The Effects of Supervisor Support on Creativity: Investigating the Mediating Effect of Job Crafting

Jeewon Gwak · Seokhwa Yun*

Abstract

Based on significance of employee's self-initiative change, this study examined the influence of supervisor support on employee's job crafting behavior and creative performance. Results showed that supervisor support is positively related to employee's creative performance, and it is mediated by employee's job crafting behavior. Finally, employee's exchange ideology moderated the overall relation, completing a moderated mediation model. Since today's organization cannot fit each individual's needs, importance of job crafting is magnified as a way of employee's self-initiative change. This study explored job crafting behavior in an integrated model, thus we broadened the current perspective in the field and suggested the need for future research.

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*Corresponding author

I. Introduction

In todays' rapidly changing business environments, it is crucial for organizations to cope with diverse situations and to make the good use of resources (Rudolph, Katz, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017). Job crafting behavior, which refers to "the actions employees take to shape, mold, and redefine their jobs" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2011: 180) is one of proactive behaviors to deal with such ever-changing world effectively (Rudolph et al., 2017). Since organizations cannot satisfy all employees' individual needs and conditions, employees can increase their own person-job fit (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012; Grant & Parker, 2009) by making self-initiative changes to reflect their own motives and preference (Peeters, Jonge, & Taris, 2013).

Job crafting behavior have gained lots of attentions in the field (Rudolph et al., 2017), so various scholars investigated why and when individuals craft their jobs (Bindl & Parker, 2010; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010; Tims & Bakker, 2010). For instance, individuals' regulatory focus, personal needs, and proactive personalities were examined as antecedents of job crafting behaviors (Bindl, Unsworth, Gibson, & Stride, 2018; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Kim & Beehr, 2018). However, only few literatures explored contextual factors in job crafting behavior (Kim & Beehr, 2018; Yang, Ming, Ma, & Huo, 2017). Therefore, in this research, we will consider the leaders' influence as a contextual factor on employees' job crafting behavior.

As a salient agent in the organization, a leader can affect subordinates through various form of communication and network (Parker & Wu, 2014; Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012). Consequently, leaders can inspire employees to be motivated and act proactively (Kim & Beehr, 2018). Considering such significant roles of leaders, few existing studies explored relationship between leadership and subordinates' job crafting behavior. For example, Kim and Beehr (2018) and Thun and Bakker (2018) demonstrated the positive relation between empowering leadership and subordinates' job crafting behavior. Servant leadership (Yang et al., 2017) and transformational leadership (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018) were also examined as antecedents of employees' job crafting behavior. Followed by such literatures, we will explore leaders' influence on employees' job crafting behavior in broader perspective. Specifically, we propose that supervisor support predicts subordinates' job crafting

behavior, and it will result in their creative performance. Creativity is significant to maintain competitive advantages in today's work environment (Shalley & Gilson, 2004; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Thus, by considering creative performance as final outcome, we will explore if employees' crafting behavior benefits the organization. Finally, we propose employee's exchange ideology as moderating variable. Since exchange ideology influences one's norm of reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), employees with high exchange ideology will tend to craft their jobs and perform creatively to return supervisor supports.

In sum, we will contribute the field by proposing an integrated model regarding job crafting behavior. Since this study completes a moderated mediation model including both influence of leaders and individual factor on one's job crafting behavior and creativity, this study will broaden the current perspective on job crafting behavior as a whole.

II. Hypothesis Development

1. Supervisor Support and Job Crafting Behavior

Supervisor support is defined as an extent to which the subordinates perceive them as supportive (Chen, Li, & Leung, 2016; Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). As a most significant actor in organization (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), the supervisor provides critical job resources to employees (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). Accordingly, extant literatures explored diverse effects of supervisor support on subordinates. For example, job satisfaction (Blau, 1964), task performance (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006) were suggested to have positive relation with supervisor support. Role conflict, role ambiguity (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999), and psychological stress (Baker, Israel, & Schurman, 1996) were negatively related to supervisor support. Shanock and Eisenberger (2006) demonstrated that subordinates increase their efforts in doing works to reciprocate supervisor support. Furthermore, we insist that such increased efforts will encourage employees to act more proactively and craft their jobs.

