

Title

Job Crafting Revisited: The Impact of Calling, Locus of Control and Courage on Selfergy

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Introduction

In today's rapidly changing and decentralized working environments, where free-forms organizations, i.e. the holacratic ones, gain ground (Schell and Bischof, 2021), there is increase in demand for employees, who are active participants at work rather than passive implementers of orders (Zhang and Parker, 2019; Frese and Fay, 2001). Behaviors like anticipating or actively attacking problems, identifying and/or searching for new opportunities, and continuously improving the work environment, can be extremely valuable to organizations (Bruning and Campion, 2018; Crant 2000) that become orientated towards proactive active employees with self-management skills (De Bloom, Vaziri, Tay and Kujanpää, 2020) especially the current era of cutting edge technology.

In the current business environment where changes are rapid and technology create new challenges, it is essential that the employees will be active, on the lookout of new opportunities, taking charge of emerging problems, etc. Such kind of behaviors are called proactive behaviors and are defined by Crant (2000, p. 436) as "taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones", are self-starting, can take the form of in-role or extra-role ones and go beyond the formal requirement from employees. Indicatively, personal initiative (Frese, Kring, Soose and Zempel 1996), role innovation (Van Maanen and Schein 1979), voice (LePine and Van Dyne 1998), organizational citizenship behaviour (Organ and Konovsky 1989), etc. are proactive behaviours that emphasize the active role of the employees.

One proactive behaviour that gains most of the interest of the scholars the last years is job crafting, which has shifted the interest in job redesign from top-down approaches to the bottom-up ones. Job crafting is defined as "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001, p.179).) As indicated in the definition, job crafting incorporates three aspects of the employee's job: the task-related, the relationship-related and the cognitive one. Job crafting, even though extensively researched, still lacks an emphasis on its cognitive aspect, which has been neglected in the literature (Wang, Li and Chen, 2020). However, cognitive crafting is considered very important when the emphasis is on the proactive behaviour, as it determines the behaviour outcome (Melo, Dourado, and Andrade, 2021).

In this paper we are focusing on a newly introduced element of job crafting, selfergy, which emphasizes and completes the cognitive aspect of job crafting. We go a step further and also examine the factors that may positively affect it.

Literature Review

Job Crafting as a Proactive Behavior

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) introduced a new proactive behavior as an alternative way of job redesign: job crafting, which is defined as ‘self-initiated change behaviors employees engage in with the aim to align their jobs with their own preferences, motives, and passions’ (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001, p. 299) Thus, job crafting is an **action**. Job crafting employees are trying to fit their work in their preferences, values and skills (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Based on Crant’s (2000) definition of proactivity, job crafting is a self-starting initiative and it can be therefore regarded as a proactive form, that apart from being physical, social and cognitive, it is also an individual-level activity that can be visible or invisible, incremental or radical, long or short, good or bad for the organization (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Tims and Bakker, 2010).

Selfergy

Selfergy is a new concept, created to complete the job crafting theory. It is defined as **“the active and unique way of revealing one’s self while being active at work”** (Paraskevopoulou, 2017).

Selfergy is an English translation of the Greek word “autergeia”. Autergeia consists of two Greek words: “autos”, meaning the self, with derivatives like self-esteem and “ergon”, which means work/action, with derivatives like synergy and ergometer. The combination of the words “self” and “ergon” creates a term that can capture the interactive process between the job and the individual during job crafting. Job crafters customize their work to themselves, whereas their unique personal characteristics influence this process.

Thus, selfergy refers to the revealing of the self while we make our job our own. We suggest that employees, through their interaction with their job **they enact and influence the work as they make their job their own, in such a way that through their job they disclose their true self**. Therefore, selfergy is directly connected with

job crafting, so we state that while doing job crafting, the employees customize their work to themselves in such a way that they simultaneously express themselves.

The selfergy aspect of job crafting is expected to further strengthen the neglected cognitive job crafting factor (Oprea, Barzin, Vîrgă, Iliescuand and Rusu, 2019), which is essential in cases of active job crafters, who will go the extra mile and do something more and extra than the expected.

Hypotheses Development: Factors Associated with Selfergy

In the current paper, we explore the association of calling, locus of control and bravery as a facet of courage with selfergy. The job crafting theory lays support for the two first factors, arguing for job crafting as a work meaning reconstruction process that requires autonomy and a sense of control (Dutton and Wriznieski, 2001). Similarly, courage has been found to be associated with proactive behaviors, i.e. personal initiative (Frese et al., 1997).

