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## Exploring Job Crafting Among State Civil Apparatus: A Descriptive Qualitative Study

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### Abstract

This study analyzes job crafting practices among civil servants at the Department of Manpower and Transmigration of East Java Province (Disnakertrans Jatim). Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through in-depth interviews with five purposively selected employees. Thematic analysis reveals that employees engage in all three dimensions of job crafting, though the extent of implementation varies. Relational crafting emerged as the most dominant dimension for strengthening social capital and work coordination. Cognitive crafting is utilized by employees to redefine the meaning of their work, while task crafting remains limited to informal adjustments due to bureaucratic constraints. These findings underscore that job crafting serves as a crucial mechanism for employee adaptability in the public sector. Practically, this study recommends the need for flexible organizational structures, increased autonomy, and enhanced inter-unit collaboration to optimize public service performance.

**Keyword:** job crafting, public sector, civil servants, qualitative study, thematic analysis.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis praktik job crafting di kalangan pegawai negeri sipil pada Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi Provinsi Jawa Timur (Disnakertrans Jatim). Menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan lima pegawai yang dipilih secara purposif. Analisis tematik menunjukkan bahwa pegawai terlibat dalam ketiga dimensi job crafting dengan tingkat pemanfaatan yang bervariasi. Relational crafting menjadi dimensi yang paling dominan dalam memperkuat modal sosial dan koordinasi kerja. Cognitive crafting digunakan pegawai untuk memaknai ulang tugas mereka, sementara task crafting cenderung terbatas pada penyesuaian informal akibat hambatan birokrasi. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa job crafting berfungsi sebagai mekanisme adaptabilitas pegawai di sektor publik. Secara praktis, studi ini merekomendasikan perlunya struktur organisasi yang lebih fleksibel, peningkatan otonomi, dan penguatan kolaborasi antarunit untuk mengoptimalkan kinerja layanan publik.

**Kata Kunci:** job crafting, sektor publik, aparatur sipil negara, studi kualitatif, analisis tematik.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

An organization can be conceptualized as a system or a forum in which a group of individuals collaborates in a coordinated manner to achieve predetermined common goals (Habsy et al., 2024). The attainment of these objectives is contingent upon a systematic organizational design and structure that aligns work processes and practices. Recent research emphasizes that flexible and decentralized structures, when aligned with strategic HRM, significantly enhance organizational performance and employee engagement (Putri et al., 2025). Furthermore, a literature review by Munawaroh et al. (2025) posits that the existence of well-designed organizational structures, incorporating clear role division and dynamic relationships among units, is imperative for the adaptation of organizations to evolving needs. Among all managed resources, human resources (HR) stand as the most crucial and dynamic asset. The term HR is defined as productive individuals who function as the primary drivers and assets for the organization (Habsy et al., 2024). The capacity of an organization to adapt and thrive is contingent upon the caliber and conduct of its human resources department.

In the contemporary era, characterized by volatility and digital disruption, organizations, particularly in the public sector, face growing pressure to enhance service quality and adapt to rapidly changing operational demands. This global shift necessitates a departure from rigid bureaucratic structures that traditionally emphasize hierarchy and rule adherence. As Widi (2023) has observed, public agencies must evolve beyond their traditional, often bureaucratic, responses to volatile environmental conditions. Consequently, public sector organizations now require the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) as their primary human resource to move beyond mere compliance with formal duties and to exhibit proactive attitudes, innovation, and extra role behaviors. Such proactive behaviors are essential for ensuring organizational effectiveness, generating public value, and maintaining government agency adaptability and responsiveness to community needs.

In this context, a particular form of proactive behavior among employees, namely job crafting, assumes particular significance. Job crafting is defined as the proactive redesign of tasks, relationships, and cognitive frameworks related to one's work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This phenomenon is widely acknowledged as a critical catalyst for enhancing performance, adaptability, and resilience within contemporary organizational settings. In Indonesia, the role of the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is of particular significance. ASN embodies an element of the state apparatus entrusted with the provision of services to the public, characterized by professional competence, integrity, fairness, and impartiality. The performance of ASN employees serves as a primary indicator of organizational success and is evaluated based on criteria such as service orientation, integrity, and commitment. Nevertheless, studies conducted within diverse governmental contexts in Indonesia persist in identifying fundamental performance deficiencies. Research in the domain of village governance has underscored deficiencies in key areas, including but not limited to: low performance

related to discipline and initiative, inadequate coordination, and a paucity of initiative and responsibility (Prabowo et al., 2025).

In order to address these high-performance demands, the study of proactive behaviors like job crafting becomes imperative. This is particularly relevant in the Indonesian context, where there is ample evidence that job crafting significantly influences ASN performance. This national challenge is reflected in key regions, such as East Java Province, which is one of Indonesia's main economic and demographic centers (Supriatna et al., 2023). Despite the gradual improvement indicated by labor market indicators, the Open Unemployment Rate (TPT) was recorded at 4.88% as of August 2023. Consequently, the East Java Provincial Regional Development Plan (RPD) for the 2025-2026 period (Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan Transmigrasi Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2024b) identifies the reduction of the unemployment rate as a priority target. This mandate places significant responsibility on related public agencies, including the East Java Provincial Manpower and Transmigration Office (Disnakertrans Jatim).