Grant and Ashford (2008) proposed that job crafting behavior is predicted by two main

factors; individual and contextual factor. Individual factor such as proactive personality, needs and motivation (Bindl et al., 2018) have been examined to predict job crafting behavior in previous literatures (Rudolph et al.,2017). However, such individual factor is not enough to predict job crafting behavior solely (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Parker & Bindl, 2010). Therefore, we suggest supervisor support as a contextual factor to predict job crafting behavior. In specific, this study insists that work-based resources from supervisor support would lead employees to engage in job crafting behavior (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999). To change the job to fit one's needs and conditions, individuals require abundant resources because they have to put extra efforts on it. Job crafting behavior requires conditions to act voluntarily and proactively because they have to adjust their context in work environment and bring up some novel ideas (Hornung & Rousseau, 2007). In addition, job crafting can end in failure (Brenninkmeijer & Hekkert-Koning, 2015), so individuals need enough resources to take the risk (Demerouti, 2014; Hobfoll, 2002; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) indicates that individuals tend to maximize extra resources for future reinvestment (Hobfoll, 2011). Therefore, one with supervisor support has enough resources to strategically reinvest on crafting their jobs.

Based on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Bindl and colleagues (2018) clarified individual needs to craft jobs as needs for competence, needs for relatedness, and needs for autonomy. Demerouti, Bakker and Gevers (2015) also suggested psychological needs and personal capacities as basic motivations to craft the job. Individuals are motivated to fulfill basic needs (Latham & Pinder, 2005) because satisfaction of core psychological needs is salient in one's personal growth and well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2008). As a result, employees are likely to engage in job crafting behavior because it includes active changes of one's job to satisfy the needs (Bindl et al., 2018). Therefore, since job crafting behavior fulfills one's core needs (Bindl et al., 2018), increases personal meaning (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and helps one to enjoy the job (Seligman, 2011), it can be perceived as potential advantages in future. Thus, in this paper, we propose that resources from supervisor supports would be invested in job crafting behavior.

Hypothesis1. Supervisor support is positively related to employee's job crafting behavior.

2. Mediation via Job Crafting Behavior

Employee creativity is defined as production of valued, useful and novel ideas in the workplace (Amabile, 1996; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). Creativity is increasingly emphasized recently because it is significant for organizations to achieve competitive advantage in the fast-changing society (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). As stated in prior Hypothesis, supervisor support would positively affect subordinate's job crafting behavior. Accordingly, we suggest that supervisor support will have positive relationship with employees' creative performance, and such relation will be mediated by employees' job crafting behavior.

Chen and colleagues (2016) investigated relation between supervisor support and creativity. They insisted that by support, a supervisor exhibits concerns regarding subordinates' needs, values their contributions, and eventually increases intrinsic motivation (Facteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudisch, 1995). According to Amabile (1996), intrinsic motivation is one of most essential components of creativity. Specifically, individuals are most creative when they are intrinsically motivated by enjoyment, satisfaction and challenge of his or her work (Chen et al., 2016; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Therefore, because supervisor support provides subordinates intrinsic motivation to be creative, it is positively related to subordinate's creative performance

Furthermore, such relation will be mediated by employee's job crafting behavior. Because of risky and effortful characteristic of creativity, individuals require proper resources to exhibit creative performance (Anderson, Potocnik, & Zhou, 2014; Shalley & Gibson, 2004). Job crafting behavior refers to self-initiated change of job (Parker et al., 2010), so it increases employees' person-job fit (Tims & Bakker, 2010) and induces high work-engagement (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010). Consequently, employees will gain extra resources which can be strategically reinvested (Hobfoll, 2011). Demerouti and colleagues (2015) also defined job crafting as a 'resource-generation process'. Creativity is highly valued in today's organizations because it is a key factor of success and innovation (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996; Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Therefore, employees who achieved creative performance will be highly recognized in organization as well. In sum, as Hobfoll (2011) suggested based on Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), employees

may reinvest their accumulated resources from crafting behaviors to gain further resources. Furthermore, according to Hammond, Neff, Farr, Schwall, and Zhao (2011), intrinsic motivation, job autonomy and precise role expectation positively predicts employee creativity. Therefore, job crafting behavior, which induces employee's intrinsic motivation (Tims & Bakker, 2010), job autonomy (Li, Sekiguchi, & Qi, 2014) and reduces one's role ambiguity and role conflicts (Rudolph et al., 2017), would be positively related to creativity as well.

Overall, supervisor supports has positive relation with employees' creativity, and it will be mediated by their job crafting behavior. Supervisor support offers critical job resources to employees (Carlson & Perrewe, 1999), and it will encourage employees to craft their jobs. Lyons (2008) addressed that individuals craft their jobs when they recognize proper opportunity to do so. Bindl and colleagues (2018) insisted that by engaging in job crafting behavior, employees can change the scope of their jobs to be creative. Accordingly, supervisor support would form the opportunity for employees to craft their jobs, and it will be linked to creative performance. Thus,

Hypothesis2. Supervisor support is positively related to employees' creative performance, and such relation is mediated by their job crafting behavior.

