



Research article

How job crafting is related to the individual readiness to organizational change

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the relationship between job crafting activities and employees' readiness to change. Confirmatory factor analysis and hierarchical regression analysis were conducted on a representative sample of 500 employees. Sampling was carried out in a European country in a period strongly affected by COVID-19 to isolate the five dimensions of job crafting and their separate effects on employees' readiness to change. The findings show that the five dimensions of job crafting can be distinguished from each other and that they have differential effects on employees' readiness to change. Extending task crafting shows a positive relationship with employees' readiness to change while reducing task crafting showed no significant relationship. Surprisingly extending and reducing relationship crafting showed no significant relationship with readiness to change. Cognitive crafting was found to be significantly positively related to the dependent variable. This research contributes to the development of job crafting theory by providing empirical support that job crafting can be associated with readiness to change but that this relationship may vary across its dimensions. The results may also provide important conclusions for change leaders and HR professionals.

1. Introduction

Research on job crafting has recently received increasing attention [1,2]. Job crafting is an individual, proactive, bottom-up effort regarding the change of the (perceived) characteristics and boundaries of the job, aiming to enhance the individual's positive job experience [3,4]. In theory, all workers in all jobs should be able to do job crafting, but not all workers do [5]. Several antecedents (individual and job characteristics) and consequences (satisfaction, commitment, stress, intention to quit, job performance) of the extent of job crafting have been recognized [1], but its link with employee support for top-down change initiatives has been less in the focus of research.

Job crafting is rather ignored in change management literature, as recently highlighted by Walk and Handy [6], despite being a useful construct. Regardless of the importance of the phenomenon, little empirical research has focused on how job crafting relates to employees' general attitudes to organizational change, more specifically their readiness to change [7–9]. The studies published so far on the relationship between individual readiness to organizational change and job crafting have examined whether supporting different types of organizational change can be linked to job crafting [10]. However, little research [8,9] has investigated the inverse, i. e., whether individuals who use job crafting have more positive or less negative attitudes toward organizational change. Two main conceptualizations of job crafting exist: one is referred to as role-based and the other as resource-based [11,12]. Previous research on

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job crafting relationship to individual readiness to change was examined by the resource-based perspective of job crafting. No research - to our knowledge - has examined how the individual's job crafting relates to their perceptions of organizational change based on a role-based conceptualization of job crafting research, except for a recent conference paper [13].

To this end, this study investigates five different dimensions of role-based job crafting focusing on extending and reducing task crafting, extending and reducing relational crafting, and cognitive crafting, and how these relate to individual readiness to organizational change. Confirmatory factor analysis and hierarchical regression analysis were conducted on a sample [14], triggering many changes in the workplaces at the organizational level and regarding individual work [15], therefore it was a suitable field and time for the analysis of the phenomena under study.

The research results confirm the previous research findings [8,9], indicating job crafting is related to individual readiness to change. This research has added new aspects to further clarify the relationship between the two phenomena. Extending task crafting and cognitive crafting show a significant positive relationship with employees' readiness to change while reducing task crafting and relationship crafting (extending and reducing) showed no significant relationship with employees' readiness to change. It shows that overall role-based job crafting is positively related to individual readiness to change, with a positive relationship in two dimensions and no significant relationship in the other dimensions. This study has certain organizational implications for practitioners. However, it is worth pointing out that these relationships identified in the research need to be examined in an intervention study to show the causal effect, which is one of the possibilities for further development of the present research.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Job crafting

Job crafting has been conceptualized in two directions; taking role-based and resource-based perspectives, which differ in job crafting types and motives [12,16]. Role-based job crafting perspective was built on the original approach of Wrzesniewski and Dutton [4] and is defined as "shaping the task boundaries of the job (either physically or cognitively), the relational boundaries of the job, or both" (p.179). Based on a role-based perspective, job crafting is both a cognitive activity – how an individual thinks about job relationships and tasks – and a physical action – changing the boundaries of tasks and relationships. The original three-dimensional perspective (cognitive, task, relationship) was extended by Weseler and Niessen [17] to five dimensions, which included both the extending and reducing directions (extending- and reducing-oriented task crafting, extending- and reducing-oriented relational crafting, and cognitive crafting). The motivations in the role-based perspective for job crafting are rooted in individuals' needs to gain control, a positive self-image, and social relatedness at work [18].

