Journal of Psychology in Africa, 2026
Vol. 36, No. 5, 841–852, http://doi.org/10.32604/jpa.2026.072413

Job satisfaction in Eswatini's energy sector: The sequential mediation of job crafting through engagement and commitment

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Received: 26 August 2025; Accepted: 21 April 2026; Published: 30 October 2026

Abstract: Background: This study examined the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction among employees in Eswatini's energy sector, with work engagement and organisational commitment as sequential mediators. **Method:** A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 235 blue- and white-collar employees. Data were analysed using PROCESS macro Model 6 to test sequential mediation, and independent-samples *t*-tests were used to assess group differences. **Results:** No direct relationship was found between job crafting and job satisfaction. However, a significant indirect effect emerged: job crafting increased work engagement, which enhanced organisational commitment and, in turn, job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.211$, 95% CI [0.117, 0.319]). White-collar employees reported significantly higher job satisfaction than blue-collar employees (M = 5.04 vs. 4.39, $p < 0.001$, $\eta^2 = 0.14$). **Conclusion:** Job crafting appears to influence job satisfaction indirectly through engagement and commitment pathways. The findings contribute to sub-Saharan African research and suggest the value of interventions that strengthen employee engagement and organisational commitment in energy sector contexts.

Keywords: Blue- and white-collar workers; Eswatini energy sector; job crafting; job satisfaction; organisational commitment; sequential mediation; work engagement

Introduction

The energy sector in Eswatini operates as a state-owned enterprise employing approximately 700 permanent employees responsible for electricity generation, transmission and distribution throughout the country. Similar to many organisations worldwide, the sector is experiencing substantial transformation resulting from technological developments, economic uncertainty and political pressures. The emergence of Industry 4.0 (I4.0) technologies and the disruptions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic have further increased the need for adaptive and proactive employee behaviours in rapidly evolving workplaces (Marx et al., 2025). These developments influence the balance between job demands and available resources, requiring employees to continuously adjust their approach to and experience of their work (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Within this environment, job crafting becomes particularly important, as it enables employees to modify aspects of their work to support adaptability and sustained engagement.

Proactive behaviour can be understood as self-directed, future-oriented action aimed at improving personal or organisational circumstances (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). One expression of such behaviour is job crafting, in which employees intentionally change elements of their work roles to better align with their strengths, preferences, and work-related needs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Job crafting has been consistently associated with a range of positive work outcomes, including enhanced work engagement, stronger organisational commitment, improved job performance and greater job satisfaction, while simultaneously reducing occupational strain and turnover intentions (Silapurem et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022). Despite growing global interest, there is insufficient empirical evidence on how job crafting manifests within sub-Saharan African workplaces, particularly in critical infrastructure industries such as energy provision.

The socio-cultural environment of Eswatini may further influence how employees perceive and respond to work. This country is generally characterised by collectivist values and relatively strong hierarchical structures that emphasise authority and group harmony. In such contexts, employees may hesitate to engage in behaviours that could be interpreted as challenging managerial decisions or established organisational norms (Chabika et al., 2024; Triguero-Sánchez et al., 2022). Consequently, organisational commitment may be shaped more strongly by collective loyalty and social belonging than by individual career preferences. These cultural dynamics may therefore affect how employees experience job crafting, engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction in the workplace.

An important gap in the literature concerns how job crafting differs across occupational categories (Ghazzawi et al., 2025). Within the Eswatini energy sector, employees occupy both blue-collar and white-collar positions, each associated with distinct working conditions, levels of autonomy and access to organisational resources. Blue-collar workers, who occupy technical, operational, and manual roles, often face standardised tasks, limited autonomy, and poor working conditions (Stengård et al., 2023), which may limit opportunities for independent decision-making and proactive role modification (Demerouti et al., 2021). Yet, as the emerging literature suggests, even workers in routine or collaborative roles can benefit from job-crafting practices and interventions

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(Signore et al., 2023). In contrast, white-collar employees usually fulfil administrative, professional or managerial roles that involve greater cognitive complexity, planning responsibilities and decision-making authority (Mainka et al., 2025). Such conditions may provide employees with greater opportunities to shape their work experiences, potentially strengthening feelings of control, meaning, and satisfaction within their roles. Consequently, a higher degree of independence, sense of meaning and control over one's work may lead to increased job satisfaction. Nigerian authors Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017) similarly argue that job-crafting behaviours contribute to greater job satisfaction by fostering a sense of meaningfulness and fulfilment among employees. Those who perceive greater control at work report not only greater satisfaction but also increased commitment, motivation and performance, along with lower stress and turnover intentions (Polatçı & Sobaci, 2020).

While some studies have explored the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction in various sectors in sub-Saharan Africa, including mining and manufacturing (de Beer et al., 2016), education (Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017) and construction (Thomas et al., 2020), limited research has focused specifically on the energy industry and the context of Eswatini. Thus, implementing job crafting interventions for both blue- and white-collar employees in Eswatini's energy sector could boost job satisfaction, increase work engagement, and strengthen organisational commitment (Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017). However, little attention has been given to the sequential mediating roles of work engagement and organisational commitment in the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction, particularly in this context. Examining these mediating mechanisms is important because it may provide deeper insight into how proactive work behaviours contribute to employee satisfaction and positive organisational outcomes (Hayes, 2022).