## 3. Moderation by Exchange Ideology

Finally, we propose moderation via employee's exchange ideology. Exchange ideology refers to one's dispositional orientation regarding expectation of behavioral response in exchange relationship (Scott & Colquitt, 2007; Witt, 1991). For instance, an employee with high exchange ideology shows higher commitment when organization is supportive (Redman & Snape, 2005) and does more organizational citizenship behavior to return the supports (Ladd & Henry, 2000). Thus, it reflects one's norm of reciprocation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Based on such characteristics, we insist that when employees with high exchange ideology perceive supervisor support, they will be likely to craft their jobs to reciprocate the supports.

When feeling supported, employees with high exchange ideology feel obligated to return it

(Redman & Snape, 2005) and even try to suggest new and improved ideas (Choi, Madjar, & Yun, 2018). Job crafting behavior gives opportunities to be positively recognized by the supervisors (Rudolph et al., 2017). However, it is risky at the same time since one has to take the risk of failure (Brenninkmeijer & Hekkert-Koning, 2015). Therefore, employees with high exchange ideology are more likely to take the risk of job crafting behavior as reciprocation, and eventually, it will be linked to creative performance.

In sum, exchange ideology will moderate the relationship between supervisor support and employee's creativity via job crafting behavior. Amabile (1983) proposed that creativity is predicted by interaction of individual and contextual factor. Therefore, this study suggests supervisor support and exchange ideology as those factors which can finally result in creative performance. Taken together, we propose moderated mediation model as Figure 1. Thus,

Hypothesis 3. Exchange ideology moderates the relationship between supervisor support and employee's creative performance mediated by job crafting behavior, such that the mediated relationship is stronger when employee's exchange ideology is high than low.

<Figure1>
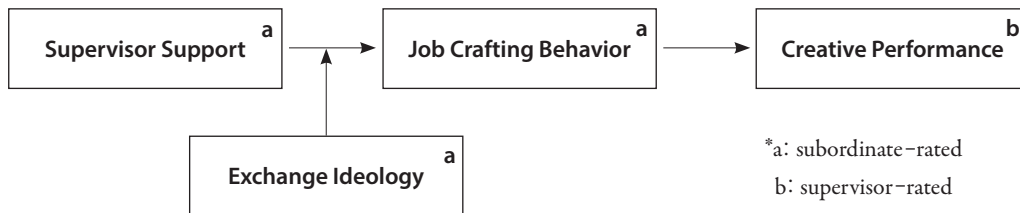
III. Method

1. Sample and Procedure

Survey data for this article was collected from various organizations in South Korea. The

survey package was distributed to 180 leader-subordinate dyads in a team setting. First, subordinates were asked to answer the questionnaires about their leader and themselves. Second, leaders evaluated creative performance of their certain subordinates. Demographic factors were asked in both surveys.

The survey package was distributed to 180 dyads, and 165 completed sets were returned, giving a response rate of 91.6%. We eliminated insufficient data and finally 162 dyads were used for the analysis. Of the subordinates' total, 43.8% was male, and the average age was 33.37years (SD = 6.97). Of the supervisors, 58.6% was male, and their average age was 39.84 years (SD = 8.26). The most frequent mentioned level of education for both subordinates and supervisors were four-year university (Subordinates = 74.7%, Supervisors = 70.4%).

2. Measures

All participants answered the questions with seven-point Likert scales. Questionnaires were originally developed in English but translated into Korean with Brislin (1970)'s back translation method (Brislin, 1970).

Supervisor Support. We measured supervisor support using eight items of Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997) (α=.93). For example, "my supervisor is supportive of me" was asked.

Job Crafting Behavior. Bibdl et al. (2018)'s twenty-eight items were used to measure job crafting behavior (α=.94). For instance, "I changed my tasks so that they were more challenging" was asked. Among various scales to measure job crafting behavior, we used Bindl et al. (2018)'s because they integrated broad concepts of job crafting behavior.

Exchange Ideology. To measure exchange ideology, Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001)'s eight items were used (α=.86). Sample item is "an employee who is treated badly by a company should work less hard".

Creative Performance. Creative performance was measured with Zhou and George (2001)'s thirteen items (α=.97). One of the items was "this subordinate suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives".

Control Variables. Subordinate's age, gender, and education were controlled to prevent spurious effects.

