# The Role of Employee Adaptability as Mediating Variable in Job Crafting and Innovative Employee Performance Linkage

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## ABSTRACT

Innovation is a critical concern in both academic research and organizational practice, as it supports long-term employee well-being, engagement, and productivity, which are essential for sustained organizational success. Sustainable employees contribute consistently while experiencing lower levels of burnout and demonstrating greater adaptability to workplace changes. Given this importance, examining employee sustainability in relation to innovative employee performance, job creation, and employee adaptability is essential. Innovative employee performance plays a key role in employee retention by enhancing job satisfaction and work motivation. Through proactive job crafting where employees actively modify their tasks and work interactions employees can create more meaningful and fulfilling work experiences, reduce emotional exhaustion, and strengthen long-term organizational commitment. This study employs a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design. Purposive sampling was applied, targeting employees working in organizations that implement remote or flexible work arrangements. Data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The findings indicate that job crafting has a positive effect on innovative employee performance, and employee adaptability mediates the relationship between job crafting and innovative employee performance.

**Keywords:** Employee Adaptability, Employee Innovative Performance, Job Crafting

## INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary business environment characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), sustaining a productive and resilient workforce has become a strategic imperative for organizations pursuing long-term success (Irfan et al., 2023). Employee sustainability defined as employees' capacity to maintain health, well-being, and productivity over time enables individuals to contribute consistently to organizational goals while adapting to ongoing environmental changes (Rosen et al., 2015). As work environments become increasingly dynamic, workforce sustainability has emerged as a critical determinant of organizational competitiveness (Gazi et al., 2024).

Job crafting and employee adaptability are two interrelated factors that play a central role in fostering employee sustainability. Job crafting refers to employees' proactive adjustments to their tasks, relationships, and cognitive perceptions to better align work with personal strengths, values, and career aspirations, thereby enhancing engagement and motivation (Dhanpat, 2024). Prior studies demonstrate that job crafting supports sustainable work ability, long-term career development, and psychological well-being (E. Janssen et al., 2021). However, the extent to which job crafting translates into innovative employee performance depends largely on employee adaptability the capability to adjust cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses in response to changing work demands (Teng & Chen, 2024).

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Employee adaptability equips individuals to manage uncertainty, acquire new competencies, and apply creative problem-solving, enabling organizations to respond effectively to change and competitive pressures (Cullen et al., 2014). When job crafting is accompanied by high adaptability, employees are more likely to develop resilience and sustain innovative performance, particularly in work contexts that require continuous innovation. Organizational environments that cultivate these capabilities not only enhance individual performance but also strengthen collective capacity for long-term value creation.

Despite the expanding literature on job crafting, adaptability, and innovative performance, empirical research integrating these constructs within a unified framework linked directly to employee sustainability remains limited. Existing studies have often examined these relationships in isolation, paying insufficient attention to the mediating mechanisms through which job crafting influences innovative performance and, ultimately, workforce sustainability. Addressing this gap, the present study proposes a model that (1) examines the direct effect of job crafting on innovative employee performance and (2) tests the mediating role of employee adaptability in this relationship. By integrating proactive work behaviors and adaptive capabilities, this study offers a more comprehensive explanation of how organizations can sustain workforce effectiveness in an increasingly volatile business environment.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Job Crafting and Employee Innovative Performance

Job crafting refers to self-initiated changes made by employees to their tasks, work relationships, and cognitive perceptions in order to better align their jobs with personal strengths and interests (Tims et al., 2013). This proactive behavior enhances the meaningfulness of work, which in turn increases employee engagement and job satisfaction (Berdicchia et al., 2024). By actively shaping their roles, employees create more personalized and fulfilling work experiences, thereby sustaining motivation and performance over time.

Employee-driven job design also facilitates employees' ability to cope with new and evolving work demands (Hevi et al., 2024). When employees experience greater autonomy in shaping their jobs, they are more likely to feel comfortable and aligned with their work needs, which fosters creativity and innovative behavior (Berdicchia et al., 2024). A supportive and self-directed work environment reduces unnecessary pressure, allowing new ideas to emerge. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Job crafting has a significant positive effect on employee innovative performance.

### Job Crafting and Employee Adaptability

Employees who are able to design jobs that align with their personal needs and competencies tend to adapt more easily to changing work conditions (Kidron & Rispler, 2025). Employee adaptability not only supports individuals in coping with uncertainty but also enhances employee embeddedness within the organization (Teng & Chen, 2024). Accordingly, employees who engage in self-designed job roles are better equipped to respond to new challenges and evolving work demands.

