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How Job Crafting Enhances Academics' Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Work Engagement

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Purpose: Academics face intense workloads due to multiple roles, publication pressures, project work, administrative responsibilities, and increasing institutional expectations. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between job crafting and well-being through work engagement.
Design/Methods: Data were collected through a survey questionnaire from 336 academics working at universities in Türkiye. The validity and reliability of the scales were assessed through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and the research hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling.
Results: Job crafting has a positive and significant effect on both well-being and work engagement. Work engagement also has a positive and significant effect on well-being and partially mediates the relationship between job crafting and well-being.
Conclusion: The findings indicate that academics' proactive efforts to reorganize their work enhance their well-being both directly and indirectly through work engagement. Institutional practices that support job crafting and work engagement may contribute to healthier and more sustainable academic work environments.

Keywords: Job crafting, Work engagement, Well-being, Academics, Mediation effect

1 Introduction

Job demands in working life refer to the efforts and costs required to perform work tasks. These include negative factors such as workload, job demands, and work-family conflicts, which deplete individuals' energy at work and lay the groundwork for withdrawal from work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Excessive work demands lead to negative perceptions of the work environment. If this situation persists for a long time, it forces employees to spend more energy on their work, leading to physiological and psychological burnout (Zeijen et al., 2021). According to resource conservation theory, employees' resources are limited, and when they perceive a loss of resources, they tend to conserve existing resources and seek new ones. When the process they are in consumes a lot of resources, employees can no longer cope with their work calmly, which can lead to burnout (Blanco-Donoso et al., 2021). As a result of

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resource depletion, employees will be unable to conserve their energy, will display a negative attitude towards work, or will lack a strong desire and enthusiasm for it.

Under intense, consuming working conditions, employees are not only passively affected by the work environment but can also actively shape their work experience by rearranging tasks, relationships, and perceptual boundaries (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In this context, job crafting refers to employees' proactive efforts to re-establish the balance between job demands and job resources on their own initiative (Tims et al., 2012). This approach shows that employees are not just individuals who adapt to the work environment; they are also actors who can make their work more meaningful, manageable, and functional (Rudolph et al., 2017). Especially in work environments where the risk of resource loss increases, job crafting behaviors offer a critical area of study for both organizational outcomes and individual well-being, as empirical findings show that these behaviors are positively associated with indicators of work engagement and well-being (Letona-Ibañez et al., 2021).

Work engagement, which describes the positive, energetic, and dedicated psychological state of individuals towards their work, is a core concept in the work-life literature. Studies show that employees with high engagement tend to be energetic, more focused on their work, and willing to contribute at a high level to the organization (Soares & Mosquera, 2019; Neuber et al., 2022; Mazzetti et al., 2023). Employees with high levels of work engagement report greater job satisfaction and more positive work experiences. For this reason, researchers are increasingly studying the mechanisms that strengthen employees' psychological bonds towards work (Ojo et al., 2021; Monje-Amor et al., 2021). Work engagement is an important concept not only for organizational performance but also for employees, helping them find their work meaningful, feel psychologically connected to it, and maintain sustainable energy in their business lives. Therefore, examining the relationship between job crafting and work engagement is important for understanding the psychological and behavioral responses that employees develop under intense job demands (Rudolph et al., 2017; Frederick & VanderWeele, 2020).

Evaluating working life solely in terms of performance, productivity, or organizational contribution is insufficient. In recent years, employee well-being has become increasingly important as one of the most significant individual outcomes of organizational life. Although well-being and mental health are often used interchangeably in the literature, researchers emphasize that they are separate concepts (Grouden & Jose, 2015; Keller, 2020). The concept of mental health encompasses a spectrum of experiences, from well-being to mental illness. Good mental health refers not only to the absence of mental illness but also to the presence of certain structural skills, habits, and capacities that enable an individual to respond meaningfully to or cope with their environment (Keller, 2020). On the other hand, the concept of well-being is more holistic; it encompasses broader social, physical, and economic experiences. It is usually an indicator of the extent to which an individual can live their life as they wish. Well-being is associated with developing strong relationships, reaching one's potential, and participating in activities that have personal value and meaning (Simons & Baldwin, 2021). Research also shows that a positive work environment, including workplace rewards, increases employee well-being (Cvenkel, 2018; Keeman et al., 2017). The well-being of employees is directly affected by the work and processes within the organization, and this effect, in turn, shapes employees' work.

This general framework becomes particularly important for occupational groups characterized by high job demands and intense performance pressure. Recently, universities and academic work have undergone substantial transformations. Academics face various pressures that affect their working lives and psychological well-being, including university and researcher rankings, student satisfaction surveys, intensifying administrative and bureaucratic processes, and growing competition within academia. Although academics have traditionally enjoyed relatively high autonomy in organizing their work, this autonomy increasingly coexists with escalating job demands arising from publication pressure, grant applications, administrative responsibilities, and heavy teaching loads. This distinctive combination of relatively high autonomy and increasing job demands makes academia a particularly suitable context for examining job crafting, as academics have both the need and the latitude to proactively reshape their tasks, relationships, and work practices.

Today, the academic profession is not limited to knowledge production and teaching activities; it has become a complex labor process woven into research performance, publication and printing, administrative duties, assessment and evaluation processes, quality assurance practices, and multifaceted institutional expectations. For this reason, it is important to examine not only the job demands to which academics are exposed but also how they reorganize their work in response to these demands, the extent to which they are dedicated to their work, and how their holistic well-being is shaped. In the context of academic labor, elucidating how proactive employee behaviors, such as job crafting, relate to work engagement and well-being can make meaningful contributions both to management and organizational literatures and to human resource management practices in higher education institutions.

