

Mediating Role of Job Crafting in the Relationship Between Work Characteristics and Turnover Intentions of Young Working Adults.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between work characteristics and turnover intentions among young working adults in Nigeria. Grounded in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Person-Environment Fit theory, the research investigates how job content (skill variety, specialization) and context factors (working conditions, ergonomics, physical demands) predict turnover intentions, and whether job crafting serves as a behavioral mechanism in this relationship. A cross-sectional design was employed, with data collected from 350 young employees (aged 18-40) across nine higher education institutions in Imo State, Nigeria. Participants completed validated scales measuring turnover intentions, job design, and job crafting. Results from hierarchical regression analysis indicated that job variety significantly negatively predicted turnover intentions ($\beta = -.29, p < .01$). In contrast, job specialization positively predicted them ($\beta = 0.14, p < .01$). Mediation analysis using PROCESS macro revealed that job crafting partially mediated both relationships, with significant indirect effects. These findings offer actionable insights for HR professionals and organizational psychologists aiming to develop effective retention strategies by fostering job crafting and tailored job designs in Nigerian workplaces.

Keywords: Job crafting, turnover intentions, work characteristics, job design, JD-R model, young workers, Nigeria, mediation

INTRODUCTION

According to Tett & Meyer (1993), turnover intention is a conscious decision to depart an organization. The choice of whether to stay on the work or leave is a mental one made by the individual (Jacobs & Roodt, 2007). Employees' intentions to leave their jobs could be influenced by factors relevant to their jobs (such as personality traits or demographics). According to turnover theorists, workplace incidents, working circumstances, and psychological issues all interact to influence an employee's decision to leave a company (Moreno Jimenez et al., 2012). According to Sheridan and Abelson (1983), it proceeds in a series of progressive steps beginning with an employee's perception of the work environment's affective reactions and gradually increasing the possibility that they would leave the workgroup, the organization, and the profession. Therefore, companies go above and beyond to hire and keep employees that do well on the job and are unlikely to leave the company (Astakhova, 2016). Barrick and Zimmerman (2005) stressed the importance of employee retention for business success. It is simpler for organizations to assess if new employees can contribute successfully and have a high level of commitment when predictors of turnover intentions are identified (Bretz & Judge, 1994). Therefore, researchers keep working to understand the various elements that motivate workers to leave their employers. Additionally, even if there isn't a real turnover, those who want to leave are frequently less likely to significantly contribute to the organization than those who want to stay (Christian & Ellis, 2014).

The intention to leave a work has just recently begun to garner significant attention in job design; many facets of this perspective have received little attention. For instance, The Job Characteristics by Hackman and Oldham (1976 and 1980) explains the connection between job characteristics (such as skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) and personal responses to work (Faturochman, 1997), such as work motivation, job satisfaction, and work effectiveness. The three psychological states that these job aspects elicit—experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and awareness of results—lead to positive outcomes

for both the individual and the organization. As moderators of the relationship between job characteristics and the outcome variables, individual differences (such as knowledge and skills, growth need strength, and context satisfaction) are included in the job characteristics that specify the task conditions under which individuals are predicted to perform well in their work (Faturocham, 1997). Job features and intention to leave the job have led to a lot of research at the same time. According to the Job Characteristics Theory (JCT), having all three psychological states present at once leads to a number of positive personal and professional consequences. Particularly, the employee's internal motivation at work (i.e., how they feel when they perform well and how they feel when they perform poorly) (Kulik et al., 1987). JCT asserts as well that if employment are made more motivating, employees will find their workplace to be more appealing. According to studies, the key predictors of work outcomes are job characteristics. According to Oldham and Hackman (2010), a good work design improves the wellbeing of both people and an organization.

