

## A Conceptual Model on the Moderating Role of Organisational Agility on the Relationship between Job Crafting and Employee Performance

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### Abstract

*Job crafting (JC), which is the personal and efficiency-oriented changes that employees make to redefine, redesign and shape their jobs, is a vital sustainer of employee performance (EP), especially amid challenges. It is equally a good option for optimizing performance in this information age. However, it remains a novel area with few studies especially from the African contexts. Nevertheless, employees tend to job craft only to the extent to which relevant 'opportunity' exists – and that is psychometrically, 'organisational agility' (OA). This paper/study employed critical review and content analysis of the existing literature. Among the findings are that there is paucity of studies on JC and OA as they relate to EP. Also, no empirical study is found to have distinctly examined the moderating role of OA on the JC-EP relationship, especially among the lecturers of public universities in Northwest region of Nigeria. The proposed framework is based on Job Crafting Theory and consists of three JC behaviours/dimensions (task crafting, relational crafting and cognitive crafting) as the independent variables, and EP as the dependent variable. Due to the inconsistencies in the findings of previous studies, OA serves as the Moderator. It is recommended that the proposed framework/model should be tested empirically.*

**Keywords:** Employee Performance, Job Crafting, Northwestern Nigeria, Organisational Agility, Public Universities

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Higher education, especially university education, is crucial for national development. As provided by the 2013 National Policy on Education, the Nigerian universities shall provide optimum contribution to the national development by producing well trained high level manpower, conducting productive researches and providing customized community services for socio-economic development (Nigerian Educational Research and Development

Council, NERDC, 2013). However, among recent concerns as per the currently available data are the Nigeria's fall into the seven countries with the lowest Human Capital Index (HCI) score in 2020 (The World Bank, 2020), as well as the consecutive drops of 3.25 percent and 1.14 percent in Nigeria's labour productivity growth in 2018 (Census and Economic Information Center, CEIC, 2021). These performance challenges are more evident in the public sector, including the public universities (Afolabi & Awolola, 2021; Akah et al. 2022;

Bakare, 2021; Igwesi et al., 2021; Jacob & Lawan, 2020). Akpa-achimugu and Ibeh (2023) observes that national development depends on citizens' access to quality education. Likewise, human capital development depends to a great extent on access to education (Kanu et al., 2024) – and any challenge to such access forces the Human Capital Index (HCI) down.

As the universities are crucial to the prosperity of the country because they are the primary source of the country's highly skilled manpower who staff and mostly head all the vital sectors such as health, education, security and industries that eventually determine the national development, this study argues that addressing these performance-related issues should start from the Nigerian universities whose excellence equally lies in the performance of its staff, especially the academics (Hee et al., 2019, 2020; Mba, 2019; Rasheed, 2020). Relatedly, Akah et al. (2022) observe poor performance among the academics of Nigerian universities. But various forms of problems pose more peculiar performance challenges to the academics in the Northwestern region of Nigeria (Galadanci et al. 2016; National Population Commission NPC, 2021; Peace & David, 2019; Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), 2023; Rasheed, 2020; Times Higher Education (THE), 2022a, 2022b; Usman, 2022). As such challenges present new limitations and lead to decreased academic opportunities and performance, they force the lecturers to adjust how they perform their duties and behave generally (Kanu et al., 2024; Ojo et al., 2023; Tanko, 2021; Zhou et al., 2024). These conscious changes the lecturers make to be able to optimize their employee performance (EP) or at least keep going relate to what is known as job crafting (JC).

JC simply means the proactive and efficiency-oriented changes that employees make to redefine, redesign and

shape their jobs that results in higher level of performance (Genty et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). But the opportunity to make such changes as highlighted by the job crafting theorists influences the form and extent of such JC behaviours (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Consequently, it can be deduced that, for JC to bring the desired optimum result, all key stakeholders should actively and passionately participate and thus, the most relevant management concept/variable in this regard is organisational agility (OA).

OA means the ability and capabilities of an organisation to successfully, swiftly and efficiently adapt to unanticipated changes thereby having a competitive advantage or at least maintaining relevance in the sector, immediate environment or better still, the global arena (Ganguly et al., 2009; Menon & Suresh, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted the study and application of JC and OA, making OA a crucial issue among scholars (Khalid & Firdaus, 2021). Moreover, as employees are considered the most important resource in organizations and equally most important factor in OA (Goodarzi et al., 2018), studying the moderating role of OA on the JC-EP relationship is of great relevance.

