

# Exploring How Transformational Leadership Enhances Subordinate Person–job fit: The Roles of Job Crafting and Perceived Organizational Support

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Recent research notes that transformational leadership is positively related to person-job fit (P-J fit). However, the mechanism underlying this relationship remains unclear. Based on the social exchange theory, the current study investigates whether job crafting serves a mediating role in this relationship and examines the moderating effect of perceived organizational support (POS) on the direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on P-J fit. The two-wave data were collected from 213 full-time employees in Taiwan. The results indicated that (a) transformational leadership was positively related to P-J fit and job crafting, (b) job crafting was positively related to P-J fit, (c) job crafting mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit, (d) when POS is high (vs. low POS), the positive relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting is stronger, and (e) when POS is high (vs. low POS), the indirect relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit (via job crafting) is stronger.

**Keywords:** *job crafting, P-J fit, perceived organizational support, social exchange theory, transformational leadership*

## Extended Abstract

Person-job (P-J) fit, which refers to the match between employees and their jobs, is important for employee work performance and organizational effectiveness. P-J fit is high when an employee's knowledge, ability, and skills are sufficient for the job, when organizational and individual values are consistent, and when the job satisfies the employee's needs and expectations (Edwards, 1991). Studies have indicated that a high P-J fit benefits both employees and organizations, such as by increasing job satisfaction, engagement, job performance, and organizational commitment (Bui et al., 2017; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chi & Pan, 2012). On the contrary, when employees have a low P-J fit, they feel frustrated and burned out (Tong et al., 2015), which may in turn decrease job satisfaction and job performance (Cable & DeRue, 2002) and increase their intention to leave (Tak, 2011). Therefore, how P-J fit may be enhanced is important to scholars and practitioners aiming to increase organizational effectiveness. However,

most research has focused on how to identify high P-J fit candidates (Boon et al., 2011, Ehrhart, 2006; Ehrhart & Makransky, 2007; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Saks & Ashforth, 2002) rather than how to maintain or enhance employees' P-J fit. Our study aimed to fill this research gap.

In terms of job crafting, i.e., employees' self-initiated adjustment of their jobs according to their preferences and expectations (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), employees can enhance P-J fit by engaging more readily with their jobs and proactively searching for more resources and challenges to strengthen their abilities and fulfill their expectations (Lu et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2016). Moreover, given that leadership is related to job performance, Chi and Pan (2012) suggested that transformational leadership can improve employees' P-J fit, which in turn results in better job performance. Transformational leadership is change-oriented leadership in which the leader cares about their subordinates, provides the resources required

by subordinates, and encourages subordinates to improve continuously (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Hetland et al. (2017) suggested that transformational leadership can stimulate subordinates to craft their jobs. Therefore, we proposed that transformational leadership influences subordinates' P-J fit through job crafting. However, it is unclear what kind of change might be stimulated by transformational leadership, and in turn transform employees' perceptions of their jobs. We also lack knowledge about the conditions that might influence the relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit.

Therefore, drawing on social exchange theory, we examined the indirect relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit. Specifically, social exchange theory indicated that individuals will build social exchange relationship when they trust and believe that exchange target will return rewards (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986). That is, employees will be more willing to put more effort into work if they trust their organizations. Given that employees who adjust their jobs proactively may be a link between transformational leadership and P-J fit, we investigated the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit. In addition, organizational factors may moderate how transformational leadership influences subordinates' behavior and perception (Yiing & Ahmad, 2009). Thus, we investigated the moderating effect of perceived organizational support on the direct relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting, and on the indirect relationship between transformational leadership

and P-J fit (via job crafting). Altogether, we proposed a moderated mediation model (Figure 1).