Job crafting, which is the process by which employees modify their employment to better suit their own requirements and skills (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), has recently attracted a lot of interest in the field of job design. Job crafting, as opposed to the conventional top-down approach to job design, represents employees' more proactive and individualized efforts to change their occupations to increase the meaning of their work (Berg et al., 2013). The term "job crafting" was first used by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who described it as "the cognitive and physical changes individuals make in the job or relational boundaries of their work". They proposed the task, cognitive, and relational elements of job crafting. Changes in the quantity or nature of the tasks that employees must do at work are referred to as task crafting. The modifications in interactions with people while carrying out duties are referred to as relational crafting. Finally, cognitive crafting is modifying how workers view their occupations (for example, the purpose and importance of the job). It is common across many professions for employees to have some freedom to define the parameters of their jobs (Zhang & Parker, 2019). The subjective well-being of employees, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work engagement, job performance, and career success are further benefits that job designing may have (Petrou et al., 2017; Romeo et al., 2019; & Wang et al., 2019). In essence, the literature contends that by designing jobs, people can better match their roles to their personalities and motivate initiatives at work (Berg et al., 2013). Researchers have looked at what job-related elements inspire people to craft their jobs due to the benefit of job crafting to employees and their organizations (Makikanges et al., 2017).

Statement of Problem/Justification

The turnover intention has just started attracting close attention in job designing; various aspects of the perspective of job design have been relatively understudied. However, in the Nigerian context, research has ignored the strength of association, job design, and turnover intentions. While literature explores the elements that contribute to turnover intentions, the quantity of research on the nature of turnover intentions concerns young working adults in Nigeria is underdetermined.

On review of literature of turnover intentions and job design among employees, there is a gap to what factors of job design (Content – skill variety and skill specialisation) and contextual factors (working conditions, ergonomics, and physical demands) are associated with turnover intentions compared to studying job design in its totality. The extent to which young working adults in Nigeria experience turnover intentions related to different job design dimensions is undetermined.

However, job crafting research has mainly focused on the consequences of job crafting. Thus there have been calls for exploring what facilitates employees' engages in crafting their jobs at work (Tims et al., 2012; Kooij et al., 2017). In addition, recent studies have examined how to promote employee job crafting (e.g. Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2018). It appears that young Nigerian working adults find it challenging to craft their jobs, which could lead to turnover intentions. Furthermore, it appears that young Nigerian working adults are at greater risk of experiencing turnover intentions because they are less insulated by buffers. Therefore, it is expected that job crafting may have a potential mediating role in the link between job design factors and turnover intentions.

It is vital to continue searching and initiating mechanisms through which young adults in Nigeria can apply to mitigate turnover intentions. So therefore, the study will provide;

1. empirical evidence on the mediating role of job crafting on the relationship between work characteristics and turnover intentions of young working adults.
2. evidence of the nature of association between work content characteristics and turnover intentions among young working adults.
3. evidence of the nature of association between work contextual characteristics and turnover intentions among young working adults in the State.
4. data and information that will help stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of policies on strategies for reducing the issue of turnover intentions of young working adults in the State and in the country at large.

Objective of the Study

We, therefore, tend to investigate whether

1. work content factors (skill variety and work specialisation) would significantly predict turnover intentions
2. work context (working conditions, ergonomics, and physical demands) would significantly predict turnover intentions,
3. job crafting (cognitive) would significantly mediate the relationship between job design and turnover intentions.

Research Questions

Therefore the study seeks to answer the following questions.

1. Will work content factors (skill variety and work specialisation) significantly predict turnover intentions?
2. Will work context (working conditions, ergonomics, and physical demands) significantly predict turnover intentions?
3. Will job crafting significantly mediate the relationship between job design and turnover intentions

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical framework that addresses the issues related to work factors (content and contextual factors), job crafting, and turnover intentions.

