

Job crafting and innovative behavior among hospitality workers: The moderation effect of work engagement

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received July 27, 2022

Revised January 7, 2023

Accepted February 8, 2023

Keywords

innovative behavior;

job crafting;

work engagement.

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted a decline in hotel occupancy rates in the hospitality sector worldwide, including in Indonesia. Therefore, hotel management and workers need innovation to attract customers by crafting their jobs and developing original and creative ideas. Moreover, employees' work engagement will also support the emergence of innovative behavior. This study aimed to explore whether work engagement moderates the relationship between job crafting and innovative work behavior among hotel employees. This research was conducted at one of the four-star hotels in Medan, with 109 employees chosen with a total sampling technique to participate in this study. The innovative behavior scale, the job crafting scale, and the work engagement scale were used to collect the data, which were then processed using the moderated regression analysis method with Process Macro Software. The results show job crafting has a significant positive effect on innovative behavior, and work engagement moderates the effect of job crafting on innovative behavior. Increasing innovative behavior can be achieved by increasing job crafting and work engagement in the organization. The implication of this study may assist the hotel management in assessing its employees and then implementing training on job crafting and work engagement to improve innovative behavior.

Introduction

The hospitality sector has been impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the closure of 1.266 hotels in Indonesia and the layoff of 150.000 employees (Alika, 2020). Seventy-one hotels are closed due to the pandemic in the North Sumatra region alone, including 24 hotels in Medan, 32 in Samosir, and 15 in Simalungun. Hotel owners in North Sumatra experience monthly losses of about 100 billion rupiahs (Sianturi, 2020). The hotel management must develop a strategy to survive and overcome this condition.

Hotels can gain competitive advantages by delivering innovation based on effective and planned strategies. The more innovative a hotel is, the more likely it is to be survived (Campo et al., 2014; de Spiegelaere et al., 2014). Innovation is required to deliver and make new items or complete updates by applying creative behavior to customers. Implementing innovative behavior can help organizations accelerate their success in achieving their goals (Shanker et al., 2017). Innovative behavior is an employee's creative way of implementing innovative ideas in the workplace, which can stimulate an organization's improvement (de Spiegelaere et al., 2014). Employees' innovative behavior is shown by always being creative at work, always conveying creative ideas, looking for new techniques at work, having plans to develop

new ideas, trying to innovate using resources, and developing creativity in work teams (Bani-Melhem et al., 2022).

Innovative work behavior is required in hospitality through innovative thoughts for new works, methods, administrations, or items (Campo et al., 2014; M.-S. Kim & Koo, 2017; Luoh et al., 2014). Innovation in the hotel area can further develop finance, efficiency, quality guidelines, authoritative worth, and execution (Edghiem & Mouzoghi, 2018). Indeed, the hotel business requires a creative way of incrementing visitor visits. Visitors themselves will be drawn in by the innovations hotel management creates. Accordingly, innovation affects expanding guests to remain at the hotel (Rosyiana et al., 2020) and can improve hotel performance (M.-S. Kim & Koo, 2017). Previous research indicates that hotel employees should be innovative and creative in their behavior to propel the hotel industry (Mahfud et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2018).

Consequently, it is notable that the hotel management must create and upgrade the development and innovation of its workers by nurturing higher innovative work behavior to produce an upper hand for the hotel. Therefore, job crafting is needed to bring up innovative behavior among workers (Rofcanin et al., 2016). Job crafting is a process by which employees change the way or design of their work, physically and psychologically (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). As one of the job resources, job crafting has become an important topic in research. Opposing the job resources, in this study, we illustrate the COVID-19 pandemic as the key job demand which requires hotels to survive and compete. Due to frequent interaction and the responsibility to serve customers, hotel employees must adapt and design their roles to meet customers' demands (H. Kim et al., 2018). Thus, there was a higher need for the employee to display innovative work behavior during this pandemic time.