This study's primary aim is to evaluate the impact of the dense, multi-layered business ecosystem in which academics operate on their job crafting behaviors, levels of work engagement, and well-being within a holistic framework. Although the concepts of job crafting, work engage-

ment, and well-being are widely examined in the literature across different samples, studies that examine their combination among academics in higher education, where job demands are increasing, are limited. In this context, the study aims to make visible not only the structural pressures to which academics are exposed, but also the proactive adaptation mechanisms they develop in response.

This study advances the literature by clarifying the mechanisms through which job crafting is associated with academics' well-being. It distinguishes a direct pathway from an indirect motivational pathway operating through work engagement. By focusing on academic work, which combines considerable discretion with increasing publication, teaching, and administrative demands, the study also highlights the proactive role of employees within the JD-R framework. Accordingly, job crafting is conceptualized as a bottom-up resource-management process, while work engagement is positioned as an important, but not exhaustive, mechanism linking job crafting to well-being.

2 Conceptual Framework

The Job Demands-Resources [JD-R] Theory was developed by Demerouti et al. (2001) to explain the relationship between job characteristics and individual perception factors such as job burnout. The basic assumption of this theory is that the characteristics of each job can be evaluated along the axes of demand and resources. Job demands, such as excessive workload, role conflict, time pressure, and job insecurity, are considered factors that deplete employees' energy and require additional effort to complete the work (Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In contrast to job demands, job resources are considered positive work-related elements that support the achievement of business goals and help individuals grow, learn, and develop (Demerouti et al., 2001). This theory explains how job demands and job resources affect employee well-being and job performance. It also reveals how employees use proactive and reactive work behaviors to influence work demands and business resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker & Costa, 2014).

Job demands refer to the effort and costs required to perform work, including workload, job-related ability requirements, and work-family conflicts. These are factors that consume individual energy in the workplace and lead to negative consequences for employees (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Studies in the literature show that job demands can lead to negative psychological and behavioral reactions among employees, thereby reducing work engagement (Janssen, 2000). Excessive job demands cause employees to develop a negative perception of the work environment. The persistence of these demands forces employees to spend more energy on work and consumes their physical and psychological resources (Zeijen et al., 2021).

According to the Job Demands-Resources Theory, job demands and job resources interact to influence employee well-being. This interaction occurs in two ways. The first suggests that job resources can weaken the impact of job demands on tension (Bakker et al., 2023). This is based on the premise that business resources can change perceptions of business demands and resources, mitigate reactions following the evaluation process, and reduce the negative impact of these reactions on health. In this context, job resources, such as social support and performance feedback, can mitigate the impact of various job demands, including workload, cognitive demands, and interpersonal conflicts, on employee well-being (de Jonge & Huter, 2021; Lavoie-Tremblay et al., 2014). In contrast, the JD-R theory suggests that high job demands reinforce the positive impact of job resources on work engagement. Especially when employees must cope with challenging job demands (e.g., work complexity, time pressure), they can benefit from various work resources, including performance feedback and support from colleagues (Bakker et al., 2007; Hobfoll et al., 2018). Job resources become even more important when job demands are high. In such cases, employees may develop negative attitudes and behaviors towards work, experience reduced energy, and decrease their motivation to work (Blanco-Donoso et al., 2021).

2.1 Job Crafting

Job crafting is defined as "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179). The first is task-based job crafting, which posits that employees shape the tasks they perform at work when they feel the job has become monotonous and seek to take on different tasks that require new skills. The second is relational job crafting, based on the principle that employees develop interpersonal relationships at work, for example, regularly meeting with a colleague who inspires them. Finally, the third form is cognitive job crafting, which involves employees changing their cognitive perception of aspects of their work that they find boring. The work itself does not change when cognitive status changes; however, the employee's perspective on the job improves.

Job crafting refers to a set of proactive behaviors that employees use to balance work resources with work demands. High job demands can lead to psychological changes in employees (Gonzalez-Mulé et al., 2021). When their job responsibilities exceed their work resources, employees experience intense work pressure, which can lead to negative emotions such as anxiety and stress and compel them to devote more time to work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This framework shows that job crafting can also be explained within the Work Demands-Resources Theory.

However, the concept of job crafting is also addressed within other approaches, independent of this theory. In this approach, job crafting is defined by four dimensions: (1) increasing structural job resources that provide greater decision-making freedom or self-development opportunities; (2) increasing social job resources such as obtaining support from colleagues; (3) increasing challenging job demands (e.g., taking on more tasks or responsibilities); and (4) reducing inhibitive job demands, such as cognitive or emotional demands. Although there is some overlap between these two approaches (Demerouti, 2014; Tims, 2013), there are also differences in the studies built on each approach. For example, studies examining task, relational, and cognitive job crafting often use qualitative research designs, whereas studies focusing on Job Demands-Resources Theory (JD-R) are mostly quantitative. Despite the differences, both approaches aim to reinforce positive behaviors in the workplace by increasing employees' job satisfaction.

2.2 Work Engagement

The conceptual foundations of work engagement were introduced by Kahn (1990), whose role-based perspective emphasized individuals' active involvement and authentic self-expression in their work roles. Building on this foundation, work engagement is defined as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). This conceptualization subsequently gained prominence through the widespread use of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). Engaged employees typically invest greater effort in their work, which can contribute to improved performance (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009; Borst et al., 2020).

Research suggests that work engagement has both stable and dynamic characteristics (Xanthopoulou & Bakker, 2021). Although individual differences such as conscientiousness and extraversion may contribute to relatively stable levels of engagement (Young et al., 2018), engagement can also fluctuate across days in response to changing job demands, available resources, and proactive behaviors such as job crafting and playful work design (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Scharp et al., 2019). In this context, job crafting can help employees adjust their job characteristics to changing job demands and thereby strengthen their work engagement (Kim et al., 2018).