Person-Environment Fit Model by French, Caplan, and Harrison (1982)

The model posits that human behavior is a function of the interaction between the characteristics of the person and the characteristics of the situation. One aspect of this interaction that is relevant to occupational stress is the degree to which there is a fit between the person and the situation. According to this approach, an employee perceives the work environment as stressful when there is a lack of fit (Caplan, 1987; French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1982). The concept of P-E Fit (and misfit) may also occur at a more "macro" level of analysis. More specifically, one can speak of the degree of fit between the features of the police officer and the characteristics of the organization. For example, suppose an employee who places a very high value on individual accomplishment goes to work for an organization that places a very high value on teamwork. It would be a poor fit, and, likely, such an individual would ultimately find working in such an environment stressful. The P-E Fit approach has proven to be quite useful to occupational stress researchers. However, the major limitation of the P-E Fit approach is that, compared to the Environment component, we seem to be much further ahead in the measurement of the Person component of the model. That is, psychologists have devoted considerable time and energy to conceptualizing and measuring individual characteristics such as abilities, skills, and personality while

giving far less attention to conceptualizing and measuring unique characteristics of organizations. Dawis and Lofquist (1984) stated that the advantage the P-E Fit concept has over other theories is that it is based on how the employee adjusts in a work setting and which is necessary for his or her well-being. The level of fit is high when the preferred level and received level are both high; and when both of them are low.

The literature on occupational stress and well-being suggested that there are two parts to the concept of P-E Fit, these are (1) demands – ability fit: these refer to the extent of match between work demands and ability to do the work. (2) Need - supply fit: this concept matches the person's needs and the available resources. Most of the existing studies on P-E Fit focus on the need-supply fit because the lack of resources will have a severe impact on the level of stress and the person's well-being. For example, the employee who wanted an extensive interaction with his or her colleagues and experienced it is an excellent example of an intense match between what one wants and what one receives. On the other side, the employee may not want to interact with his or her colleagues extensively, and did not substantially interact with them is also a good match. This situation does not precisely reflect the high–high condition because some employee's social interaction may not be a relevant factor in determining the impact level of stress and well-being.

On the contrary, P–E Fit theory proposed that when there is a mismatch between an employee need and what they receive will lead to high levels of strain. The highest level of strain will occur when the employee strongly desires something but failed to receive it. More so, there will be a mismatch in a situation where an employee may not need the interaction but received it. In other words, the employee should experience strain. However, this is likely to depend on numerous other factors, including whether the attribute interferes with other activities of the employee. For example, having frequent contact with work colleagues may distract the person from core job activities, leading to frustration and a sense of lack of achievement, in which case high strain might be expected.

In summary, Edwards (1995, 2000) identified the basic principles of P-E Fit as the need to match people's wants with what they received and also matching their ability to the demand of the job. He further stressed that demands-ability and needs-supply mean more to people when a reward is attached, as indicated in the theory of Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. The theory includes the relative salience of perceived fit versus actual levels of components, but the vital assistance outweighs these limitations that the model has made to theorizing and useful application. Though this model has generated instructions for work contexts in areas of stress management interventions and promotion of occupational health and well-being, it is comparative perceived versus the actual fit level of the components has been criticized.

Empirical Review

A negative connection between increasing job challenges and turnover intention was found in a recent study (Esteves & Lopes, 2017). Increasing resources and challenges are also associated with higher motivation to work past the retirement age (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2016). Job crafting is negatively related to leaving intentions among trainee surgeons (Dominguez et al., 2018). Besides being scarce, we note that the samples used in these previous ones have certain limitations. Both Esteves and Lopez (2017) and Dominguez et al. (2018) studied health care workers, who are more prone to experience a sense of calling toward their job (Cardador et al., 2011), thus possibly buffering the effect of job crafting on turnover intentions. Further, the sample used by Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2016) was composed of mainly elderly employees, making it hard to generalise the results to younger populations. Based on existing research, we expect to replicate the negative relationships between job crafting and intent to leave on an extensive sample, including people with different professions and within young workforce.