Disnakertrans Jatim, in accordance with its duties and functions, is at the forefront of handling these complex employment and transmigration issues. The 2024 Government Agency Performance Report (LKJIP) underscores a range of strategic challenges confronting the agency, including the pressing imperative to prepare the workforce for the imminent demographic bonus and to adapt to the skill demands of the industry 4.0 era. While the report indicates success in achieving certain performance targets, such as labor absorption rates, it also acknowledges persistent problems like the mismatch between educational competencies and actual industry needs and the "mislink" in the effective dissemination of labor market information (Disnakertrans Jatim, 2025a). The 2025 Work Plan (RENJA) further operationalizes this mandate into specific programs focused on reducing the TPT, such as vocational training, job placement programs, and labor inspections (Disnakertrans Jatim, 2024a). This institutional commitment is formalized in the 2025 Performance Agreement (PK), which establishes quantifiable objectives for key indicators, including a 65% labor absorption target and a 47.50% target for company compliance with labor norms (Disnakertrans Jatim, 2025b).

This complex and high-pressure work environment requires contributions that extend beyond passive compliance with formal tasks. This scenario establishes an environment conducive to the cultivation of individual initiative. Preliminary observations within Disnakertrans Jatim indicate that employees actively respond to these pressures through proactive behaviors aligned with the concept of job crafting. In contrast to the conventional approach of merely executing tasks, employees were observed modifying their work methods to enhance efficiency, actively establishing collaborative networks, and deliberately conceptualizing their roles as significant contributions.

Despite the substantial research conducted on job crafting in private organisations, the antecedents of job crafting within public service organisations remain underexplored. For instance, Renkema et

al. (2023) demonstrates that accountability systems in bureaucracies encourage proactive job crafting among public professionals. Moreover, empirical evidence from government institutions, such as the study by Khomsah & Sumiati (2025) in a tax office, demonstrates that talent management can significantly foster job crafting in the public sector. At the individual level, psychological autonomy and task competence have also been demonstrated to be robust antecedents of job crafting (Nwanzu & Babalola, 2024).

Specifically, there is a shortage of studies focusing on the contextual drivers of job crafting in the public sector, and much research tends to overlook the role of specific work contexts (Renkema et al., 2023). This discrepancy is particularly pronounced in the Indonesian public sector, where the empirical understanding of job crafting is still in its early stages of development. There is a lack of empirical research examining how this process occurs (Adikara & Soetjipto, 2021). This necessitates the implementation of descriptive qualitative research to investigate the emergence of this behavior within the context of the unique environment in question.

This research gap, which indicates the presence of job crafting practices but a paucity of scientific documentation in the Indonesian public sector, forms the basis of this study. The objective is to describe the manifestation of job crafting among the employees of Disnakertrans Jatim. In accordance with this emphasis, the objective of this study is to furnish a thorough descriptive synopsis of job crafting practices. The present study aims to provide a comprehensive description of the forms of task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting that are currently in practice. Consequently, this study aims to elucidate how civil servants proactively shape their roles, thereby providing foundational understanding for future research and practical insights for public sector leaders.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The present study is grounded in the foundational theoretical framework of job crafting and is reinforced by contemporary empirical literature, which provides a contextual framework for understanding the phenomenon within the Indonesian public sector.

### **Job Crafting**

The notion of job crafting represents a fundamental shift in the prevailing perspective on job design, transitioning from a rigid, top-down approach to a proactive, bottom-up process driven by the employee. Job crafting is defined as "*the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work*" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This phenomenon signifies a form of proactivity in which individuals proactively adapt their work to align more closely with their personal preferences, strengths, and values. Recent findings suggest that job crafting continues to serve as a reliable predictor of favorable work outcomes. A recent longitudinal meta-analysis

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(Silapurem et al., 2024) found that job crafting consistently enhances work engagement, job satisfaction, and job performance over time. In a similar vein, Junça-Silva et al. (2022) demonstrated that the three dimensions of job crafting positively correlate with job performance, thereby enhancing the meaningfulness of work. The original theory identifies three primary forms of crafting:

### 1. Task Crafting

Task crafting refers to "*changing the number, scope, or type of job tasks done at work*" as defined by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), it involves the modification of the number, scope, or type of job tasks performed at work. In essence, task crafting involves employees modifying the content of their work by adjusting how tasks are carried out or by expanding and reshaping the responsibilities outlined in their formal role (Ihsan & Zona, 2024). These modifications can include changing the sequence or approach to tasks, taking on additional responsibilities that enhance competence or challenge, or reducing activities that no longer align with personal strengths or work goals. Through these proactive changes, employees shape their work to better fit their skills, interests, and preferences without requiring formal structural changes to the job (Noesgaard & Jørgensen, 2024).

### 2. Relational Crafting

Relational crafting is defined as "*changing the quality and/or amount of interaction with others encountered in the job*" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Relational crafting is defined as the process of taking control of the manner, timing, and partners involved in job-related interactions (Noesgaard & Jørgensen, 2024). It can be further elaborated as the strategic modification of employee interactions in the execution of their professional duties, encompassing the manner, timing, and partners involved in these interactions (Ihsan & Zona, 2024). Relational crafting is defined as the modification of interpersonal relationships or the quality of these relationships in professional contexts (e.g., the endeavor to cultivate close acquaintances within one's professional milieu) (Olafsen et al., 2025). The relevance of relational crafting strategies is evidenced by their application in the creation of new relationships (e.g., attempting to forge connections with new individuals), the optimization of existing relationships (e.g., enhancing the quality of interactions with individuals), and the utilization of social resources (e.g., seeking support from family members during periods of emotional distress) (Chen et al., 2022).