Work engagement, defined as a positive and fulfilling work-related state of mind marked by high energy, dedication, and absorption in work (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015), is a key concept for understanding how job crafting leads to positive results. Employees who are highly engaged typically demonstrate elevated levels of enthusiasm, persistence and energy in their roles, which may strengthen their emotional attachment to the organisation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Organisational commitment, in turn, reflects the extent to which employees identify with and feel psychologically connected to their organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Previous studies have shown that both work engagement and organisational commitment are associated with favourable employee outcomes, including improved performance and increased job satisfaction (see Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017). However, their combined mediating role in the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction has received limited scholarly attention, particularly in African public-sector organisations.

Goals of the Study

This study sought to address the identified empirical gaps by investigating the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction, and examining the sequential mediating role of work engagement and organisational commitment among blue- and white-collar employees in Eswatini's energy sector. Another aim was to determine whether blue- and white-collar workers differ significantly regarding these variables. In doing so, the researchers sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of proactive work behaviours in under-researched contexts, inform evidence-based human resource management (HRM) interventions, and provide insights into how different employee groups experience and benefit from job crafting in a changing world of work.

Theoretical Framework

The rapid evolution of work, driven by technological, political and socioeconomic forces, has necessitated a shift in how organisations manage human resources, particularly in critical sectors such as energy. The EEC, a state-owned enterprise located within the Kingdom of Eswatini, is undergoing rapid transformation due to technological advances, digitisation, and the broader effects of I4.0, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. These changes have altered job roles, for example, remote machine operation, and intensified the need for adaptable, proactive employees. In this sector, job crafting may be especially valuable to employees navigating transitions in work methods, tools and expectations.

The interplay between job crafting and job satisfaction

The concept of job crafting, introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), refers to employees' self-initiated actions aimed at shaping, redefining and personalising aspects of their work to align with their skills, preferences and values. By taking greater control over the design and nature of their jobs, employees can experience increased meaning and purpose in their work. Job crafting, therefore, enables employees to enhance their sense of fulfilment through three primary avenues: (1) modifying the tasks they perform, (2) altering the way they perceive those tasks, and (3) shaping the social interactions and relationships they engage in at work (Berg et al., 2013).

Expanding on this perspective, Tims et al. (2012) conceptualise job crafting within the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), highlighting how employees proactively adjust aspects of their work environment—specifically job demands and resources—to better align with their individual preferences, skills and abilities. In this context, job crafting refers specifically to self-initiated behaviours through which employees make actual changes to the levels of their job demands or resources. These adjustments may include increasing structural resources (e.g., opportunities for learning and growth), reducing hindering demands (e.g., minimising emotional or cognitive strain), increasing challenging demands (e.g., volunteering for engaging new projects) and enhancing social resources (e.g., seeking feedback and support from colleagues and supervisors) (Tims et al., 2012). According to Zhang et al. (2024), such proactive modifications can boost motivation, particularly through work engagement, and lead to improved outcomes such as job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Job satisfaction, which reflects an employee's affective and cognitive evaluation of their work, is closely associated with performance, retention and organisational citizenship behaviours. Job satisfaction is essential for employees to engage meaningfully with their work environment and contribute effectively to organisational goals. Research has consistently shown a positive relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction (Amillano et al., 2024). Employees who proactively shape their jobs tend to report higher levels of satisfaction, as job crafting aligns work with their personal skills, preferences and motivations, thereby improving their level of job satisfaction and overall well-being (Almasradi et al., 2023). Not all studies report a direct link, however, some highlight the importance of mediating variables such as engagement and commitment in translating crafting into satisfaction.

Work engagement and organisational commitment as mediators

Work engagement is defined as a fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterised by vigor, dedication and absorption (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2015). Engaged employees are enthusiastic about their work, committed to the organisation's mission and vision, and often go beyond their formal job responsibilities. Their collective efforts significantly contribute to increased productivity, improved team effectiveness, and enhanced organisational competitiveness and strategic advantage (Govender & Bussin, 2020). Engagement has also been consistently associated with proactive behaviours and enhanced job performance. For example, Nissinen et al. (2022) and Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017) found that employees who engage in job crafting behaviours tend to experience higher levels of engagement, which in turn positively influences job satisfaction. Thus, when employees craft their work around their personal strengths, they not only perform at a higher level but also experience greater authenticity and energy (Yang et al., 2021). This alignment fosters positive work experiences, including a sense of control, autonomy, and deep concentration, which ultimately enhance creativity, motivation, and overall job satisfaction.

Organisational commitment—especially its affective component—refers to an employee's emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in an organisation (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees who proactively craft their roles are more likely to develop such an emotional bond, as they shape their work environment to better align with their personal needs, values and strengths. This alignment fosters a stronger sense of belonging, which in turn enhances organisational commitment. While commitment has a well-documented influence on job satisfaction (Moshabi et al., 2024), its role as a mediator in the job crafting–satisfaction relationship remains underexplored, particularly in sub-Saharan African public enterprises.

Thus, while work engagement is often conceptualised as a more immediate, effective response to job characteristics, reflecting employees' energy, involvement and absorption in their work, organisational commitment, in contrast, represents a more stable and enduring psychological attachment to the organisation. Consequently, engagement may function as an antecedent to commitment, whereby employees who experience higher levels of energy and involvement in their work are more likely to develop stronger emotional bonds with their organisation.

Research on the serial mediation pathway involving job crafting, work engagement, organisational commitment and job satisfaction remains limited. Studies by Ogbuanya and Chukwuedo (2017) and Yogantara and Zona (2023), however, suggest a dual mediation pathway in which job crafting enhances both engagement and commitment, which in turn contribute to greater job satisfaction. Despite these findings, empirical research in the African context remains limited, particularly in sectors that employ both blue- and white-collar workers.