Work factors and turnover intentions

Ozbeğ et al. (2014) investigated the moderating role played by three motivating factors, job characteristics (autonomy, feedback, skill variety), in the association between burnout and turnover intention using a sample of 161 respondents. Using SPSS statistical packet program, data obtained from the questionnaire was analysed. In addition, the Sobel test was used to measure the significance of moderating effects of motivating job characteristics. The findings show that employees who reported more exhaustion and cynicism feel less

professional efficiency had more intention to leave their organisation. However, the results also reveal no significant moderating effect association between motivating job characteristics and turnover intention. Samad (2006) investigated the role of demographic factors, job characteristics and job satisfaction on turnover intentions. With a sample of 292 IT staff in Telecom Malaysia (TM), the results revealed that job satisfaction and job characteristics are negatively and significantly related to turnover intentions. The study also revealed that demographic variables, job characteristics & job satisfaction had a significant contribution and a negative effect on turnover intentions. In addition, the study showed that job satisfaction accounted for more considerable variance in turnover intentions than from job characteristics. The study also found that job satisfaction had more effect on turnover intention than job characteristics.

Uruthirapathy & Grant (2015), in a study, investigated how IT and non-IT job professionals relate to motivational & social job characteristics & their impact on job satisfaction, job performance and turnover intentions. Data were collected from IT shared service employees through a survey, and quantitative analysis was performed. The researchers found that IT professionals experienced greater task significance among the motivational job characteristics than the non-IT jobholders. The professionals and advisory group differed from the other groups in terms of feedback from the job, job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

In a study, Agarwal & Gupta (2018) examined a moderated- mediation model that investigated the relationship between motivating job characteristics, work engagement, conscientiousness, and managers turnover intentions. The researchers used a survey questionnaire from 1,302 managers working in eight Indian private sector organisations; structural equation modelling and hierarchical regression analysis were utilised to test the hypothesis. The study found the mediating role of work engagement for the association between motivating job characteristics and managers' turnover intentions. Conscientiousness moderated the relationship between work engagement and turnover intention. The indirect effects of motivating job characteristics on turnover intention were moderating job characteristics on turnover were moderated by conscientiousness.

Zhang et al. (2019) investigated enterprises' social media usage for work-related and non-work-related (social) purposes. Using the organisational commitment theory, the researcher developed a model to explore how different purposes of social media usage affect employee job satisfaction and turnover intention in the Chinese context. Using a sample of 298 both online and offline, the results revealed that work-related and socialrelated, social media usage positively affects employee organisational commitment through their organisational engagement, social media usage improves job satisfaction and reduces employee's turnover intention through enhancing their engagement and organisational commitment and in the process of social media usage influencing employee's job satisfaction and turnover intention, employees of different genders show a significant difference.

Job crafting and turnover intentions

Ahmad (2018), in a paper, examined the underlying reciprocity mechanism which governs the association between employer and employee at their workplace in a perspective where intrinsic and extrinsic factors of job satisfaction are considered as a proxy to organisational offerings, while multi overall job satisfaction and dimensional organisational commitment & employee turnover intentions. Using a sample of 647 hospital workers, the researchers used a five-point Likert scale in measuring the variables. The results from the study revealed that workers' subjective evaluation of the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of a job contributes to the formation of their reciprocal perspective of psychological commitment. Dominguez and Setal (2018) examined the intentions to leave surgical training. Using structural equation modelling techniques (SEM) and independent tests, respectively. They found that job crafting correlated negatively with burnout, which bore a positive relationship to the intention to leave.

Zhang & Li (2020) investigated the influence of job crafting, job satisfaction, and work engagement on employee turnover intention and dissected the role of work engagement and job satisfaction as mediators in the association between job crafting and employee turnover intention. A questionnaire method of data collection was used with 212 employees of a service company in China. The findings from the structural equation modelling revealed that work engagement and job satisfaction partially mediated the job crafting-turnover intention associations. Their results extended prior research and confirmed that job crafting; job satisfaction and work engagement were predictors of employees' turnover intention. These findings suggest that employees' turnover intention may be

reduced through generated job crafting behaviour and by improving job satisfaction and work engagement. In a study, Tiago and Miguel (2017) investigated the emerging interest in the job crafting construct. A self-report questionnaire among 189 Portuguese nurses and nursing assistants analysed how job crafting can be strongly related to workers' sense of calling and turnover intention. The results showed the significance of calling and turnover intention. Furthermore, the result showed that calling mediated the negative relation between the increase in challenging job demands and turnover intentions. Although, the traditional assumption is that a sense of calling leads workers to craft their jobs. The theory indicated that the results support the possibility that a sense of calling may be triggered when workers increase their challenging job demands. The researchers recommend that further studies provide additional insight into the job crafting formation mechanism.