Work meaning: Job as a calling

As Frankl (1963) has stated, people are struggling for meaning; human beings are constantly on the lookout of meaning in every aspect of their life. Work, as an important part of human life, is also part of this intense searching for meaning process. Since meaningfulness is such an important aspect of human existence, it could not be excluded from organizational behavior literature, which has emphasized the important role of the meaningfulness of work and studied its positive impact in job performance and satisfaction (Roberson, 1990).

Meaning, which should not be used interchangeably with the words meaningful and meaningfulness, relates to what something signifies or the outcome of the sensemaking process of the job (what my job means to me) (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003). The authors identify meaningful work, when “the work and/or its context are perceived by its practitioners to be, at minimum, purposeful and significant” (p. 311).

Allan, Batz-Barbarich, Sterling and Tay (2019) in their meta-analysis revealed that one’s evaluation about the meaningfulness of their work might lead firstly to positive attitudinal change, which in turn may result in behavioral change.

Wrzesniewski (2003) discussed an alternative perspective on work meaning to further explain this interplay between the person and the work: the work orientation. According

to this theory, employees may see their work either as job (the job is a means of living), career (prestige, advancement, power are important) or calling (the work contributes to the greater good) (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin and Schwartz, 1997). An important finding of Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin and Schwartz's (1997) research is that they identified employees with the same job position and in the same organization looking at their job through a different perspective. Interestingly, employees in similar job positions regarded their work (in equal quotas), either as job, or as careers or as callings, which suggests that "even in the same job done in the same organization, there are significant differences in how people make meaning of their work" (Wrzesniewski, 2003, p. 302). That means that apart from the contextual influence, the uniqueness of each employee may determine how one interprets and reconsiders his/her job. Work orientation may shed light on the connection between work meaning and job crafting, and specially with work meaning and selferg. It may be that job crafters with calling will probably customize their job in a unique way and reveal their own identity through this process.

Following the logic that as calling levels increase, job crafters will customize their job in a unique way and reveal their own identity more, we hypothesized that:

H1: Calling as an indicator of work meaning will have positive effect on selferg.

Locus of control

Locus of control is a personality variable, defined as "a generalized expectancy that rewards, reinforcements or outcomes in life are controlled either by one's own actions (internality) or by other forces (externality)" (Spector, 1988; p. 335). Rotter (1966) divided locus of control in two parts: the external locus, where someone believes that destiny, or outside forces are responsible of what happens in life and the internal locus, where someone believes that one's own ability, effort, or actions determine what happens in life. Thus, individuals can interpret events as being either a result of their own actions or external factors.

Job crafting "is likely to occur among these [employees] with an internal locus of control" (Cheng, Costantini, Zhou and Wang, 2022, p. 911). Research findings demonstrate that employees with high perceived control, engage more frequently in job crafting, and exhibit a more intense job crafting behavior, assessed with measures like the magnitude and/or complexity, or "reach" of a specific change, its time

intensiveness and the value or importance of the change in relation to one's work (Lyons, 2008). Similarly, the lower the job control, the lower the personal initiative for workers, who probably develop a passive approach toward work (Frese, Kring, Soose and Zempel, 1996).

It is therefore safe to assume that employees with an internal locus of control, may exhibit other proactive behaviors too. Such employees believe that they have control of their own life and work; therefore, they do not consider any environmental constraints. On the other hand, employees with an external locus of control perceive any environmental limit as an insurmountable barrier that cannot be easily overcome.

Thus, we expect that employees with internal locus of control more probably will become job crafters and exhibit selfergy and hypothesize:

H2: Internal locus of control will have a positive effect on selfergy.

Courage

Courage is a universal virtue that concerns humanity throughout its history and is present in every aspect of the society, nonetheless it had not received the deserved research attention by scholars. The main issue in courage literature is that it cannot easily be unanimously defined. As Woodard and Pury (2007) also state "what is courageous for one person may or may not be courageous for another" (p.136).

There are many perspectives to look at courage, but mainly it has been connected with fear (less) and higher values. For example, Woodard defined it as "the ability to act for a meaningful (noble, good, or practical) cause, despite experiencing the fear associated with perceived threat exceeding the available resources" (Woodard, 2004; p.174). Recently, though, courage has been dissociated from fear; Woodard and Pury, (2007) revisited their work and redefined it as the "voluntary willingness to act, with or without varying levels of fear"(p.136), while Worline and Quinn (2003) disconnected courage from fear presenting courageous principled action as a form of action taking place when individuals, based on their intuitive, emotional, and cognitive resources, act in accordance with the highest values of the organization, but not with the status quo (Worline and Quinn, 2003).

