

# Who needs transformational leadership to craft their job? The role of work engagement and personal values

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to discuss relationships between transformational leadership and job crafting. Using the job demands-resource (JD-R) theory, this study investigates the mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting. The author has also tested the moderating roles of personal values.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study is based on data from 450 knowledge workers representing companies of various sizes from the knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) sector in Poland. The questionnaires were completed using the computer-assisted telephone interview method. The statistical verification of the mediation and moderation analyses was conducted using macro PROCESS (ver. 3.3).

**Findings** – The findings show that transformational leadership was positively related to job crafting. Statistical analysis also confirmed the research hypothesis that as a personal resource, self-enhancement values moderate relationships between transformational leadership and work engagement, thus strengthening them. The study integrated research on leadership and personal and organisational resources to examine the collective impact of these variables on employee job crafting.

**Originality/value** – The study is the first to explore the mediating mechanism (through work engagement) between transformational leadership and job crafting in the context of KIBS companies in Poland.

**Keywords** Transformational leadership, Job crafting, Work engagement, Personal values

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Diverse and multifaceted transformations are connected with the nature of work; these include issues such as the intensification and subjectification of work, boundaryless work, and complex work. This creates a need for companies to apply continuous adjustment processes, to change business models, and, consequently, to transform management processes. These changes are particularly visible in knowledge-intensive business services (KIBS) companies. Such companies mostly employ highly qualified knowledge workers (Berraies and Bchini, 2019), and base their activities on creating knowledge with a high level of intensity and uniqueness, combined with significant technological support. Therefore, meeting high job demands often requires creativity, flexibility, and proactivity on the part of the employees. One such form of proactivity is job crafting, which constitutes self-initiated behaviours representing the bottom-up process of change. Employees introduce it in their

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work boundaries to “balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs” (Tims *et al.*, 2012, p. 174), and provide it with meaning (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). High significance of this form of proactivity in the KIBS companies results from the fact that job crafting (JC) relies on looking for resources, and undertaking challenges in response to the personalised expectations of clients.

While the research on individual antecedents of job crafting – or job characteristics – is well documented (Lichtenthaler and Fischbach, 2018a; Rudolph *et al.*, 2017; Zhang and Parker, 2019), some more in-depth analysis is needed with regard to the exploration of organisational context. It should include the social context—in particular with regard to leadership; the mechanism which underlies leaders’ influence, and which is conducive to job crafting (Tims *et al.*, 2022, p. 66). Thus far, research on knowledge-intensive firms has focussed both on transactional and transformational leadership (Berraies and Bchini, 2019) without, however, extensive reference to job crafting which is relevant for knowledge workers in order for them to undertake challenges and search for resources. The few existing analyses on knowledge-based organisations indicate the relationships between transformational leadership and job crafting (Hetland *et al.*, 2018). Thus, those analyses form the basis for further in-depth research of this relationship, especially given that studies covering employees from other sectors have not provided explicit conclusions. In one meta-analysis devoted to this issue, Wang *et al.* (2020) emphasised that not all research indicates the beneficial impact of social factors on job crafting, including a clearly confirmed positive and significant connection between transformational leadership and job crafting or increasing the resources. The ambiguity in the description of these relationships is mostly related to the explanation of mechanisms in which leadership influences job crafting. One example that can be provided is the causal relationship between work engagement and job crafting. Research showed two antithetical effects—namely, that work engagement promotes job crafting (Bai *et al.*, 2021; Bajaba *et al.*, 2021; Oprea *et al.*, 2022; Tan *et al.*, 2020), as well as the reversed causality for these variables (Bakker and Oerlemans, 2019; Lazauskaite-Zabielske *et al.*, 2021; Letona-Ibañez *et al.*, 2021; Radstaak and Hennes, 2017). The bidirectional relationship between these variables is confirmed by analyses which aggregate the previous research (Dash and Vohra, 2020; Zhang and Parker, 2019). Moreover, when analysing the relationship of leadership and job crafting, the researchers were mostly focussing on examining the selected, individual factors, for instance proactive personality (Kim and Beehr, 2018), psychological capital (Kim and Beehr, 2021), adaptability (Wang *et al.*, 2017), optimism (Thun and Bakker, 2018), promotion focus (Hetland *et al.*, 2018), job-based psychological ownership (Naeem *et al.*, 2021), and self-efficacy (Oprea *et al.*, 2022), without testing the more complex mechanism of this relationship.