2.3 Well-being

Well-being is widely regarded as a multidimensional construct encompassing cognitive evaluations, such as life satisfaction, and affective experiences, including both positive and negative emotions (Diener, 2000). In the workplace context, well-being is defined as "a summative concept that characterizes the quality of working lives, including occupational safety and health aspects" (Schulte & Vainio, 2010, p. 422). This perspective is consistent with broader approaches that consider well-being across psychological, emotional, and work-related dimensions (Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2011).

Workplace well-being extends beyond the absence of mental illness and includes positive emotions, job satisfaction, healthy working conditions, and effective functioning at work (Page & Vella-Brodrick, 2009; Angelopoulou & Panagopoulou, 2020; Keeman et al., 2017). It is associated with higher levels of productivity and innovation (Carolan et al., 2017; Katebi et al., 2022), can reduce the adverse effects of job demands on burnout (Bakker et al., 2005), and is linked to higher work engagement and job satisfaction as well as lower turnover intentions (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2018).

3 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Increasing well-being at the organizational and individual levels is directly related to meeting employees' basic psychological needs, such as autonomy, belonging, and passion (Van Wingerden et al., 2017). Employees perform better and develop a stronger sense of meaning in their work by meeting these needs, thanks to job-crafting processes that adapt their work to their values, interests, and personal preferences (Van Wingerden et al., 2017; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). Positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and pleasure, experienced by individuals who apply work-shaping practices intensively also improve physical and mental health parameters (Bakker et al., 2008), ultimately leading to a holistic state of well-being. Job crafting is considered an important determinant of employees' general well-being (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). While this process is seen to have a direct impact on individuals' emotional worlds (Van den Heuvel et al., 2015), job crafting behaviors, especially those exhibited proactively, reinforce well-being by fostering the development of career competencies and skills (Plomp et al., 2016). Therefore, there is a positive relationship between job crafting practices and employee well-being (Plomp et al., 2016). To this end, the first hypothesis of the study is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Job crafting positively affects well-being. According to the Work Demands-Resources Theory, employees' initiatives to increase structural and social work resources are expected to strengthen their work engagement. In line with this expectation, it has been shown that increasing structural and social job resources in the face of compelling job demands is among the main posi-

tive indicators of work engagement in both the mining and manufacturing sectors (De Beer et al., 2016). Accordingly, a significant, positive relationship was found between job crafting practices and work engagement (Baghdadi et al., 2021). It is evident that work shaping efforts at the individual level directly affect work engagement; employee engagement increases, especially with increased structural work resources (Tims et al., 2013). It has been shown that employees who proactively organize their work environment can maintain their work engagement (Bakker et al., 2012). Finally, job crafting, defined as the active changes employees make to adapt their skills to job demands, plays an important role in increasing work engagement by aligning individual characteristics with job requirements (Jiang et al., 2022). Hence, the second hypothesis of the study is:

Hypothesis 2: Job crafting positively affects work engagement. Work engagement is associated with being active and energetic, strongly demonstrating the capacity to perform work and reflecting the positive qualities of professional identity. The employee loves his job and is proud of his job; in other words, showing engagement, exhibiting high vitality and energy at work, and developing a strong psychological commitment to work are among the basic elements of work engagement (Ding et al., 2022). It has been determined that work engagement has both constructive and multifaceted effects on employees' performance and general well-being (Shimazu et al., 2015). On the other hand, it is emphasized that negative outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are more likely to occur among employees with low engagement, and this process directly weakens individual well-being (Shuck & Reio, 2014). On the other hand, it is stated that a high level of work engagement facilitates the compensation of wear and tear caused by job demands and the recovery process; thus, it has been shown to increase employee welfare by reinforcing positive mood (Fairlie, 2017). Consistent with these findings, Akın and Reyhanoğlu (2025) reported that work engagement positively influenced life satisfaction among employees working from home, indicating that engagement contributes not only to work-related outcomes but also to employees' broader well-being. The third hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis 3: Work engagement positively affects well-being. The literature shows that different dimensions of job crafting affect specific areas of well-being through work engagement. In this context, it is argued that task-oriented job crafting affects psychological well-being, whereas relationship-oriented job crafting affects social well-being through work engagement (Han, 2023). It has been determined that work engagement plays a critical mediating role in the indirect effect of job crafting on psychological well-being, and even a portion of the total effect is explained by this mediating variable (Aldhafeeri et al., 2026). Research specifically conducted in the healthcare sector also shows that job design increases well-being by fostering stronger engagement among nurses, thereby enhancing their capacity to cope with occupational stressors (Ibrahim et al., 2025). It is also emphasized that high levels of job crafting behaviors foster a sustainable sense of well-being among employees, thereby further strengthening work engagement (Moreira et al., 2022). The last hypothesis of the study is as follows:

Hypothesis 4: Work engagement mediates the relationship between job crafting and well-being.

4 Materials and Method

4.1 Research Design and Sample

The study employs quantitative methods and collects data via a questionnaire. Academics constitute a suitable sample for examining the relationships among job crafting, work engagement, and well-being, given their high job demands, multiple role structures, publication and performance pressures, administrative responsibilities, and increasing corporate expectations. Therefore, the study population comprises academics employed at universities across Turkiye. According to the Council of Higher Education's November 2025 academic statistics, a total of 186,942 academic staff work in higher education institutions in Türkiye (Council of Higher Education, 2025). Because it was not possible to access the entire population, convenience sampling was employed. Participation was voluntary, and data were obtained anonymously from the participants. Comprehensive feedback was obtained from 336 volunteer academics, and analyses were conducted on these data. The sample size of 336[1] participants included in the study is considered sufficient for structural equation modeling analysis.

4.2 Data Collection Instrument and Measures

A questionnaire was used to collect data in the study. The questionnaire consists of four parts: demographic information, the job crafting scale, the work engagement scale, and the well-being scale. The demographic information section contains eight questions on gender, marital status, age, field, title, years of employment, years at the current institution, and administrative duties.