The research in the second stream, the resource-based job crafting perspective was built on the approach of Tims and Bakker [19], which was based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. This conceptualization of job crafting research is defined as "the changes that employees may make to balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs" [20] and incorporates employee-driven changes in tangible job boundaries. There are three different resource-based job crafting types: increasing job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and decreasing hindering job demands [20]. The motivations in the resource-based perspective for job crafting are rooted in individuals' needs to align their levels of job resources and job demands with their abilities and preferences [19]. Both job crafting conceptualizations comprise approach-directed crafting, which involves the expansion of resources or is driven by the desire to improve the work experience, and on the other hand, avoidance-directed crafting, which is driven by the reduction or elimination of some parts of the job or by the reduction of the boundaries of job tasks or relationships [4]. While the resource-based perspective focuses strictly on manifest job crafting activity and ignores the cognitive aspects, the role-based job crafting conceptualization comprises changes in tangible job boundaries and intangible job perceptions.

This present research study conceptualized job crafting by adopting the role-based perspective, focusing on both cognitive and behavioral aspects of job crafting because the authors believe - in line with other scholars [21] - that cognition plays a significant role in altering human behavior. Cognitive crafting is a critical component of job crafting that highlights the importance of perception and interpretation when performing a job. Cognitive job crafting may also be relevant in jobs that do not provide opportunities to change tasks and relationships of the job, where workers have little autonomy, and work processes are regulated [18]. To this end, this study is built on the conceptualization by Wrzesniewski and Dutton [4]: which differentiates cognitive changes from behavioral changes, additionally, incorporates the distinctions between extending and reducing task and relational boundaries, as suggested by Weseler and Niessen [17].

2.2. Individual readiness to change

Organizational change refers to the process of implementing new or modified policies, procedures, or systems within an organization in order to improve its overall performance and effectiveness, which can include changes to the company's structure, culture, strategy, or technology [22]. Several research findings suggest that employees may show certain typical reactions to organizational change [23,24]. Some may support the purpose and process of organizational change and are committed to the change, while others may be indifferent to the change, and some develop aversions [25] or even experience the change of the previous status quo as a grieving process [26]. The diversity of responses to change can be attributed to the different perceptions of the people affected by the change [27]. It is a managerial challenge to convince employees that change is a desirable and necessary process [28]. Piderit [29] considered readiness to change as an attitudinal construct by identifying its three dimensions as cognitive, affective, and intentional – in line with the tripartite view of attitudes [30–32]. Armenakis and colleagues define individual readiness to change as "the precursor

to the behaviors of either resistance to, or support for, a change effort undertaken by an organization” [33]. Individual readiness to change reflects “the extent to which employees hold positive views about the need for organizational change (i.e. change acceptance), as well as the extent to which employees believe that such changes are likely to have positive implications for themselves and the wider organization” [34]. Beasley et al. consider readiness for change as “a multidimensional and multilevel construct that is comprised of both structural and psychological factors that reflect the extent to which individuals are inclined to accept, embrace and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo” [35].

Employees’ readiness to change deserves attention because they will be the ones who support, promote, or resist and hinder organizational change [36]. Readiness to change can be associated with Lewin’s famous model about the stages of change, where he suggested three stages: unfreezing, moving [changing], and refreezing [37]. This influential theory was further developed by Holt et al. [24] who defined readiness to change, adoption, and institutionalization as the three stages of executing organizational change, therefore underlining that readiness to change is one of the most important antecedents of support for change initiatives. Readiness to change is negatively related to resistance to change [38], which is negatively related to the success of change [23,39]. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for change managers responsible for organizational change to assess employees’ readiness to change and to understand the factors that influence it [40].

In the present research, we investigate both affective and cognitive aspects of employees’ readiness to change, conceptualizing it based on Vakola’s [27] recent definition: an individual ready to change is “one who exhibits a proactive and positive attitude toward change, which can be translated into willingness to support change and confidence in succeeding in change”. Our present study investigates the five different dimensions of a role-based job crafting measuring instrument developed by Weseler and Niessen [17] focusing on extending and reducing task crafting, extending and reducing relational crafting, and cognitive crafting, in line with the conceptualization of Wrzesniewski and Dutton [4].