Some previous empirical studies found job crafting positively affects innovative behavior (Supriyanto et al., 2020; Uen et al., 2021). In addition, other studies found that job crafting mediates transformational leadership and innovative behavior (Afsar et al., 2019), and job crafting has a mediating servant leadership and innovative work behavior (Khan et al., 2021, 2022). Hotel employees have to deal with their customers' preferences, demands, and expectations. Thus, to maintain high customer satisfaction, hotels must have engaged employees (Turksoy & Tutuncu, 2021). Engaged employees can work optimally and can satisfy customers as well. In turn, customers will ultimately benefit the hotel because there are many customer references related to the hotel's services. Moreover, work engagement can develop innovative behavior among employees, where highly engaged employees will put more effort into their tasks, are more innovative and take the initiative to solve a problem, and have high enthusiasm for work (Sharma & Nambudiri, 2020). Work engagement is a positive state of mind and a sense of satisfaction with a job that can be seen in vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Work engagement can be a factor that increases innovative behavior in organizations. At the individual level, job engagement positively impacts work and duties innovation (Rahmadani et al., 2020). In addition, research on individual intrinsic motivation shows that work engagement is closely related to innovative behavior (Aryee et al., 2012; Chang et al., 2013; Tims et al., 2013), where innovative behavior among employees can increase in a work environment where work engagement increases (Kyoung Park et al., 2014). Thus, it can be said that the higher the level of employee work engagement, the greater the originality and innovation produced by the employee (Gichohi, 2014).

This study developed based on the urgency of employees' innovative behavior among hospitality workers, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, this study examined the extent to which work engagement will increase the effect of job crafting on innovative behavior in hotel employees. The first hypothesis of this study is job crafting increases innovative work behavior among hotel employees. While the second hypothesis is work engagement moderates the relationship between job crafting and innovative work behavior among hospitality workers.

Method

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative method with a correlational design involving three variables, innovative behavior as the dependent variable, job crafting as the independent variable, and work engagement as the moderator variable. A survey study was conducted among hospitality workers in Medan. The research was carried out online via a google form, where the google form link was shared with the participants by the manager and HRD team, and they asked them to fill out the form. The instruction and informed consent were attached accordingly in the google form link.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of all employees at one of the four-star hotels in Medan. One hundred nine employees participated, with the majority being male (67.9 %), aged 18 – 40 years (93.58%), and worked 3 – 10 (57.80 %). Most of the participants came from the Housekeeping division with 38 employees (34.9%), followed by the Front Office division with 16 employees (14.7%), Marketing with 15 employees (13.8%), F & B with 13 employees (11.9%), and Engineering as many as ten employees (9.2%). Meanwhile, 17 participants are from the HRD, Accounting, and General Manager and Assistant divisions (15.50%).

Instruments

Three scales, originally in English with summated rating method, were used in this study for data collection. Therefore, before being modified to the similar response's anchors, all three scales followed the back translation procedure (Brislin, 1970). The modification was conducted in a few parts deemed necessary to be replaced to adjust to the participant's context. When adapting and modifying the measuring instruments, the experts were involved. All scales use a Likert format consisting of five ranges of choices for answers ranging from 1 to 5, which are: 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (sometimes), 4 (often), and 5 (very often).

Innovative behavior was measured with the scale developed by Dahiya & Raghuvanshi (2022), which was modified based on the six dimensions proposed by Kleysen & Street (2001) and De Jong & Den Hartog (2010). Those dimensions are opportunity exploration, generation of ideas, investigation of information, championing ideas, and ideas implementation and application. 19 out of 20 items had high factor loadings between .69 and .89. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = .95. One item from the investigation of information was dropped due to the low factor loading.

Job crafting is measured by modifying the Job Crafting Scale (JCS) proposed by Tims et al. (2012) with four dimensions: increasing structural job resources, decreasing hindering job demands, increasing social job resources, and increasing challenging job demands. All 16 items had high factor loadings between .57 and .86. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = .88.

Work engagement is measured by modifying the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) proposed by Schaufeli & Bakker (2004), which consists of 3 dimensions of work engagement: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Eight out of 12 items had high factor loadings between .60 and .86. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient = .79. Two items from both vigor and absorption dimensions were dropped due to low factor loading.

Data Analysis

The hypothesis was tested with moderated regression analysis with Process Macro by Hayes (2018) using SPSS Statistics 21 Software. However, some assumptions must be tested beforehand (Keith, 2014). A normality test is carried out to assess whether the data

distribution is normally distributed. The linearity test determines whether the relationship between variables is linear. The homoscedasticity test determines whether the residual variance is unequal in a regression model; if the residual variance remains, the data is homoscedastic. The multicollinearity test determines the correlation between the independent variables; if two or more independent variables have a strong correlation, there is a multicollinearity between the independent variables.

Results

Table 1 shows the effects of job crafting and work engagement on innovative work. Based on the results, job crafting significantly positively affects innovative behavior ($p < .05$); $b = .5951$), which means hypothesis 1 is accepted. The higher the frequency of job crafting, the employees' innovative behavior will be higher. Moreover, work engagement moderates job crafting and innovative work behavior, as expected in hypothesis 2.