From the point of view of significant challenges and high-level job demands in KIBS companies, it is important to understand the processes motivating knowledge workers to undertake job crafting. Therefore, two key research questions were formulated: (1) what are the mechanisms in which transformational leadership influences job crafting? (2) What determines the fact that a leader triggers job crafting, and who (which knowledge workers) “needs” *de facto* leadership in order to undertake job crafting? The answer to the second question corresponds to the postulate to study the universal motives for job crafting (Dash and Vohra, 2020), and supplements the previous perspective of exploring the role of the leader as the person who might encourage job crafting, by providing and facilitating access to resources (Tims *et al.*, 2022), as well as by developing their subordinates’ resources (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Bearing in mind the fact that job crafting denotes self-initiated efforts, and may be undertaken without any direct support by the management (Dash and Vohra, 2020), it becomes justified to attempt to determine the boundary conditions of leadership’s influence on job crafting. Therefore, this research has addressed a specific gap in understanding the boundary conditions for transformational leadership to be effective for triggering job crafting in KIBS companies.

This paper analyses the mechanism underlying the relationship between leadership and job crafting in the case of employees from KIBS companies. As the overarching theoretical basis for the conducted analyses, I adopted the job demands-resource (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017) to explain how transformational leadership (TL) influences job crafting (JC). The JD-R theory has already been used to examine these relationships (Naeem *et al.*, 2021), and it assumes that leadership may be treated as an organisational/job resource (Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021; Tummers and Bakker, 2021). With reference to the JD-R theory, I assume that transformational leadership – as a job resource – triggers motivational processes that lead both to work engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008), and job crafting (Tims *et al.*, 2022). In view of the fact that the main measure to promote work engagement is to increase resources (Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021), I would have expected that transformational leadership is positively related to job crafting via work engagement. In turn, work engagement leads to outcomes, and facilitates the further increase of resources and undertaking of challenges, namely job crafting. Research confirms the role of work engagement as a mediator between job resources and proactive behaviour (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008), and personal initiative (Hakanen *et al.*, 2008).

Moreover, I assume that an important role in this process may be played by employees' values, which can be treated as personal resources and motivational dispositions. Values, which are similar to other psychological resources, such as needs and personality traits, may serve as a moderator of the relationship between transformational leadership and the work engagement of knowledge workers.

In conclusion, the motivational dispositions of the employees, the resourceful design of jobs by leaders, and their positive influence on employees' work engagement can lead to job crafting. Figure 1 presents the relationships conceptualised in this study.

This paper contributes to the job crafting literature in three ways. First, the study analyses a more complex mechanism of the relationship between leadership and job crafting through the inclusion of values as a single moderator which has not been previously analysed in the research on the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Values, similarly to needs, perform an important motivational function, providing direction for human behaviour. Due to the fact that they have a more universal, permanent, and intrasituational character, they may be analysed as antecedents of various behaviours. They may also be decisive in terms of the occurrence and strength of other behavioural determinants.

Second, the study indicates that values play a distinctive role in terms of transformational leadership changing the pattern of individual job crafting through work engagement. The level of values differentiates the followers, generating effects which are connected with their different adaptability to the influence of the leader. This perspective breaks with the previous manner of examining the transformational leadership in the categories of its universal influence, showing that its effects are determined by individual factors, in this case, values.