Because there were no validated Turkish versions of the job crafting and work engagement scales, the original

[1] A total of 336 completed and usable questionnaires were returned, providing a sufficient sample size for the structural equation modeling analysis.

English scales were translated into Turkish using a standard translation-and-back-translation method. The translated items were reviewed by experts in organizational behavior and management as well as English-language experts to ensure their conceptual, semantic, and linguistic equivalence. Subsequently, an independent expert back-translated the Turkish versions into English, and the back-translated items were compared with the original English items to verify equivalence. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were also conducted to assess the construct validity and reliability of the scales. The Turkish version of the well-being scale adapted by Şahin and Arslan (2023) was used. To measure job crafting, a one-dimensional scale consisting of seven expressions, adapted from Petrou et al. (2012) and Demerouti et al. (2017) and used in Jiang et al. (2022), was employed. Although job crafting is conceptually discussed as a multidimensional phenomenon, it was interpreted in this study as a single, holistic construct, consistent with the unidimensional structure of the scale employed. Accordingly, the analysis captures academics' general tendency to proactively reshape their work rather than the effects of specific job crafting dimensions. One example statement on the scale is "I look for ways to increase productivity at work."

To determine work engagement, a one-dimensional scale consisting of three statements, adapted from Rothbard (2001), was used. One example item on the scale is: "I focus on my work with great attention."

As a well-being scale, the short form of the Well-Being at Work Scale (Smith & Smith, 2017, pp. 200-205) was used, with the Turkish adaptation by Şahin and Arslan (2023). The scale consists of 10 statements across two dimensions: positive and negative well-being. An example statement for the positive well-being dimension on the scale is "Are you an exemplary employee (e.g., helpful, kind, a good supporter)?" and an example statement for the negative well-being dimension is "Do you have a low level of well-being? (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression)".

Therefore, the questionnaire included 8 demographic questions and 20 scale items. Scale items were presented to the participants in blocks. All statements were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

4.3 Data Analysis

The study tested hypotheses regarding the causal relationships between the variables. The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS 26 and AMOS 26. First, descriptive statistics for the demographic variables were calculated. The normality of the data, the status of multiple linear connectivity among variables, the adequacy of the sample, and the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis were then examined. In this context, skewness and kurtosis values, variance inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance values, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, and Bartlett's sphericity test results were evaluated. Exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and reliability and validity analyses were performed to assess the construct validity and reliability of the scales. The research model (Figure 1) developed in the last stage was tested using Structural Equation Modeling; the direct relationships among the variables and the mediating effect of work engagement were examined through path analysis.

5 Results

5.1 Demographic Findings

At this stage, the sample's demographic distribution was examined, and frequency analyses were conducted. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the 336 academics who participated in the study. The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 52.4% of the

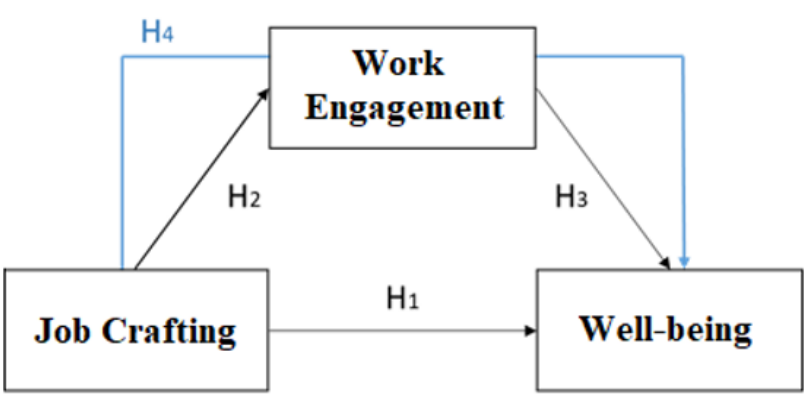


Figure 1: Research Model

participants being men and 47.6% women. Most participants were married (70.5%), and the largest age group was 31–40 years (43.5%), followed by those aged 41–50 years (35.1%). A substantial majority worked in the social sciences (78.9%). Assistant professors constituted the largest academic-title group (36.6%), followed by associate professors (21.7%) and professors (13.4%). Regarding employment experience, the largest proportion of participants had worked for 11–15 years (30.1%). Similarly, 28.9% had been employed at their current institution for 11–15 years, 28.6% for 0–5 years, and another 28.6% for 6–10 years. Finally, 47.3% of the participants held an administrative position, whereas 52.7% did not.

5.2 Preliminary Statistical Analyses

The analyses were conducted on data from 336 questionnaires. First, skewness and kurtosis were calculated for each item to determine whether the data were normally distributed. It is stated that the normal distribution assumption can be met if the skewness is within ±3.0 and the kurtosis is within ±10.0 (Kline, 2015, p. 63). Since the skewness values for the items in the analysis ranged from -1.476 to +0.259 and the kurtosis values ranged from -0.923 to +3.731, the data were deemed normally distributed.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Gender	**Number of participants (n=336)**	**Percentage (%)**
Women	160	47,6
Male	176	52,4
Marital Status		
Single	99	29,5
Married	237	70,5
Age		
30 years and under	27	8,0
31-40 years old	146	43,5
41-50 years old	118	35,1
51 and above	45	13,4
Fields of Science		
Social Sciences	265	78,9
Science	41	12,2
Health Sciences	30	8,9
Title		
Research Assistant	39	11,6
Research Assistant PhD	19	5,7
Lecturer	23	6,8
Lecturer PhD	14	4,2
Assistant Professor	123	36,6
Associate Professor	73	21,7
Professor	45	13,4
Years in Employment		
0-5 years	54	16,1
6-10 years	61	18,2
11-15 years	101	30,1
16-20 years	40	11,9
21-25 years	31	9,2

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (continues)

Gender	Number of participants (n=336)	Percentage (%)
26-30 years	30	8,9
Over 31 years	19	5,7
Years at Current Institution		
0-5 years	96	28,6
6-10 years	96	28,6
11-15 years	97	28,9
16-20 years	19	5,7
21-25 years	7	2,1
26-30 years	11	3,3
Over 31 years	10	3,0
Administrative Duty		
Yes	159	47,3
No	177	52,7

In addition, variance inflation factors (VIFs) and tolerance values were examined to assess multicollinearity in the model. The calculated values for the job crafting (JC) and work engagement (WE) variables were low (VIF = 1.37; tolerance = 0.73), indicating no significant multicollinearity problem in the model (Yurt, 2023).

