

Understanding Career Cushioning Underorganizational Instability: Job Crafting as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Perceived Organizational Instability and Employee Engagement

Supar Wasesa¹, Jaka Syahputra²

¹Magister Of Manajemen, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara North Sumatera, Indonesia, ²Universitas Nurul Hasanah Kutacane

Email: suparwasesa@fe.uisu.ac.id, jakasyahputra1995@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of career cushioning, defined as employees' tendency to discreetly prepare alternative career opportunities without informing their current employer, has become increasingly prevalent in the wake of widespread layoffs and ongoing global economic uncertainty. This conceptual article aims to develop a theoretical framework that explains the relationships among perceived organizational instability, employee engagement, career cushioning, and job crafting. Unlike conventional employee engagement studies, which often conceptualize organizational loyalty as a relatively stable construct, this article argues that perceived organizational instability encourages employees to engage in career cushioning as a psychological self-protection mechanism, ultimately reducing their level of employee engagement. Furthermore, job crafting is proposed as a moderating variable that mitigates this negative relationship. Employees who proactively redefine their work tasks, interpersonal relationships, and the meaning of their work are expected to possess greater psychological resources, enabling them to remain engaged despite experiencing organizational uncertainty. This study employs a narrative literature review based on Job Insecurity Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, the Job Demands–Resources Model, and Job Crafting Theory to develop a conceptual model consisting of five propositions for future empirical testing. The proposed framework contributes to the organizational behaviour and human resource management literature by extending the traditional concept of job insecurity to encompass more subtle and concealed defensive career behaviours. In addition, it offers practical implications for human resource practitioners in designing retention strategies and employee engagement initiatives that are better aligned with the challenges of an increasingly uncertain and dynamic work environment.

Email:

suparwasesa@fe.uisu.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

The post-pandemic business environment has fundamentally transformed the employment relationship between organizations and their employees. Increasing economic uncertainty, organizational restructuring, technological disruption, and repeated waves of layoffs have challenged the traditional notion of long-term organizational loyalty. Rather than perceiving employment as a stable and enduring relationship, employees increasingly

view their careers as requiring continuous preparation for unexpected organizational changes. Consequently, many employees have begun adopting proactive career self-management strategies to reduce employment-related risks and enhance their long-term employability (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Savickas, 2005).

One emerging behavioural phenomenon reflecting this shift is career cushioning, which refers to employees' deliberate yet discreet efforts to prepare alternative career opportunities while remaining employed. These behaviours may include updating professional profiles, expanding external professional networks, pursuing additional certifications, and exploring job opportunities without disclosing such intentions to their current employer. Unlike turnover intention, which explicitly reflects an employee's intention to leave an organization, career cushioning represents a preventive career strategy designed to maintain career security under uncertain organizational conditions. This phenomenon has become increasingly visible in contemporary organizations as employees seek to safeguard their careers against potential organizational instability (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Savickas, 2005). The growing prevalence of career cushioning can be explained by employees' perceptions of organizational instability. Organizational restructuring, declining organizational performance, leadership transitions, and persistent economic uncertainty have increased employees' perceptions that organizational stability can no longer be taken for granted. This perception, commonly referred to as perceived organizational instability, is conceptually rooted in the extensive literature on job insecurity, which argues that employees' reactions to workplace uncertainty depend primarily on subjective interpretations rather than objective organizational conditions (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford et al., 1989; De Witte, 2005). According to Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, individuals confronted with potential resource loss tend to preserve their remaining psychological, emotional, and social resources by adopting protective coping strategies (Hobfoll, 1989). Within this perspective, career cushioning may be interpreted as a proactive mechanism through which employees seek to protect future career resources when organizational stability is perceived to be threatened.