Job crafting reflects employees' proactive capacity to modify their work tasks and routines in response to changing trends and market requirements (Hevi et al., 2024). This proactive behavior strengthens employees' adaptive capabilities, particularly in highly dynamic work environments.

H2: Job crafting has a significant positive effect on employee adaptability.

### Employee Adaptability and Employee Innovative Performance

Employee adaptability refers to an individual's capacity to adjust effectively to changes in job requirements, work conditions, and shifting priorities in the workplace (Zhou & Zheng, 2022). Employees who demonstrate high adaptability are better able to manage environmental changes and experience lower levels of work-related

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stress (Cullen et al., 2014). Reduced stress, in turn, creates a supportive psychological state that facilitates creativity and innovative behavior in task execution.

Employee adaptability offers substantial benefits by enabling individuals to cope with evolving work demands and apply flexible approaches to problem-solving, thereby enhancing innovative work outcomes (Cárdenas-Muñoz et al., 2024). As a result, innovative employee performance can be viewed as a direct outcome of employees' adaptive capabilities, as adaptable employees are more capable of generating novel ideas and effectively addressing diverse workplace challenges.

H3: Employee adaptability has a significant positive impact on employee innovative performance

**Employee Adaptability mediate the Effect of Job Crafting on Employee Innovative Performance**

Adaptability is shaped by multiple factors, including employees' capacity to modify their work in ways that align with their personal needs and competencies (Park & Park, 2021). Employees who engage proactively in shaping their work roles tend to adapt more easily to changing job demands, which subsequently enhances their innovative performance (Ilmudeen et al., 2020). Mansour and Nogues (2022) further highlight that employees' ability to design their own work has several positive outcomes, particularly in fostering innovative behavior. This relationship suggests an interconnected mechanism in which job crafting strengthens employee adaptability, which in turn enables employees to perform their tasks more innovatively.

Employee adaptability also influences how individuals manage work activities and leisure time, while providing personal resources to cope with workplace challenges and strengthen work resilience (Teng & Chen, 2024). These adaptive resources support employees' capacity to generate new ideas and solve problems effectively. Therefore, employee adaptability can be theoretically positioned as a mediating variable linking proactive work design to innovative employee performance.

H4: Employee adaptability mediates the influence of job crafting on employee innovative performance

## METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional survey design to test the hypothesized relationships among job crafting, employee innovative performance, employee adaptability, and employee sustainability. The unit of analysis is at the individual level, with data collected from respondents through an online questionnaire.

A purposive sampling technique was employed to target employees working in organizations that implement remote work or flexible work arrangements. A total of 238 valid responses were obtained and included in the analysis. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, the measurement model was assessed to ensure acceptable levels of reliability and validity in accordance with established evaluation criteria.

In the second stage, the structural model was evaluated. This evaluation comprised two components: the outer model and the inner model. The outer model assessment focused on convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability of the measurement indicators. The inner model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination ($R^2$) for endogenous latent variables and the significance and direction of path coefficients. Positive path coefficients indicate positive relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables, whereas negative coefficients indicate inverse relationships.

The measurement instruments used in this study were adapted from established prior research. Job crafting was conceptualized as a form of proactive behavior in which employees modify job characteristics to align with their interests and develop their skills (Bakker et al., 2012). It was measured using nine items adapted from Berg et al. (2015), rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

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Employee innovative performance was defined as individual behavior directed toward the initiation and implementation of new and useful ideas, processes, products, or procedures within a work role, group, or organization (Qian et al., 2024). This construct was measured using the scale developed by Janssen (2000), which captures three dimensions of innovative performance idea generation, idea promotion, and idea realization each represented by three items, measured on a five-point Likert scale.

Employee adaptability was defined as the ability to adjust effectively to changes in job requirements, work conditions, and shifting priorities (Zhou & Zheng, 2022). This construct was measured using a scale adapted from Bodla and Ningyu (2017), employing a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

# RESULT

### Evaluation of Measurement Model

The measurement model evaluation was conducted to assess the quality of the instruments used to measure each construct. Measurement models can be classified as reflective or formative; this study employs a reflective measurement model, as the indicators are theoretically grounded and specified by the researchers. The evaluation focused on construct validity assessed through convergent and discriminant validity and reliability, examined using composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The results of the measurement model evaluation provide the foundation for subsequent hypothesis testing.