Based on its practical applicability and conceptual meaning, this study acknowledges the importance of JC in enhancing employee performance and also builds its model on the job crafting theory. Among the major *theoretical* contributions of this study is using organizational agility as a moderator, which is a psychometric variable that can comprehensively represent a strong aspect of the theory which holds that employees tend to job-craft if the 'opportunity' to do so exists and that the opportunity determines the form of the JC. This position is based on the submission of the theorists, Wrzesniewski and Dutton

(2001), that employees' perceived opportunity for JC restricts or gives room for them to decide the form and extent to which they craft their jobs. And with this, the researchers believe that OA can serve as a befitting psychometric variable to measure that 'opportunity' and empirically test both the theory and the unique model of the study – thereby filling the identified *empirical gap*.

Moreover, it is empirically found that JC significantly and positively affects EP (Emmywati et al., 2020; Esmaeili et al., 2019; Genty et al., 2020; Igwesi et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2018). But the studies of Baten (2015) and Bohnlein and Baum (2020) found insignificant relationships, which signifies lack of consensus on the observed JC-EP relationship. As asserted by Baker and Slemp (2018), Demerouti (2014) and Singh and Rajput (2021), being a relatively new concept, there are few JC studies. This dearth is especially in relation to EP (Baker & Slemp, 2018). This brings about various *calls* for JC-EP studies that tally with the earlier highlighted research issues and part of the *literature gaps* found by this study (Bohnlein & Baum, 2020; Castiello-Gutiérrez et al., 2020; Genty et al., 2020; Melhem, 2019).

However, the employees need organisational leaders' support and understanding for effective JC, and this can best be achieved through OA. Thus, building on the assertion of Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), how the lecturers perceive the OA of their institution/university tend to moderate how their job crafting behaviours affect their performance. Similarly, Ghadi (2020), who studied how JC affects OA, calls for adding variables in future researches and some specific calls are for examining how OA relates to EP (Akkaya & Tabak, 2020) and the role it plays in relation to organisational excellence (Nafei, 2016). This simply means using the OA as a moderator. Other relevant

recommendations for future studies include enriching the OA model to cover people and organisational capabilities (Chan & Muthuveloo, 2019). So also the education sector as well as its excellence (Nafei, 2016). Logically, incorporating JC relates to the "people" while OA relates to the "organisational capabilities" and EP of lecturers which translates into organizational (e.g. university's) "excellence" are good responses to these suggestions by Chan and Muthuveloo (2019) and Nafei (2016) collectively – and this is the empirical contribution of the study.

More so, there is paucity of studies on JC and OA as they relate to EP. Likewise, the researchers only came across some few existing studies mixing some of these variables along with different other variables in their studies. Studies of closer interests are Genty et al. (2020) and Igwesi et al. (2021) that somewhat investigated JC-EP relationship in Nigerian contexts. But Genty et al. (2020) studied MTN staff in Lagos state and used only task crafting and relational crafting out of the three dimensions of their selected JC measure, while Igwesi et al. (2021) used only one dimension of cognitive crafting (leaving out the two other dimensions) in their self-developed cognitive crafting measure which was merged with the DV attributes in the questions asked. These notable shortcomings that still leave both *knowledge and methodological gaps* limit their findings' applicability in this study's peculiar context of academics in public universities in Northwestern Nigeria.

Based on all the foregoing, the researchers believe that understanding the JC behaviours of the lecturers in the Northwestern Nigeria and how their perceived OA influences how the JC behaviours affect their performance can enable managers generally, and the universities management in particular, to know what behaviour(s) to promote and

what other decisions to make in order to improve the performance of employees (e.g. the lecturers, the overall academic excellence of the universities) and by extension boost the national development. Thus, this study aims to fill the identified gaps in the existing literature by using the Job Crafting Theory to investigate the moderating role of OA on the JC-EP relationship among lecturers in public universities in the Northwest region of Nigeria. It would also guide managers, leaders, and regulators (such as the Nigerian Universities Commission, NUC) on how to use JC and OA to enhance employee performance and managerial practice.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Concept of Employee Performance**

Employee Performance can simply be defined as what employees do in terms of job-related actions and decisions as their contributions towards the achievement of organisational objectives (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015). Sihombing et al. (2018) consider it as the worker's accomplished result based on relevant job requirements. Similarly, Buba et al. (2022) consider it as a standard that relates to organizational outcomes and success. The present study's contextual/operational meaning of EP of the academics is how well they teach/lecture and examine students, supervise students' researches, conduct and publish researches and undertake community services.

For its importance to the overall organisational success, several studies were conducted on EP (Al-Halalmeh, 2021; Alonso et al., 2019; Bohnlein & Baum, 2020; Genty et al., 2020; Hee et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2018; Zabolypour et al., 2018). This study posits that as per current circumstances in Nigeria, any result-oriented effort to address performance challenges shall incorporate JC and/or OA.