The theoretical model is presented in Figure 1.

Based on the JD-R (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) theory, the researchers propose a serial mediation pathway in which job crafting can increase employees' access to job resources or help them manage job demands more effectively. According to this theory, job resources are associated with greater work engagement. For their part, engaged employees are more likely to develop stronger affective bonds with their organisations, which would be reflected in stronger organisational commitment. This increased commitment is expected to lead to more positive evaluations of one's job, thereby increasing job satisfaction. This sequence provides a theoretical basis for the proposed serial mediation pathway in Figure 1.

Occupational differences between blue- and white-collar workers

The Eswatini energy sector comprises both blue- and white-collar employees, whose roles vary significantly in terms of autonomy, task complexity and access to job resources (Mainka et al., 2025). As Mainka et al. (2025) point out, these occupational differences are important to consider when examining job crafting and its outcomes. Blue-collar workers typically perform more manual, standardised tasks and may have limited autonomy, fewer opportunities for development, and restricted access to resources—all of which can constrain their ability to engage in job crafting, especially task and relational crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Zhang et al., 2024). Despite these constraints, emerging research (e.g., Dotto, 2023; Signore et al., 2023) suggests that even in rigid work environments, blue-collar employees may still engage in forms of job crafting, for instance by reducing hindering demands or seeking support from colleagues. To demonstrate, Dotto (2023) concludes that job crafting among low-skilled workers serves as an effective strategy for managing stress, enhancing motivation, fostering teamwork and driving innovation, while also enabling workers to autonomously establish rules that better suit their needs in the workplace.

In contrast, white-collar employees generally occupy more knowledge-intensive, flexible roles that offer greater autonomy, discretion, and access to structural and social job resources (Tims & Bakker, 2010). These conditions, which are conducive to all three forms of job crafting—task, cognitive and relational—may result in higher levels of engagement, commitment and satisfaction.

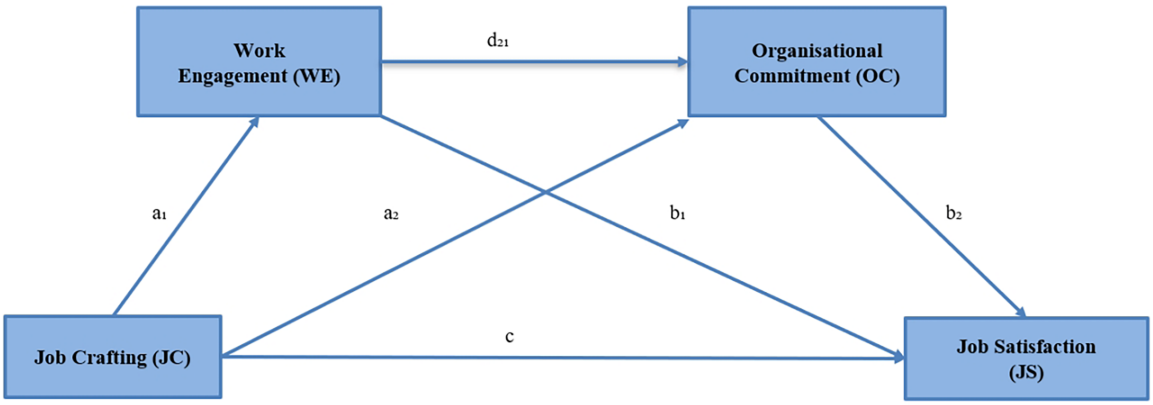

Figure 1. Hypothesised mediation model: Pathways from job crafting to job satisfaction, mediated by work engagement and organisational commitment. *Note*. Researcher's own compilation; a_1, a_2: Effects of X on M_1 and M_2, respectively; b_1, b_2: Effects of M_1 and M_2 on Y, respectively; c: Total effect of X on Y; d_{21}: Total effect of X on Y, including direct and indirect effects.

As Roczniewska and Puchalska-Kamińska (2017) observe, individuals in higher-level organisational positions tend to seek more challenging job demands and engage more frequently in structural and social crafting. Hornung (2019) similarly reported that task crafting is more common among higher-level employees due to the greater sense of control and impact it affords, whereas lower-level employees may rely more on cognitive crafting to make their work feel meaningful.

These differences in job characteristics and opportunities for crafting also influence employee outcomes such as job satisfaction, work engagement and organisational commitment. For instance, Issa Gazi et al. (2022) found that employees in senior positions reported significantly higher levels of job satisfaction than those in lower ranks—largely due to increased status, higher salaries, and greater opportunities for self-direction. Similarly, despite being an older study, Lapasaran et al. (2019) found that white-collar workers were more satisfied with their jobs than their blue-collar counterparts.

Work engagement also appears to differ by occupational level. According to Jaworek (2017), managerial (white-collar) roles are typically associated with greater autonomy, job control and access to development resources—factors closely tied to engagement, according to the JD-R and Conservation of Resources (COR; Hobfoll & Ford, 2007) theories. The same study found that blue-collar workers reported lower engagement than managers. Notably, Hakanen et al. (2019) emphasise that work engagement is shaped by individual, job-related and contextual factors, such as level of education, contract type and industry. Blue-collar employees—particularly those with lower levels of education—may therefore require targeted interventions to foster engagement in their roles.