Third, the study takes into account the specific context of KIBS companies. Together with the homogeneity of the study sample, it facilitates a deeper understanding of the mechanisms occurring in the relationships analysed in connection with the specificity of

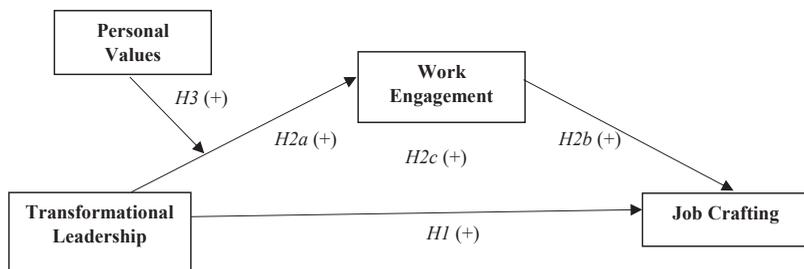


Figure 1.  
Theoretical model of  
hypotheses

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knowledge-intensive work. Focussing the study on the context allows for a better understanding of the determinants of job crafting with regard to knowledge workers, taking into account their specific demands. This has a key significance for the influence of the leaders and their behaviours.

## Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

### *Transformational leadership and job crafting*

Leadership is one of the key factors anchored in the organisational context that influences the occurrence of job crafting. Leadership represents the social context, and demonstrates the significance of relationships with the leader as a catalyst for employee behaviours and outcomes. So far, with regard to job crafting, most analyses have been conducted with reference to transformational leadership (Asfar *et al.*, 2019; Hetland *et al.*, 2018; Naeem *et al.*, 2021; Wang *et al.*, 2017), empowering leadership (Tang *et al.*, 2020; Kim and Beehr, 2021), employee-oriented leadership (Lichtenthaler and Fischbach, 2018b), and servant leadership (Harju *et al.*, 2018). The relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting is not explicit (Wang *et al.*, 2020). Studies have indicated a positive example of the relationship of transformational leadership with job crafting (Asfar *et al.*, 2019; Hetland *et al.*, 2018; Wang *et al.*, 2017). However, other analyses have presented this relationship as nonsignificant (Esteves and Lopes, 2017). By contrast, to take into account the positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee proactive behaviour, pointed out in the meta-analysis by Chiaburu *et al.* (2014), it is possible to assume that leaders' influence on approach crafting can have positive effects, especially if we consider the specific dimensions of transformational leadership—inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealised influence. This type of leadership is expressed through communicating visions and goals to the employees (Bass and Avolio, 1997) which is significant from the viewpoint of boosting their motivation for action. Due to intellectual stimulation and the creation of challenges, employees have opportunities to develop their abilities and increase their knowledge as well as resources. One feature of such leadership is that it encourages employees to apply new modes of operation, and expects higher performance, expressing the above through inspiring them to find new ways to work (Wang *et al.*, 2017). This increases not only proactivity but also innovativeness in the workplace (Asfar *et al.*, 2019), which is especially significant in the case of knowledge workers from the KIBS companies. Other behaviours of transformational leaders, such as intellectual stimulation, which facilitates changes to expand the task, also have immediate consequences for job crafting. Moreover, leaders form role models for employees when they manifest proactive behaviours themselves by way of “idealised influence”. Another type of leader activity is aimed at the coherence between demands and employee competencies, which may stimulate job crafting. Research confirms the relationship of transformational leadership with a higher perception of fit both in the need–supply dyad and in the demand–ability dyad (Chi and Pan, 2012). Analyses confirm the direct influence of leadership on job crafting (Tummers and Bakker, 2021). The indirect influence is also confirmed—leaders can provide their employees with better access to resources that can be used to craft their job (Tims *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, I suggest that transformational leadership is positively related to job crafting by employees, and I posit the following hypothesis:

H1. Transformational leadership is positively related to job crafting.

### *The mediating role of work engagement in the relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting*

Apart from the direct influence of leadership on job crafting, it is also possible to indicate an indirect influence through the mediated role of work engagement. These correlations are aptly explained by the JD-R model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017), which suggests that job resources

