

We're all in this together! Job crafting among vulnerable workers for employability development

Sara Dotto

Ph.D. student

Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne

Introduction

- Sustainability: has environmental, economic, social dimensions.
 - Importance of sustainability in the world of work: maintain of employability + well-being and health throughout their working life
 - To achieve this, increase in the level of workload and stress for employees, especially low-level workers
- How to cope with stress and achieve sustainability in the workplace?

Plan

- Literature
 - the Job Demand-Resource Model – how to cope with stress and find work engagement
 - Job crafting: how to reinforce the JD-R Model
 - Thriving for a long time: sustainable employability
- Research question
- Methodology
- Preliminary findings
- Discussion, contributions, future directions

Job Demand-Resource Model: how to cope with stress in the workplace

- Combines the literature on job stress and motivation
- The characteristics of jobs can be distinguished in two broad categories of working conditions: Job Demands and Job Resources.
- Job Demands = physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects that require sustained physical or psychological effort and are associated with physical/psychological costs (ex high work pressure, demanding interactions w/customers and colleagues). Not necessarily negative, may turn into hindrance when they require high effort and the employee hasn't recovered enough yet
- Job Resources = physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects that are a) functional in achieving work goals, b) reduce job demands, and the associated psychological/physical costs, or c) stimulate personal goals, learning and development → necessary + important on their own

JD-R Theory

- JD-R Model → used to predict burnout, organizational commitment, work enjoyment, connectedness, work engagement + the consequences of these experiences
- The model has become a theory to understand, explain, predict about employee wellbeing, and job performance → a flexible theory, that can be applied to all work environment and can be tailored to the considered occupation
- JD & JR trigger 2 different independent processes → health impairment process and a motivational process
- A dynamic theory: individual's levels of exhaustion and work engagement influence their JD and JR

JD-R Theory and Job Crafting

- Well-designed jobs and working conditions → ↑motivation & ↓ stress
- When those are not available → individuals actively change their job design by choosing tasks, renegotiating job content, assigning different meaning to tasks and jobs → job crafting
- Job crafting is a proactive behaviour, consisting in the actions taken by individuals themselves to modify their jobs in a bottom-up fashion, through adjustments to make it suit better to themselves
- Task, relational, cognitive crafting
- JD-R Theory: modifications of JD and JR
- Physical = changes in form, scope, number of activities
- Cognitive = how one sees the job

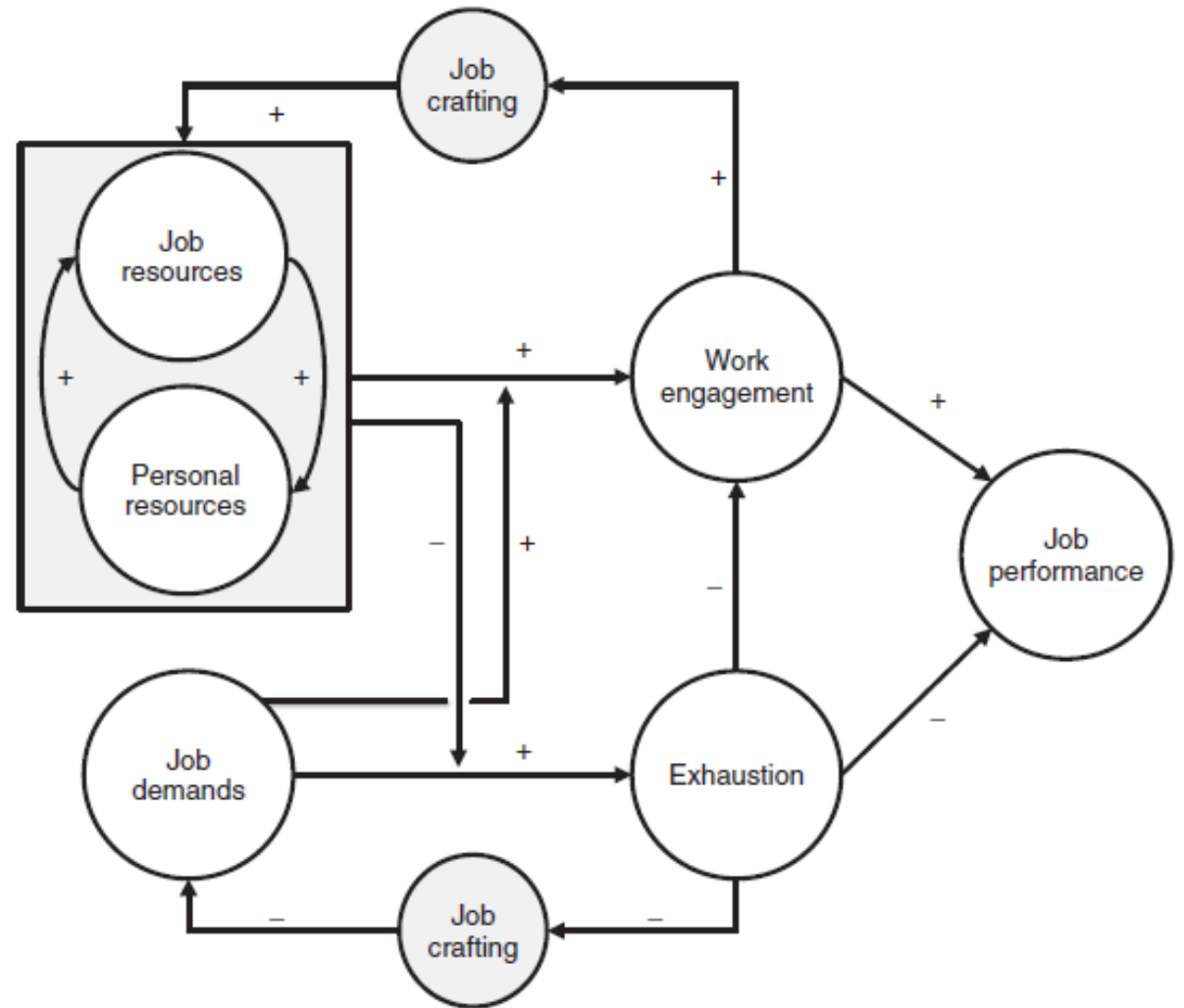
Job Crafting: how and why?

