

The Mediating Role of Job Crafting in Transformational Leadership Amid AI Implementation in The Workplace: A Literature Review

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Abstract. Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping work design and raising questions about how leadership supports employee adaptation. This literature review examines job crafting as a potential mechanism linking transformational leadership with employee performance during AI implementation. Drawing on the studies assembled in the source manuscript, the review synthesizes evidence concerning leader support, autonomy, psychological safety, proactive work redesign, and AI-related demands. The synthesis suggests that transformational leadership may encourage promotion-focused job crafting by strengthening employees' motivation and capacity to seek resources, develop skills, and reconfigure tasks. AI can create opportunities for such adaptation while also imposing algorithmic constraints and job insecurity. However, existing findings do not establish a uniform causal mediation effect across AI-enabled workplaces. The paper proposes an integrative interpretation based on Job Demands–Resources theory and identifies boundary conditions involving task interdependence, digital capability, and organizational support. Practical implications emphasize leadership development and employee participation in the redesign of AI-mediated work.

1 Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly embedded in organizational workflows, changing the distribution of tasks, access to information, and expectations of employee performance. Beyond the automation of routine work, generative and algorithmic systems can alter how employees exercise discretion, collaborate, and interpret their professional roles (Bankins et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2025). Organizational responses therefore require more than technical adoption: employees must continually reassess the resources and demands associated with their work.

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Transformational leadership may be particularly relevant to these changes. By articulating a shared vision, encouraging experimentation, and responding to individual development needs, transformational leaders can create conditions in which employees approach uncertainty as a learning opportunity. Research on leadership and adaptive performance supports the significance of enabling resources for adjustment, although relationships may depend on organizational context (Bonini et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2025). Job crafting captures employees' proactive efforts to modify aspects of their tasks, relationships, and understanding of work, rather than relying solely on formal top-down job redesign (Wang, 2017).

Existing research links leadership with job crafting and employees' work outcomes, while newer studies examine AI-related resources, insecurity, and technology-enabled crafting (He et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2025; Sha & Chai, 2025). Yet the available scholarship does not consistently test the complete transformational leadership–job crafting–performance pathway within the same AI implementation context. The principal gap is therefore not the absence of evidence on individual relationships, but the limited integration of their mechanisms and boundary conditions.

This review addresses two questions: (1) How might transformational leadership support employees' job crafting during AI implementation? (2) Under what conditions could job crafting explain the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance? Rather than assuming causality from cross-sectional or conceptually adjacent studies, the review distinguishes documented associations from a proposed mediating mechanism. Its contribution is a concise, AI-sensitive synthesis of employee agency, leadership support, and technological constraints.

2 Theoretical Framework

Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory offers a useful lens for interpreting employees' adaptation to AI. From this perspective, job resources such as autonomy, supportive supervision, and learning opportunities can help people manage demands and sustain engagement. Job crafting is understood as employees' proactive adjustment of available resources and job demands. Leadership may influence the feasibility of those adjustments, but the process also depends on work structures and individual capabilities (Kim & Beehr, 2019; Wojtczuk-Turek, 2022).

This study considers transformational leadership through inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These behaviours may encourage employees to seek knowledge, experiment with work procedures, and negotiate responsibilities as new technologies enter the workflow. Studies of leaders' AI-related signalling suggest that the manner in which managers frame AI can stimulate job crafting (He et al., 2023). In this view, leadership provides a social and motivational resource rather than directly determining each employee's role redesign.

Job crafting is not a single uniformly beneficial activity. Promotion-focused crafting, such as seeking resources and challenges, may support growth and performance, whereas preventing or reducing demands may have different consequences depending on employee well-being and team interdependence (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2018). This distinction matters in AI-enabled work: employees might develop prompts, redistribute routine tasks, or invest newly available time in higher-value activities, but

rigid workflow systems and algorithmic monitoring may restrict the changes they can make (Law & Varanasi, 2025; Sha & Chai, 2025).

The proposed relationship is thus conditional: transformational leadership may strengthen access to psychological and organizational resources; those resources may enable promotion-focused job crafting; and suitable crafting practices may contribute to performance. Digital literacy, task interdependence, work autonomy, and AI-related insecurity plausibly shape this pathway. The review treats this sequence as a conceptual synthesis, not as a statistically proven mediation model.

3 Review Approach

This article is a structured narrative synthesis of the research assembled in the original manuscript, covering leadership, job crafting, AI implementation, and employee outcomes. The source manuscript describes a search of scholarly databases and references PRISMA 2020; however, it reports inconsistent numbers of reviewed studies (12 and 40) and does not supply a fully reproducible screening record, search dates, or study-level extraction table. Accordingly, the revised article does not claim verified PRISMA compliance or present an unsupported quantitative count of included studies. The synthesis was organized around three analytic questions: how leaders enable crafting, how AI changes opportunities and constraints for crafting, and which outcomes and boundary conditions are supported by the cited literature. Preference was given to research directly informing these themes. Published relationships are characterized as reported by the cited studies, while cross-study integration and implications are identified as interpretations. A future systematic review should publish the complete Boolean strategy, databases, eligibility decisions, PRISMA flow counts, and an appraisal of study quality.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Leadership as A Resource for Proactive Work Redesign

Across the reviewed research, a recurring theme is that employees are better placed to craft their work when leaders provide developmental support and room for initiative. Leadership can foster employees' perceived competence and motivation to expand resources or pursue new challenges. Studies of empowering, inclusive, and transformational leadership support links between leader behavior and proactive crafting, although their constructs and settings are not interchangeable (Guo et al., 2022; Kim & Beehr, 2019; Wang, 2017; Wojtczuk-Turek, 2022). The implications for AI are strongest where employee experimentation is both permitted and supported.