3. Analytical Procedures

We conducted hierarchical regression analyses and bootstrapping method developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004). In step 1, to minimize the spurious effects, this study included control variables. In step 2, supervisor support was entered to test the effect on employee's job crafting behavior (Hypothesis 1). In step 3, to test mediation effect (Hypothesis 2), we included creative performance as dependent variable. It was also tested by SPSS PROCESS (Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Then, we put exchange ideology and its interaction term with supervisor support to test moderation effect (Hypothesis 3). Finally, moderated mediation effect was tested by bootstrapping method of SPSS PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2004).

IV. Results

The means, standard deviations, intercorrelation, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient of variables are in Table 1. To prevent potential multicollinearity problem, all variables were mean-centered (Aiken & West, 1991).

Hypothesis 1 proposed positive relation between supervisor support and employee's job

<Table1> Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	33.37	6.98							
2. Gender	1.56	.50	−.28**						
3. Education	2.81	.62	.05	−.10					
4. Supervisor Support	5.34	1.06	.03	.04	.17*	(.93)			
5. Job Crafting Behavior	4.57	.78	.18*	−.23**	−.02	.18*	(.94)		
6. Exchange Ideology	4.05	1.14	−.28**	.17*	.13	−.16*	−.02	(.86)	
7. Creative Performance	4.72	1.03	.204**	−.10	.06	.18*	.23**	−.02	(.97)

Note. N=162.

All variables are mean-centered.

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed)

crafting behavior. The result is exhibited in Table 2, and Hypothesis 1 is supported (β=.20, p<.01). Hypothesis 2 suggested mediation effect of job crafting behavior between supervisor

<Table 2> Regression on Job Crafting Behavior (H1)

	Model1	Model2
Age	.12	.18
Gender	−.21*	−.22**
Education	−.05	−.09
Supervisor Support		.20**
Overall F	4.02**	4.87**
R square	.07	.11
Change in F	4.02**	6.97**
Change in R square	.07	.04

Note. N=162.

All variables are mean-centered.

Dependent variable: Job Crafting Behavior

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed)

<Table 3> Regression on Creative Performance (H2)

	Model1	Model2	Model3
Age	.19**	.18**	.16
Gender	−.05	−.06	−.02
Education	.04	.01	.03
Supervisor Support		.18**	.14
Job Crafting Behavior			.17*
Overall F	2.53	3.20*	3.50*
R square	.05	.08	.10
Change in F	2.53	5.02*	4.43*
Change in R square	.05	.03	.03

Note. N=162.

All variables are mean-centered.

Dependent variable: Creative Performance

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed)

<Table 4> Results of Bootstrap for Indirect Effects (H2)

Dependent	Bias-corrected confidence intervals			
	Indirect	Boot SE	LLCI	ULCI
Supervisor Support	.03	.02	.0009	.0905

Note. N=162.

Bootstrap sample size = 10,000.

<Table 5> Regression on Job Crafting Behavior (H3)

	Model1	Model2	Model3	Model4
Age	.12	.12	.14	.12
Gender	-.21**	-.22**	-.24***	-.23***
Education	-.05	-.09	-.11	-.10
Supervisor Support		.20**	.22**	-.64**
Exchange Ideology			.11	-1.18**
Support X EI				1.44***
Overall F	4.02**	4.87**	4.29**	5.30***
R square	.07	.11	.12	.17
Change in F	4.02**	6.97**	1.87	9.20**
Change in R square	.07	.04	.01	.05

Note. N=162.

All variables are mean-centered.

Dependent variable: Job crafting behavior

*p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001 (two-tailed)

support and creative performance. As indicated in Table 3, Hypothesis 2 was also supported (β=.17, p<.05). As exhibited in Table 4, results from SPSS PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2007) supported Hypothesis 2 as well, since effects was positive (.03) and bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect did not include zero (.0009, to .0905).
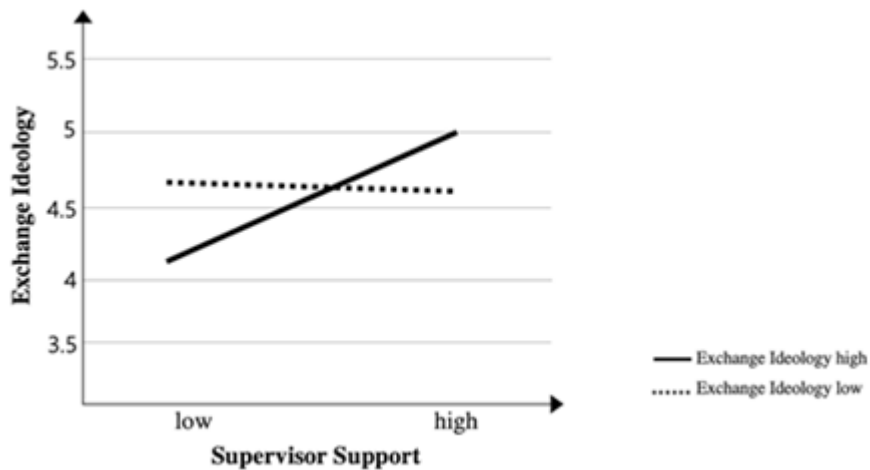
Hypothesis 3 proposed moderating effect of exchange ideology. Specifically, employee's exchange ideology moderated the relationship between supervisor support and creative performance via job crafting behavior. As suggested in Table 5, the interaction term of supervisor support and exchange ideology is significant (β=1.44, p<.001). With Aiken and