- Four forms:
 - a) increasing structural resources,
 - b) increasing social job resources,
 - c) increasing challenging job demands,
 - d) decreasing hindrance job demands
- Motivations:
 - taking control of the job to avoid negative consequences (e.g. alienation)
 - ↑ positive sense of self to be expressed and confirmed by others
 - Fulfill basic human needs for connection with others
 - Create conditions to work healthily and be well motivated

Job Crafting in the JD-R theory

- At the individual level, positive effects on well-being, satisfaction, work engagement, person-job fit, well-being, employability, career success and commitment
 - At the organizational level, organizational commitment, better performance, higher employees' retention
 - Some unintended consequences → overload, strain, stress
- substantial role of JC in the mechanism suggested by the JD-R theory

Job Demand-Resource Model



Being employable, key to sustainability

- Importance of the dimensions of well-being, personal and professional development
- Employability: having the skills and willingness to be employed, making the best use of one's competencies
- Development of employability: importance of the agentic dimension, focus on higher- and middle-level workers. It has become the very condition for employment, increasingly individual responsibility asked to low-level workers → externalizing career, «responsibilization»

Gazier, 2001; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Van Der Hejide and Van Der Hejiden, 2006; Forrier et al., 2018; Vallas and Prener, 2012; Smith, 2010)

Being employable, remaining employable

How to remain employable? Two main views

- Individual responsibility in developing one's competencies → Importance of proactivity and personal initiative
- Shared responsibility with the organization → need for support by the organization to increase competencies, maintain health, employability, well-being

Sustainable employability model

- A more recent conceptualization of employability
- A multi-dimensional construct leading to maintain employability and realize employees' development, health, satisfaction, well-being, valuable contributions.
- Employees should have the capabilities: to be put in the conditions to realize their potential
- Need for the support by the organization

(Van Der Klink et al., 2016; Hazelzet et al., 2019; Fleuren et al., 2020)