The consequences of perceived organizational instability extend beyond career planning and have important implications for employee engagement. Employee engagement reflects a positive psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work activities (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Previous studies consistently demonstrate that job insecurity negatively influences employee engagement, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being (Sverke et al., 2002; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sora et al., 2010). From the perspective of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, employees who perceive increasing job demands while experiencing declining organizational resources tend to experience reduced work engagement because substantial psychological resources are redirected toward coping with uncertainty rather than investing in work-related activities (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Employees engaged in career cushioning may therefore remain physically present at work while gradually withdrawing their emotional and cognitive investment from the organization. Nevertheless, employees do not respond uniformly to organizational instability. Some individuals demonstrate remarkable resilience and remain highly engaged despite experiencing considerable uncertainty. One important explanation for this variation

is job crafting, defined as employees' proactive efforts to redesign their work by modifying task boundaries, interpersonal relationships, and cognitive perceptions of their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Employees who actively engage in job crafting tend to experience greater autonomy, work meaningfulness, and psychological control, thereby strengthening their engagement even under challenging organizational conditions (Tims et al., 2012; Petrou et al., 2012). Accordingly, job crafting may function as an important personal resource that buffers the negative influence of perceived organizational instability on employee engagement.

Although extensive research has examined the effects of job insecurity on organizational attitudes and behaviours, several important research gaps remain. First, previous studies have predominantly focused on overt outcomes such as stress, burnout, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention (Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Saks, 2006; Cheng & Chan, 2008), while relatively little attention has been given to career cushioning, a more subtle and concealed behavioural response to organizational uncertainty. Second, career management literature has generally investigated boundaryless careers and career adaptability independently from employee engagement research, resulting in limited theoretical integration between these domains (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Savickas, 2005). Third, despite substantial evidence supporting the positive role of job crafting in enhancing engagement, few conceptual studies have examined whether job crafting can mitigate the adverse effects of perceived organizational instability through employees' career self-protection behaviours. Addressing these gaps, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework linking perceived organizational instability, career cushioning, employee engagement, and job crafting. Specifically, career cushioning is conceptualized as a mediating mechanism through which organizational instability influences employee engagement, while job crafting is proposed as a moderating resource capable of weakening the negative impact of organizational instability on employee engagement. By integrating Conservation of Resources Theory, the Job Demands–Resources Model, and career development theory, this study extends the traditional job insecurity literature by introducing career cushioning as a previously underexplored behavioural response to organizational uncertainty. The proposed framework contributes to organizational behaviour and human resource management literature by offering a more comprehensive understanding of employees' adaptive career behaviours in increasingly dynamic and uncertain workplaces. Furthermore, it provides practical implications for organizations seeking to strengthen employee engagement through transparent organizational communication, proactive career development initiatives, and the promotion of job crafting practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perceived Organizational Instability

Perceived organizational instability refers to employees' subjective perceptions regarding the level of uncertainty, organizational change, and potential disruptions occurring within their organizations, including restructuring, leadership transitions, declining organizational performance, and rumours of layoffs. Unlike objective organizational conditions, perceived organizational instability reflects employees' personal interpretations

of organizational uncertainty, meaning that individuals working within the same organization may experience different levels of perceived instability depending on their experiences, access to organizational information, and psychological characteristics (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford et al., 1989; De Witte, 2005). From the perspective of Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, uncertainty represents a potential threat to valuable personal resources. Individuals are therefore motivated to preserve their psychological, emotional, and social resources by adopting protective behaviours that minimise future losses (Hobfoll, 1989). Within organizational settings, employees who perceive greater instability are likely to reduce their psychological investment in their current organization while simultaneously preparing alternative employment opportunities. Consequently, perceived organizational instability becomes an important antecedent of career cushioning behaviour.

Career Cushioning

Career cushioning is defined as a proactive yet discreet strategy through which employees prepare alternative career opportunities without immediately leaving their current organization. This strategy includes updating professional profiles, expanding professional networks, obtaining additional qualifications, and monitoring external job opportunities while maintaining current employment. Although the term has only recently gained popularity in career management literature, its conceptual foundation originates from Boundaryless Career Theory, which argues that modern careers are increasingly characterised by mobility across organizational boundaries rather than lifelong employment within a single organization (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Savickas, 2005).