### Convergent Validity

Hair et al. (2014) stated that convergent validity is achieved when the factor loading for each item exceeds 0.50. The detailed results of the convergent validity test are shown in Table 1**.**

Table 1. Result of Convergent Validity

| **Variable** | **Indicators** | **loading** | **CA** | **CR** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Job Crafting | JC1 | 0.717 | 0.765 | 0.842 |
| | JC2 | 0.808 | | |
| | JC3 | 0.678 | | |
| | JC4 | 0.774 | | |
| | JC5 | 0.608 | | |
| Innovative Employee Performance | IEP1 | 0.749 | 0.928 | 0.939 |
| | IEP2 | 0.680 | | |
| | IEP3 | 0.755 | | |
| | IEP4 | 0.765 | | |
| | IEP5 | 0.756 | | |
| | IEP6 | 0.852 | | |
| | IEP7 | 0.832 | | |

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | IEP8 | 0.802 | | |
| | IEP9 | 0.783 | | |
| | IEP10 | 0.807 | | |
| Employee Adaptability | EP1 | 0.708 | 0.848 | |
| | EP2 | 0.695 | | 0.880 |
| | EP3 | 0.665 | | |
| | EP4 | 0.535 | | |
| | EP5 | 0.664 | | |
| | EP6 | 0.647 | | |
| | EP7 | 0.652 | | |
| | EP8 | 0.663 | | |
| | EP9 | 0.708 | | |
| | EP10 | 0.679 | | |
| | EP11 | 0.588 | | |

Table 1 shows that all indicators have factor loadings greater than 0.50, indicating that each item meets the criteria for convergent validity and is therefore retained for further analysis. The reliability test results also demonstrate strong internal consistency, with both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values exceeding the threshold of 0.60.

**Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity, the second aspect of construct validity, was assessed by comparing the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct with the inter-construct correlations. Discriminant validity is established when the square root of a construct's AVE exceeds its correlations with other constructs. As an additional check, item loadings were compared across constructs to ensure indicator distinctiveness. The detailed results of the discriminant validity assessment are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Result of Discriminant Validity

| | **JC** | **IEP** | **EP** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **JC** | **0.720** | - | - |
| **IEP** | 0.369 | **0.779** | - |
| **EP** | 0.549 | 0.568 | **0.756** |

**Discriminant Validity**

Table 2 demonstrates that the discriminant validity criteria in this study have been met. The square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), displayed on the diagonal, exceeds the correlations between constructs in

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the corresponding columns. This indicates that each construct is more strongly correlated with its own indicators than with those of other constructs, confirming sufficient discriminant validity.

**Evaluation of Structural Model**

The structural model was evaluated using key indicators, including the coefficient of determination ($R^2$), predictive relevance ($Q^2$), and effect size ($f^2$). The $R^2$ value for innovative employee performance (IEP) is 0.72, indicating that 72% of the variance in IEP is explained by job crafting (JC) and employee adaptability (EP). The $R^2$ value for employee adaptability (EP) is 0.47, suggesting that 47% of the variance in EP is accounted for by job crafting (JC). Overall, these results indicate strong explanatory power of the structural model. Predictive relevance was assessed using the $Q^2$ statistic, where values greater than zero indicate adequate predictive capability. The $Q^2$ values for innovative employee performance (0.720) and employee adaptability (0.464) confirm that the model demonstrates strong predictive relevance.

The effect size ($f^2$) was examined to assess the relative contribution of each exogenous variable to the explained variance of the endogenous constructs. Following Hair et al. (2014), effect sizes of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The effect size of job crafting (JC) on innovative employee performance (IEP) is 0.380, indicating a large effect. Job crafting also exhibits a large effect on employee adaptability ($f^2 = 0.466$). Furthermore, employee adaptability has a substantial effect on innovative employee performance ($f^2 = 0.340$). These findings underscore the differential strength of the relationships within the model.