3. Research hypotheses

3.1. Task crafting and readiness to change

In the present study, it is assumed that extending the boundaries of job tasks (task crafting) may contribute to the individual’s more supportive attitude towards organizational change. The essence of task crafting is according to the role-based job crafting theory that employees, in addition to performing tasks that are required of them, also voluntarily execute tasks that are not obligatory but satisfy their needs and thus enrich their jobs [4]. Based on the empirical findings of Vogt et al. [45], by taking on new tasks when crafting their job, employees may increase their feelings of autonomy, relatedness, and competence. In line with the self-determination theory (SDT) [46], the satisfaction of these needs contribute to the individual’s intrinsic motivation, and help achieve certain positive psychological states, thereby enhancing their positive perceptions of their work [47]. Research results by Svensen et al. [48] suggest that employees’ perceptions of their work are positively related to their support for organizational change.

In addition, in workplace contexts where employees negotiate idiosyncratic, personalized deals and where they have a high degree of autonomy in modifying and defining their own work by performing tasks they personally find meaningful or enjoy beyond the scope of the job contract, employees shape their psychological contract with their employer [49,50]. The psychological contract was defined by Rousseau [51] as the beliefs of the individual about mutual obligations in the context of the relationship between the employee and the employer. An empirical study of Van den Heuvel and Schalk [52] found that fulfillment of the psychological contract was negatively related to resistance to change. Van den Heuvel et al. [53] reported research results that a psychological contract can increase trust between the parties, contributing to reducing employee resistance to organizational change.

It can be assumed that the obligation to perform unpleasant work tasks that are not willingly done by the employee can cause frustration and stress - based on Karasek’s famous Demand-Control Theory [54]. In such cases, a potential organizational change may carry the hope of improving the situation and may give rise to the perception that it is less in the individual’s interest to maintain the status quo than to face the uncertainty of change, creating a ‘sense of urgency’. Kotter in his famous change management theory [55] points out that one of the fundamental bases of supportive employee attitudes towards change is the sense of urgency for change on the part of employees. For this reason, it can be assumed that the less the individual has the opportunity to get rid of some or all the unpleasant work tasks through reduced task crafting, the more supportive the employee will be of organizational change.

Furthermore, task crafting associated with a narrowing of work tasks increases the chances that such behavior will be perceived as counterproductive work behavior by colleagues and managers [56]. Empirical evidence shows that counterproductive work behaviors are negatively related to readiness for change [57].

Building on the above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H1a Extending task crafting will be positively related to individual readiness to change.

H1b Reducing task crafting will be negatively related to individual readiness to change.

3.2. Relational crafting and readiness to change

One form of job crafting is extending relational boundaries, whereby the employee gets to know new colleagues in the course of their work and deepens personal relationships with colleagues to make the job more meaningful. Individual perceptions, experiences, and sensemaking of workplace experiences are influenced by the community around the individual, which then influence the individual interpretations [58,59]. Extending relational crafting is positively correlated to self-rated performance [17], so employees who

engage in this type of job crafting might expand their social relationships with people who also want to work constructively, and perform at high levels [60]. This can lead to an inspiring social climate around work and workplace and the employee who engages in extending relational crafting, which provides the individual with positive interpretations of organizational change and can help the individual to accept organizational change.

Extending relational crafting can also contribute to the satisfaction of the individual's affiliation needs, which may create the basis for the individual to experience high work social support. Higher levels of work social support may contribute to higher levels of resilience [61]. Higher levels of resilience are associated with easier adjustment to stressful life events [62]. Organizational change is often a significant source of stress for individuals [26]. For this reason, we hypothesize that extending social relationships at work helps to make change easier to bear and to reduce individual resistance.

In contrast, reducing relational boundaries implies a reduction of personal relationships with colleagues with whom the individual does not get along well [17]. This reduces the individual's network [63], whereby they receive less information and feedback [64]. This kind of isolation can deprive individuals of timely and relevant information about the untenability of the current situation (the need for change), the benefits of change (the desired future state), and the steps to get there, making them less supportive of change [65]. This leads to our hypothesis that:

Based on this line of thought, it is hypothesized that:

H2a Extending relational crafting will be positively related to individual readiness to change.