In terms of organisational commitment, the evidence is mixed yet insightful. While high-level employees may benefit from structural advantages, Oh et al. (2021) found that non-managerial employees in a Korean hotel showed increased motivation and commitment when they experienced a positive organisational culture and were empowered through structural changes. This suggests that even lower-level employees can develop strong organisational commitment when given autonomy and recognition. Collectively, these theoretical and empirical insights highlight the multifaceted influence of job level and role type on job-crafting behaviours and their outcomes.

Drawing from the discussion above, the following hypotheses were proposed for this study:

Hypothesis 1: Job crafting has a positive indirect effect on job satisfaction, with this relationship being sequentially mediated by work engagement and organisational commitment among employees in the Eswatini energy sector.

Hypothesis 2: There are significant differences between blue-collar and white-collar employees in terms of the levels of job crafting, work engagement, organisational commitment and job satisfaction.

Method

Population and setting

The sample, comprising 726 blue- and white-collar employees from Eswatini's energy sector, was aged 22–60 and permanently employed. Both job categories were included due to their prevalence in the sector and the shared challenges of high workloads, conflicting expectations, and excessive role demands.

A non-probability convenience sampling strategy was employed, yielding a total of 251 completed questionnaires (122 paper-based and 129 online submissions). No dataset errors were detected; however, 15 cases with missing values were excluded, along with one pilot test entry. No duplicate cases were identified. Consequently, 235 responses were retained for further analysis.

The sample mainly comprised male employees (70.2%), with the majority aged between 35 and 44 (39.1%). Most respondents held permanent positions (93.6%), with technicians (24.3%) representing the largest occupational group, followed by linesmen (14%). In terms of organisational division, the majority were employed in Operations (66.4%). Tenure distribution indicated that 28.9 per cent of respondents had 1–5 years of work experience, while 25.5 per cent had 6–10 years. Regarding educational qualifications, the largest proportion held a National Diploma in Electrical/Mechanical Engineering (26%), followed by a Bachelor's degree (23.4%).

Measures

A cross-sectional study was conducted to assess the formulated hypotheses, and the measurement instruments employed were selected based on their validity, reliability and widespread use in the existing literature.

The 21-item Job Crafting Scale (JCS) developed by Tims et al. (2012) measures job-crafting behaviours—the extent to which employees proactively modify their job demands and resources to better align with their strengths, preferences and abilities—through four dimensions: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands and decreasing hindering job demands. Respondents were required to rate the frequency of these behaviours on a five-point Likert scale ("never" to "very often"). The JCS exhibits good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.73 to 0.77 (Tims et al., 2012).

The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), developed by Spector (1985), assesses job satisfaction across nine facets (pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworkers, nature of work and communication) using a 36-item scale. The items are rated on a six-point agreement scale (ranging from 1 = "disagree very much" to 6 = "agree very much"), with internal consistency demonstrated by a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91 (Spector, 1985).

The 17-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002), evaluates work engagement through three sub-dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption, using a seven-point Likert scale (ranging from 0 = "never" to 6 = "always"). UWES is a widely used instrument for measuring work engagement and has demonstrated high reliability across numerous studies.

Finally, the Organisational Commitment Scale (OCS) is a widely used tool to measure employee commitment, based on Meyer and Allen's tri-component model (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It assesses three types of commitment: affective (emotional attachment), continuance (cost of leaving) and normative (sense of obligation). The OCS, a 24-item questionnaire, has proven to be reliable across various organisational settings (Mitonga-Monga et al., 2023), with Cronbach's alpha typically above 0.70 for each dimension.

A biographical questionnaire was also included to gather demographic and job-related information to characterise the sample.

Data-collection procedure

Data collection was conducted using a survey approach, utilising validated and reliable questionnaires, distributed in both electronic and paper-based formats. The university's Research Ethics Committee granted ethical clearance, and permission was obtained from the EEC. Ethical approval for the study was obtained under reference number 0623–Department of Human Resource Management Research and Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa (Unisa) (Reference No. 0623). All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary involvement throughout the study.

A designated gatekeeper distributed paper questionnaires to blue-collar workers during their weekly safety talks. The completed questionnaires were then returned to the designated boxes at their workstations. Meanwhile, white-collar employees completed the questionnaire electronically, using LimeSurvey. An independent third party emailed these employees a link to the survey, along with a respondent information sheet. This link directed respondents to the online platform, where their responses were captured anonymously.

Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, who were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses.

Data analysis

The data were quantitatively analysed using IBM SPSS (version 29) and the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2022). To investigate the serial mediating roles of work engagement and organisational commitment in the association between job crafting and job satisfaction, a mediation analysis was conducted using the PROCESS macro (version 4.0) developed by Hayes (2022). Model 6 was employed to test the hypothesised sequential mediation, positing that job-crafting behaviour influences employees' level of job satisfaction through work engagement and organisational commitment. Model 6 was chosen because it allows for an examination of the sequential nature of these mediating processes. Indirect effects were estimated using 5000 bootstrap samples to provide more robust confidence intervals. The analysis estimated the direct effect of job crafting on job satisfaction, as well as the indirect effects through the specified mediators. The product of the unstandardised path coefficients was used to quantify the indirect effects.

To determine whether there were statistically significant differences in the means of the study variables between the two groups, blue–collar and white-collar workers, independent samples *t*-tests were conducted. Notably, these tests compare the means of two independent groups to assess whether the observed difference is statistically significant (Pallant, 2020). Before performing the *t*-tests, Levene's Test for Equality of Variances was used to assess the assumption of homogeneity of variances. A *p*-value of ≤ 0.05 was used as the threshold for statistical significance, indicating that any observed mean difference was unlikely to have occurred by chance. When Levene's Test indicated unequal variances, the results of the adjusted *t*-test, which did not assume equal variances, were reported (Pallant, 2020).