Career cushioning differs fundamentally from turnover intention. Whereas turnover intention reflects an explicit intention to resign within the foreseeable future, career cushioning functions as a long-term risk management strategy that enables employees to maintain career flexibility without necessarily changing jobs. Employees may engage in career cushioning for extended periods as a psychological safety mechanism, thereby reducing uncertainty while remaining employed. Consequently, career cushioning represents a subtle form of employee withdrawal behaviour that is considerably less visible than absenteeism, declining performance, or actual turnover.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to a positive psychological state in which employees invest themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally in their work roles (Kahn, 1990). Highly engaged employees demonstrate enthusiasm, dedication, persistence, and a strong sense of meaning in their work. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model further explains that engagement develops when sufficient job and personal resources are available to balance work demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

When employees perceive increasing organizational instability, psychological resources previously devoted to work performance may gradually be redirected toward self-protection and career planning activities, including career cushioning. Consequently, employee engagement may decline because employees allocate part of their emotional energy, attention, and commitment to securing future career opportunities rather than investing fully in their present organizational roles.

Job Crafting

Job crafting refers to employees' proactive efforts to redesign the boundaries of their work by modifying tasks, interpersonal relationships, and the cognitive meaning attached to their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Rather than passively accepting prescribed job designs, employees actively shape their work to better match their personal strengths, interests, and values. Job crafting generally consists of three dimensions: task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting (Tims et al., 2012). Within uncertain organizational environments, job crafting functions as an important personal resource that enhances employees' sense of autonomy, control, and work meaningfulness. Employees who actively craft their jobs tend to demonstrate greater psychological resilience because they can adapt their work experiences despite organizational instability. Consequently, job crafting is expected to weaken the negative influence of perceived organizational instability on employee engagement by enabling employees to maintain meaningful work experiences under changing organizational conditions (Petrou et al., 2012).

Previous Studies and Hypothesis Development

Previous research consistently demonstrates that job insecurity negatively influences employee attitudes and behaviours. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that perceived job insecurity reduces organizational commitment, job satisfaction, employee well-being, and work engagement while increasing stress and turnover intention (Sverke et al., 2002; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sora et al., 2010). Nevertheless, previous studies have predominantly focused on overt behavioural outcomes and have rarely examined hidden coping behaviours such as career cushioning. Similarly, extensive research has established job crafting as a significant predictor of employee engagement. Employees who proactively redesign their jobs generally report higher engagement because job crafting enhances autonomy, meaningfulness, and psychological resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Petrou et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2012). Daily job crafting studies further demonstrate that fluctuations in job crafting behaviours correspond directly with changes in work engagement, highlighting its dynamic role as a psychological resource.

Drawing upon Job Insecurity Theory, Conservation of Resources Theory, Boundaryless Career Theory, and the Job Demands–Resources Model, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework linking perceived organizational instability, career cushioning, employee engagement, and job crafting. Specifically, perceived organizational instability is expected to encourage career cushioning as a proactive career protection strategy, which subsequently reduces employee engagement. However, employees with higher levels of job crafting are expected to maintain stronger engagement despite experiencing organizational uncertainty because they possess greater personal resources and psychological flexibility. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Perceived organizational instability positively influences career cushioning.

H2: Career cushioning negatively influences employee engagement.

H3: Perceived organizational instability negatively influences employee engagement.

H4: Career cushioning mediates the relationship between perceived organizational instability and employee engagement.

H5: Job crafting moderates the relationship between perceived organizational instability and employee engagement, such that the negative relationship becomes weaker among employees with higher levels of job crafting.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the proposed theoretical relationships, this study develops a conceptual framework in which Perceived Organizational Instability functions as the exogenous variable, Career Cushioning acts as the mediating variable, Employee Engagement serves as the endogenous variable, and Job Crafting operates as the moderating variable on the direct relationship between perceived organizational instability and employee engagement. The framework integrates the Conservation of Resources Theory and the Job Demands–Resources Model to explain how employees respond to organizational uncertainty through career protection behaviours while highlighting the buffering role of job crafting in sustaining employee engagement. The proposed conceptual model therefore suggests that employees who perceive greater organizational instability are more likely to engage in career cushioning, resulting in lower employee engagement. Nevertheless, employees who actively engage in job crafting possess stronger psychological resources that mitigate the adverse effects of organizational instability, thereby enabling them to maintain higher levels of engagement despite uncertain organizational conditions.