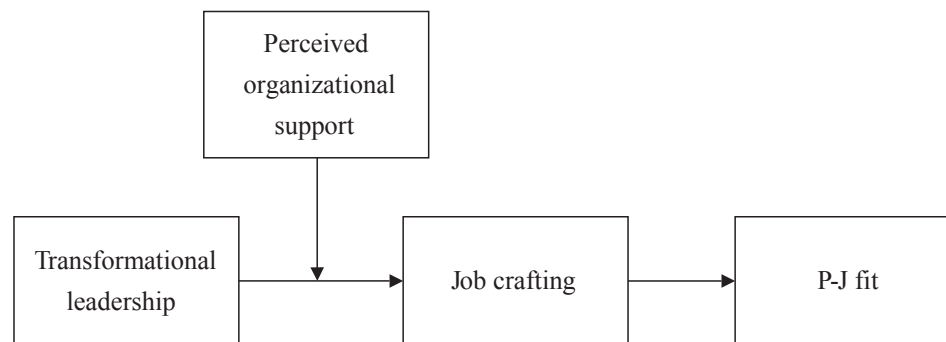
## Method

We collected data from full-time employees in Taiwan across two time points a month apart. At Time 1, the employees were asked to fill out a questionnaire on demographic information (i.e., gender and tenure) and transformational leadership. At Time 2, they were asked to fill out a questionnaire on perceived organizational support, job crafting, and P-J fit. Of the 448 participants to whom we distributed the questionnaire, 359 returned usable responses at Time 1 (89% response rate), and 213 returned usable matched responses at Time 2 (59% retention rate). In the final sample, 39.9% were male, the average tenure was 6.18 years ( $SD = 6.57$  years), and the main education level was bachelor's degree and above (86.9%).

Transformational leadership was measured using the 9-item measure developed by Avolio and Bass (1991), for which Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .92. Job crafting was measured using the 11-item measure developed by Tims et al. (2012), for which Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .82. P-J fit was measured using the 4-item scale developed by Saks and Ashforth (1997), for which Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .80. Perceived organizational support was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002), for which Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was .94. We translated the original English scales into Chinese via the back-

**Figure 1**

*The hypothesized moderated mediation model*



translation procedure (Brislin, 1980) to decrease the error caused by translation. Gender and tenure were set as the control variables, as research has suggested that they may influence employees' job crafting and P-J fit (Chi & Wang, 2012; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

## Results

We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the fit and discriminant validity of the measurement model. The results show that our research model was a better fit ( $\chi^2 = 1034.11$ ,  $df = 516$ ,  $RMSEA = .07$ ,  $SRMR = .05$ ,  $CFI = .92$ ,  $TLI = .91$ ) than other competing models. We also used the CFA marker method to investigate common method variance (Williams et al., 2010) and chose psychological detachment (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007) as the CFA marker. The result showed that common method variance did not influence our research findings.

Table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability estimates among the study variables. The correlations between the variables provided preliminary support for our hypotheses.

We used SPSS PROCESS v3.5 (Hayes, 2013) and a bootstrapping approach with 5,000 re-samples (MacKinnon et al., 2004) to test our hypotheses. Table 2 presents the results on the direct, indirect, and moderation effects (Hypotheses 1–5). Transformational leadership

was significantly related to P-J fit ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ); thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Transformational leadership was also significantly related to job crafting ( $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .001$ ); thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported. Job crafting was significantly related to P-J fit ( $\beta = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ); thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported. The bootstrapping results showed that the indirect effect of transformational leadership on P-J fit through job crafting was significant [ $B = .07$ ,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI (.03, .13)]; thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported. As to Hypothesis 5, which proposed that perceived organizational support moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting, the interaction term was significant ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Table 2). Further, we performed a simple slope test and drew the interaction plot (Figure 2). The results indicated that the relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting was stronger when perceived organizational support was high ( $t = 4.02$ ,  $p < .01$ ) versus low ( $t = 0.22$ ,  $p = .83$ ); thus, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Table 3 presents the results on the moderated mediation effect (Hypothesis 6). This hypothesis proposed that perceived organizational support moderates the indirect relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit. The bootstrapping results showed that the index of moderated mediation was significant [ $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI (.01, .07)], and that the indirect effect was higher when perceived organizational support was high [ $B = .08$ ,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI (.03, .15)] than low [ $B =$

**Table 1**  
*Means standard deviations, and correlations among variables*

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Tenure	6.18	6.57						
2. Gender <sup>a</sup>	0.40	0.49	.81					
3. TL	3.99	1.05	-.04	.20**	(.92)			
4. Job crafting	3.88	0.64	-.11	.06	.31**	(.82)		
5. P-J fit	4.27	0.80	.23**	.23**	.33**	.34**	(.80)	
6. POS	3.99	1.00	.00	.02*	.48**	.38**	.58**	(.94)

*Notes.*  $N = 213$ . TL refers to transformational leadership; POS refers to perceived organizational support. Cronbach's alpha is in boldface along the diagonal of the table.;

<sup>a</sup> Male = 0; Female = 1.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2**  
*Mediation and moderation effect analysis*