promote engagement through a motivational process. Work engagement is a positive motivational state that combines high energy with a strong intention to invest one's resources in work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). An important factor triggering work engagement is transformational leadership which forms a job/organisational resource (Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021; Tummers and Bakker, 2021). Referring to the JD-R theory, it is possible to state that transformational leadership may form both a resource and a factor which triggers resources. Studies show that such a type of leadership is more strongly connected with the work engagement of knowledge workers than with transactional leadership (Li, 2019). Treating leadership as a key resource allows for a better understanding of its influence on engagement (Tummers and Bakker, 2021). The resources create motivational potential, which leads to work engagement and performance (Knight *et al.*, 2016; Lazauskaite-Zabielske *et al.*, 2018). While the perceived resources are instrumental in achieving professional goals, they can also aid employees' development, and increase their readiness to exert their efforts while conducting tasks. Therefore, organisational resources are assumed to have a direct positive relationship with engagement, as confirmed by meta-analyses (Crawford *et al.*, 2010; Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021). A leader motivates knowledge workers to undertake a considerable effort connected with performing services for customers who have high, personalised expectations. As stressed by Hakanen and Roodt (2010, p. 95) "leadership styles, such as transformational and servant leadership, which emphasize the importance of interpersonal relationship, are most likely to act as 'energizers' in building engagement". A strong interaction of knowledge workers with the leader may also provide information on how to maintain engagement, even in the situation of high demands and work complexity. Moreover, leaders directly influence the realisation of tasks, and through intellectual stimulation and challenging the knowledge workers who perform high complexity work and workloads, they may reinforce their energetic state and tendency for action (Bai *et al.*, 2021). Stimulation through challenges demands brings a result in the form of positive emotions and active problem-focused coping strategies which, in turn, cause an increase in workers' willingness to expend their energy on performing work-related tasks with increased engagement (Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021). It is possible to explain the strong influence of transformational leadership on engagement through the enhancement of job resources that the skills and knowledge of managers can facilitate. By this token, and in accordance with the motivational hypothesis of the JD-R Model (Mazzetti *et al.*, 2021), employees are motivated to engage in their work. Therefore, I posit the following hypothesis:

*H2a.* Transformational leadership is positively related to work engagement.

According to the JD-R theory, work engagement facilitates positive employee outcomes, which can also lead to the seeking of resources and undertaking challenges. In turn, employees may increase their available resources even more through job crafting, which further reinforces their work engagement. In the case of knowledge workers, work engagement triggers the resource gain process (Bai *et al.*, 2021), which is necessary to realise job demands and undertake challenges. Employees with a high level of engagement will be motivated to gain additional resources, such as social and job resources, through job crafting. Also, they will increasingly accept challenging job demands (Tims *et al.*, 2012). The high level of motivation of knowledge workers may increase their work engagement, and subsequently modify their work boundaries. As stressed by Bakker and Leiter (2010), engaged employees may be more inclined to change their job demand and resources proactively, so that their performance is optimal. The influence of work engagement on job crafting was indicated in numerous studies (Tan *et al.*, 2020; Oprea *et al.*, 2022; Letona-Ibañez *et al.*, 2021; Bai *et al.*, 2021; Bajaba *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, empirical analyses confirm the role of work engagement as a mediator between job resources and proactive behaviour (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008) and personal initiative (Hakanen *et al.*, 2008). Empirical studies have found positive relationships between work engagement, activated positive affect, and crafting (Hakanen *et al.*, 2018). On

the other hand, [Zeijen et al. \(2018\)](#) found that work engagement is positively related to job crafting through self-observation and self-goal setting. Thus, it is possible to state that the psychological state of an employee is an important stimulus that triggers their readiness to manifest proactivity, which is demonstrated in job crafting.

I thus assume that work engagement is the mediator in the relationship between leadership and job crafting. The proposed approach is in accordance with the assumption that when employees show high engagement levels, respect, and appreciate their work, they can be expected to put extra effort into improving their working circumstances ([Tan et al., 2020](#)). Transformational leadership forms this organisational predictor of the discussed correlations, which gained empirical support. Existing studies confirm the relationship of leadership with both work engagement ([Amor et al., 2020](#)) and job crafting ([Wang et al., 2017](#); [Lichtenthaler and Fischbach, 2018b](#); [Tan et al., 2020](#)). Therefore, I posit the following hypotheses:

*H2b.* Work engagement is positively related to job crafting.

*H2c.* Work engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting.