Table 1. Variable in the direct path of Perceived Organizational Instability to Employee Engagement

Exogenous Variables	Mediator Variable	Endogenous Variables
Perceived Organizational Instability	Career Cushioning	Employee Engagement

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a conceptual research design using a narrative literature review to develop a theoretical framework explaining the relationships among perceived organizational instability, career cushioning, employee engagement, and job crafting. A conceptual approach was selected because career cushioning is a relatively new phenomenon in organizational behaviour literature, and standardized measurement instruments have not yet been widely developed or empirically validated. Therefore, establishing a comprehensive theoretical foundation is considered an essential first step before conducting empirical investigations. The literature review synthesizes theories and previous empirical findings related to Job Insecurity Theory, Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model, Job Crafting Theory, and Boundaryless Career Theory. Through critical analysis and theoretical integration, this study develops a conceptual framework that explains how perceived organizational instability influences employee engagement through career cushioning, while job crafting is proposed as a moderating resource that weakens the adverse effects of organizational instability. To facilitate future empirical validation, the proposed conceptual model is designed to be tested using a quantitative cross-sectional survey involving employees working in industries characterised by high levels of organizational change, such as banking, technology, and capital-intensive manufacturing. Perceived organizational instability may be measured by adapting established job insecurity scales to capture employees' perceptions of organizational uncertainty rather than individual job loss. Career cushioning requires the

development of a dedicated measurement instrument because no standardized scale currently exists. Potential indicators include the frequency of updating professional profiles, expanding external professional networks, participating in professional development activities, and engaging in passive job-search behaviour. Employee engagement can be measured using validated work engagement instruments covering the dimensions of vigor, dedication, and absorption, while job crafting can be assessed using established scales measuring task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting.

For future empirical studies, data analysis is recommended using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), either Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) or Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM), because the proposed framework simultaneously examines both mediation and moderation effects. Alternatively, moderated regression analysis may also be employed to evaluate the interaction effect of job crafting. Following commonly accepted guidelines for structural model estimation, a minimum sample size of 200–300 respondents is recommended. Respondents should be selected using purposive sampling, with eligibility limited to permanent employees who have worked in their current organization for at least one year, ensuring that they possess sufficient organizational experience to evaluate perceived organizational instability and its behavioural consequences accurately.

RESULT

Analysis of the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Instability, Career Cushioning And Employee Engagement

The literature synthesis indicates that perceived organizational instability represents a significant antecedent of career cushioning. Employees who perceive organizational restructuring, declining organizational performance, leadership transitions, or economic uncertainty as potential threats are more likely to adopt proactive career protection behaviours. This finding is consistent with Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which argues that individuals attempt to preserve valuable resources when they perceive a risk of future resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). In organizational settings, preparing alternative employment opportunities enables employees to reduce uncertainty and maintain psychological security. Furthermore, Job Insecurity Theory suggests that employees respond not only to objective organizational conditions but also to their subjective perceptions of instability (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984; Ashford et al., 1989). Therefore, employees experiencing higher levels of perceived organizational instability are expected to demonstrate stronger career cushioning behaviours through activities such as updating professional profiles, expanding external professional networks, and monitoring employment opportunities outside their organizations.

Table 2. Summary of Theoretical Analysis and Proposed Relationships

Variable	Theoretical Foundation	Expected Relationship	Supporting References
Perceived Organizational Instability → Career Cushioning	Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory explains that employees protect valuable resources when facing	Positive (+)	Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt (1984); Ashford et al. (1989); Hobfoll