H2b Reducing relational crafting will be negatively related to individual readiness to change.

3.3. Cognitive crafting and readiness to change

The essence of cognitive crafting is that the employee reframes the cognitive task boundaries of the job and its associated work tasks, giving additional meaningfulness to the work [4]. The increased perceived meaning of work can result in higher levels of positive emotions, which are positively related to the individual's readiness to organizational change [66].

Empirical evidence revealed that employees who craft their jobs cognitively are more likely to experience increased positive affection in the workplace [67], which may form the base of the affective component of organizational commitment [68–70], and affective commitment is negatively related to resistance to organizational change [71].

Linking these findings to our study context, we predict that:

H3. Cognitive job crafting will be positively related to readiness to change.

4. Method

4.1. Sample and procedure

The target population was employees at different hierarchical levels of European (Hungarian) enterprises and non-profit organizations during the COVID-19 outbreak. At the time of the survey, COVID-19 had a dramatic impact on the processes and business operations of organizations and on people's daily lives in Hungary [72]. During the period when the questionnaire was completed, the daily case rate broke all previous – and subsequent – records in the country, and the government extended the national emergency. An online voluntary survey of the general public was carried out at the beginning of March 2022 in cooperation with a professional research company, in compliance with the ethical guidelines of quantitative research [73]. The sample was restricted to employees who had worked for at least three months in an organization of at least 10 employees. The sample was a representative sample of participants aged between 18 and 65 years ($n = 500$, representing 2,800,000 Hungarian employees meeting the aforementioned criteria). Data were collected using a self-completed online questionnaire, in the absence of face-to-face contact, the Covid 19 pandemic did not affect response behavior. The average age of the sample was 41.76 years ($SD = 12.01$), and 42% were female (209 persons). The average length of time spent in the organization was 3.54 years ($SD = 1.31$). 81% of the respondents worked full-time, 10% worked 30 h per week and 9% worked part-time up to 20 h per week. 36% of respondents work in large enterprises (more than 250 employees), 30% in medium-sized enterprises (between 51 and 250 employees), and 34% in small enterprises (between 11 and 50 employees). Micro-enterprises (less than 10 employees) were not included in the sample - because it is difficult to interpret job crafting in simple organizations that do not rely on the formal division of labor. Sole proprietorships were omitted as well, due to the lack of organizational context. 81% of the respondents were subordinates, 17% were middle managers and 2% were senior managers. The respondents worked in a variety of economic sectors, proportionally reflecting the structure of the Hungarian economy.

4.2. Variables included in the study

4.2.1. Individual readiness to change

Conceptualizing and measuring individual readiness to change is a major challenge. As Holt et al. reveal [24] more than thirty definitions and questionnaires are used in parallel. To capture individual readiness to change, a questionnaire that was developed and validated by Vakola [27] was used. The questionnaire consisted of 6 reflective Likert-type scale questions, with responses ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree (one question was reverse coded). The six questions covered emotional, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of readiness to change as an attitude. A CFA was conducted to examine the validity of this reflective construct. The

factor loading of Question 3 was not acceptable, therefore that question was excluded from the subsequent analysis. The one factor model showed a good fit (χ^2 (df) = 12.253 (5); CFI = 0.990; GFI = 0.990; NFI = 0.984; TLI = 0.981; RMSEA = 0.054). The Cronbach's alpha of the five remaining questions was $\alpha = 0.81$, which is satisfactory. A sample statement was „When organizational change happens in the organization where I work, I think I am ready to cope with it”.

4.2.2. Job crafting

Weseler and Niessen's [17] questionnaire was used to measure Job Crafting. The questionnaire contained 14 reflective questions measured on a Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree. Each statement started with the introductory sentence “So that the job I do suits me [...]”. Out of the 14 questions, 3 measured Task crafting extension ($\alpha = 0.67$) (Sample statement: [...] “I concentrate on specific tasks”); 3 measured Task crafting reduction ($\alpha = 0.79$) (Sample statement: [...] “I pass on tasks that do not really suit me”); 2 measured Relational crafting extension ($\alpha = 0.65$) (Sample statement: [...] “I look for opportunities to work together with people whom I get along well with at work”); 3 measured Relational crafting reduction ($\alpha = 0.80$) (Sample statement: [...] “I try to avoid contact with the people at work whom I do not really get on well with”), and 3 measured Cognitive crafting ($\alpha = 0.82$) (Sample statement: [...] “I find personal meaning in my tasks and responsibilities at work”). The Cronbach α values are acceptable [74] and their values are very similar to those measured in previous studies [17].