### **2.2 Concept of Job Crafting**

Job crafting refers to the proactive and efficiency-oriented changes that employees make to redefine, redesign and shape their jobs (Genty et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) at various levels of seniority and autonomy (Berg et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Contextually, job crafting by university academics may involve adjusting lecture and examination schedules, contents, methods, supervision contact hours and study areas, whom to closely relate with among colleagues, what type of research to conduct, when and where to publish, which community service to engage in and so on, to both fit personal needs and optimize results.

#### **2.2.1 Dimensions of Job Crafting**

##### **2.2.1.1 Task crafting**

Task crafting refers to adjusting or customizing the job's content by changing the scope, number, nature, and manner of execution (Singh & Rajput, 2021). The four indicators of task construction are adding, removing, emphasizing, and restructuring tasks (Meerdink, 2021). Tims et al. (2012) and Weseler and Niessen (2016) assert that employees' performance rises as a result of task crafting. Also, employee taking additional task along with the tasks assigned by their job designs, means enriching their job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). More recent empirical studies that found significant relationship between task crafting and employee performance include Genty et al. (2020), Khan et al. (2018) and Zhang & Liu, (2020). On the other hand, Baten (2015) found an insignificant relationship.

##### **2.2.1.2 Relational crafting**

Relational crafting entails using personal judgment to choose whom to interact with at work. For instance, friendship with people with similar skills or interests (Slemp & Vella-brodrick, 2013). Relational crafting entails using judgment

while choosing whom to interact with at work (e.g., making friends with people with similar skills or interests) and such choice can even be arbitrary. According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), the changes may involve either the quality or frequency of interacting with others at work. A study by Dorji and Drakpa (2020) to examine the job crafting practice among the lecturers of a college in Bhutan revealed that relational crafting was the type of job crafting that participants were most likely doing out of the three types: cognitive crafting, task crafting, and relational crafting. Zhang and Liu (2020) found relational crafting to have a significant effect on job performance, while Baten (2015) found otherwise.

#### **2.2.1.3 Cognitive crafting**

Cognitive crafting, involves changing how an employee sees his or her job (Slemp et al., 2020). Singh and Rajput (2021) posit that cognitive crafting is the easiest form of job crafting because altering one's perspective of the job is considerably easier than altering the tasks and interpersonal interactions of the job. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) state that such changes in perception and interpretation of tasks and/or work are usually to make them more meaningful. Empirically, it significantly affects EP (Khan et al., 2018; Zhang & Liu, 2020). But Baten (2015) found an insignificant effect.

Moreover, it can be deduced that, this ease inherent in cognitive crafting comes from the fact that cognitive aspect is almost entirely personal (though can be somewhat contagion among colleagues), less noticeable than task crafting and relational crafting and hence most exclusively independent, but by implication the most potent. This is because the personal conviction about one's job tend to be the strongest determinant of job outcomes such as job

satisfaction, commitment, performance and embeddedness.

#### **2.3 Organisational Agility as a Moderator**

As earlier presented, OA refers to the capacity of an organisation to successfully, quickly, and effectively adapt to unanticipated changes in order to gain a competitive edge or, at least, maintain relevance in the industry, nearby community, or, preferably, the whole world (Ganguly et al., 2009; Menon & Suresh, 2021).

But academics cannot achieve effective and efficient JC on their own because they require the support, approval, or at the very least, understanding of the institution's leaders, who can only do so to the extent that they can anticipate and make changes in accordance with the institution's laws; and this is simply what OA is all about. Additional literature searches show that OA can fit into the model of this study, because it has a significant effect on EP (Al-Halalmeh, 2021; Mohammadi, 2015; Zabolypour et al., 2018). Also, though JC is found to have significantly and positively affected EP (Alonso et al., 2019; Emmywati et al., 2020; Esmaeili et al., 2019; Genty et al., 2020; Igwesi et al., 2021; Khan et al., 2018; Zhang and Liu, 2020), paucity is still observed and many calls for such studies were made (Baker & Slemp, 2018; Bohnlein and Baum, 2020; Castiello-Gutiérrez et al., 2020; 2020; Genty et al., 2020). However, further review of literature showed that among the closest studies in this regard are those by Zabolypour et al. (2018) who found that perceived OA moderated the relationship between intellectual capital and the EP of nurses and that of Zhang and Liu (2020), who found that social capital partially mediated the JC-EP relationship,