Variable	Theoretical Foundation	Expected Relationship	Supporting References
	uncertainty. Organizational instability encourages employees to prepare alternative career opportunities.		(1989); De Witte (2005)
Career Cushioning → Employee Engagement	Career cushioning diverts employees' psychological resources from their current work to future career preparation, thereby reducing work engagement.	Negative (-)	Kahn (1990); Schaufeli & Bakker (2004); Bakker & Demerouti (2007)
Perceived Organizational Instability → Employee Engagement	Organizational instability reduces employees' trust, commitment, and psychological investment in their work, leading to lower engagement.	Negative (-)	Sverke et al. (2002); Cheng & Chan (2008); Sora et al. (2010)
Career Cushioning as Mediator	Career cushioning explains the behavioural mechanism through which organizational instability gradually decreases employee engagement.	Mediation Effect	Hobfoll (1989); Bakker & Demerouti (2007); Savickas (2005)
Job Crafting as Moderator	Employees who proactively redesign their work possess stronger psychological resources, reducing the negative effect of organizational instability on engagement.	Moderation Effect	Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001); Tims et al. (2012); Petrou et al. (2012)

The conceptual analysis further suggests that career cushioning negatively influences employee engagement. Although career cushioning does not necessarily indicate an immediate intention to resign, it requires employees to redirect psychological resources from their current organizational roles toward preparing future career alternatives. Consequently, employees may continue performing their formal responsibilities while gradually reducing their emotional attachment, cognitive attention, and psychological commitment to their organizations. This argument supports the engagement framework proposed by Kahn (1990) and the Job Demands–Resources Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which emphasise that employee engagement depends on the availability of psychological resources. When substantial psychological resources are allocated to career protection behaviours, fewer resources remain available for work engagement, thereby reducing employees' vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Analysis of the Direct Effect of Perceived Organizational Instability on Employee Engagement

The literature consistently demonstrates that perceived organizational instability directly reduces employee engagement. Employees who perceive uncertain organizational

conditions often experience lower trust in organizational continuity and reduced confidence regarding their future careers. These perceptions increase psychological strain while simultaneously reducing employees' willingness to invest additional effort in their current work.

Table 3. Summary of Research Propositions

Proposition	Relationship	Expected Direction	Theoretical Justification
P1	Perceived Organizational Instability → Career Cushioning	Positive	Employees respond to uncertainty by preparing alternative career options to preserve future resources.
P2	Career Cushioning → Employee Engagement	Negative	Career cushioning reallocates employees' emotional and cognitive resources away from their current jobs.
P3	Perceived Organizational Instability → Employee Engagement	Negative	Organizational uncertainty directly reduces employees' psychological attachment to the organization.
P4	Career Cushioning mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Instability and Employee Engagement	Mediation	Organizational instability first encourages career cushioning, which subsequently decreases employee engagement.
P5	Job Crafting moderates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Instability and Employee Engagement	Moderation	Employees with high levels of job crafting maintain stronger engagement despite organizational instability.

Meta-analytic findings reported in previous studies indicate that job insecurity is negatively associated with organizational commitment, job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and employee engagement (Sverke et al., 2002; Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sora et al., 2010). Accordingly, perceived organizational instability is expected to exert a direct negative influence on employee engagement.

The Mediating Role of Career Cushioning and Moderating Role of Job Crafting.

The conceptual synthesis indicates that career cushioning serves as an important behavioural mechanism linking perceived organizational instability with employee engagement. Previous job insecurity studies have generally explained declining engagement through psychological outcomes such as stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion. This study extends the existing literature by proposing that employees also respond behaviourally through career cushioning. Rather than immediately withdrawing from their organizations, employees gradually invest time and psychological resources in preparing alternative career opportunities. This behavioural adjustment reduces their emotional investment in current organizational roles and ultimately contributes to declining employee

engagement. Consequently, career cushioning is proposed as a mediating variable explaining how organizational instability translates into reduced engagement.

The analysis further suggests that job crafting functions as a personal resource capable of weakening the negative relationship between perceived organizational instability and employee engagement. Employees who actively redesign their work tasks, interpersonal relationships, and perceptions of work meaning possess greater psychological flexibility when facing organizational uncertainty. Consistent with the Job Demands–Resources Model, job crafting increases work autonomy, meaningfulness, and personal resources, thereby enhancing employees' capacity to cope with stressful organizational conditions (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Tims et al., 2012; Petrou et al., 2012). Consequently, employees with high levels of job crafting are expected to maintain stronger employee engagement despite experiencing organizational instability.