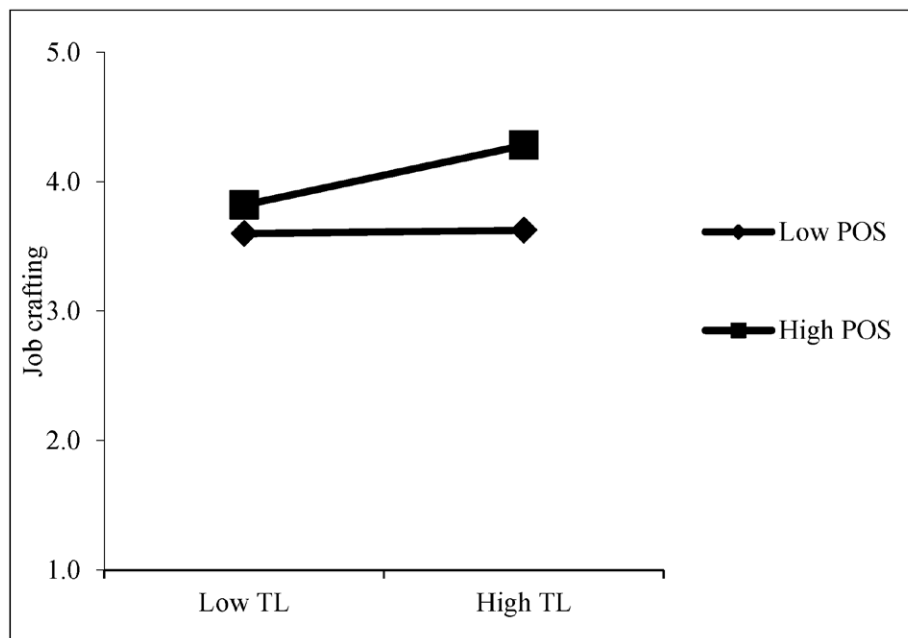
Variables	Job crafting		P-J fit	
	M1	M2	M3	M4
<b>Control variable</b>				
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.00	-.04	.15***	.15**
Tenure	-.10	-.10	.24**	.27***
<b>Independent Variable</b>				
TL	.31***	.20**	.27***	.17**
<b>Mediator</b>				
Job crafting				.32***
<b>Moderator</b>				
POS		.35**		
<b>Interaction</b>				
TL×POS		.20**		
R <sup>2</sup>	.11	.22		.25
F	8.24	11.50		17.57

Note. *N* = 213. TL refers to transformational leadership; POS refers to perceived organizational support.

<sup>a</sup> Male = 0; Female = 1.

\**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001.

**Figure 2**  
*Interaction between transformational leadership and perceived organizational support on job crafting*



**Table 3**  
*Moderated mediation analysis*

Indirect effect	POS	B	SE	95% CI	
				LLCI	ULCI
TL → JC → P-J fit	<i>M - 1SD</i>	.01	.02	-.03	.05
	<i>M + 1SD</i>	.08	.03	.03	.15

Notes.  $N = 213$ . TL refers to transformational leadership; JC refers to job crafting.

.01,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI (-.03, .05)]; thus, Hypothesis 6 was supported.

## Discussion

This research has three main contributions. First, we extend the knowledge of P-J fit. Previous research has focused on how to select high P-J fit candidates (Boon et al., 2011; Ehrhart & Makransky, 2007; Higgins & Judge, 2004) rather than enhancing employees' P-J fit. Our study found that transformational leaders make their subordinates perceive they are important through caring and support them. Hence, employees will transform how they evaluate their job, thereby increasing P-J fit. This finding enhances the understanding of how to increase employees' P-J fit. In terms of practical implications, it suggests that organizations should provide their leaders with transformational leadership training to promote employees' crafting behavior and P-J fit.

Second, drawing on social exchange theory, our results suggest that job crafting is a significant mediator between transformational leadership and P-J fit. Transformational leaders motivate subordinates to craft their job proactively by establishing relationships

of social exchange with subordinates and conveying the importance of continuous change (Hackett et al., 2018). Subordinates adjust their jobs according to their expectations to achieve more work autonomy and work meaning, which in turn improves their work conditions and P-J fit (Lu et al., 2014). In practical terms, we suggest that organizations and leaders provide employees with more resources, such as job autonomy, and support employees in their proactive job crafting and thus increase organizational effectiveness.

Third, drawing on social exchange theory, we found that perceived organizational support served as a boundary condition that strengthened the direct relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting, as well as the indirect relationship between transformational leadership and P-J fit (via job crafting). Our findings show that perceived organizational support can promote the effectiveness of transformational leadership in enhancing employee proactive behaviors and P-J fit. In terms of practical implications, our findings suggest that leaders and organizations should increase employee proactive behaviors and positive job evaluations by establishing supportive environments and contexts for transformational leadership.