### 3. Cognitive Crafting

Cognitive crafting represents the most psychological manifestation of job crafting, entailing "*the modification of how employees interpret their job, perceiving it as either a series of discrete work tasks or as an integrated entity*" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Cognitive crafting is defined as the process through which individuals redefine or reframe their work or life in ways that enhance meaning (Chen et al., 2022). It is evident that the significance of an

object or concept is predominantly influenced by the manner in which individuals interpret and mentally construct their experiences. Consequently, cognitive crafting emerges as a potent mechanism for enhancing meaning. Chen et al. (2022) propose a model in which cognitive crafting operates through three mechanisms: perceptual expansion (broadening one's understanding of the holistic purpose of work), perceptual focusing (narrowing attention to reduce negative interpretations), and perceptual liking (connecting tasks to personally valued or adored outcomes). Furthermore, it is suggested that practices such as self-reflection can be employed to enhance feelings of joy and meaning. Olafsen et al. (2025) illustrates this interplay, demonstrating how cognitive adjustments shape subsequent behavioral strategies that support the fulfilment of fundamental psychological needs.

Research findings indicate that job crafting is a learnable and developable skill that can be strengthened through targeted interventions. A systematic review by Roczniowska et al. (2023) confirmed that job crafting programs effectively enhance employee–job fit and well-being, demonstrating its relevance for workforce adaptability. Empirical studies further support these benefits across different professional settings. For example, El-Gazar et al. (2023) found that training interventions significantly increased harmonious work passion among nurses, while Yang et al. (2025) reported reduced burnout and heightened engagement among project managers. Additionally, Yue et al. (2024) showed that joint interventions involving both employees and supervisors improved job crafting behaviors and work engagement. Although much of the existing evidence originates from private or healthcare sectors, these mechanisms are highly transferable to public organizations, particularly those operating in hierarchical and rigid bureaucratic structures. In such environments, including Indonesian civil service institutions, top-down job redesign opportunities are often limited. Therefore, job crafting emerges as a crucial bottom-up strategy that enables civil servants to proactively navigate constraints, sustain motivation, and maintain effective public service performance. Dimensions of Job Crafting and Public Sector Application the table 1.

### **The Indonesian Public Sector Context**

The study of job crafting in the public sector context poses distinct challenges that differ from those encountered in the private sector. The work setting in the public sector is frequently described as rigid and susceptible to inertia (Adikara & Soetjipto, 2021). In Indonesia, the endeavours to implement bureaucratic reform continue to encounter significant obstacles, primarily due to the pervasive presence of hierarchical structures, centralised decision-making processes, and a paucity of professional autonomy. Hawari & Kartini (2023) observe that endeavours to effect bureaucratic transformation in the post-pandemic era have encountered difficulties in the face of entrenched centralisation and inflexible administrative layers. Cultural resistance and deeply rooted hierarchical

**Table 1. Dimensions of Job Crafting and Public Sector Application**

No	Dimension	Definition	Public Sector Context	Relevance for Civil Servants
1	Task Crafting	Changing the number, scope, or type of job tasks done at work	Adopting digital tools to speed up administrative reporting, volunteering for ad-hoc projects aligned with personal expertise, and adjusting task sequencing for efficiency.	Enhances productivity and service delivery within rigid bureaucratic structures.
2	Relational Crafting	Changing the quality or amount of interaction with others encountered in the job	Building informal cross-department networks; improving collaboration with stakeholders; mentoring colleagues beyond formal supervisory duties.	Strengthens coordination and social capital critical for public service effectiveness.
3	Cognitive Crafting	Changing how employees interpret their job, perceiving it as either a series of discrete work tasks or as an integrated entity	Reframing duties from “processing paperwork” to “serving the community” to enhance meaningfulness.	Sustains motivation, emotional resilience, and engagement in routine or regulatory roles.

norms within public institutions have been identified as significant factors that inhibit genuine reform towards a merit-based professional model (Wulandari, 2024). Consequently, government agency work environments are traditionally not designed to encourage flexibility or individual initiative.

Nonetheless, government organizations must continue to demonstrate their capacity to provide maximum public service. In this regard, the State Civil Apparatus (ASN) is entrusted with the responsibility of delivering optimal service to the public. The formal assessment of ASN performance is predicated on two fundamental components: Employee Performance Targets (SKP) and specific work behaviors. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, service orientation, integrity, commitment, and discipline. The present study posits that the specific context, characterized by a formal performance appraisal structure and elevated service demands, renders job crafting a salient phenomenon worthy of investigation (Supriatna et al., 2023).

In the public sector, employees frequently encounter complex bureaucracy and rigid procedural requirements that impede their autonomy and flexibility. For instance, Fuenzalida et al. (2024) provide evidence that high levels of bureaucracy increase the risk of burnout among public servants. Concurrently, Jiang et al. (2023) demonstrate that perceived red tape reduces work engagement and encourages turnover intentions, while Li & George (2025) in a systematic review argue that red tape imposes systemic constraints on organizational adaptability. Beyond frontline staff, Hill & Plimmer (2024) emphasize that managers must navigate competing demands, whilst also attempting to reconcile bureaucratic rigidity with their motivation to serve.

Moreover, mounting accountability demands can generate stress and tension (Renkema et al., 2023). Concurrently, the prevailing organizational culture in Indonesian government agencies is

occasionally characterized by an authoritarian and rule-oriented structure, impeding the implementation of proactive initiatives by subordinates. In the Indonesian context, this challenge is compounded by conditions that require employees to devise their own methods of utilizing available resources due to deficiencies in equipment and support (Negoro et al., 2025).