Worline (2004) regarded courage at work as a pattern of constructive opposition, where one opposes towards the social groups as a response to an organizational duress in order

to follow socially valuable goal. The important element of Worline's perspective is the constructive opposition aspect, defined as 'a particular moment in social life, when an individual expresses the capacity to act separately from the social forces, in which (s)he is immersed in order to protect or advance the collective good in some way' (Worline, 2012, p.307). As Worline (2012) underlined "anyone [in an organization] can undertake courageous action when the right combination of opportunity and resources presents itself" (Worline, 2012, p.306). Worline and Quinn (2003) have stated that people at the bottom of the hierarchy may easily identify inappropriate or out of date rules, routines and processes and therefore should need either to break or modify them. Such divergence, innovation and adaptability in behavior can be risky and therefore requires courage. For Dahlsgaard, Peterson and Seligman (2005) courage is considered a universal virtue across cultures that may motivate and facilitate transcendent behaviors, allowing individuals to face real risk and thus not give up to the potential downsides of proactive behaviors. This perspective is present in most proactive behaviors such as initiative taking, taking charge, innovation, whistle-blowing, issue selling, voice, dissenting, where courage seems to be essential, as they require to diverge from the original way of working. Specifically, courage has been related with various proactive behaviors such as whistle-blowing, (Rothschild and Miethe, 1999), risk taking, (Spreitzer, McCall and Mahoney, 1997), and action orientation (McCall, 1994). Even though courage seems to be an essential factor for proactive behaviors the literature has not yet included it extensively in the studies. Still, research on bravery remains one of psychology's open frontiers' (Peterson, and Seligman, 2004, p.228). Worline and Quinn (2003) noticed that more research in courage is required to be done within the organizational context. Following this call, we incorporated in our research one neglected, but essential factor of proactive behaviors: courage.

Especially nowadays, where changes are essential in the work context, job crafters may require more courage in order to introduce their changes. Job crafters are active employees and that require boldness, it requires courage from the part of the job crafters in order to bring their whole self at work.

We, therefore, suggest that courage may affect proactive behaviors, and specifically on selfergy of job crafting, thus hypothesize:

H3: Courage will have a positive effect on selfergy

Methods

The study followed a cross sectional research design (Bryman, 2015). After pilot testing the instrument, data were collected for a period of one month through an online survey. Email invitations, including instruction and the URL, followed by two reminders, were sent to a list of academics, resulting to a response rate of 13.1%.

Measures

All scales, but courage and selfergy, for which instruments were available in the native language of respondents, have been translated using the collaborative iterative backward translation technique (Douglas and Craig, 2007).

We used existing scales to measure the concepts under investigation. Specifically, for courage, we utilized, the character strength, bravery aspect (Peterson and Seligman, 2004) defined as ‘the disposition to voluntarily act ... in an effort to obtain or preserve some perceived good for one self or others recognizing that the desired perceived good may not be realized’ (Shelp. 1984, p.354). Details on the measures and their internal consistency are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Sample

Context of research

The focused sample were Greek educators at the tertiary sector, and were purposefully selected, as they represent a job category with sufficient level of job autonomy (a prerequisite for job crafting) and with high chances to imbue the self in the work (a favorable condition for selfergy). We included both private and public academic institutions to gain a holistic view and richer understanding of the educator as a job crafter.

The participants were consisted of 206 academics at five higher education institutions. The sample is balanced in relation to gender (men 50%). 69.9% are over the age of 46 and have research as their main work orientation (58%). The majority were tenure track

faculty (79.2%), 42.7% are at the level of lecturer and assistant professor, while 42.8% are associate and full professors.

Results

The variables, connotations and relationships of our study, accompanied with hypotheses tested are shown on Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Harman's one-factor test was used to inspect for common method variance (CMV). The exploratory factor analysis with all study variables produced eigenvalues indicating that the single factor accounted for 16.45% of the variance among variables. This value is well below the 50% threshold (Fuller, Simmering, Atinc, Atinc, and Babin, 2016) thus no problematic CMV is suggested.

Table 1 contains basic descriptive statistics, internal consistency alphas and intercorrelations among the studied variables. Selfergy was significantly correlated with calling ($R=.365^{**}$, $p<.001$), locus of control ($R=.214^{**}$, $p<.002$) and courage ($\beta=.256^{**}$, $p<.001$).