Table 1
The Results of Moderated Regression Analysis

	<i>Coeff</i>	<i>Se</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>LCI</i>
Constant	58.1937	1.3421	43.3597	.0000	55.5325	60.8549
Job Crafting	.5951	.1724	3.4514	.0008	.2532	.9369
Work Engagement	.3277	.2718	1.2058	.2306	-.2112	.8666
Job Crafting * Work Engagement	.0352	.0175	2.0129	.0467	.0005	.0699
$R^2 = .1378$						
$F(3,105) = 5.5934$						

Table 1 shows the moderating effect of work engagement on the relationship between job crafting and innovative behavior [$b = .035$, $t(105) = 2.01$, $p = .04$]. In sum, work engagement moderates job crafting and innovative behavior, as expected in hypothesis 2.

Figure 1
Interaction Plot

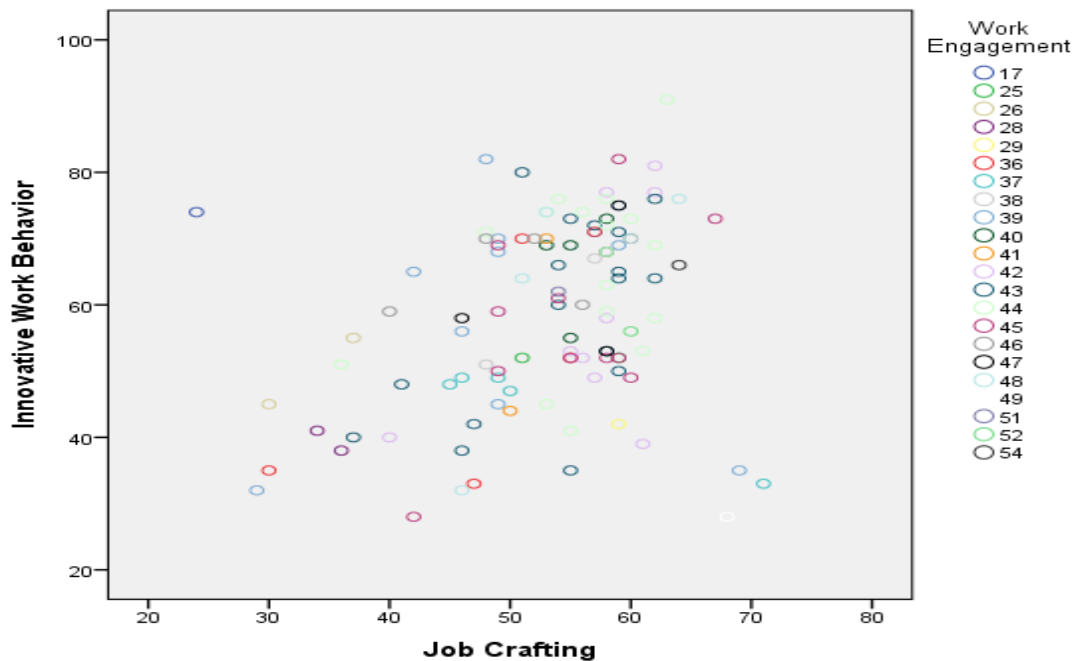


Figure 1 illustrates that work engagement moderates the association between job crafting and innovative work behavior in such a way that job crafting is positively associated with innovative work behavior for low, average, and high level work engagement. This finding supports hypothesis 2, with the added value as the *R-Square* change index due to the moderating effect (Hayes, 2018). The change in the *R-Square* value from Model 1 to Model 2 (plus interaction) was .0333, indicating the interaction effect accounted for an additional 3.33% variation in Y (innovative behavior).

Based on the data categorization, employees with innovative behavior are categorized as innovative are 43.1%, and 8.3% are categorized as very innovative. Therefore, in total, there are 56 people (51.4%) are innovative and very innovative. Moreover, for the job crafting variable, as many as 60 employees, about 55%, are proficient in doing job crafting, and 3.7% are categorized as very proficient. In total, 64 people (58.7%) are proficient and very proficient in job crafting. This finding is also followed by the high percentage of employees in the category of high work engagement (60.6%) and 10.1% in the very high work engagement category. In total, 77 people (70.7%) are in the category of high level and very high level of work engagement.

Discussion

This study examined whether job crafting positively affects innovative behavior and whether work engagement moderates this effect. The main finding in this study shows that job crafting has a positive effect on innovative behavior and that work engagement moderates the effect of job crafting on innovative behavior.