In such environments, the practice of job crafting particularly the task crafting component aimed at modifying formal procedures, can encounter significant resistance due to the presence of entrenched bureaucratic and accountability norms. However, recent research suggests that job crafting remains a critical adaptation strategy in the public sector. For instance, Renkema (2023) demonstrates how systems of accountability in professional bureaucracy prompt proactive crafting behavior. Conversely, Jørring (2025) emphasize how frontline public workers utilize crafting to navigate and redefine bureaucratic constraints under digitalization.

In the context of constrained resources and inflexible regulations, employees may be compelled to proactively devise novel methodologies in order to maintain their effectiveness. A salient point of discussion is the tendency of public sector employees to be driven by high Public Service Motivation (PSM). This motivation compels them to discern meaning and methods to contribute to public value, even in the face of organizational constraints (Woo & Kim, 2024). Consequently, job crafting, particularly in its relational and cognitive dimensions, emerges as a pivotal coping mechanism for ASN to address job demands and bureaucratic limitations.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive study design. This design was chosen to obtain a rich and holistic description of job crafting practices among the employees of the East Java Provincial Manpower and Transmigration Office (Disnakertrans Jatim). The qualitative descriptive approach is appropriate when the research aim is to obtain a direct description and comprehensive summary of an event or phenomenon. Recent methodological discourses have emphasized that qualitative descriptive research enables scholars to remain in close proximity to participants' own language, perspectives, and interpretations, thereby producing findings that reflect everyday terms rather than abstracted or highly theorized representations. As Villamin et al. (2025) emphasize, qualitative descriptive designs prioritize the presentation of data in a manner that is both accessible and faithful to the accounts of the participants.

This approach is of particular value for studies seeking to document experiences, perceptions, or events without imposing heavy analytical interpretation. This low-inference orientation is conducive to clarity, practical relevance, and methodological rigor. Empirical applications further reinforce the value of qualitative descriptive research as a flexible yet structured approach, as demonstrated by Yang et al. (2024), who show that it enables researchers to explore participant perspectives without

abstracting the data or forcing conceptual interpretations beyond what participants express. In consideration of these characteristics, the qualitative descriptive design was identified as the optimal approach in comparison with phenomenology, case study, and grounded theory. Phenomenology is oriented towards the unmasking of the profound and subjective essence of lived experience, case study designs focus on the intensive examination of a bounded system or specific context, and grounded theory aims to generate new theoretical explanations through systematic procedures. In contrast, qualitative descriptive designs emphasize producing low-inference, factual accounts that remain closely aligned with participants' everyday language and contextual realities (Villamin et al., 2025).

### **Participant Selection**

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling. This approach is frequently employed in qualitative research to ascertain that selected informants possess relevance and a profound comprehension of the phenomenon under study (Widi, 2023). The primary criteria for participant selection included the depth of their experience regarding daily work practices, team collaboration, and personal initiative. In addition to job position, substantive considerations included length of service, involvement in innovative activities, and the handling of autonomous tasks. Five employees from Disnakertrans Jatim were recruited, representing diverse functional roles and levels of seniority. Their tenure ranged from 3 to 39 years, ensuring a mix of fresh perspectives and deep institutional memory. The characteristics of the participants are detailed in Table 2.

All selected participants had a track record of involvement in several agency innovations, including audiences with the Centre for Migration and Development (ZME) GIZ Germany team, organizing the Millennium Job Center for inclusion classes, collaboration with the Auto2000 Learning Center for automotive instructor training, implementation of the Job Fair and Jatim Fest in 2025, as well as participation in the Integrity Zone Desk towards a Corruption-Free Area (WBK) and pre-departure briefings for transmigration candidates at the UPT BLK.

Furthermore, the employees had prior experience with autonomous tasks such as monitoring and evaluating training programs at UPT BLK, monitoring and evaluating the Job Fair and Jatim Fest programs, managing and updating labor market data in the Disnakertrans Jatim Online Employment Information System, and taking personal initiatives in planning, implementing, and developing work competencies. This diversity of roles, length of service, and involvement enabled a thorough understanding of how autonomy and various task types influence job crafting practices in the Disnakertrans Jatim environment.

**Table 2. Participant Characteristics**

Participant	Job Position	Length of Service
P1	Head of Section	16 years
P2	Advanced Expert Community Empowerment Activator	30 years
P3	Young Expert Community Empowerment Activator	18 years
P4	Data Manager	18 years
P5	First Expert Employment Counselor	3 years

### **Data Collection Procedure**

The primary data for this study were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews. The researcher developed an interview guide based on the theoretical dimensions of job crafting proposed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). This interviewing approach offers qualitative researchers structured guidance throughout data collection while preserving the flexibility necessary to further explore participant responses in depth. Unlike unstructured interviews, its adaptability remains within a clearly defined framework, enabling the researcher to maintain focus and direction during the process. By integrating methodological insights and reflective considerations from qualitative scholars, semi-structured interviews are understood to support more rigorous and meaningful findings when applied appropriately within qualitative inquiry (Ruslin et al., 2022).

This preliminary study was conducted within the timeframe of October 2025 to November 2025. The data collection was situated at the Office of the Department of Manpower and Transmigration of East Java Province (Disnakertrans Jatim), located at Jl. Dukuh Menanggal Selatan No. 124-126, Dukuh Menanggal, Gayungan District, Surabaya, East Java. The data collection method employed semi-structured interviews using a hybrid approach, where in-depth interviews and direct observations were primarily conducted on-site. However, online communication was subsequently utilized to continue or complete the interviews whenever time constraints prevented on-site finalization. This approach was selected to ensure flexibility and convenience for the informants during their working hours

Each interview session lasted between 25 and 35 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant's consent. In addition to interview data, this study also utilized secondary data in the form of non-participant observation conducted during the research visit. The observation phase of the study was designed to provide a contextual framework for understanding the behaviors exhibited in the workplace, thereby complementing the findings derived from the interview data. During the interview process, the researcher observed interaction. Explanation is in table 3 Interview Guidelines Based on Job Crafting Dimensions.