#### **Research Framework and the Proposed Model**

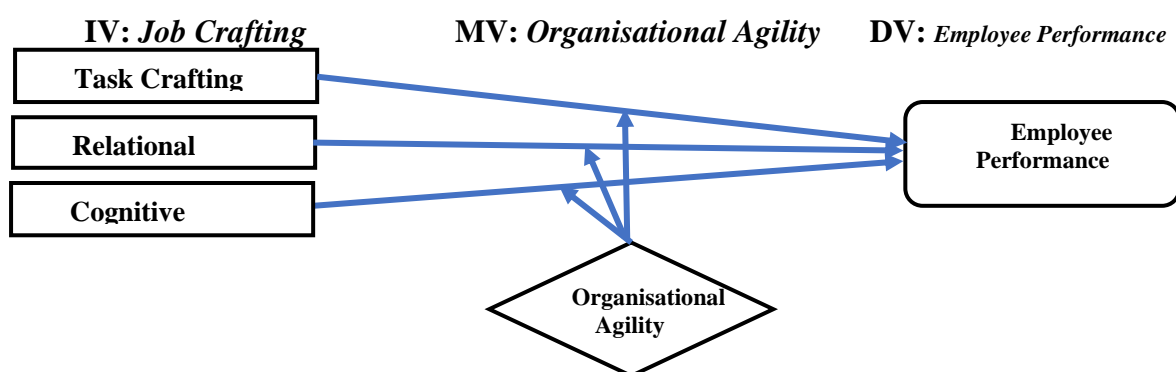
The job crafting theory, proposed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), states



that employees tend to craft (adjust) their jobs mainly to satisfy individual needs of asserting some control over their jobs to elevate the meaning of the jobs, create or maintain a positive self-image and/or attain self-fulfillment; *when they perceive the existence of the opportunity for job crafting* (Berg et al., 2007; Holcombe, 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The EP related outcomes of JC as highlighted by the Job Crafting Theory are employees' increased resilience and contributions that benefit the organization (Berg et al., 2007; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The theory highlights the importance of employee resilience and contributions emanating from crafting their jobs, that benefit the organization. The theory suggests that perceived organizational readiness (OA) plays a moderating role in the JC-EP relationship, as it aligns with the opportunities for job crafting that the employees consider when engaging in these behaviors. The theory also supports a positive relationship between job crafting and employee performance, highlighting the importance of increasing competence and making valuable contributions. On the other hand,

it could also be seen that, based on the foregoing submissions on the theory's stance vis-à-vis EP and related attributes such as increasing competence and making valuable contributions and practices that benefit the organization, the fact that job crafting theory proposes a positive relationship between JC, OA and EP can be supported. Based on the foregoing, this study presents the following propositions with a focus on the moderating role of OA on the JC-EP relationship so as to guide hypothesis development and empirical research:

- i. Organisational agility will moderate the relationship between task crafting and employee performance among lecturers of the universities in Northwest, Nigeria.
- ii. Organisational agility will moderate the relationship between relational crafting and employee performance among lecturers of the universities in Northwest, Nigeria.
- iii. Organisational agility will moderate the relationship between cognitive crafting and employee performance among lecturers of the universities in Northwest, Nigeria.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study**  
**Source:** The Researchers' Design (2025)

### 3. Methodology

This study/conceptual modelling employed critical review and content analysis of the existing literature in an

effort to come up with the propositions that can be used to guide relevant hypotheses development and empirical research. In process, relevant research gaps were identified to establish the

problem of the study and the needed propositions to guide hypotheses and relevant methodology for the empirical research were identified. Journal articles, conference proceedings, theses/dissertations, facts from regulatory agencies and published statistical data from both national and international organisations relevant to the study are among the sources of the utilized literature. Equally identified from the literature were the theory to underpin the study and the scales for optimally measuring the latent variables. The measures are: *EP*, scale developed by Koopmans et al. (2014); *JC*, the job crafting scale by Slemp and Vella-brodrick (2013) and *OA*, the measure by Sharifi and Zhang (1999).

#### **4. Conclusion**

1. This study found that there is general dearth of studies on the interactions between *JC*, *OA* and *EP*. This paucity is more in Africa and Nigerian contexts, especially in the education sector. The

researchers did not come across any study with distinct model on the moderating role of *OA* on the *JC-EP* relationship. Therefore, this study aims to develop a unique model incorporating *JC*, *OA*, and *EP* variables. The model will investigate the moderating role of *OA* on the *JC-EP* relationship among academics of the public universities in Northwestern region of Nigeria, in light of the Job Crafting Theory, with a view to discover how best to improve academic performance in Nigeria's Northwestern region. Among the major contributions of this study, is identifying a standardized *OA* scale/measure as a psychometric measure of the 'perceived opportunity' to craft jobs as the theory states. Future studies should use questionnaire tool in a longitudinal quantitative survey and PLS-SEM for its outstanding robustness in analysis, for results that would enrich the literature and enhance performance and managerial practice.

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