Chu et al. (2021) examined the relationship of employee strengths use on the turnover intention by proposing a moderated mediation model using the theory of Planned Behaviour. Using a sample of 234 medical staff in Beijing, results revealed that strengths use had a significant negative effect on turnover intention. However, job crafting completely mediated the relationship between strength use and turnover intention. The study also revealed that self-efficiency positively moderated the direct relationship between strengths used and job crafting and the crafting and the indirect relationship between strengths used and turnover intention through job crafting.

METHODS

Scope of study: The study involves details such as gender, marital status, age, highest educational qualifications, their educational qualifications ranged from the first school leaving certificate to postgraduate study, the study comprises those who work in public or private firms, their ranks or positions they occupy, and finally, length of service.

Area of study: The area of study was on the relationship between work characteristics and turnover intentions of young working adults in Imo State (Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Imo State University of Agriculture, Umuagwu, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Imo State University of Agriculture (Umuagwo), Federal University of Technology Owerri, Ebonyi State University, Abia State Polytechnic, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, and Federal Polytechnic Oko). Furthermore, the study examines the mediating role of job crafting in the association between work characteristics and turnover intentions of young working adults in all the institutions under study.

Subjects/Participants: Participants were young employees within the age bracket of (18-40) of the ten (9) institutions (Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Imo State University of Agriculture (Umuagwo), Federal University of Technology Owerri, Ebonyi State University, Abia State Polytechnic, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, and Federal Polytechnic Oko). Data was collected based on based on young employees and working students' participation.

Sample/Sampling technique: The samples were young working staff from each institutions whose data are available and accessible during the time of this research. Purposive sampling method would be used to gather data. However, individuals whose data are incomplete or distorted were not included during data collection.

Measures

Data were collected using a self-report questionnaire comprising established scales to measure the study constructs. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: demographic variables, turnover intentions, job design, and job crafting. Unless otherwise indicated, participants responded to all items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*).

Turnover Intentions: Turnover intentions were measured using a scale adapted from the work of Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978). This scale assesses an employee's conscious and deliberate willingness to leave their current organization. A sample item is, "I often think about quitting my present job." Participants indicated their level of agreement with each statement. Higher scores reflected a greater intention to leave the organization. The scale has demonstrated strong reliability in previous research, and in the present study, the Cronbach's alpha was .78.

Job Design: Job design was assessed by measuring two distinct dimensions: job specialization and job variety. These dimensions were measured using subscales from the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1975, 1980).

Job Specialization: Job specialization, the degree to which a job requires a narrow range of skills and is repetitive, was measured using a subscale. An example item is, "My job requires me to do many different things at work, using a variety of my skills and talents" (reverse-coded). Items were coded so that higher scores indicated a higher degree of specialization. The Cronbach's alpha for this subscale in the current study was $\alpha = .68$. Job variety the extent to which a job requires employees to perform a wide range of operations and use various skills, was measured using a subscale. A sample item is, "The job requires me to use a number of complex or high-level skills." Higher scores represented a greater perception of variety in the job. The internal consistency for this subscale was $\alpha = .73$.

Job Crafting: Job crafting was measured using the Job Crafting Scale (JCS) developed by Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2012). This scale captures the proactive changes employees make to their task and relational boundaries at work. (1) increasing structural job resources, (2) increasing social job resources, (3) increasing challenging job demands, and (4) decreasing hindering job demands. Participants rated how often they engaged in each behavior (1 = *Never* to 5 = *Very Often*). A sample item is, "I try to develop my capabilities." A composite score for overall job crafting was calculated by averaging all items, with higher scores indicating a greater tendency to craft one's job. The scale has been widely validated, and the Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale in this study was .65.