<Table 6> Moderated Mediation Results (H3)

Moderator	Exchange Ideology	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low	−1.00	−.0031	.0236	−.0546	.0455
High	1.00	.0786	.0492	.0029	.1935

Note. N=162.

Bootstrap sample size = 10,000

<Figure 2> Moderating Effects of Exchange Ideology

West's (1991) method of ±1 standard deviation, we plotted the results and it is indicated in Figure2. As presented, relationship between supervisor support and job crafting behavior is stronger when exchange ideology is high than low. To examine precise moderating effects, we conducted simple slope test as well. The results show that the relationship between supervisor support and job crafting behavior is significant only when exchange ideology is high (b=.340, t=3.030, p<.01). Furthermore, the moderated mediation effect was tested by SPSS PROCESS (Preacher & Hayes, 2007), and it is indicated in Table 6. Specifically, the indirect effect at the high level of exchange ideology was stronger (.0786) and significant with a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect not containing zero (.0029 to .1935). However, the indirect effect at a low level of exchange ideology was not significant with a bootstrapped 95% CI around the indirect effect including zero (−.0546 to .0455). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was

supported only at high level of exchange ideology.

V. Discussion

Since self-initiative change is highly emphasized lately, this study explored an integrated model including employee's job crafting behavior. All the hypotheses were supported, so we achieved main contributions we proposed earlier. Above all, we contributed the field by considering employee's job crafting behavior in the integrated model. Most studies solely considered individual factors as antecedents of job crafting behavior and did not examine the further outcomes induced by job crafting behavior. However, since individual and contextual factor both are salient for job crafting behavior, we suggested supervisor support and exchange ideology. Moreover, we proposed creative performance as final outcome because it is highlighted as a key factor of survival nowadays (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Thus, since all hypotheses gained supports, we demonstrated the link between job crafting and creative performance and broadened the current perspective in the field of Organizational Behavior.

However, this study still has few limitations. First, since we used cross-sectional design, we could not infer the precise causality. Therefore, a longitudinal design or experimental design can be used for further research. Second, this study examined only supervisor support as antecedents of job crafting behavior and creative performance. However, supervisor influence can be diverse, and other significant actors in organization, such as coworker, can be influential to employee's behavior as well. Therefore, other influences from leader or coworkers can be considered in future research. In sum, if future study complements such factors, it will be able to broaden current perspective toward employee's job crafting behavior, its antecedents and consequences.

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구성원의 직무 변화 행위와 창의성에 대한 연구: 상사의 지원 행위를 중심으로

곽 지 원 · 윤 석 화*

요 약

오늘날 조직이 구성원 개개인 모두의 필요와 이해를 만족시킬 수 없기 때문에, 구성원의 자발적 변화의 중요성이 점점 강조되고 있다. 따라서 본 연구는 조직 내에서 구성원의 직무 변화 행위를 유발시킬 요인은 무엇인지, 또 그러한 직무 변화 행위의 결과는 무엇인지를 다방면으로 살펴보았다. 다양한 요인 중 본 연구는 상사의 지원 행위가 구성원에게 자원의 역할을 함으로써 직무 변화 행위를 유발시킨다고 보았다. 또한 그 결과로 구성원의 창의성이 증대될 것임을 주장하였다. 마지막으로 구성원 개인의 교환 관념이 이 관계에 정적 조절 효과를 가질 것임을 살펴보았다. 연구 가설 검증 결과, 본 연구에서 제시한 가설은 모두 지지되었다. 따라서 본 연구는 구성원의 직무 변화 행위를 중심으로 상사, 구성원 개인의 요인 모두를 포괄하는 모델을 제시하였다는 의의를 갖는다.

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*교신저자