5. Results

5.1. Initial data analysis

5.1.1. Common Method Bias

Since the same measurement instrument was used to collect data for both dependent and independent variables at the same time, two different procedures were used to test for Common Method Bias (CMB): (1) Harman's one-factor test [75], (2) the examination of the correlation matrix between variables [76]. Using Harman's [75] one-factor method, the single factor accounted for a variance of 28.65% and which is less than the recommended threshold of 50% [77]. The correlation matrix of the variables in our study does not contain any highly correlated variables ($r > 0.9$), suggesting that the dataset is not contaminated by CMB.

5.2. Dimensions of job crafting

Studies based on a role-based approach have interpreted job crafting as a multidimensional concept. Leana et al. [41] built their research on task, relational, and cognitive dimensions of task crafting. Empirical evidence of Slemp and Vella-Brodrick [42] supported a three-factor structure that reflected the task, relational, and cognitive forms of job crafting originally presented by Wrzesniewski and Dutton [4]. The same three-factor structure was examined in a recent study of Jeong et al. [43]. In the research paper of Niessen et al. [44] the three-factor solution (task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting) showed the best fit indices. Weseler and Niessen [17] added items to their questionnaire to measure both the extending and reducing dimensions of the task and relational crafting, along with cognitive crafting. They conducted confirmatory factor analyses (CFA), and the five-factor model fit their data significantly better than the three-dimensional models.

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) with IBM SPSS Statistics and AMOS 27 have been conducted to examine the factor structure of the job crafting scale in our sample. The fit of the five-factor model was found to be significantly better compared to other models for all relevant indicators and shows a good fit (see Table 1): χ^2 (df) = 255.016 (67), RMSEA = 0.075, CFI = 0.927, GFI = 0.930, NFI = 0.905, TLI = 0.901.

Items and factor loadings of the job crafting scale are presented in Table 2.

5.3. Control variables

In line with the correlation matrix (Table 2) and the literature [17,78], several demographic variables were included as control variables in the regression model: these were age, tenure, managerial position, and perceived autonomy. Age was measured in years on a ratio scale, tenure was captured by an ordinal variable (e.g., 1: Less than 3 months), so the class marks were used in our analysis, and position was also measured by an ordinal variable (1: Senior manager, 2: Middle manager, 3: Subordinate). Autonomy was assessed by a Likert-type scale question (“I have sufficient autonomy, I have my own responsibilities and autonomy in decision making”), with

Table 1
Confirmatory factor analyses for the job crafting scale.

Models	χ^2 (df)	CFI	GFI	NFI	TLI	RMSEA
One factor	1289.841 (77)	0.532	0.688	0.519	0.446	0.178
Three factors: extended, reduced, cognitive crafting	645.000 (74)	0.779	0.831	0.759	0.729	0.124
Three factors: task, relationship, cognitive crafting	964.653 (74)	0.656	0.714	0.640	0.577	0.155
Five factors: task extended, task reduced, relationship extended, relationship reduced, cognitive crafting	255.016 (67)	0.927	0.930	0.905	0.901	0.075

Table 2
Items and standardized factor loadings of the job crafting scale.

Items	Factor loadings
Task Crafting – Extending	
1	0.75
2	0.79
3	0.55
Task Crafting – Reducing	
4	0.75
5	0.82
6	0.65
Relational Crafting – Extending	
7	0.66
8	0.67
Relational Crafting – Reducing	
9	0.69
10	0.80
11	0.79
Cognitive Crafting	
12	0.71
13	0.81
14	0.83

responses ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree.

5.4. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics of the variables included in the study, as well as the correlation between them and Cronbach's alpha values of the constructs, are presented in Table 3. The data show that of the five dimensions of job crafting, cognitive crafting has the highest average score (3.60), followed by the average score for extended relationship crafting (3.37). The two dimensions of task crafting achieved the lowest averages, with the reduced task crafting's average being the lowest of the five dimensions (2.12).