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted to assess sample size adequacy and the dataset's suitability for factor analysis. The KMO value was calculated as 0.836. Since this value exceeds the lower limit (KMO> 0.50) recommended by Field (2013), the sample size was considered sufficient. The significant result of Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.001$) indicates that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis.

5.3 Reliability and Validity Analyses

At this stage, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on all items. In the EFA process, principal component analysis and varimax rotation were used. During the EFA, WB_1, WB_2, WB_4, WB_5, JC_1, and JC_5 were removed because they exhibited problematic loading patterns that reduced the factorial clarity of the measurement structure. More specifically, WB_1 loaded primarily on an unintended factor (0.566), whereas WB_2 showed substantial cross-loadings on two factors (0.512 and 0.501), indicating an ambiguous factorial assignment. Although WB_4 (0.741) and WB_5 (0.772) exhibited relatively high loadings, both loaded on an additional factor rather than converging with the theoretically expected well-being dimensions. Similarly, JC_1 displayed a high loading (0.789) on a factor distinct from the main job crafting factor, whereas JC_5 failed to reach the predetermined 0.50 loading threshold (0.475) and also showed a secondary loading of 0.390. Following the removal of these items, the retained items yielded a clearer, theoretically interpretable four-factor structure consistent with the study's conceptual framework. Importantly, the removal of these items was not considered to materially compromise the conceptual coverage of the constructs, as the retained items continued to represent their core theoretical domains and subsequently demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity. Thus, item removal improved factorial clarity while preserving the substantive meaning of the constructs. The lower limit for factor loadings is 0.50, and the lower limit for eigenvalues is 1. As a result of EFA, a two-factor structure (positive and negative well-being) was obtained for the well-being variable, whereas the other variables exhibited a single-factor structure, consistent with the original scale structures. EFA results are presented in Table 2.

EFA yielded four factors that accounted for 67.45% of the total variance.

To assess the potential for common method bias, Harman's single-factor test was conducted by entering all measurement items simultaneously into an unrotated factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The first factor accounted for 32.312% of the total variance, which is below the commonly referenced 50% threshold, suggesting that common method variance was unlikely to constitute a substantial concern in the present study (Fuller et al., 2016).

Subsequently, reliability and validity analyses of the scales were conducted. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were used to evaluate reliability. For all factors, Cronbach's alpha was expected to be above 0.60, and the CR value was expected to be above 0.70 (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). The findings show that all factors meet the reliability conditions. The findings from the reliability and validity analyses are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

Variables	Dimensions	Items	Factor Loads	Variance Explained
Well-being	1	WB_3	0.635	16.164
		WB_6	0.783	
		WB_7	0.832	
	2	WB_8R	0.748	12.055
		WB_9R	0.703	
		WB_10R	0.575	
Job Crafting	3	JC_2	0.697	19.371
		JC_3	0.766	
		JC_4	0.781	
		JC_6	0.675	
		JC_7	0.564	
Work Engagement	4	WE_1	0.845	19.859
		WE_2	0.883	
		WE_3	0.879	

Table 3: Reliability and Validity Analyses

Dimensions	Cr.'s Alpha	AVE	√AVE	CR	Correlations			
					WB_P	WB_N	JC	WE
WB_P	0.742	0.57	0.755	0.797	-	0.61	0.42	0.43
WB_N	0.619	0.461	0.679	0.718	0.61	-	0.4	0.34
JC	0.793	0.491	0.701	0.827	0.42	0.4	-	0.62
WE	0.906	0.755	0.869	0.903	0.43	0.34	0.62	-