**Table 3. Interview Guidelines Based on Job Crafting Dimensions**

Dimensions	Indicators	Interview Questions
Task Crafting	Altering the variety/number of tasks	Do you often seek new ways or specific strategies to make routine work more interesting and less boring?
	Altering the scope of tasks	Do you have the flexibility to independently add or reduce your responsibilities or workload?
	Changing the type of tasks performed	How do you organize your work methods or environment to ensure task completion is more efficient and focused?
Relational Crafting	Building positive relationships	Do you actively strive to build positive relationships and interpersonal communication with colleagues?
	Seeking collaboration opportunities	Do you actively seek opportunities to collaborate with other colleagues in completing tasks?
Cognitive Crafting	Expanding social networks	Is there a culture or personal initiative to expand social networks across divisions/departments in this office?
	Reframing the job purpose	How do you interpret the meaning of your work? Do you feel that your role has a significant impact on the organization?
	Viewing work as a contribution to others	Do you view your work as a form of tangible contribution to others (e.g., the community or job seekers)?
	Viewing work as a self-development opportunity	Do you view this job as an opportunity for personal self-development?

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using a recursive Thematic Analysis approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). This approach is a proven method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) emerging from qualitative data (Hidayati et al., 2025). This approach was chosen for its flexibility and rigor in identifying and organizing patterns of meaning that emerged from participant narratives and observational results, thereby enabling the generation of a rich and comprehensive description. The analysis process was conducted manually by working directly with the raw data in the form of interview transcripts and field notes. The researcher used pens, highlighters, and basic Excel tables to mark, code, and group themes. This analysis followed the six phases proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021), namely:

1. Familiarization with data. During this phase, the researcher transcribed all interview audio recordings verbatim and read the transcripts and field notes several times to understand the content, context, and nuances of meaning contained in the data. This familiarization process was designed to ensure that the researcher obtained a comprehensive understanding prior to initiating the initial coding.

2. Following a comprehensive review of the data, the researcher methodically examined the entire dataset, assigning labels or codes to data segments pertinent to the research focus. The initial codes reflected the important ideas, behavioral patterns, or meanings that emerged from the participants' narratives. These codes subsequently formed the basis for theme development.
3. The codes exhibiting analogous meanings or conceptual affinities were subsequently consolidated into overarching, prospective themes. At this stage, the researcher initiated the organization of relationships between codes and the review of emerging patterns of meaning to construct an initial thematic structure capable of answering the research question.
4. A subsequent review of the themes will be conducted. In this phase, the potential themes were re-evaluated by comparing them against the raw data and the entire dataset to ensure their consistency and empirical fit. Themes that lacked substantial support from the data could undergo a process of refinement, including division, combination, or elimination. This approach was undertaken to ensure the final results remained both valid and representative of the underlying data.
5. Subsequent to the establishment of the final themes, the researcher proceeded to define each theme with precision, articulating its fundamental essence. Each theme was assigned a concise and specific appellation that reflected its core substance. This ensured that the theme could be readily understood and accurately described the pattern of meaning found in the data.
6. The final stage of the research process entailed the composition of a comprehensive analytical narrative, in which the primary themes that were identified were presented and interpreted. Each theme was substantiated with relevant verbatim excerpts from participants, which were presented in the results section to provide empirical evidence for the research findings.

This version of thematic analysis supports a fully qualitative, non-positivist orientation, emphasizing methodological congruence and low-inference interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2024)

### **Trustworthiness of Data**

In order to guarantee rigor and credibility, this study employed contemporary trustworthiness strategies grounded in the four key pillars of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Ahmed, 2024). To achieve credibility, the researcher actively applied triangulation method by synthesizing data from in-depth semi-structured interviews with extensive field observations. The interview process involved five civil servants employee from Disnakertrans Jatim, selected specifically for the depth of their experience regarding daily work practices, team collaboration, and personal initiative. In addition to job position, substantive selection considerations included length of service, involvement in innovative activities, and the handling of autonomous tasks. These participants represented diverse functional roles with tenure ranging from

3 to 39 years, ensuring a comprehensive dataset that bridges fresh perspectives with deep institutional memory.

The credibility of the research was enhanced through the utilization of triangulation method, which entailed the comparison of interview data and observation notes, as well as investigator triangulation, which involved the involvement of multiple researchers in data interpretation to minimize bias (Chitwattanakorn et al., 2024). The researcher conducted direct observations of interactions and work behaviors on-site while conducting the interviews. This was complemented by retrospective observations derived from the researcher's prior six-month internship at the agency. This extended immersion allowed for a deeper contextual understanding of the organizational culture, enabling the researcher to cross-verify interview responses against actual behavioral patterns observed over a significant period.

To support transferability, detailed contextual descriptions of these participant roles and the organizational setting were documented to enable cross-source comparison. Dependability was ensured through a systematic, well-documented analysis process, including an audit trail and reflexive journaling, which allows for the traceability of data from raw material to final results. Finally, ethical principles were strictly adhered to; informed consent was obtained prior to all interviews, ensuring participants were fully aware of the research objectives, data confidentiality, and their right to withdraw without consequence, in accordance with standard ethical codes for social research (American Psychological Association, 2017).