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Before conducting the mediation analysis, descriptive statistics were calculated for each scale to understand the data distribution. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the sub-scales (DeVellis & Thorpe, 2016). For the current sample, the reliability estimates were as follows: job crafting ($\alpha = 0.70$), work engagement ($\alpha = 0.88$), organisational commitment ($\alpha = 0.62$) and job satisfaction

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4
1. Job crafting	3.43	0.54	0.70	—			
2. Job satisfaction	3.46	0.67	0.76	0.09	—		
3. Work engagement	4.91	0.10	0.88	0.36*	0.42*	—	
4. Organisational commitment	4.16	0.91	0.62	0.17*	0.42*	0.37	—

Note. *$p < 0.05$; $r > 0.10$ (small effect); $r > 0.30$ (medium effect); $r > 0.50$ (large effect).

Table 2. Sequential mediation analysis of job crafting on job satisfaction through work engagement and organisational commitment

Effect	Pathway	β	BootSE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	Significance
Total effect	JC → JS	0.113	0.080	−0.045	0.271	Not significant ($p = 0.159$)
Direct effect	JC → JS (controlling for mediators)	−0.098	0.075	−0.245	0.050	Not significant ($p = 0.193$)
Total indirect effect	JC → WE & OC → JS (all pathways combined)	0.211	0.051	0.117	0.319	Significant
Indirect effect 1 (Ind1)	JC → WE → JS	0.145	0.037	0.079	0.224	Significant
Indirect effect 2 (Ind2)	JC → OC → JS	0.017	0.026	−0.030	0.071	Not significant
Indirect effect 3 (Ind3)	JC → WE → OC → JS	0.048	0.016	0.022	0.084	Significant

Note. JC = Job Crafting, WE = Work Engagement, OC = Organisational Commitment, JS = Job Satisfaction; Bootstrap confidence intervals (CI) based on 5000 samples, significance indicated when CI does not include zero; Direct and indirect effects are standardised coefficients (β); Total effect includes both direct and indirect effects.

($\alpha = 0.76$). Assumptions of normality were met (Pallant, 2020). Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients (r) were calculated to determine the linear relationships between the variables. The correlation analysis revealed significantly positive associations between job crafting and work engagement ($r = 0.36$, $n = 235$, $p = 0.00$) and job crafting and organisational commitment ($r = 0.17$, $n = 235$, $p = 0.01$). The correlation between job crafting and job satisfaction was nonsignificant ($r = 0.09$, $n = 235$, $p = 0.16$), indicating no meaningful relationship between the two variables. In contrast, work engagement showed a moderate positive correlation with both job satisfaction ($r = 0.42$, $n = 235$, $p = 0.00$) and organisational commitment ($r = 0.37$, $n = 235$, $p = 0.00$). In addition, organisational commitment was moderately correlated with job satisfaction ($r = 0.42$, $n = 235$, $p = 0.00$) (see Table 1).

Sequential mediation analysis

The results of the sequential mediation analysis are presented in Table 2.

As shown in Table 2, the direct effect of job crafting on job satisfaction was not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The negative beta ($\beta = -0.098$, $p = 0.193$, 95% CI [−0.245, 0.050]) further suggested a tendency for higher job crafting to be associated with lower job satisfaction, albeit that this relationship was weak. The analysis revealed a significant indirect effect of job crafting on job satisfaction through work engagement ($\beta = 0.145$, 95% CI [0.079, 0.224]), but not through organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.017$, 95% CI [−0.030, 0.071]) as the confidence interval included a zero. The sequential indirect effect (indirect effect 3) was statistically significant because the confidence interval did not contain a zero ($\beta = 0.048$, 95% CI [0.022, 0.084]). This indicates that job crafting positively influenced job satisfaction indirectly, by first enhancing work engagement and then organisational commitment. The total indirect effect of job crafting on job satisfaction, encompassing all the pathways, was significant ($\beta = 0.211$, 95% CI [0.117, 0.319]). However, the total effect (combining both direct and indirect effects) was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.113$, $p = 0.159$, 95% CI [−0.045, 0.271]). This implies that job crafting influenced job satisfaction primarily through the mediating roles of work engagement and, sequentially, organisational commitment. However, while there was a positive indirect effect through work engagement alone, the most substantial support was for the full sequential chain. Hypothesis 1 was thus partially supported. Figure 2 illustrates the results of the mediation analysis.