WB: Well-being, JC: Job Crafting, WE: Work Engagement

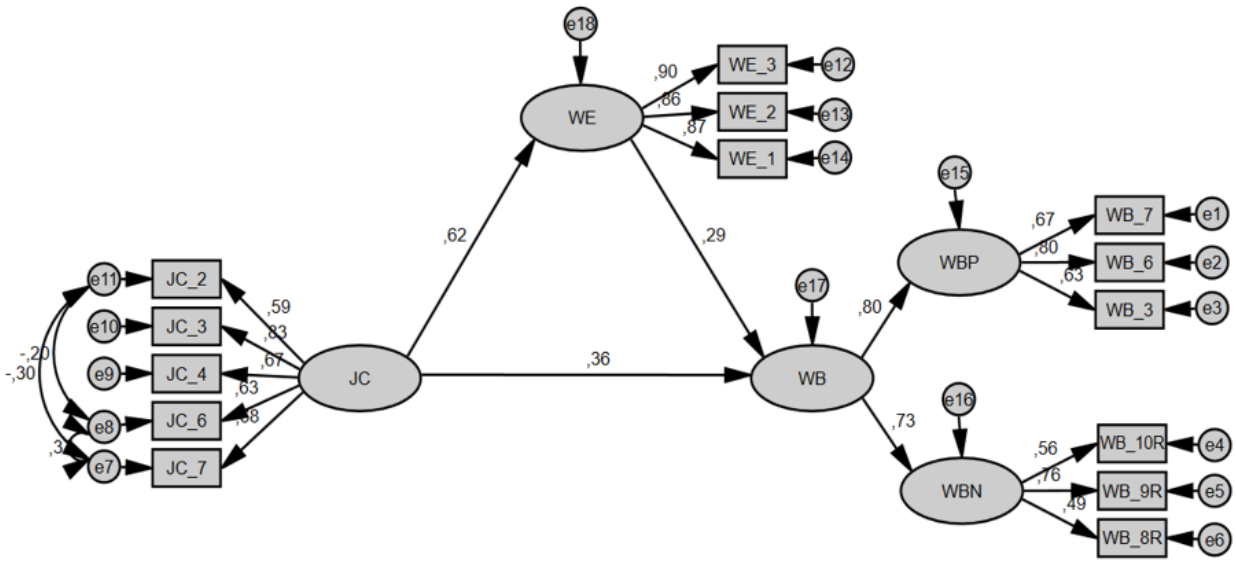


Figure 2: Structural Model

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing

	Independent	Dependent	β	t	p	Decision
H_1	Job Crafting (JC)	Well-being (WB)	0.36	3.484	< 0.001	**Accepted**
H_2	Job Crafting (JC)	Work Engagement (WE)	0.62	9.185	< 0.001	**Accepted**
H_3	Work Engagement (WE)	Well-being (WB)	0.29	2.993	0.003	**Accepted**
H_4	Job Crafting (JC) X Work Engagement (WE)	Well-being (WB)	0.18	2.845	0.004	**Accepted**

Validity was evaluated using convergent and discriminant validity. In order to ensure convergent validity, the mean explained variance (AVE) values must be above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014, p. 103). Examination of Table 3 shows that the factors largely meet this condition. The finding that CR values exceeded AVE values was considered supportive of the construct's validity. To test the validity of the disjunction, the square root of each factor's AVE value was compared with the correlations of that factor with other factors. The fact that the square-root AVE values are higher than the correlation coefficients indicates that discriminant validity is achieved (Hair et al., 2014, p. 105). The findings reveal that the scales used are acceptable in terms of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

To assess construct validity, first- and second-level confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted for the subdimensions of the well-being variable. The first-level CFA yielded χ^2/df=3.23, RMSEA=0.08, SRMR=0.06, and GFI=0.91; the second-level CFA yielded χ^2/df=3.20, RMSEA=0.08, SRMR=0.06, and GFI=0.91. Since these fit indices were within acceptable ranges, the model fit was considered sufficient (Hu & Bentler, 1998).

5.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

Path analysis, as part of structural equation modeling, was used to test the research model and hypotheses. Accordingly, the structural model presented in Figure 2 was analyzed using AMOS 26. The goodness-of-fit indices from the path analysis indicated an acceptable fit (χ^2/df = 3.20; RMSEA = 0.08; SRMR = 0.06; GFI = 0.91) (Hu & Bentler, 1998). These findings show that the proposed structural model is compatible with the data and that hypothesis tests can now be conducted.

After the model fit was deemed sufficient, the direct effects among the latent variables were examined, and the research hypotheses were tested. The findings are presented in Table 4. Accordingly, job crafting had a positive and statistically significant effect on well-being (β = 0.36; p <0.001). This result shows that employees' proactive efforts to restructure their work increase their well-being, supporting H1. Similarly, job crafting had a positive and significant effect on work engagement (β = 0.62; p <0.001). This finding reveals that as job crafting increases, employees' psychological commitment to their jobs strengthens, confirming H2. In addition, the effect of work engagement on well-being was positive and statistically significant (β = 0.29; p < 0.005). Thus, the H3 hypothesis was also supported.

To test the mediation hypothesis, the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between job crafting and well-being was also evaluated. The results of the analysis show that the direct effect of job crafting on well-being remains significant (β = 0.36) and the indirect effect through work engagement is also significant (β = 0.18). The persistence of the direct effect and the statistically significant indirect effect indicate that work engagement partially, rather than fully, mediates this relationship. In other words, job crafting not only directly affects employees' well-being but also indirectly strengthens it by increasing their level of work engagement. This finding suggests that the H4 hypothesis is also supported.

Regarding the explanatory power of the structural model, job crafting accounted for approximately 38.8% of the variance in work engagement (R^2 = .388). In addition, job crafting and work engagement jointly accounted for approximately 33.7% of the variance in academics' well-being (R^2 = .337). These results indicate that the proposed model explains a substantial proportion of the variance in both endogenous constructs.

The results reveal that the relationships among job crafting, work engagement, and well-being are consistent with the predictions of the research model. That job crafting has both direct and indirect effects through work engagement shows that employees' proactive reorganization of their work has significant consequences for psychological and emotional well-being. The structural model developed for this research was empirically validated, and all hypotheses were accepted.

6 Discussion

The main purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among job crafting, work engagement, and well-being in academics and to determine whether work engagement serves as a mediating factor in these relationships. The findings indicate that all the relationships predicted by the research model are statistically significant. Accordingly, job crafting both directly and indirectly affects well-being by increasing work engagement. In addition, work engagement has a significant positive effect on well-being. These results show that the relationship between job crafting, work engagement, and well-being aligns with theoretical expectations in the academic sample.

The first finding of the study was that job crafting has a positive and significant effect on well-being. This result indicates that aligning employees' work with their values, interests, and skills supports not only job performance but also psychological and emotional well-being. This finding aligns with previous studies highlighting the impact of job crafting on employees' emotional world, positive affect, and overall well-being (Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014; Van den Heuvel et al., 2015; Plomp et al., 2016). This result is also meaningful within academia. Academics work within a fragmented labor structure spanning teaching, research, publication, administrative duties, and quality processes; therefore, they need more targeted interventions to make their work more meaningful and manageable. In this context, job crafting can be considered not only an adaptation mechanism for academics but also a self-regulation strategy that supports psychological resilience.