Job crafting has a significant positive effect on innovative behavior. These results indicate that the more often an employee improves his work components, the higher the innovative behavior carried out by the employee. These results are supported by previous studies that state that job crafting can increase employees' innovative behavior (Afsar et al., 2019; Supriyanto et al., 2020; Uen et al., 2021).

The results show that job crafting is one of the factors that can encourage innovative behavior among hotel employees. 58.7% of the participants are in the category of proficient and very proficient in doing job crafting. In other words, many hotel employees are active and have a high initiative to change their work aspects. This finding aligns with previous research, which shows that by increasing job resources, in our case by applying job crafting, hotel employees will manifest their actions to achieve work goals in a work environment with high job demands (Bavik et al., 2017). Thus, applying job crafting in their daily work routines will empower the hotel employees to tackle the job demands in the challenging COVID-19 pandemic pressure in the hospitality sector, helping the hotel company survive this situation. Finally, the availability of resources and balanced job demands can encourage employee motivation and commitment to pursue innovation (Demerouti et al., 2015).

The hotel employees know that innovation is needed. So, it is associated with the characteristics of someone who explores opportunities (de Jong & den Hartog, 2010; Yesil & Sozbilir, 2013). Furthermore, employees carry out idea generation, meaning that employees issue new concepts with the aim of improvement. The result that 51.4% of participants are innovative and very innovative indicates that the employee can see solutions at work, even in a problematic situation such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

After employees generate their innovative ideas, they conduct information investigations regarding their ideas, whereas formative investigation involves experimenting with new ideas and solutions before implementing them. In this case, the hotel employees try their ideas before implementing them in a broader context. Next, they fight for their ideas, trying to convince their superiors and coworkers about the idea so it can be implemented. Ultimately, these innovative ideas can be applied in hotels, a form of new work or routine

processes usually carried out (Amankwaa et al., 2022; de Jong & den Hartog, 2010). For example, hotel employees have updated their services to serve a takeaway system for customers who order offline and online food to keep getting income even though the hotel is empty of visitors.

Work engagement moderates the effect of job crafting on innovative behavior. Based on the data categorization, 70.7% of employees are in the high and very high work engagement category. In other words, more than half of the participants have passion, dedication, and absorption components in doing their jobs. It can be said when hotel employees feel passionate about work, have high dedication to work, and absorb their work; it stimulates their behavior. In turn, the work engagement will strengthen the effort to make changes related to their work physically and cognitively or to craft it, leading to creative ideas and innovation to make it profitable for the hotel. A previous study found that employees sought resources (crafting their work) and challenges when they were more engaged (Petrou et al., 2012). In crafting their job, the hotel employees adopt a bottom-up strategy in which they actively change their tasks for themselves. Employees who work more energetically, enthusiastically, and engrossed will take an active role in their tasks (Shin et al., 2018). As a result, they will perform at work, and in our study, they behave innovatively.

Similarly, employees with a proactive tendency as engaged employees will take the initiative and persevere until they see a substantial change in their workplace (Sharma & Nambudiri, 2020). More specifically, a high level of engagement and approach to job crafting leads to performance and creativity; however, burnout (the antidote to work engagement) is unrelated to approach crafting (Zhang & Parker, 2019). In sum, engaged employees' job crafting is associated with strong innovative work behavior. In contrast, job crafting is also associated with the least innovative work behavior for the least engaged employees or employees with low work engagement.

There are a few limitations of this study. First, this study uses a work engagement scale with a modified Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The items are prepared using statements on the UWES scale translated into Indonesian and adapted to the participants. After conducting an online trial, several items fell out. Further researchers are advised to study further the fallen items, such as doing sentence redactions and conducting re-tests online and offline. Next, this is a cross-sectional study with one company as a sample; thus, no causal inference is applied, and be careful in the generalization.

Conclusion

Job crafting affects employees' innovative behavior; the more competent individuals at job crafting will also be more innovative. Moreover, work engagement increases the effect of job crafting on employees' innovative behavior. The better employees craft their job, the stronger their work engagement and the higher their chances to perform innovative behavior. Thus, hotel management may implement programs to increase job crafting and work engagement to enhance innovative behavior among their employees.

Acknowledgment

The authors thank the participants and the hotel management for granting permission to collect the data. The authors also appreciate the reviewers' and editors' constructive feedback and comments on this article.

Declarations

Author contribution. GK was responsible for outlining the research design, collecting and analyzing the data, and writing the article. VGR was responsible for approving the research design, checking the results, writing the article, and processing the article for publication.

Funding statement. This study was self-funded.

Conflict of interest. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Additional information. No additional information is available for this paper.

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