## **RESULT, DISCUSSION, AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATION**

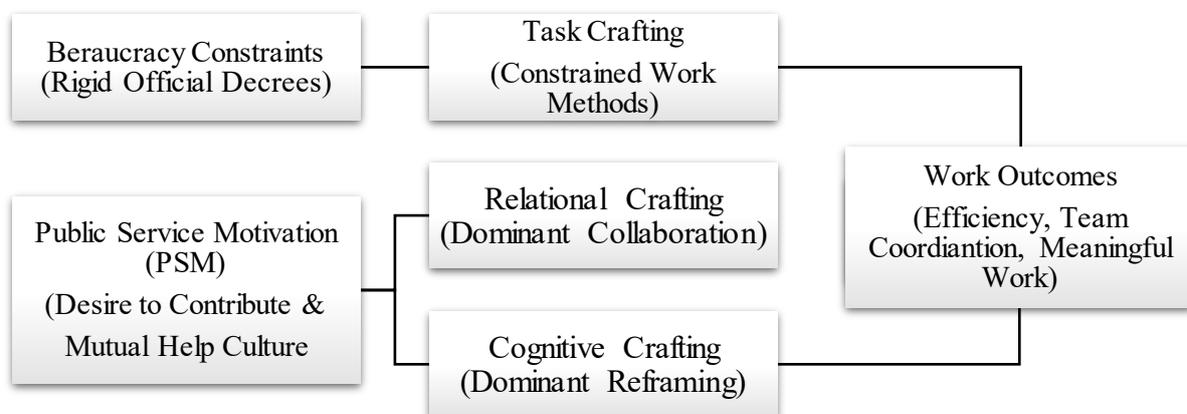
### **RESULTS**

A comprehensive analysis of interview data and observational notes has yielded a nuanced understanding of how job crafting manifests in daily work practices at Disnakertrans Jatim, deeply embedded within the specific context of the Indonesian civil service. The findings indicate that employees actively and consciously engage in various forms of job crafting to manage work demands, improve efficiency, and find meaning. However, the frequency and impact of these events exhibited significant variability across dimensions.

The study revealed that Relational and Cognitive crafting emerged as the predominant strategies employed by employees for adaptation. This dominance suggests that in a rigid environment, employees leverage high Public Service Motivation (PSM) to reframe their work's purpose and build social support networks to navigate obstacles. Conversely, Task crafting was identified as a contributing factor, though its implementation is often constrained and not optimally utilized. Employees reported that efforts to modify formal tasks (job scope) were significantly impeded by rigid bureaucratic constraints, including the strict requirement to adhere to Official Decrees (SK) and

standardized procedures.

This finding offers a critical theoretical dialogue with recent scholarship. Renkema et al. (2023) demonstrated that high-stakes accountability contexts often trigger professionals to engage in "self-serving" proactive behaviors or "avoidance crafting" primarily to protect themselves from liability. In contrast, the dynamic at Disnakertrans Jatim suggests a different motivational pathway: rather than crafting to *avoid* responsibility due to pressure, employees appear to accept the bureaucratic constraints on *task* design but channel their agency into *relational* and *cognitive* domains as compensatory mechanisms to maintain performance and morale. Thus, while the bureaucratic structure limits task autonomy, the underlying Public Service Motivation drives employees to find alternative, non-structural ways to serve effectively.



**Figure 1. Thematic Map of Job Crafting Practices at Disnakertrans Jatim**

### Task Crafting

In accordance with the primary findings, task crafting was identified as the most constrained dimension, and its implementation was found to be suboptimal. In this environment, task crafting did not manifest as formal changes to job descriptions. This was due to the participants' acknowledgement of job descriptions as rigid structures. As expressed by P5:

"I cannot officially add or subtract work responsibilities because it must go through procedures and an official decree (SK)."

This quote underscores the employees' comprehensive cognizance of the inherent bureaucratic constraints that impede the formulation of policies at the formal task level. However, this constraint precisely encouraged the emergence of informal task crafting focused on work methods and experiences. Initially, employees devised strategies to cope with feelings of boredom.

P1 explained, "We look for new ways to make the work feel more interesting, like listening to music, shifting focus to other tasks, or taking a short break." This is a subtle psychological strategy to maintain engagement in monotonous tasks.

Second, employees proactively optimized personal work methods for efficiency. P1 provided a specific example:

"I try to organize my work method to be more efficient by applying the Pomodoro technique, limiting mobile phone use, and maintaining a comfortable workspace, like bringing a small pillow for my back to be more focused."

This demonstrates a high level of autonomy in *how* work is done, even if *what* is done is predetermined. Third, task crafting manifested as taking informal initiatives that went beyond the SK. P3, after stating the SK limitations, added, "However, I often take additional initiatives according to the needs of my colleagues."

This is crafting that proactively expands tasks to help the team run smoothly. Overall, task crafting at Disnakertrans Jatim is 'subtle', focusing on 'methods' and 'informal initiatives' to navigate the rigidity of 'formal tasks'.

### **Relational Crafting**

In contrast to the limited task crafting, relational crafting was identified as the form of crafting practiced with the highest frequency, the most strategy, and the greatest impact in the data. It was found that employees very consciously and proactively invest time and energy to build and maintain relationships. Importantly, this was not done merely for social purposes but has become a primary functional tool for achieving work objectives within the bureaucratic structure. P1 stated:

"We maintain good relationships with colleagues because a harmonious work atmosphere makes team and individual work smoother and easier to complete. Positive relationships also help in resolving obstacles amicably and respectfully."