Independent samples T-tests

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the study variables between blue- and white-collar workers. The results indicated a statistically significant difference (t (111.180) = −6.31, $p = 0.000$) in the JS_WO (satisfaction with the work itself) scores, with white-collar workers ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 0.81$) reporting higher scores than their blue-collar counterparts ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.97$) (see Table 3). The mean difference, of −0.66 (95% CI: −0.918 to −0.392) suggests a meaningful effect. The magnitude of the difference, as measured

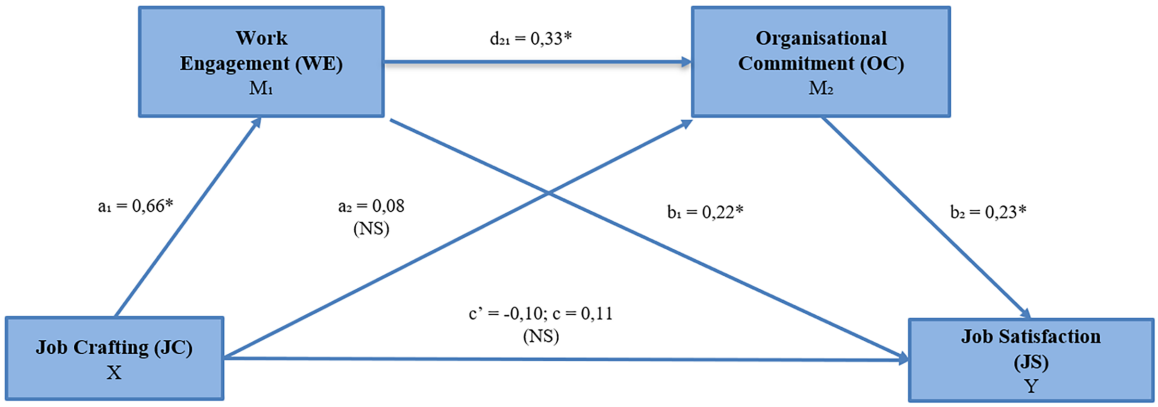

Figure 2. The mediation model: Indirect effects of job crafting on job satisfaction. *Note*. Researcher's own compilation; a_1, a_2: Effects of X on M_1 and M_2, respectively; b_1, b_2: Effects of M_1 and M_2 on Y, respectively; c': Direct effect of X on Y, controlling for mediators; d_{21}: Total effect of X on Y, including direct and indirect effects; NS: Nonsignificant; *$p < 0.05$.

Table 3. Summary of significant group differences by job level

				Levene's test for equality of variances		*t*-test for equality of means					
		M	*SD*	*F*	*Sig.*	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std error difference	95% Confidence interval of the difference
											Lower / Upper
JS_WO	Blue	4.38	0.97	4.22	0.041	−4.94	110.028	0.00	−0.66	0.133	−0.918 / −0.392
	White	5.04	0.81								

Note. Only variables with statistically significant results are included; JS_WO = Job satisfaction regarding the work itself; Levene's Test indicated a significant difference in variances ($p = 0.041$); therefore, the *t*-test, not assuming equal variances, was reported; $p \leq 0.050$ is considered statistically significant.

by eta squared ($\eta^2 = 0.14$), was moderate (Cohen, 1988). As only one statistically significant difference was found, meaning Hypothesis 2 was partially supported.

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to examine how work engagement and organisational commitment influenced the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction among blue-and white-collar employees in Eswatini's energy sector. A further aim was to determine whether significant differences existed between these two occupational groups with respect to the study variables.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the existing literature by addressing the scarcity of empirical research on job crafting within sub-Saharan Africa's energy sector. It offers insight into how job crafting is experienced differently by blue- and white-collar workers, in addition to uncovering the psychological mechanisms through which job crafting affects job satisfaction. These findings provide a foundation for evidence-based HRM interventions to be tailored to diverse occupational groups in similar contexts.

Firstly, the results of this study provided partial support for Hypothesis 1. An important and unexpected finding was that job crafting did not have a statistically significant direct effect on job satisfaction. One possible explanation is that job crafting may reduce job satisfaction when there is a misalignment between employees' crafting efforts and the structure of their roles (Ghazzawi et al., 2025). For instance, blue- and white-collar workers alike may experience this misalignment, but blue-collar roles—typically more rigid and offering fewer opportunities for meaningful job crafting—may be particularly vulnerable to negative outcomes, especially when crafting is defensive (focused on reducing demands) rather than proactive (focused on growth) (de Beer et al., 2016; Mainka et al., 2025). Also, although white-collar workers generally have more autonomy, job crafting that exceeds what the organisational culture or leadership supports may result in role conflict, work overload or diminished support, all of which can reduce job satisfaction (de Beer et al., 2016; Mainka et al., 2025).

This finding may be interpreted in light of the cultural and organisational characteristics of the Eswatini energy sector. As a state-monopolised and highly regulated industry, many roles are governed by strict operational procedures, safety protocols and hierarchical reporting structures. Such conditions may limit employees' discretion to meaningfully alter their tasks or work processes. Ongoing technological changes may also have further standardised certain work patterns, particularly in technical and operational roles. Under these circumstances, job crafting may not directly translate into higher degrees of job satisfaction, but may instead operate indirectly through increased engagement and commitment.

Secondly, the analyses revealed a significant indirect effect through work engagement alone, but not through organisational commitment alone. This suggests that when employees craft their jobs to better align with their needs

and preferences, they become more engaged in their work. This heightened engagement, in turn, enhances job satisfaction. In other words, although job crafting does not directly increase job satisfaction, it increases work engagement, which, in turn, contributes to greater job satisfaction. Conversely, the finding that organisational commitment did not have a standalone mediating effect on the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction is noteworthy. One possible explanation is that organisational commitment, defined as an affective attachment to the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1997), may not be a necessary link in the causal chain through which job crafting influences job satisfaction, because job crafting often has a direct and independent effect on job satisfaction, bypassing the need for organisational commitment as a linking mechanism. Instead, job satisfaction may be more directly shaped by the immediate work environment and task-related factors, rather than by broader organisational attachment.