5.5. Regression analysis

The research hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analysis, performed by IBM SPSS version 27. This method is suitable "to analyze the effect of a predictor variable after controlling for other variables" [79]. Hierarchical regression enables us to evaluate the effect of each group of predictor variables independently and in addition to the effect of the previously included predictors in the regression model, making it possible to identify the predictor variables that support a theory [79]. This statistical technique, which is used to understand the relationship between multiple predictor variables and a dependent variable while considering the potential confounding effect of additional control variables, is in line with the relevant literature, as it was also used in previous research of job crafting [17]. In the present study in the first step, the control variables were added to the model (age, tenure, position, autonomy). In the second step, the five factors of job crafting were added to the model. The results are presented in Table 4. As for the control variables, autonomy ($\beta = 0.114, p < 0.001$) and position ($\beta = -0.25, p < 0.001$) showed a significant relationship with individual readiness to change. In contrast, age and tenure did not significantly affect the dependent variable. In the second step, before the analysis, multicollinearity was examined, because this can lead to unstable and unreliable estimates of the regression coefficients and can make it difficult to determine the unique contribution of each independent variable to the outcome. To detect multicollinearity, Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was calculated. VIF values greater than 5 or 10 are commonly considered to indicate multicollinearity. Detailed examination of the VIF values and further collinearity diagnosis revealed that there is a multicollinearity issue between extended task crafting and extended relationship crafting. However (1) extended relationship crafting shows no

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among the study variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	41.76	12.02									
2. Tenure (month)	82.71	74.95	.35**								
3. Autonomy	3.76	1.12	−0.03	.09*							
4. Extended task crafting	2.60	0.50	0.03	0.03	.35**	(0.67)					
5. Reduced task crafting	2.12	0.68	−0.07	−0.02	0.05	.36**	(0.79)				
6. Extended relationship crafting	3.37	0.56	0.05	0.00	.25**	.89**	.41**	(0.65)			
7. Reduced relationship crafting	3.04	0.74	−0.08	−0.06	−0.09	.21**	.42**	.51**	(0.80)		
8. Cognitive crafting	3.60	0.75	0.02	0.03	.43**	.77**	.28**	.76**	.17**	(0.82)	
9. Individual readiness to change	2.30	0.49	−0.02	0.02	.34**	.53**	.19**	.47**	0.02	.60**	(0.81)

Notes: n = 500. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.

Table 4
Results of hierarchical regression analyses of job crafting dimensions on individual readiness to change.

	Individual readiness to change			ΔR^2	ΔF	VIF
	β	t	S. e.			
Step 1						
Age	0.00	0.06	0.00			
Tenure (month)	0.00	-1.04	0.00			
Position	-0.25***	-5.58	0.04			
Autonomy	0.14***	7.70	0.02			
				0.17	25.28	
Step 2						
Extended task crafting	0.24*	2.43	0.10			8.05
Reduced task crafting	0.00	0.12	0.03			1.39
Extended relationship crafting	-0.07	-0.64	0.11			11.99
Reduced relationship crafting	-0.04	-0.93	0.04			2.67
Cognitive crafting	0.28***	6.87	0.04			3.17
				0.24	40.54	

Notes: n = 500. *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

significant relationship with individual readiness to change in the model, (2) we are more interested in the direction and significance of the relationship between the predictor variables and the outcome variable, than the specific values of the regression coefficients, (3) removing extended relationship crafting as a predictor variable from the model does not change the direction and significance of extended task crafting in a four-predictor regression model. Therefore, we interpret our results with caution and consider this multicollinearity issue to be tolerable.

Employees with a higher level of task crafting were more positive towards organizational change ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.001$), thus confirming H1a. H1b was not supported by the data, as employees with a lower level of task crafting did not show significantly more negative attitudes towards organizational change ($\beta = 0.03$, ns). Job crafting, as manifested by extending personal relationships, was not significantly related to readiness to change ($\beta = -0.07$, ns), thus H2a was not confirmed. Our preliminary expectations were not met that reduced relationship crafting has a negative relationship with individual readiness to change ($\beta = -0.04$, ns), contrary to H2b. We found a significant positive effect of cognitive job crafting on individual readiness to change ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$), thus confirming H3.

6. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the five dimensions of job crafting (extending and reducing task crafting, extending and reducing relational crafting, and cognitive crafting) can have a different relationship with employees' readiness to change. The findings reveal that extending task crafting has a positive relationship with employees' readiness to change while reducing task crafting was not found to have a significant relationship with it. Extending and reducing relationship crafting - surprisingly - was not found to have a significant relationship with the outcome variable. Additionally, cognitive crafting was found to be positively related to readiness to change. Previous empirical research has shown that job crafting is positively related to readiness to change [10], indicating a possible link between employees' willingness to promote or participate in organizational change and job crafting. This appears to back the argument of Wrzesniewski and Dutton [4] and Walk and Handy [6] that job crafting may be particularly important during organizational change. According to Walk and Handy [6], job crafting has been framed as a positive and proactive reaction to change. This research shows the other side of the coin: if employees apply job crafting, it can facilitate the adaptation and willingness to change. This is in line with the findings of two recent job crafting intervention studies conducted by Demerouti et al. [8,9] and supports the conclusion that job crafting might promote readiness to change.

The findings of this study suggest that task crafting activities have a significant relationship with employees' readiness to change. Specifically, employees who extended their task boundaries were more open to organizational change, while employees who reduced their task boundaries showed no significant relationship with their willingness to change. This indicates that how employees perceive and enact their work tasks can play an important role in how they respond to organizational change. This result contradicts the results of Dewi et al. [13], who did not find a significant relationship between task crafting and employees' readiness to change in their empirical research. The findings of the present study are consistent with previous research on autonomy and control in the context of organizational change [1]. For example, Lyons [10] found that employees who had higher levels of autonomy and control over their work tasks were more likely to make changes in their work. This suggests that employees who feel they have more control over their work and more opportunities to shape their tasks to align with their interests and strengths may be more willing to embrace organizational change.

Regarding the dimension of relationship crafting, extended relationship crafting received a high average value (see Table 3) compared to the other dimensions. The rise of the home office during the COVID-19 crisis has created conditions conducive to physically isolated workers interacting with each other. This raises the chances of individuals to connect more with colleagues who are closer to them in their network of relationships, providing psychological security, as well as opportunities for knowledge sharing and collaboration [80]. Our results indicate that there is no significant relationship between extending or reducing relationship crafting

and employees' readiness to change. This outcome is different from the conclusions of Dewi et al. [13], who found a positive relationship between relationship crafting and employees' readiness to change in their empirical research. Previous scientific results highlighted the importance of social support in the context of organizational change [1,2], which is somewhat supported in the current study by a higher mean value for extended relationship crafting (Table 3), but extended relationship crafting's relationship was not statistically significant with the dependent variable. Further investigation is required to determine whether there are sub-groups within the sample for whom extended relationship crafting is significantly related to readiness to change.

Cognitive crafting received the highest average score (see Table 3) of the five dimensions, which is consistent with the empirical results of Weseler and Niessen [17] but contradicts the research findings of Laker et al. [81]. Our result seems to suggest that the employees' perceptions regarding the purpose and meaning of their work are constantly being altered during a worldwide health crisis, which has a huge influence on the work, life, and family domains and the interplay of these [82]. According to the present study, those who were engaged in cognitive crafting were more open to organizational change, which confirms the importance of cognitive job crafting in terms of employees' attitudes to change. The findings suggest that employees contribute to a more supportive attitude towards organizational change by finding or striving to find meaning in their job duties and responsibilities. This supports the claim of van der Heuvel et al. [52] that the ability to create meaning, and link everyday events to a framework of personal values, positively relates to willingness to change. Sharing ideas, assumptions, and beliefs may foster cognitive crafting, which is an essential individual strategy for dealing with adverse situations [83].