The second finding shows that job crafting positively affects work engagement. This conclusion is consistent with the JD-R theory's predictions. Proactive initiatives to increase job resources and make work demands more manageable help employees focus on their work with greater energy, attention, and commitment. The finding aligns with studies showing that structural and social job resources strengthen work engagement (De Beer et al., 2016; Tims et al., 2013; Bakker et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2022). Notably, this relationship was confirmed in the sample of academics. Although academics often seem to have high autonomy, they cannot always continue their work as they would like due to intense performance pressure, measurement and evaluation responsibilities, bureaucratic processes, and institutional expectations. For this reason, job crafting behaviors allow academics to regain their subjective sense of control over their work and, as a result, become more dedicated to it.

The third finding shows that work engagement has a positive and significant effect on well-being. This result confirms that work engagement is an important mechanism supporting not only performance but also employees' overall well-being. The findings align with studies showing that engagement to work fosters positive mood, mitigates attrition caused by work demands, and promotes employee well-being (Shimazu et al., 2015; Fairlie, 2017). On the other hand, the literature indicates that low levels of work engagement are associated with burnout, depersonalization, and psychological wear and tear, further supporting this conclusion (Shuck & Reio, 2014). For academics, this finding is important because it shows that individuals who are psychologically attached to their work, find it meaningful, and feel a high level of vitality in it have higher well-being.

One of the most striking findings of the research is that work engagement partially mediates the relationship between job crafting and well-being. The continued direct effect of job crafting on well-being indicates that this relationship cannot be explained solely by work engagement. The significance of the indirect effect indicates that work engagement is an important intermediate process in this mechanism. This finding is consistent with studies revealing that the effect of job crafting on psychological and social well-being may be through work engagement (Han, 2023; Aldhafeeri et al., 2026; Ibrahim et al., 2025). In this context, job crafting behaviors help academics make their work more meaningful and manageable, thereby increasing their engagement and ultimately strengthening their well-being.

By positioning job crafting as a form of proactive resource management, this study highlights employees' active role within the JD-R framework. This perspective is particularly relevant to academic work, where considerable discretion over the organization of teaching, research, and professional activities coexists with increasing publication pressure, administrative responsibilities, and workload demands. Whereas traditional applications of the JD-R theory predominantly emphasize resources provided by the organization, the present findings foreground job crafting as a bottom-up process through which employees actively seek to improve the alignment among job demands, available resources, abilities, and professional goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Tims et al., 2012). Accordingly, employees are not merely recipients of externally determined job characteristics but active agents who can influence their own work experiences.

The partial mediation finding further specifies this theoretical contribution. The significant indirect relationship suggests a motivational pathway in which job crafting is associated with higher well-being through greater vigor, dedication, and absorption. However, the persistence of the direct relationship between job crafting and well-being suggests that work engagement does not fully capture the benefits of job crafting. Job crafting may also relate to well-being through mechanisms such as greater perceived control, person–job alignment, need satisfaction, and meaningful work. Thus, the findings extend the motivational logic of the JD-R theory by showing that work

engagement constitutes an important, but not exhaustive, explanatory mechanism linking proactive work redesign to well-being.

Academic work provides a theoretically informative setting for examining this dual pathway. Academics generally have some discretion in organizing their teaching, research, and professional activities, which provides opportunities for job crafting. At the same time, publication pressure, administrative responsibilities, heavy teaching loads, and performance expectations constrain this discretion and increase the need to manage available resources proactively. The simultaneous presence of discretion and high demands means that academia is not merely another occupational sample; it represents a context in which job crafting is both possible and increasingly necessary. The findings therefore suggest that individual job crafting can complement organizational resources, but should not be treated as a substitute for institutional efforts to reduce excessive demands and provide supportive working conditions.

However, certain limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional design limits the extent to which causal relationships among the variables can be inferred. Second, the reliance on self-reported data collected from the same respondents at a single point in time may have introduced some degree of common method bias. Although Harman's single-factor test indicated that common method variance was unlikely to represent a substantial concern, this potential source of bias cannot be entirely ruled out. Third, the use of convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader academic population. Nevertheless, the consistency of the findings with the theoretical framework and the support for all proposed hypotheses strengthen the explanatory value of the model.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine the temporal ordering and potential causal direction of the relationships among job crafting, work engagement, and well-being. In addition, daily or weekly diary studies could capture within-person fluctuations in academics' job crafting behaviors, work engagement, and well-being, thereby providing a more dynamic understanding of how these constructs interact over time.

7 Conclusion

This study drew three main conclusions from an examination of the relationships among job crafting, work engagement, and well-being in academics. First, it was found that job crafting behaviors had a direct positive effect on academics' well-being. Secondly, as job crafting increased, work engagement increased. Third, work engagement significantly strengthened well-being and partially mediated the relationship between job crafting and well-being. These results show that proactive work-arrangement behaviors and psychological commitment to work determine employees' holistic well-being in academic work.

The research reveals that the JD-R theory and resource conservation approach have explanatory power in the academic sample (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Blanco-Donoso et al., 2021). When academics are exposed to high job demands, they make efforts to render their work more functional, meaningful, and manageable; these efforts contribute to their greater engagement in their work and, consequently, to a higher level of well-being. In this respect, the study shows that academics are not only passive carriers of institutional pressures but also active actors who can transform work experiences.

The main theoretical contribution of the study is its identification of two complementary pathways between job crafting and well-being. The indirect pathway through work engagement supports the motivational process proposed by the JD-R theory, whereas the remaining direct relationship indicates that the well-being implications of job crafting cannot be reduced to engagement alone. In academic work, job crafting can therefore be understood as a bottom-up resource-management and self-regulation process through which academics respond to the simultaneous presence of professional discretion and increasing job demands.

Supporting the well-being of academics is not merely an individual concern; it is also a strategic necessity for the long-term institutional effectiveness of universities, research and teaching quality, and sustainable human resource management. For this reason, higher education institutions need to create more flexible, participatory, and human-oriented work environments that support academics' capacity to shape their jobs and their commitment to work.