Proposed Conceptual Model

Based on the synthesis of previous theories and empirical evidence, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework consisting of four principal constructs. Perceived Organizational Instability acts as the exogenous variable that directly influences both Career Cushioning and Employee Engagement. Career Cushioning functions as the mediating mechanism through which organizational instability indirectly reduces employee engagement, while Job Crafting serves as a moderating variable that weakens the negative effect of perceived organizational instability on employee engagement.

The proposed conceptual model therefore supports the following propositions:

- a. P1: Perceived Organizational Instability → Career Cushioning (positive relationship).
- b. P2: Career Cushioning → Employee Engagement (negative relationship).
- c. P3: Perceived Organizational Instability → Employee Engagement (negative relationship).
- d. P4: Career Cushioning mediates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Instability and Employee Engagement.
- e. P5: Job Crafting moderates the relationship between Perceived Organizational Instability and Employee Engagement by reducing the negative effect of organizational instability.

Overall, the conceptual analysis demonstrates that organizational instability not only affects employee engagement directly but also indirectly through employees' proactive career protection behaviours. At the same time, job crafting emerges as an important psychological resource that enables employees to remain engaged despite increasing organizational uncertainty. This integrated framework contributes to organizational behaviour literature by introducing career cushioning as a previously overlooked behavioural mechanism linking organizational instability and employee engagement while highlighting the strategic role of job crafting in sustaining workforce engagement.

The model proposed in this article offers a new perspective on understanding the relationship between organizational instability and work engagement, incorporating career cushioning as a previously overlooked explanatory mechanism. Until now, the relationship between job insecurity and engagement has been largely explained through affective pathways, such as anxiety or work stress. This article offers an additional behavioral explanation, namely that some of the decline in engagement actually stems from employees

diverting psychological resources to activities preparing for backup career options, which indirectly reduces the psychological capacity available to devote to their current work.

Table 4. Conceptual Interpretation of the Proposed Model

Construct	Role in the Model	Expected Organizational Implication
Perceived Organizational Instability	Independent Variable	Increases employees' perception of uncertainty and career insecurity.
Career Cushioning	Mediating Variable	Encourages proactive career protection while simultaneously reducing psychological attachment to the organization.
Employee Engagement	Dependent Variable	Represents employees' vigor, dedication, and absorption, which decline as organizational uncertainty increases.
Job Crafting	Moderating Variable	Strengthens employees' resilience by increasing autonomy, work meaningfulness, and psychological resources, thereby mitigating the negative impact of organizational instability.

The role of job crafting as a moderating variable in this model also provides an optimistic perspective. While organizational instability does tend to pose a threat to work engagement, this threat is not absolute. Employees who actively reshape their tasks, relationships, and the meaning of their work are more likely to remain engaged, as they have internal psychological resources to rely on without relying entirely on the external stability of the organization. Thus, job crafting can be viewed as a form of individual agency that can bridge the tension between the demands of career survival and the need to maintain meaning in their current work. This argument also has broader theoretical implications for career studies. Until now, the boundaryless career literature has tended to view cross-organizational career transitions as explicitly observable phenomena. Career cushioning expands this understanding by demonstrating that preparation for cross-organizational career transitions actually occurs long before the transition actually occurs, and can even take place for years in a form that is barely visible to the organization. This requires a shift in perspective from one focused on employee turnover to one focused on the psychological processes that precede these transitions.

CONCLUSION

This article proposes a conceptual model that positions career cushioning as a new explanatory mechanism in understanding the relationship between perceived organizational instability and employee engagement, with job crafting acting as a moderating variable that weakens the negative impact of organizational instability on work engagement. This study expands the understanding of employee coping behavior from its initial focus on overt responses to more subtle and hidden responses, while also emphasizing the importance of individual agency through job crafting in maintaining work engagement amidst uncertain organizational dynamics. This model is expected to serve as a foundation for instrument development and empirical testing in further research, while also providing new directions

for human resource management practices in responding to changes in the contemporary employment landscape.

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