6.1. Theoretical and practical implications

This study offers a novel contribution to the literature on job crafting and individual readiness to change by testing a five-factor role-based job crafting model (extending and reducing type of task and relational crafting, as well as cognitive crafting) in relationship with individual readiness to change. Previous research on job crafting and individual readiness to change has examined job crafting operationalized as a one-dimensional construct [10], or as a three-dimensional resource-based construct [8,9], a three-dimensional role-based construct [13], but not as a five-dimensional role-based construct. Weseler and Niessen [17] managed to identify the five-dimensional factor structure, but they did not examine their relationship with individual readiness to change. The results of this study indicate that the five dimensions of job crafting (extending and reducing task crafting, extending and reducing relational crafting, and cognitive crafting) can have a different relationship with employees' readiness to change.

This study has certain organizational implications for practitioners, i.e., HR managers and organizational change practitioners, to consider. First, it points to the value of considering job crafting as a possible intervention to counter negative attitudes toward organizational change. At the same time, it is worthwhile to differentiate the dimensions of job crafting and to encourage extending task crafting among organizational members. This raises the question of whether employees will be overburdened if they are only allowed to add new tasks and not give up or transfer tasks. This job crafting dimension does not only mean taking on additional tasks but also focusing on certain work tasks and intensifying the work tasks that employees prefer to do. However, in addition to the possible positive organizational consequences of job crafting, it is also important to draw attention to some potential side effects. For example, if the additional activities carried out in the context of extended task crafting work against the implementation of organizational changes, then despite the positive personal effects on the employee, the job crafting may not be desirable and may be perceived as resistance to change from a managerial perspective. A further beneficial impact can be expected by practitioners by stimulating cognitive crafting of the job, aligning it with organizational goals, and finding meaning beyond tasks and responsibilities, which may contribute to individuals seeing their work as more meaningful and thus to a positive shift in their overall attitude towards organizational change.

6.2. Research limitations and further research directions

We would like to point out several limitations of the research presented in this paper, which calls for caution when interpreting the results. The study was a cross-sectional quantitative survey with questionnaires, which indicates two limitations. One of these is that this research was a snapshot (in the literal sense of the word, because it was conducted nearly on a single day) rather than a longitudinal study and therefore limited in its ability to explore causality. Additionally, self-report measures are subject to bias and may not accurately capture the actual behaviors and outcomes associated with job crafting.

Our hypothesis when formulating our research question was that job crafting is an antecedent variable of readiness to change. However, the reverse may also be true: workers who are more open to change may be the ones who are more willing to change the characteristics of their jobs, while workers who are less tolerant of changes in the status quo may be more inclined to stick to familiar routines in their work tasks and social relationships. Longitudinal research may be useful in the future to analyze causality in a more sophisticated way and to understand the long-term effects of job crafting on individuals and organizations.

We based our study on the conceptualization of Wrzesniewski and Dutton [4]. They proposed that job crafters shape prescribed tasks. However, the individual perception of the formal job description is a cognitive process subject to individual sensemaking. This might lead to a complex interplay between the dimensions of task and relationship and cognitive crafting that is difficult to track in the questionnaire. Through qualitative studies, it is hoped that these phenomena will be better understood in the future, which may also contribute to the development of quantitative measurement tools.

Another future direction could be to investigate the potential of technology in supporting or facilitating job crafting. With the rise of remote working and virtual teams, technology can be a powerful tool to help employees make changes to their work tasks and interactions and to monitor the effectiveness of these changes over time.

A further limitation on the measurement tool side is that only two questions captured the reduction direction of relationship crafting, while the other job crafting dimensions were captured by at least three questions. In the future, it seems appropriate to develop the questionnaire so that all five job crafting dimensions are covered by the same number of questions. A limitation of the questionnaire used to measure employee readiness to change is that it explored change in general terms, even though a wide variety of organizational changes are possible - the 'directional vector' of responses to changes of different types, scope, and depth might differ, had it been for more sophisticated questions. In addition, this questionnaire measured readiness at the individual level, although group and organizational level effects may also be relevant to the success of the change.

The correlation between some of the job crafting dimensions that can be detected in our data suggests the idea of analyzing the specific constellations of the dimensions, revealing employee job crafting profiles. Promising research already exists in this direction [84,85], and the investigation of job crafting profiles and individual readiness to change could be a possible exciting future research direction.

Author contribution statement

Klaudia Szóts-Kováts, Csaba Kiss: Conceived and designed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Wrote the paper.

Data availability statement

The authors do not have permission to share data.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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