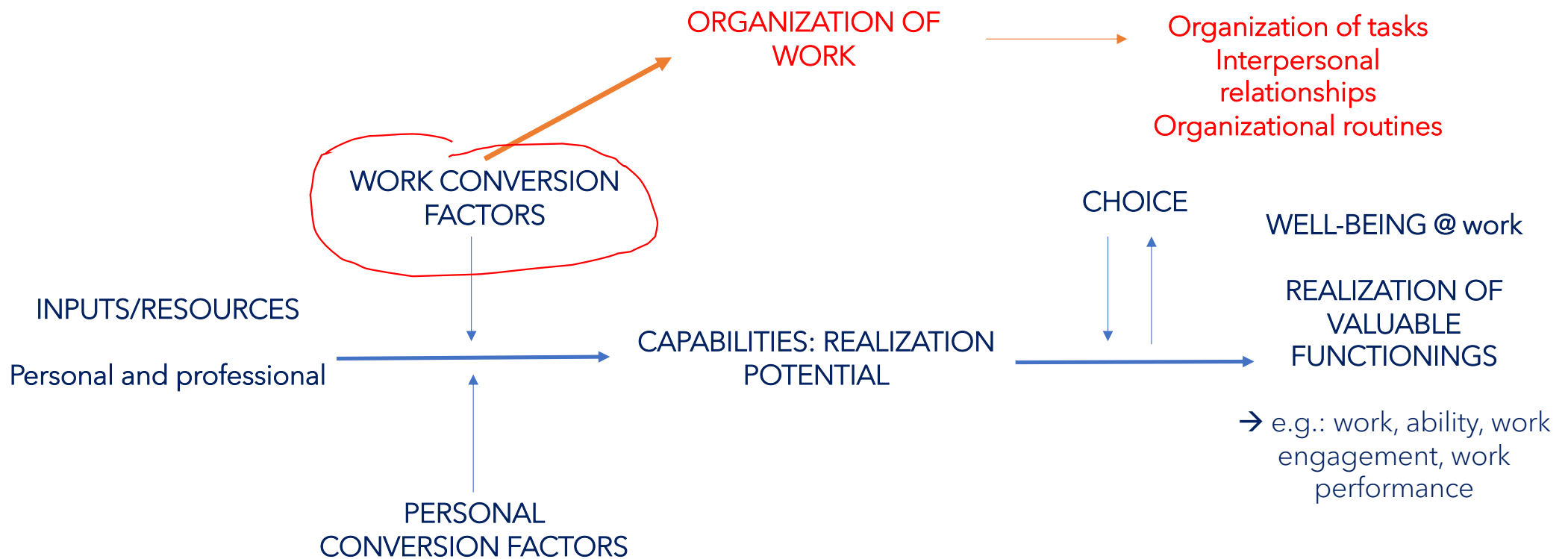
Sustainable Employability – the main aspects

- (1) Importance to achieve a valuable, meaningful work
- (2) Healthy conditions, favoring well-being
- (3) Productivity (including work engagement, motivation, positive attitude)
- (4) Long-term perspective

An ideal framework: not realized yet, but moving towards this direction, at least in sophisticated jobs...how about vulnerable jobs?

(Van Der Klink et al., 2016; Hazelzet et al., 2019; Fleuren et al., 2020)

Sustainable employability model



Problematic – how about low-skilled workers?

Low-skilled workers are vulnerable from the point of view of employability:

- *Obsolescence of competences,*
- *Problem of updating the skills*
- *Need to maintain health*

Basic notion of employability → intended as the capacity of having a job
...how about sustainable employability?

Research Question

How do low-skilled workers cope with the risks of losing their employability, and with the risks of alienation?

To what extent can job crafting contribute to cope with these risks?

Study setting and Methodology

- Study setting among the warehouse workers in a manufacturing firm located in the North-West of Paris, France
- Methodology: Participant observation → working with employees
- Two rounds of observations: in a calm period and in a more stressful one
- Interviews with Logistics Manager, HR Manager + informal discussions

Findings (I)

- Importance of Job Crafting activities → employees cope with everyday stress, boredom, risk of alienation by modifying their jobs
 - *e.g. Reduction of JD: slowing down the pace when tired, avoiding the most straining tasks, ...*
 - *e.g. Increasing JR: improving processes (signalling for colleagues), increasing social ties and prosocial behaviours*
- Increase in prosocial behaviours when stress increases → counterintuitive finding
 - *e.g. collective forms of Job crafting; higher levels of mutual help*

Findings (II)

- A good organizational climate is fostered by the organization → low level of turnover, care for employees' health and well-being
- *e.g. salaries are maybe lower than elsewhere, but the conditions are better, hence more attractive for employees*
- *e.g. Importance of the employees' contribution in improving processes: this makes them feel valued*

Discussion and contributions

- Contribution to the literature on Sustainable Employability: without the support of the organization, for low-skilled workers it's much harder to achieve well-being and long-term health
- As a consequence need for further research on how to make employers more aware and responsible about this problem
- Contribution to the literature on Job Crafting : (1) effectiveness to cope with stress in tougher moments
(2) Can lead to increase in prosocial behaviours in high-stress conditions → an area to explore

Thank you for your attention!