This quote explicitly links good relations with smooth work outcomes. Collaboration was also actively sought, not avoided. P3 saw it as a win-win strategy: "I am open to collaborating with colleagues because collaboration makes work completed faster, improves the quality of the work output, and fosters motivation and comfort at work."

One of the most prominent findings relates to how relational crafting crosses formal boundaries between work units. P1 described their strategy:

"I expand my social network across divisions within Disnakertrans Jatim, for example, through joint activities like ceremonies, routine exercises, or large events. I also sometimes eat together outside of work hours to strengthen relationships, ease communication between divisions, and support smooth work coordination."

This assertion is pivotal in elucidating that undertakings frequently regarded as non-formal, including participating in ceremonies, physical activity, and shared meals, are, in fact, meticulously designed and strategic job crafting practices. This mechanism is a primary means by which employees

cultivate social capital, thereby effectively "lubricating" the bureaucratic apparatus and facilitating cross-functional coordination that is often characterized by rigidity.

### **Cognitive Crafting**

In alignment with relational crafting, cognitive crafting has been identified as a frequently practiced dimension, functioning as a pivotal motivational foundation. This practice enables employees to persevere, adapt, and even flourish when confronted with monotonous or high-pressure tasks. Employees have been found to consistently and actively reframe their work to see "the bigger picture" and the broader impact, beyond mere daily administrative tasks.

Employees actively reframe their work to see its wider impact. P2 connected their individual role to the larger organizational mission:

"I view this work as important for the organization because everyone has an interconnected role. My work is directly related to the main mission of Disnakertrans Jatim to train job seekers, control foreign labor, and disseminate labor market information."

This search for meaning often focuses on the social impact of their work. P5 found deep meaning in interactions with the public:

"I see my work as a form of contribution to society. For example, when a job fair is held, I help connect companies with job seekers, providing a space to understand mutual needs and opportunities."

This reframing transforms a potentially exhausting task like organizing a job fair into a meaningful contribution. Work is also reframed as a path for self-development. P1 stated, "We see this job as an opportunity to keep learning, even if the progress is small and not always fast. From every activity, like meetings, post-event evaluations, to external duties, there is always something new to be learned to enrich our experience and skills."

Collectively, these findings illustrate that job crafting at Disnakertrans Jatim operates as a strategic compensatory mechanism within a rigid bureaucratic framework. While task crafting is formally constrained by administrative protocols and limited to subtle methodological adjustments, employees actively channel their agency into relational and cognitive dimensions. By leveraging social capital to navigate structural rigidities ("greasing the wheels") and reframing routine duties as vital contributions to public service, employees successfully maintain motivation and operational efficiency. This distinct pattern highlights that in a high-compliance public sector context, job crafting shifts from being a tool for individual job redesign to becoming a collective survival strategy that harmonizes strict governance with the human need for meaning and connection.

## Managerial Implications

The qualitative findings of this study highlight the importance for Disnakertrans Jatim to shift from viewing job crafting as a solitary coping mechanism to recognizing it as a strategic organizational asset. To enhance employee performance within a rigid bureaucratic structure, management should formalize these behaviors through targeted policies and structured programs.

First, recognizing that informal relational crafting serves as a key facilitator for reducing bureaucratic rigidity, the agency must shift from merely allowing to actively fostering social capital. This can be accomplished by formalizing cross-unit interactions within the agency's schedule. For example, the current Friday morning exercise routine (morning exercise) should be transformed into a mandatory Bi-Weekly "Health & Harmony" Session, with attendance rotated to promote diverse interactions between divisions such as Penta and Placement fields. Additionally, dedicating a small part of the operational budget to a Monthly "Cross-Division Potluck" would provide a consistent space for the informal information exchange employees currently seek sporadically. To further dismantle silos, a semi-annual "Shadowing" Program should be introduced, allowing employees to spend a day observing a colleague in a different division, thereby formalizing the network expansion behaviors identified in the study.

Second, regarding task crafting, while the formal scope of work remains fixed under Official Decrees (SK), management can authorize discreet adaptation by explicitly codifying autonomy over work methods. This validation should be in the form of a "Smart Workspace Policy" issued via internal memo, explicitly allowing personalization of workstations, such as using ergonomic pillows or headphones for focus music to enhance efficiency. Additionally, management should officially endorse "Micro-break" protocols, like five to ten minutes every hour for stretching or meditation. By framing these pauses as productivity standards rather than time theft, the agency aligns institutional policy with the efficiency techniques employees are already employing.

Third, to sustain the high Public Service Motivation (PSM) that drives cognitive crafting, management must systematically bridge the gap between administrative minutiae and societal outcomes. This "Sense of Societal Contribution" can be amplified by instituting a ten-minute "Success Narrative" segment at the start of every monthly evaluation meeting, featuring video testimonials or stories from job seekers assisted by the agency. This narrative approach should be reinforced physically with a "Wall of Impact" in the office lobby that displays real-time metrics of people placed in jobs, rather than just administrative targets. This serves as a constant visual cue that helps employees reframe daily duties into meaningful public service.

Ultimately, to transform crafting from a hidden tactic to a shared skill, the agency should implement a specialized "Job Crafting for Public Service" Workshop. This training should follow a practical, four-session module. The curriculum would begin with "Job Mapping" to help employees

identify alignment gaps without violating regulations, followed by "The Art of Method" to train employees on efficiency tools such as the Pomodoro technique and AI for administration. Subsequent sessions should focus on "Building the Support Squad" through stakeholder mapping, and conclude with "Reframing the Narrative," an exercise where employees rewrite their job descriptions to emphasize societal value over bureaucratic function, such as reframing a data entry role into an "employment enabler" role.