8 Policy Recommendations

The findings of the study, based on the four hypotheses tested, offer several managerial and policy implications for supporting academics' well-being in higher education institutions.

First, the support for H1, which demonstrates a positive relationship between job crafting and academics' well-being, highlights the importance of creating working conditions that allow academics to shape their tasks, priorities, and work processes to a certain extent. A more balanced distribution of teaching load, research responsibilities, administrative duties, and performance expectations may provide academics with greater opportunities to organize their work in line with their competencies and professional priorities. While maintaining common institutional expectations, university administrations may offer academics a degree of flexibility to shape the content and organization

of their work according to their expertise, career priorities, and changing professional needs. Such a working environment may contribute to a better alignment between job demands, individual resources, and professional goals.

Second, the strong positive relationship between job crafting and work engagement identified under H2 indicates that job crafting is important not only for well-being but also for the relationship academics establish with their work. Rather than evaluating academics solely through output-based performance indicators, universities may adopt more balanced human resource practices that support the meaningfulness of their work, professional development, and organizational belonging. Supportive leadership, constructive feedback, professional development opportunities, academic environments that strengthen peer support, and visible recognition of academic contributions may all be considered practices capable of supporting work engagement. Universities may also regularly review whether unnecessary administrative procedures and overly rigid role expectations constrain academics' capacity to engage in job crafting.

Third, the support for H3, which demonstrates a positive relationship between work engagement and well-being, underlines the importance of institutionally supporting academics' psychological connection with their work. Addressing academic well-being solely within the framework of individual resilience or personal stress management may be insufficient. The findings indicate that well-being is also associated with the academic work environment and organizational processes. Universities may therefore consider academic well-being as an element of their human resource management, quality assurance, and institutional sustainability policies. Regular assessments of well-being and work engagement, workload evaluations, psychosocial risk analyses, and institutional mechanisms aimed at developing supportive work environments may be employed in this context.

The support for H4, which indicates that work engagement mediates the relationship between job crafting and well-being, further points to the importance of an integrated managerial approach. The results indicate that conditions that allow academics to influence their work may correlate with increased work engagement and, consequently, with improved well-being outcomes. Accordingly, we may consider job crafting, work engagement, and well-being as complementary dimensions rather than separate human resource issues. Therefore, universities can combine practices such as balancing workload and providing flexibility in job crafting, which may, in turn, be combined with mentoring, professional development opportunities, participation in academic decision-making, and supportive management practices.

The findings also highlight the importance of adopting a more balanced approach to performance evaluation systems in universities. Excessive reliance on publication counts and similar quantitative indicators may constrain academics' ability to allocate their time and effort to activities they consider professionally meaningful. Evaluation systems that take into account multiple dimensions of academic contribution, including teaching quality, the quality and impact of research, societal contribution, mentoring, institutional service, and continuous professional development, may provide a more holistic approach.

Interpret these recommendations within the scope and research design of the present study. Future research may employ longitudinal designs to examine the direction of the relationships among job crafting, work engagement, and well-being over time. The effects of specific institutional practices, such as job crafting interventions, participatory workload planning, mentoring programs, or flexible job crafting initiatives, may also be tested through practice-oriented studies. Research involving different universities and higher education systems may further contribute to assessing the generalizability of the findings. In addition, future studies may examine whether factors such as academic career stage, disciplinary context, employment conditions, leadership support, and perceived organizational support strengthen or weaken the relationships identified in the present model.

Overall, the findings indicate a close relationship between the design, experience, and management of academic work and academics' well-being. Providing academics with opportunities to shape their work to a certain extent, while strengthening institutional conditions that support work engagement, may contribute to the development of a more sustainable academic work environment. For policymakers and university senior management, the key implication is that academic performance and academic well-being should not be regarded as competing objectives, but rather as complementary outcomes that can be supported simultaneously through appropriate working conditions and managerial practices.

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Kako preoblikovanje dela izboljšuje blagostanje visokošolskih učiteljev in raziskovalcev: mediacijska vloga delovne zavzetosti

Namen: Visokošolski učitelji se soočajo z velikimi delovnimi obremenitvami zaradi opravljanja številnih vlog, pritiskov objavljanja znanstvenih del, dela na raziskovalnih projektih, administrativnih nalog in vse večjih institucionalnih pričakovanj. Namen raziskave je preučiti povezavo med preoblikovanjem dela in blagostanjem zaposlenih prek delovne zavzetosti.
Metode: Podatki so bili zbrani z anketnim vprašalnikom, ki ga je izpolnilo 336 visokošolskih učiteljev in raziskovalcev, zaposlenih na univerzah v Turčiji. Veljavnost in zanesljivost merskih lestvic sta bili preverjeni z eksploratorno in konfirmatorno faktorsko analizo, raziskovalne hipoteze pa so bile testirane z modeliranjem strukturnih enačb.
Rezultati: Preoblikovanje dela ima pozitiven in statistično značilen vpliv tako na blagostanje kot tudi na delovno zavzetost. Delovna zavzetost prav tako pozitivno in statistično značilno vpliva na blagostanje ter delno posreduje odnos med preoblikovanjem dela in blagostanjem.
Sklep: Ugotovitve kažejo, da proaktivna prizadevanja visokošolskih učiteljev za preoblikovanje in prilagajanje svojega dela izboljšujejo njihovo blagostanje neposredno, pa tudi posredno prek večje delovne zavzetosti. Institucionalne prakse, ki spodbujajo preoblikovanje dela in delovno zavzetost, lahko prispevajo k bolj zdravemu in dolgoročno vzdržnemu akademskemu delovnemu okolju.

Ključne besede: *Preoblikovanje dela, Delovna zavzetost, Blagostanje, Visokošolski učitelji, Mediacijski učinek*