Research addressing AI-related leader behaviors adds contextual relevance. Leaders who frame AI as a meaningful organizational resource may encourage employees to identify new work possibilities instead of responding only defensively to technological change (He et al., 2023). This is compatible with JD-R reasoning: vision and support may improve access to resources needed to revise tasks and acquire capabilities. Yet positive leadership alone cannot eliminate deficient training, restrictive procedures, or inadequate system access. Related work on employee self-efficacy and proactive

personality underlines the contribution of individual resources (Jeong et al., 2022; Murniasih, 2023).

4.2 Job Crafting between AI Demands and Performance

AI implementation creates a dual condition. Intelligent tools may reduce repetitive work, expand informational resources, and enable employees to redirect effort to more complex tasks. At the same time, uncertain job prospects, skill obsolescence, algorithmic opacity, and heightened monitoring may create new demands (Bankins et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2025; Sha & Chai, 2025). Job crafting offers a plausible mechanism for employees to reconcile these pressures, but its effectiveness depends on the form of crafting and the scope for meaningful discretion.

Prior research distinguishes growth-oriented crafting from efforts primarily directed toward avoiding demands. Crafting that increases relevant resources and developmental challenges is associated with healthier performance-related outcomes, while other forms of crafting may be less beneficial in certain settings (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2018). Under AI implementation, workers may craft tasks by reallocating activities between humans and machines, craft relationships by seeking technical support, or cognitively reframe their contribution as judgment, creativity, and oversight. Evidence concerning generative AI suggests emerging forms of technology-related crafting, although sector-specific and longitudinal confirmation is needed (Law & Varanasi, 2025; Liu et al., 2025).

4.3 Boundary Conditions and Interpretation of Mediation

The mediating argument should be framed carefully. Several studies document links among leadership, proactive work behaviours, and performance; others address the AI-crafting relationship. These separate findings make a mediation model credible, but do not by themselves verify that job crafting statistically mediates transformational leadership and performance during AI implementation. Longitudinal or experimental testing is needed to establish the timing and direction of effects and to distinguish them from reciprocal influence.

Task interdependence is one potential boundary condition: employees cannot unilaterally change work that relies on closely coordinated team processes. Similarly, algorithmic management can reduce discretion even when supervisors encourage initiative. AI-related insecurity may motivate the acquisition of new resources, but can also produce defensive responses (Sha & Chai, 2025). Digital capability and confidence may influence whether individuals recognize and use crafting opportunities. These conditions help explain why leadership may have different effects across settings. Conceptual discussions of agility and analyses of digital work contexts likewise point to organizational contingency (Dhanpat, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025).

This synthesis therefore proposes a conditional process rather than a universal formula. Transformational leadership may support resource acquisition and psychological safety; these conditions can encourage promotion-focused job crafting; and well-aligned work redesign may strengthen adaptation and employee performance. Where employees lack meaningful autonomy, access to learning, or clarity about AI decisions, this pathway may be weakened. The interpretation extends the JD–R

framework to include the distinctive constraints of AI-mediated work without claiming that the reviewed studies already establish causal proof.

4.4 Implications for Management and Research

Organizations should equip managers to explain AI systems' purpose and limits, support skill development, and invite employees to redesign feasible parts of their work. Pilot initiatives can focus on concrete adjustments (such as reassigning routine tasks, improving human verification of AI outputs, and sharing effective practices) while evaluating workload, quality, employee well-being, and performance. Participation should be supported by clear rules for data use, accountability, and decisions that must remain under human supervision.

Future research should test the proposed mediation through multiple measurement waves and assess whether the effects differ by AI maturity, occupational context, digital literacy, and task interdependence. More explicit measurement of task, relational, cognitive, and technology-related crafting would clarify which behaviors benefit employees and organizations. Researchers should also examine potential costs, including intensified work, unequal access to AI resources, and reduced discretion under algorithmic management.

5 Conclusion

The reviewed literature indicates that transformational leadership can provide motivational and social resources for employee job crafting during technological change. AI implementation makes this process especially important because it simultaneously creates opportunities to redesign tasks and new constraints on discretion. Promotion-focused crafting is a plausible bridge to adaptation and performance, but the reviewed evidence does not conclusively establish a universal or causal mediating effect in AI-enabled settings. The resulting framework emphasizes how leadership support, employee agency, organizational conditions, and technological design interact. Its principal practical implication is to combine responsible AI implementation with leader-supported opportunities for meaningful, employee-driven work redesign.

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