Interestingly, the most substantial support was found for the full sequential mediation pathway. This indicates that job crafting enhances job satisfaction by first increasing work engagement, which then strengthens organisational commitment, ultimately leading to improved job satisfaction. It is challenging to compare these results with those of previous studies, as evidence for the sequential mediation pathway is limited, particularly within the African and (more particularly) South African contexts. Existing research, however, suggests that the mediating roles of work engagement and organisational commitment are often partial or context-dependent (Ogbuanya & Chukwuedo, 2017).

Regarding Hypothesis 2, partial support was found, as only one variable-job satisfaction with the work itself-showed statistically significant differences between blue- and white-collar employees. Specifically, white-collar workers reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their work, although the effect size was moderate. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that white-collar roles are typically associated with greater autonomy, skill utilisation and alignment between job characteristics and personal motivations, all of which are positively related to job satisfaction (Hogenelst et al., 2022). In contrast, blue-collar jobs are often more routine and physically demanding, offering fewer opportunities for personal growth or self-expression, which may contribute to lower satisfaction with the work itself (Hogenelst et al., 2022).

The absence of significant differences in the remaining variables suggests that job crafting, engagement and organisational commitment may be influenced more by underlying motivational processes and shared job resources than by occupational category alone. In addition, organisational culture and formalised work practices may function as situational constraints on job crafting, potentially minimising behavioural differences across employee groups. Measurement factors may also have contributed to the findings, as the scales used could have emphasised dimensions that do not differ substantially across occupational groups. For example, cognitive job crafting may be more universally experienced, while opportunities for task or relational crafting may be relatively similar in the structured energy-sector context. Despite these findings, globally, empirical research comparing blue- and white-collar employees in the South African and broader African contexts-particularly in sectors such as energy-remains limited, underscoring the contribution of the present study to addressing this gap.

Lastly, integrating the mediation analysis findings with observed differences in job satisfaction suggests that the sequential mediation pathway may be more pronounced among white-collar workers. Their knowledge-intensive and flexible roles, combined with greater access to job resources, likely provide them with more opportunities to engage in meaningful job-crafting behaviours (Mainka et al., 2025). In contrast, the rigid and routine nature of blue-collar jobs may limit the extent to which employees can craft their work (Demerouti et al., 2021) in ways that enhance work engagement and organisational commitment, thereby contributing to their lower overall job satisfaction. This integrated perspective suggests that the job context and occupational differences not only directly influence job satisfaction but may also affect the effectiveness of the psychological mechanisms through which proactive behaviours, such as job crafting, lead to positive outcomes.

Implications

This study makes a significant contribution to the existing literature by addressing the scarcity of empirical research on job crafting in the energy sector, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in Eswatini. It offers a deeper understanding of how proactive work behaviours manifest in under-researched environments. Of particular relevance is the cultural context in Eswatini, which may discourage employees from proactively changing roles that could be perceived as challenging established structures or managerial expectations. As a result, job-crafting behaviours may manifest differently from what would occur in more individualistic or low power-distance contexts. Similarly, in collectivist cultures, organisational commitment may be more closely linked to loyalty toward the organisation and the broader work group than to individual attitudes toward specific job characteristics. These cultural dynamics may help explain the patterns observed in the present study and highlight the importance of considering contextual factors when interpreting job crafting, engagement, and commitment.

The research is also valuable for its exploration of the mediating roles of work engagement and organisational commitment in the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction. The most substantial support was found for a full sequential mediation pathway, in which job crafting enhanced job satisfaction by first increasing work engagement, which in turn strengthened organisational commitment. This finding is especially noteworthy as existing research on this specific sequential pathway is limited, particularly within the African context.

Furthermore, the study addresses a notable gap in the literature by distinguishing how job crafting is experienced across different occupational groups, namely blue- and white-collar workers. It highlights that the context

and nature of the job significantly influence whether job crafting leads to positive or negative outcomes. The research provides an integrated perspective, suggesting that occupational differences not only directly influence job satisfaction but may also affect the effectiveness of the psychological mechanisms through which proactive behaviours, such as job crafting, lead to positive outcomes.

In terms of practical interventions, several key implications emerged for HRM and organisations seeking to optimise employee attitudes and performance in similar contexts:

First, the absence of a direct link between job crafting and job satisfaction suggests a need for training. Organisations should offer programmes for employees and managers to explain job crafting and how to apply it effectively (Wingerden & Poell, 2017). Specifically, these programmes could be delivered through interactive workshops that include practical exercises, such as mapping current job tasks and identifying opportunities for task, relational or cognitive crafting. For managers, training should focus on creating a psychologically safe environment, providing constructive feedback, and delegating tasks in ways that empower employees to autonomously shape their roles without compromising organisational goals.

Secondly, as indicated, job crafting was found to have an indirect impact on job satisfaction, primarily through increased work engagement. This highlights the importance of fostering engagement by offering meaningful work, autonomy, recognition and opportunities to use personal strengths. Regular feedback and employee involvement in decision-making processes can help sustain high engagement, reinforcing the positive effects of job crafting (Marx et al., 2025). For example, organisations might implement *strengths-based job design* initiatives, where managers work with employees to align tasks with their individual strengths (Yang et al., 2021). This can be coupled with a structured recognition programme that publicly acknowledges proactive behaviours, reinforcing the value of employee initiative.

