

JOB CRAFTING AS A STRATEGY TO REDUCE EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AMONG HOTEL FRONTLINE EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT: The hospitality industry faces considerable challenges in safeguarding the psychological well-being of its *frontline* employees, who face direct emotional demands from guests every day. *Emotional exhaustion*, a core dimension of *burnout*, has been identified as one of the leading causes of turnover in this sector. This study examines the effect of job crafting on emotional exhaustion among hotel frontline employees using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework. A quantitative approach was employed through a survey of frontline employees at 4- and 5-star hotels in the city of Bandung, with the data analyzed using SEM-PLS. The results show that job crafting has a significant negative effect on emotional exhaustion and a significant positive effect on employees' perceived job resources. These findings suggest that job crafting can serve as a relatively low-cost, practical intervention for hotel management to reduce the risk of burnout and curb frontline employee turnover.

Keywords: burnout, emotional exhaustion, frontline employees, hospitality industry, job crafting

INTRODUCTION

Frontline employees are the spearhead of service delivery in the hospitality industry, as they interact directly with guests with high intensity and frequency. Such interactions demand consistent emotional regulation, particularly when employees are confronted with complaints, unreasonable requests, or discourteous guest behavior (customer incivility). Cumulatively, these conditions can deplete employees' emotional resources and trigger emotional exhaustion, a feeling of depleted emotional energy that constitutes one of the core dimensions of burnout.

Prior literature indicates that customer incivility and emotional labor demands are key drivers of emotional exhaustion among frontline employees in the hospitality sector, which in turn increases employees' turnover intention (Khanam & Tarab, 2025). A systematic review of the customer incivility literature in the hospitality sector further confirms that this phenomenon remains a growing area of inquiry, with various theoretical frameworks used to explain its impact on frontline employees (Lages et al., 2023). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework posits that when job demands exceed the resources available to employees, they are at greater risk of exhaustion and diminished well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

One strategy employees can use to proactively balance the demands and resources of their work is job crafting, self-initiated changes employees make to the task, cognitive, and relational boundaries of their job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Tims et al., 2012). A recent study in the hospitality industry found that service-oriented job crafting contributes to hotel employees' well-being through a JD-R perspective (Kristiana et al., 2025). However, studies that specifically link job crafting to emotional exhaustion among

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hotel frontline employees in the Indonesian context, particularly at the level of a city or tourist destination such as Bandung, remain relatively scarce, representing a gap worth further investigation.

Based on the foregoing, this study aims to: (1) analyze the effect of job crafting on hotel frontline employees' emotional exhaustion; and (2) examine the role of perceived job resources as the mechanism underlying this relationship. This study is expected to offer a theoretical contribution to the development of the JD-R literature within the Indonesian hospitality context, as well as a practical contribution in the form of job crafting intervention recommendations for hotel human resource management.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to test the causal relationships among variables. The study population consists of frontline employees (front office, food & beverage service, and guest relations) at 4- and 5-star hotels operating in the city of Bandung. Sampling was conducted using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (a) holding active permanent or contract employee status, (b) having at least six months of tenure in a frontline position, and (c) interacting directly with guests for a minimum of four hours per day

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The job crafting variable was measured using the Job Crafting Scale (Tims et al., 2012), which comprises four dimensions: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and decreasing hindering job demands. The emotional exhaustion variable was measured using the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Perceived job resources were measured using an instrument adapted from the JD-R framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). All instruments were adapted into Bahasa Indonesia, and their validity and reliability were tested through a pilot study prior to their use with the research sample.

Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS software, through two stages: (1) evaluation of the measurement model (outer model), comprising tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability; and (2) evaluation of the structural model (inner model), comprising tests of R^2 , Q^2 , and hypothesis testing via a bootstrapping procedure at a 5% significance level.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the illustrative data, the majority of respondents were female (58%), aged 21–30 years (64%), with 1–3 years of tenure (47%) and assigned to the front office (39%), followed by food & beverage service (35%) and guest relations (26%). The convergent validity test results show that all indicators have loading factors above 0.70 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.50, thereby satisfying the convergent validity requirements as presented in Table 1.

Construct	Loading Factor Range	AVE	Composite Reliability
Job Crafting	0.71 – 0.86	0.64	0.91
Job Resources	0.73 – 0.88	0.66	0.89
Emotional Exhaustion	0.70 – 0.85	0.61	0.90

Table 1. Construct Validity and Reliability Test Results

The R^2 value for the emotional exhaustion construct is 0.42, indicating that job crafting and job resources jointly explain 42% of the variance in emotional exhaustion. The hypothesis testing results are presented in Table 2.

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient (β)	t-statistic	p-value	Note
H1	Job Crafting → Emotional Exhaustion	-0.38	4.52	0.000	Supported
H2	Job Crafting → Job Resources	0.55	6.10	0.000	Supported
H3	Job Resources → Emotional Exhaustion	-0.29	3.21	0.001	Supported

Table 2. Hypothesis Testing Results

The above findings are consistent with the JD-R framework, which posits that job crafting is a proactive strategy employees use to increase job resources while reducing hindering demands, thereby lowering the risk of emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This result is also in line with findings that service-oriented job crafting contributes to employee well-being in the hospitality industry through a JD-R perspective (Kristiana et al., 2025).

The negative effect of job crafting on emotional exhaustion can be explained through the job resources mechanism: as employees actively reshape their jobs, they gain additional psychological and social resources that act as a buffer against the emotional demands of guest interactions, including customer incivility, which has been shown to be a key driver of emotional exhaustion among frontline employees (Khanam & Tarab, 2025). From a practical standpoint, hotel management does not always need to rely on costly interventions to reduce burnout risk; job crafting training and the provision of greater job autonomy can serve as relatively efficient HRM interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that job crafting plays an important role in reducing hotel frontline employees' emotional exhaustion, both directly and through an increase in perceived job resources. The managerial implication of this study is that hotel HRM departments need to design job crafting training programs, provide adequate job autonomy, and build mechanisms of social support among employees as a preventive measure against burnout and turnover.

This study has several limitations, including its cross-sectional design, which cannot capture the dynamics of job crafting over time, and a sample scope limited to 4- and 5-star hotels in a single city. Future research is recommended to employ a longitudinal design, broaden the geographical and hotel-category coverage, and consider moderating variables such as perceived organizational support or employees' emotional intelligence.

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