#### *The moderating role of personal values in the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement*

In the JD-R theory, personal resources form an important element of the motivational process leading to work engagement ([Bakker and Demerouti, 2017](#)). Personal resources also describe beliefs as the extent to which we control our environment. Beliefs exert a direct influence on work engagement, buffer the undesirable influence of job demands on strain, and increase the desirable influence of demands on motivation ([Bakker and Demerouti, 2017](#)). [Mazzetti et al. \(2021\)](#) conducted a meta-analysis, and concluded that stable personal resources (e.g. personality characteristics) and individual characteristics (e.g. self-efficacy) are combined with work engagement. In the proposed model, I adopted values as personal resources reinforcing the effects connected with leadership with respect to work engagement. In accordance with [Schwartz et al. \(2012\)](#), values form a cognitive representation of the motivational, desirable trans-situational goal, and thus form beliefs. At the same time, they may perform a motivational function, as the basic values are organised into a consistent system that lies at the base of behaviours, attitudes, and decisions that are undertaken ([Schwartz et al., 2012](#)). The strong motivational potential of values springs from their universality and characteristics, which was aptly described thus by [Seppälä et al. \(2012, p. 139\)](#): “traits describe what people are like, whereas values refer to what people consider important (e.g. values are goals whereas traits are dispositions)”. Values provide insight into how individuals are differentially motivated, how those motives influence their behaviours, and how leaders end up motivating followers. Due to their motivational potential, values may stimulate work engagement (just as other personal resources, like self-efficacy) and subsequently job crafting, thereby manifesting a synergistic (or substitutional) effect towards transformational leadership. Research confirms that personal values (and the openness to change, self-transcendence, self-enhancement, and the commitment to values) combine with work engagement ([Sato et al., 2021](#)) and crafting ([Peters et al., 2020](#)).

From the viewpoint of work engagement, self-enhancement appears significant, as it is singled out by [Schwartz et al. \(2012\)](#), and covers achievement, power, and face. I assume that these values may reinforce the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. The basis for analysing the moderating influence of values in the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement has been provided by studies ([Leroy et al., 2018](#); [Ehnröoth et al., 2021](#)). As stressed by [Leroy et al. \(2018\)](#), although transformational leadership influences employees’ pursuit of personal status and success, it

is more oriented towards others and self-transcendence, rather than influencing employees' pursuit of personal status and success.

It is only possible to agree with this view partly, as transformational leaders encourage employees to take new challenges (by using intellectual stimulation, motivation, inspiration, and individual treatment), thus developing new competencies.

Therefore, based on the JD-R model, I posit that knowledge workers with high levels of self-enhancement values are more willing to focus on positive, stimulating, and challenging aspects of their jobs, and they express strong work engagement. At the same time, it can be expected that people who value self-enhancement less, and consequently manifest a lower focus on achievement may to a larger extent need the support of the leader for work engagement. Transformational leadership may then contribute to achieving goals with knowledge workers, and to their effective activity due to increasing their work engagement. In the view of [Ehrnrooth et al. \(2021\)](#) self-efficacy and work engagement are examples of self-enhancement effects. Analogically, values may simultaneously lead to the reinforcement of the relationship between leadership and work engagement (a synergistic effect), and to the "replacement" of leadership (a substitutional effect). In the latter case, values may be related to the characteristics of subordinates (among others: ability, experience, knowledge, need for independence), and treated as substitutes for leadership, as suggested by [Kerr and Jemier \(1978\)](#).

Based on the above arguments, the following hypothesis was formulated:

- H3.* Values moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement in such a way that the positive relationship is stronger when values are low rather than high.

## Method

### *Sample and data collection procedure*

The research sample comprised employees of companies operating in the KIBS sector ( $N = 450$ ), whose work consisted of performing tasks requiring expert knowledge and creating services for clients. The workers were employed in corporations, small-, large-, and medium-sized companies, and in various knowledge-intensive service branches: architecture and engineering activity and research and technical (17%); software, IT consulting, and related activities (14%); legal and accounting services (12%); activities of head offices, management consultancy activities (10%); advertising, market research, and opinion polls (10%); scientific research and development (7%); and other professional, scientific, and technical activities (15%). I applied random sampling to identify companies that fulfilled the criteria for membership in the KIBS sector. The study had an all-Poland character, and was conducted with the use of computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI), which ensured anonymity. The selection of participants for the study was preceded by contacting the HR department of the given firms in order to determine the eligibility of respondents, and subsequently, persons fulfilling the recruitment criteria were selected. The respondents' personal data was subject to anonymisation, and the remaining characteristics were described in the metrics.