## **CONCLUSION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The present qualitative descriptive study provides an in-depth examination of how job crafting practices spontaneously emerge among employees at the East Java Provincial Manpower and Transmigration Office. The findings reveal that employees successfully navigate the tension between rigid bureaucratic structures and their personal drive for meaningful work. Rather than passively accepting administrative constraints, employees utilize task crafting as a form of discreet method optimization, relational crafting as a strategic tool for "collaborative support," and cognitive crafting to reframe routine duties into a broader "sense of societal contribution."

Theoretically, this study contributes to the job crafting literature by shifting the perspective from crafting as a tool for individual self-fulfillment to crafting as a collective compensatory mechanism in high-compliance environments. Unlike private sector models, where crafting is often driven by career advancement, this study suggests that in the public sector, job crafting is heavily moderated by Public Service Motivation (PSM). It demonstrates that bureaucratic rigidity does not necessarily extinguish proactivity; rather, it reshapes it into "discreet" and "collaborative" forms necessary for organizational survival.

Looking forward, the challenge for public sector organizations is to transition these behaviors from hidden coping strategies into recognized institutional assets. Future initiatives should focus on creating policy frameworks that legitimize these bottom-up adaptations, ensuring that the civil service evolves from a culture of rigid compliance to one of responsive, purpose-driven service delivery.

### **Suggestions**

The agency is advised to acknowledge and promote the positive job crafting practices that are already present within the organization. The findings indicate that relational crafting plays a vital role in maintaining coordination. Therefore, the agency should actively facilitate, fund, and encourage cross-departmental activities of this nature. It is imperative to recognize that such initiatives should not be regarded as a futile expenditure of time, but rather as a deliberate strategic investment in social capital. The efficacy of this investment is evident in its ability to effectively reduce bureaucratic silos

and enhance communication. Given the rigidity of formal decrees and work structures, the agency should prioritize the grant of autonomy in work methods. The provision of autonomy in the management of work rhythms, through techniques such as the Pomodoro method, or the allowance for the customization of workspaces, has been demonstrated to engender a sense of ownership and enhance efficiency among employees.

The agency plays a crucial role in facilitating opportunities for cognitive crafting. The implementation of this strategy entails the consistent communication of the tangible impacts of employees' work. For example, following the organization of a job fair, the success stories of job seekers who have secured employment can be disseminated. A methodology that integrates administrative tasks with the organization's core mission of public service has been demonstrated to enhance employees' sense of work meaning. Additionally, the agency is encouraged to organize workshops or interventions focused on job crafting. Such training can assist employees in deliberately recognizing prospects for tailoring their tasks, relationships, and cognition in a manner that is congruent with organizational objectives.

It is recommended for future researchers to quantitatively examine the specific patterns of relationships identified in this study. For example, subsequent studies could investigate the role of social capital as a mediating factor in the association between relational crafting and outcomes such as altruism or coordination fluency. To enhance generalizability, future scholarship should replicate this inquiry across a broader spectrum of public institutions, employing larger and more comprehensive samples or comparative case designs to determine if these "bureaucratic survival" mechanisms persist in agencies with varying levels of rigidity.

Additionally, the adoption of a mixed-methods approach is strongly encouraged. By combining the contextual depth of qualitative inquiry with the statistical power of quantitative surveys, researchers can build a more holistic model of public sector job crafting. Finally, subsequent research should continue to explore potential negative aspects, investigating whether certain forms of job crafting deviate from organizational objectives or whether task crafting may focus on reducing personal workload in ways that unintentionally burden other colleagues.

To expand upon the insights gained from this qualitative inquiry, future research should aim to broaden the methodological and contextual scope. First, it is recommended to replicate this study across a wider range of public institutions, including central government bodies and other local agencies, to assess the transferability of the findings. Comparative case studies between agencies with different levels of bureaucratic rigidity would be particularly valuable.

Furthermore, utilizing a larger and more comprehensive sample group is essential to capture the diversity of civil servant experiences. Researchers are encouraged to adopt a mixed-methods design, combining in-depth interviews with large-scale surveys. This approach would allow for the statistical

testing of the specific patterns identified here. For example, subsequent quantitative studies could examine the role of social capital as a mediating factor in the association between relational crafting and outcomes such as altruism or coordination fluency. Finally, future research should explore potential negative aspects of job crafting in such organizations, investigating whether certain forms of crafting deviate from organizational objectives or if task crafting might unintentionally burden colleagues in the pursuit of individual efficiency.

### **Limitations**

The findings of this study should be interpreted within the context of certain methodological boundaries inherent to qualitative inquiry. First, regarding generalizability, this study prioritizes contextual depth over statistical breadth. As the analysis is deeply rooted in the specific bureaucratic culture of an Indonesian public agency, the findings regarding "discreet" and "collaborative" crafting may not be directly transferable to private sector settings or differing national cultural contexts without careful adaptation.

Second, the utilization of retrospective observational data necessitates a consideration of researcher positionality. The researcher's prior role as an intern at the agency provided valuable longitudinal access and established trust (prolonged engagement). However, this "insider" perspective inevitably introduces a degree of subjectivity. While this allowed for a richer contextual understanding, it required the researcher to exercise constant reflexivity to ensure that prior assumptions did not overshadow the participants' current narratives during the interpretive process. Ultimately, the sample size was determined by the principle of thematic saturation suitable for a specific case study. While this allowed for a granular analysis of the psychological mechanisms of job crafting, it does not claim to capture the exhaustive spectrum of experiences across every job level or unit within the wider agency. Future research with broader sampling would be beneficial to explore these variations further.

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