Insert Table 2 about here

To confirm our hypotheses, we performed a multiple regression analysis. Our model, which includes locus of control, calling and courage (independent variables), was statistically significant ($p<.001$) and explained 21.8% (R^2) of the variance in selfergy (dependent variable). Of these three variables calling made the largest unique contribution ($\beta=.32$, $p<.001$) followed by courage ($\beta=.21$, $p<.01$) and locus of control ($\beta=.19$, $p<.01$). Thus, all hypotheses receive full support.

Limitations

The study is limited to a single country, a single work context and the fact that it is cross-sectional.

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Appendix

Figure 1: The effects of locus of control, calling and courage on selfergy

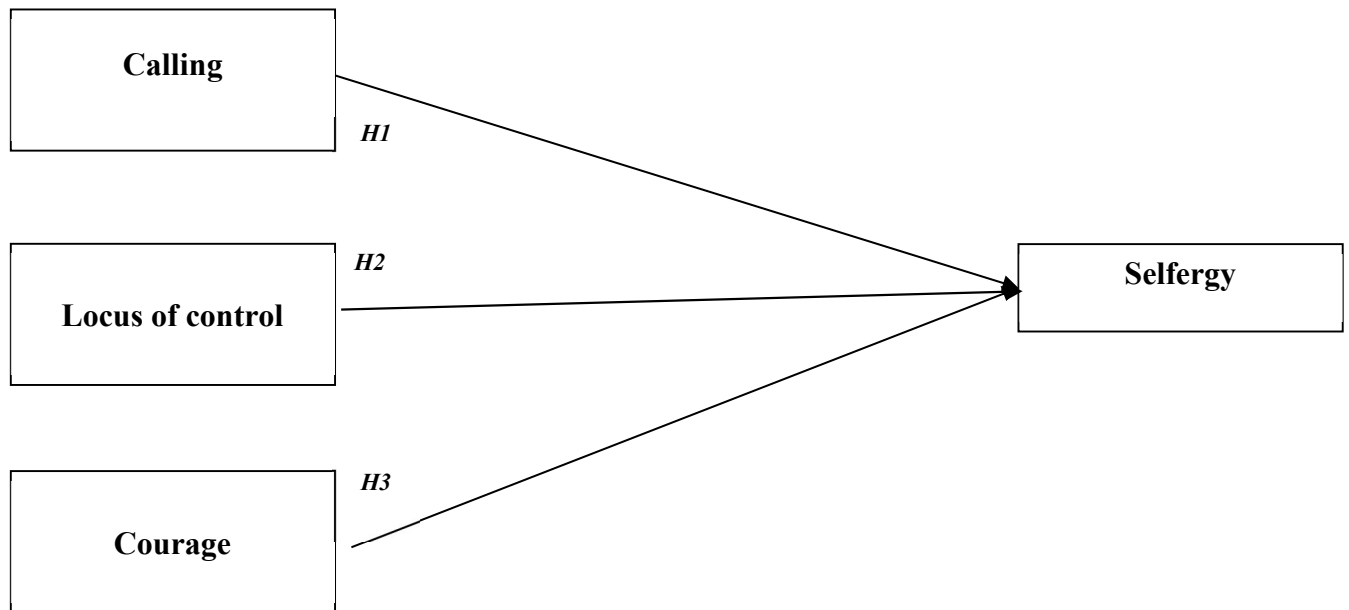


Table 1: Measures' Description and Internal Consistency

Scale	Author(s)	Cronbach's a	Type- Likert	# Items	Indicative item
Calling	Sawhney, Britt, Black and Wilson (2022)	0.783	1-7	7	'My work is one of the most important things in my life.'
Locus of Control	Spector (1988)	0.709	1-6	8	'People who perform their jobs well generally get rewarded.'
Courage	Peterson and Park (2009)	0.851	1-5	5	'I have taken frequent stands in the face of strong opposition.'
Selfergy	Paraskevopoulou and Apospori (2016)	0.841	1-7	5	'I have made my job my own.'

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix of Study Variables

	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3	4
1. Calling	5.03	1.00	.783	1	.132	.071	.365**
2. Locus of control	4.28	.69	.709		1	.116	.214**
3. Courage	3.65	.81	.851			1	.256**
4. Selfergy	5.38	.96	.841				1

*Notes: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$*