Lastly, the study highlighted distinct differences between blue- and white-collar employees in job satisfaction and job crafting potential. White-collar employees reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction, likely due to their greater autonomy and access to structural resources that support proactive job modifications. In contrast, blue-collar roles are often more rigid and standardised, limiting opportunities for task and relational crafting (Marx et al., 2025). To address these differences, HRM should design tailored interventions. For blue-collar employees, feasible forms of cognitive crafting, such as reframing perceptions of work or making minor task adjustments, can be promoted or might focus on specific areas where meaningful crafting is possible within operational constraints. Tools like *The Job Crafting Exercise* (Berg et al., 2013) and structured workshops (Geldenhuys et al., 2020) can help employees enhance the meaning of their work and strengthen their work identity. For white-collar employees, more extensive task and relational crafting can be encouraged, alongside practices such as job rotation, assigning tasks that align with strengths, facilitating collaboration across teams, and involving employees in project-based work. These approaches should broaden work boundaries, enhance social support and foster proactive behaviour, ultimately improving engagement and satisfaction (Marx et al., 2025; Yuspahruddin et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of job-crafting initiatives may depend on employees' perceptions of organisational support. When they believe the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being, they are more likely to feel psychologically safe about experimenting with new ways of performing their tasks. Perceived organisational support may therefore act as a boundary condition, strengthening the positive effects of job crafting on engagement, commitment and job satisfaction. Organisations can enhance these effects by complementing job-crafting interventions with supportive leadership practices, recognition systems and open communication channels. Tailoring job-crafting opportunities to occupational needs, fostering engagement and promoting a supportive culture, can provide HR practitioners and organisational leaders with evidence-based strategies to improve employee experiences, job satisfaction and overall organisational effectiveness.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several potential limitations. Firstly, it was conducted within Eswatini's energy sector, which limits the generalisability of the findings to other industries or countries. The results may therefore not accurately reflect job-crafting experiences in sectors with distinctly different operational structures. Secondly, the cross-sectional design prevents establishing causality or insight into how job-crafting behaviours and their outcomes develop or change over time (Spector, 2019). Thirdly, the use of self-administered questionnaires and established scales may introduce common-method bias or social desirability effects, potentially undermining the validity of the results (Podsakoff et al., 2024). Fourthly, the finding that job crafting does not have a significant direct effect on job satisfaction may be shaped by contextual factors, such as a misalignment between crafting behaviours and organisational structures or culture, which were not fully explored in this study. Lastly, while the study identified mediation by work engagement and explored sequential mediation, it did not examine other potential mechanisms or moderators that could influence these relationships, such as leadership styles, team dynamics or individual personality traits.

Future research could, firstly, explore different industries and diverse cultural settings, particularly in African or sub-Saharan African contexts, to capture the complex experiences and meanings employees attach to job crafting. In addition, longitudinal studies are recommended to monitor employees over time and provide insights into how job-crafting behaviours and their outcomes evolve. Thirdly, future research should explore other psychological and organisational variables that might mediate or moderate the relationship between job crafting and behavioural outcomes (Silapurem et al., 2024). Future research should also test job crafting interventions tailored to the unique needs, job characteristics, and work environments of

blue- and white-collar employees (Silapurem et al., 2024). Such studies could examine how differences in autonomy, task structure and access to resources influence the effectiveness of job-crafting strategies across occupational groups. Lastly, extending research beyond individual-level outcomes to include team performance, organisational innovation and collective well-being will provide a more holistic understanding of the broader impact of job crafting. Investigating these broader-level outcomes can offer valuable insights into how individual proactive behaviours translate into systemic benefits across different levels of the organisation.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the limited body of research on job crafting in sub-Saharan Africa by examining its indirect impact on job satisfaction through work engagement and organisational commitment among blue- and white-collar employees in Eswatini's energy sector. The findings revealed that job crafting did not directly influence job satisfaction but did have a significant indirect effect through a sequential mediation pathway. White-collar employees reported higher levels of work satisfaction than their blue-collar counterparts, thus highlighting the role of job context in shaping the effectiveness of job crafting. The study underscores the need for context-specific HR interventions and suggests that future research should explore job crafting across diverse African settings, incorporate longitudinal and intervention-based designs, examine broader mediators and moderators, and assess outcomes beyond the individual level (e.g., team performance and organisational innovation). By advancing our understanding of how job crafting operates within diverse occupational and cultural contexts, this study lays the foundation for more effective, tailored strategies to enhance employee outcomes and organisational success across the African continent.

Acknowledgement: The authors would like to acknowledge Dr. Dion van Zyl for his statistical support. In addition, the authors declare the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted tools during the preparation of this manuscript. Grammarly was used for language editing, grammar refinement, and sentence construction. Claude AI and Consensus were used to assist with literature searches and the identification of relevant scholarly sources. ChatGPT was used to simplify complex statistical findings (e.g., mediation pathways) into lay terminology and to support idea generation for the practical implications section. All intellectual input, interpretation of findings, critical analysis, and final content decisions remained the responsibility of the authors.

Funding Statement: The authors received no specific funding for this study.

Author Contributions: The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: study conception and design: Hloniphile Rachel Nhleko; data collection: Hloniphile Rachel Nhleko; analysis and interpretation of results: Hloniphile Rachel Nhleko; draft manuscript preparation: Melissa du Plessis. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Availability of Data and Materials: Data not available due to organisational restrictions. Due to the nature of this research, participants did not agree to have their data shared publicly, so supporting data is not available.

Ethics Approval: All procedures involving human participants were conducted in accordance with the principles outlined in the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its subsequent amendments. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee at the University of South Africa (Unisa) (Reference No. 0623). All participants provided informed consent prior to participation, and measures were implemented to ensure confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary involvement throughout the study.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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