Procedure for data collection: the researchers sought approval for the study from the Research and

Development Unit of Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri. A letter of introduction and authorization from Research and Development Unit was presented to the various institutions selected. Six research assistants were recruited and trained. Also a computer assistant, data analyst and editors were employed for this study. All information on data collected were kept confidential. The researchers and research assistants proceeded to the respective schools where data for the periods of study was generated with the assistance of the school principle officers of the respective offices/units. Data collection for the institutions under study covered a period of 30 days. Data collected will be organized and presented for statistical analysis.

Design/Statistics: The design selected for the study is cross-sectional, and a Hierarchical Multiple Regression will be employed to analyse the data (SPSS version 22). Finally, the process macro was used to test the mediating role (indirect and direct effect) of job crafting on the relationship between work factors and turnover intentions of young working adults.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables for 262 participants

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	31.2	8.1	—						
2. Job Tenure	5.8	4.3	.58	—					
3. Job Specialization	3.42	0.91	-.08	-.11	—				
4. Job Variety	3.15	30.87	-.20	.09	-.63**	—			
5. Job Context	3.01	0.95	-.10	.05	.15	-.10	—		

6. Job Crafting	3.68	0.89	.05	.03	-.41**	.54**	.12	—	
7. Turnover Intentions	3.24	1.02	-.14	-.16	.32**	-.40**	-.19*	-.28**	—

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. $p < .01$; $p < .05$.

Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations among study variables are presented in Table 1. As shown, job specialization correlated positively with turnover intentions ($r = .32, p < .01$), while job variety correlated negatively ($r = -.40, p < .01$). Job crafting was negatively associated with turnover intentions ($r = -.28, p < .01$) and positively with job variety ($r = .54, p < .01$).

Table 2 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Turnover Intentions

Here is your data organized into a clear **hierarchical regression table** format:

Predictor	Model 1 (β)	Model 2 (β)	Model 3 (β)
Step 1: Control Variables			
Age	-.11		
Gender	.04		
Education Level	-.08		
Job Tenure	-.12		
Step 2: Job Design			
Job Specialization		.14*	
Job Variety		-.29*	
Step 3: Mediator			
Job Crafting			-.19**
Model Statistics			
R ²	.04	.19	.22
ΔR^2	.04	.15**	.03

Note. β = Standardized Beta Coefficient. Gender was coded as 0 = Male, 1 = Female. $p < .05$. $p < .01$. $p < .001$.

The results of the hierarchical regression are presented in Table 2. After controlling for demographics, job design variables accounted for a significant increase in variance explained ($\Delta R^2 = .15, p < .001$). In the final model (Model 3), job specialization was a significant positive predictor ($\beta = 0.14, p < .01$), and job variety was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.29, p < .01$), supporting H1. Job crafting, when added in Model 3, was a significant negative predictor ($\beta = -.19, p < .01$).

Mediation Analysis

Table 3 Mediation Analysis of Job Crafting Between Job Design Variables and Turnover Intentions

Path	Effect (β)	SE	95% CI	Status
Job Variety Model				
Total Effect (Var \rightarrow TI)	-.37	.05	[-.47, -.27]	
Direct Effect (Var \rightarrow TI)	-.29	.06	[-.40, -.18]	
Indirect Effect (Var \rightarrow JC \rightarrow TI)	-.08	.03	[-.14, -.02]	Partial Mediation
Job Specialization Model				
Total Effect (Spec \rightarrow TI)	.18	.05	[.08, .28]	
Direct Effect (Spec \rightarrow TI)	.14	.06	[.03, .25]	
Indirect Effect (Spec \rightarrow JC \rightarrow TI)	.048	.02	[.01, .09]	Partial Mediation

Note. β = Standardized coefficient; SE = Standard Error; CI = Confidence Interval; Var = Job Variety; Spec = Job Specialization; JC = Job Crafting; TI = Turnover Intentions. Bootstrapping with 5,000 samples. $p < .01$.

