of perceived stress.

In summary, it should be emphasised that research into the possibilities afforded to employees and their organisations by conducting JC workshops should continue. The obtained results, although not providing unequivocal answers in many areas, nonetheless reveal the potential inherent in both JC and the significance of organisational interventions. It should also be remembered that a significant limitation of the conducted research is the specific occupational group that was studied. Therefore, it is necessary not only to verify the obtained results among employees of other universities but also in different types of organisations. This would allow an assessment of the extent to which organisational interventions in the form of workshops can be helpful in building well-being, independent of organisational culture and the nature of the work performed.

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