**Hypothesis Testing Results**

Hypothesis testing was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, implemented in WarpPLS software. Positive path coefficients indicate positive relationships between exogenous and endogenous variables, whereas negative coefficients indicate inverse relationships. Statistical significance was assessed using the following criteria: $p < 0.01$ (highly significant), $p < 0.05$ (significant), and $p < 0.10$ (marginally significant). The detailed results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Coefficient of Latent Variable

| **Path Relationship** | **Path Coefficient** | **P-Value** | **Status** |
|---|---|---|---|
| JC → IEP | 0.49 | <0.001*** | Supported |
| JC → EP | 0.68 | <0.001*** | Supported |
| EP → IEP | 0.45 | <0.001*** | Supported |
| JC → EP → IEP | 0.31 | <0.001*** | Supported |

*Significant at level 0.1 (*2-tailed*)

** Significant at the 0.05 level (*2-tailed*)

*** Significant at level 0.01 (*2-tailed*)

Table 3 presents the results of the hypothesis testing. The path coefficient for the effect of job crafting (JC) on innovative employee performance (IEP) is 0.49 with a p-value < 0.001, indicating a significant positive relationship. This finding confirms that job crafting significantly enhances innovative employee performance; therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

Job crafting (JC) also demonstrates a significant positive effect on employee adaptability (EP), with a path coefficient of 0.68 and a p-value < 0.001, supporting Hypothesis 2. In addition, employee adaptability (EP) has a significant positive effect on innovative employee performance (IEP), as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.45

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and a p-value < 0.001. Thus, Hypothesis 3 is supported. Furthermore, the mediating effect of employee adaptability (EP) on the relationship between job crafting (JC) and innovative employee performance (IEP) is significant, with an indirect effect value of 0.31 and a p-value < 0.001. This result indicates partial mediation, thereby supporting Hypothesis 4.

## DISCUSSION

Innovative employee performance refers to an individual's ability to generate, promote, and implement novel ideas that contribute to organizational effectiveness (Janssen, 2000). Job crafting plays a critical role in enhancing this capability by enabling employees to proactively adjust their tasks, work relationships, and cognitive perceptions to better align with their personal strengths and interests. Through task crafting, employees may seek new challenges; through relational crafting, they can develop supportive networks; and through cognitive crafting, they can derive greater meaning from their work. These proactive adjustments foster intrinsic motivation and creativity, which are essential drivers of innovation (Berg et al., 2008; Tims & Bakker, 2010).

Empirical research consistently demonstrates a positive relationship between job crafting and innovative behavior. Employees who actively redefine their roles are more inclined to engage in experimentation, problem-solving, and idea generation (Petrou et al., 2012). By improving the alignment between job demands and personal preferences, job crafting enhances key psychological resources such as autonomy and purpose, which are strongly associated with innovative performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Zhang & Parker, 2019).

The relationship between job crafting and innovative performance is further strengthened by employee adaptability, defined as the ability to respond effectively to changing job demands, work environments, and role expectations (Pulakos et al., 2000). Job crafting promotes adaptability by encouraging employees to move beyond rigid role boundaries, develop diverse skills, and embrace change. Adaptable employees are more likely to exhibit innovative behavior because they are comfortable with uncertainty, resilient in the face of challenges, and capable of adjusting strategies when pursuing novel solutions (Shin et al., 2012).

Supporting this mechanism, Rudolph et al. (2017) identify employee adaptability as a key pathway through which job crafting translates into positive work outcomes, including innovation. When adaptability is high, the proactive behaviors associated with job crafting are more likely to result in sustained innovative actions.

Beyond innovation, job crafting and employee adaptability also contribute to employee sustainability, defined as an individual's capacity to maintain health, motivation, and productivity over time (De Smet et al., 2021). While innovative work often requires substantial cognitive and emotional effort, job crafting enables employees to create meaningful work experiences, manage job demands more effectively, and protect their well-being. These processes are essential for sustaining long-term performance and preventing burnout (Tims et al., 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Organizations seeking to enhance both innovative performance and employee well-being should actively support job crafting by promoting supportive leadership, increasing job autonomy, and providing continuous learning opportunities. In addition, investments in adaptability-focused interventions such as resilience training, cross-functional assignments, and change management coaching can strengthen employees' adaptive capacities, thereby amplifying the positive effects of job crafting and sustaining long-term performance.

Overall, job crafting plays a critical role in fostering innovative employee performance while simultaneously supporting employee sustainability, with employee adaptability serving as a key enabling mechanism. By empowering employees to actively shape their work roles and develop adaptive capabilities, organizations can cultivate a culture of innovation while promoting resilience and workforce longevity.

Despite these contributions, this study has certain limitations. The sample was drawn from a specific organizational or industry context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research is encouraged to examine these relationships across diverse sectors and organizational settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking job crafting, adaptability, and employee sustainability.

Additionally, external environmental factors such as market volatility, technological change, and policy dynamics were not explicitly incorporated into the research model and warrant further investigation in future studies.

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