The mediation analysis results are summarized in Table 3. For job variety, the indirect effect via job crafting was significant ($\beta = -.08$, 95% CI [-.14, -.02]). The direct effect of variety on turnover intentions remained significant ($\beta = -.29$, 95% CI [-.40, -.18]), indicating partial mediation. This supports H3a. For job specialization, the indirect effect was also significant ($\beta = .048$, 95% CI [.01, .09]), with a significant direct effect remaining ($\beta = .14$, 95% CI [.03, .25]), confirming partial mediation and supporting H3b. Job crafting accounted for approximately 27.6% and 26.7% of the total effect of job variety and specialization on turnover intentions, respectively.

DISCUSSION

The study examined the mediated role of job crafting in the association between two job design factors (job specialization and job variety) and staff turnover intentions. One finding that supports the premise that job design does not influence turnover intentions through pathways but dynamically shapes behavioral responses was revealed. Our findings aligned with past studies which found that the relationship between core job characteristics (job specialization and job variety) and turnover intentions is significantly mediated by employees' ability to redesign their work processes. It visually establishes that job design matters for initiating effective job crafting (Oldham, 1996), with recent extensions on job crafting (Tims & Baker, 2010).

Our first contribution lies in empirically validating job crafting as a focal process mediating mechanisms. We demonstrated that job variety, as an important job resource, not only has a direct effect on turnover intentions but initiates a cycle of behavioural adaptation whereby employees who are varied in job roles are exposed to work models and diverse tasks, a safe set that enables them apply creativity at work. That in turn exacerbates a sense of psychological ownership and person–job fit (Tims et al., 2013), reducing the fact that employees want to leave their jobs.

This finding is consistent with the work of Hackman and Oldham (2005) who asserted that job resources are not just processed but are actively engaged with and expanded through proactive crafting. The JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) offers a seemingly valid lens as it posits specific behavioral and motivational processes. As such, specific behavioral manifestations of this process have success clearly mapped on turnover intentions and outcomes.

Additionally and conversely, the results revealed that highly specialized jobs exert a dual negative impact on retention. The growth-restricting nature of this (likely low autonomy) breakdown suppresses (Grant, 2007).

Our contribution states the fact there is an indirect pathway through the contribution of job crafting. Job specialisation imposes standardised procedures, limits workers' scope of proactive behaviour, and also depicts rigid job/task boundaries. This generally creates a state of passive fulfillment which inhibits growth (Grant & Parker, 2009). The strength of the mediation analysed reveals this stifling effect, which underlies the significant impact of specialisation. The negative impact stems from its compounding tendency to suppress the key behaviours that could otherwise buffer against turnover.

The differential strength of the relationships for job specialisation and variety is theoretically important. It reflects that the stronger total effect of job variety shows that the resource-providing properties may be more pertinent to retention than freedom from the narrow absence of stifling ones. This aligns with the Core Theory (Hackman, 1985), where resources beget further resources. In other words, a job rich in variety stimulates a positive spiral effect by enabling crafting, which builds personal resources, thus turnover reduction occurs. Conversely, the worker's attachment to the low work-place specialisation, on the other hand, triggers a loss spiral for a resource, thereby depleting growth opportunities and enhancing job turnover intentions.

Implications:

The results of the study carry important implications, especially as they extend the base of job design and quality, providing a roadmap for organisations.

Theoretical Implications:

The research gives a new insight beyond establishing a direct link between job design and turnover by presenting a behavioural mediator. We add to the job features model and the JD-R framework by asserting that job crafting is a viable manifestation of motivational pathway. When resourceful job features (variety) are suppressed by job constraints (specialisation), this implies a more dynamic explanation on how specialisation worsens turnover outcomes, asserting the employee of their job design that as an active participant where he or she has the ability to redirect their work is either enabled or constrained by it.

Furthermore, the strength of the relationship for job variety and job specialisation nuances the strength of the variety impact of the design. The stronger protective effect of variety means that fostering a gain spiral of resources may be more potent than merely mitigating the loss spiral of limited specialisation. This implies that theoretical models should account for this non-linear and potentially asymmetric flux of job features against effective job practices, where the presence of enriched opportunities is not merely the inverse of the presence of constraints.

Practical Implications

To organisations who seek to limit attrition, our findings suggest a strategic pivot from static job design to management of dynamic job cultivation. Organisations should find avenues to embed flexible design with applied, tailored practices that take into account relational psychology and cognitive perception of tasks. These include alignment between organisational mandates and individual strengths.

There is also need to adopt craft able roles—jobs that not only provide autonomy, yet structure, but also help reduce turnover. Finally, there is importance in leveraging technology and elasticity. This will free up capacity for more varied, social, creative, and flexible tasks that are inherently more craft able and engaging, thereby directly decreasing the root cause of turnover.

It becomes important to state that there is a paradigm shift from job design for employees to job design with employees. This would build resilient, adaptive organisations.

- Train managers to enable growth

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- Measure growth and productivity impact
 - Encourage job crafting
 - Co-create evolving role canvases.

Limitation

The study is not free from limitations. Firstly the study adopted the cross-sectional design; said to identify the results shows modest claims of relationship, preclude robust predictive research.

Further studies should utilize longitudinal or temporal procedure with multiple time points to build and establish a cause and effect relationship.

The use of single, self-report during the study limits the quality of common method variance to reflect the factors tested and do not reveal common method variance and multivariate. Though the Human's single selfreport only during the study may not reveal common method variance and multivariate. This would give a more insightful result. Future research should build upon a more dynamic and deep insight of how the design of work shapes the retention of the workforce.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of job crafting on the relationship between work characteristics and turnover intentions among young working adults in Nigeria. Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Person-Environment (P-E) Fit theory, the research focused on young employees in Nigerian higher education, a population that remains underexplored.

The findings provide strong support for the study's theoretical framework. Job design emerged as a significant predictor of turnover intentions. Roles characterized by task variety are associated with higher retention, whereas highly specialized positions are associated with a higher likelihood of turnover. These results align with the JD-R model, which posits that diverse tasks and skill utilization promote employee engagement, while repetitive and specialized tasks may deplete energy and increase turnover intentions.

The study further elucidates the mechanisms by which work characteristics influence turnover intentions. The analysis indicates that job crafting partially mediates the relationship between job design and turnover. Employees in varied roles are more likely to proactively adjust their work, enhancing person-job fit and reducing turnover intentions. Conversely, highly specialized roles limit such opportunities, potentially leading to poor fit and increased turnover, though some employees still seek to modify their roles. The partial mediation observed suggests that additional factors, such as work engagement or job satisfaction, may also contribute to these outcomes.

These findings offer practical implications for human resource professionals, organizational psychologists, and managers in Nigeria and comparable contexts. To enhance retention among young employees, organizations should redesign specialized roles to incorporate greater task variety and skill utilization. Fostering a culture that supports job crafting through autonomy, support, and training enables employees to align their work with their strengths and preferences, thereby improving retention. Additionally, human resource strategies should be tailored to individual differences rather than adopting a uniform approach.

This study has some limitations. Because it used a cross-sectional design, it cannot show cause and effect. Future research should use longitudinal studies or experiments to better understand these links. Since the data were self-reports, there may be bias; future studies should include objective or supervisor ratings. Also, the sample only included higher education institutions in one Nigerian state, so the results may not apply to other industries or regions.

Future research should explore potential moderators of these relationships, such as personality traits (e.g., proactive personality, openness to experience), perceived organizational support, or cultural dimensions unique

to the Nigerian context. Future studies should examine factors that may affect these relationships, such as personality traits, perceived organizational support, and cultural factors unique to Nigeria. Comparing results across different sectors and African countries would also help show how widely these findings apply in the role of shaping their work experiences as critical factors in understanding and managing employee turnover among young workers in Nigeria.

Conflict of interest and funding

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