The majority of respondents represented employees within the age range of 26–35 (24%), 36–45 (36%), and 46–55 (22%), who had university education (84%), and mostly with over five years of work experience (88%); 62% of the respondents were female, and 38% were male. The research was carried out between November 2019 and January 2020.

### *Measures*

*Transformational leadership* was measured using the 20-item Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) tool developed by [Bass and Avolio \(1997\)](#). Responses were rated on a

five-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (almost always). For each item, the participants were asked to evaluate their supervisor. The following are examples of statements from this questionnaire: “Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems”, “Displays a sense of power and confidence”.

*Job crafting behaviours* were assessed using the 21-item Job Crafting Scale (JCS) tool developed by Tims *et al.* (2012). The following are examples of statements from this questionnaire: “I try to develop myself professionally”, “I ask whether my supervisor is satisfied with my work”.

*Work engagement* was measured using the 3-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-3) tool developed by (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2017). An example item is as follows: “At work, I felt bursting with energy”.

*Values* were assessed using the four items from 21-item PVQ-RR-f Schwartz’s tool, forming a Polish adaptation developed by Ciecuch (2013). The items form a part of the dimension of self-enhancement, and they cover achievement and power. For each item, the respondents answer the question: “How much like you is this person?”, so the measurement of values is performed indirectly. The following are examples of statements from this questionnaire: “It is important to him to show his abilities. He wants people to admire what he does”, “It is important to him to get respect from others. He wants people to do what he says”.

All scale reliabilities (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  values) exceeded 0.7 and were thus deemed to be acceptable.

## Results

Table 1 presents the results of the intercorrelations and the descriptive statistics. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software (version 25).

To test the research hypotheses, a series of nested models were studied. AMOS software (ver. 25) was used to verify the research models. Table 2 shows the results. This study used a baseline (four-factor) model and estimated all of the theorised relationships between the stated constructs. The measurement model was assessed through confirmatory factor analysis, which comprised five latent variables. The values of these fit indices ( $\chi^2 = 1344.818$ ,  $df = 647$ ;  $p = 0.01$ ; RMSEA = 0.049; CFI = 0.957; TLI = 0.953; SRMR = 0.079) indicated that the measurement model provided the best fit to the data.

Construct validity was evaluated using composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity. The consistency reliability was tested through Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  and the CR index. The analysis indicates that all values of Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  exceeded 0.70, suggesting that they were valid for the analysis. Similarly, all the CR results ranged from 0.725 to 0.989, which was higher than the threshold value of 0.7, thus confirming internal consistency reliability (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Convergent validity was assessed using the AVE ratio. The AVE of the five constructs ranged between 0.511 and 0.812, exceeding the standard threshold of 0.5 for convergent validity. The discriminant validity of the measurement model was evaluated using the construct correlation values. The conducted analyses confirmed the existence of discriminant validity in the constructs.

To test the hypotheses and determine the relationship paths between the variables, model 7, described by Hayes (2018), was applied, using the recommended 5,000 bootstrap samplings with 95% confidence intervals (CIs) (Hayes, 2018). Table 3 presents the results. In accordance with H1, transformational leadership should be significantly and positively related to job crafting. The results in Table 3 demonstrate that transformational leadership was significantly and positively related to job crafting ( $\beta = 0.059$ ,  $t < 0.001$ ). Thus, H1 is supported.

To determine the indirect influence of transformational leadership on job crafting (H2a, H2b, H2c), inferences were conducted based on mediation analysis via work engagement. As demonstrated in Table 3, transformational leadership affects work engagement positively

**Table 1.**  
Descriptive statistics  
and inter-correlations

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Job crafting	3.58	0.52	(0.73)							
2. Work engagement	4.30	1.01	0.454**	(0.73)						
3. Transformational leadership	2.45	1.39	0.248**	0.153**	(0.99)					
4. Personal values	3.39	0.92	0.322**	0.185**	-0.015	(0.71)				
5. Sex	1.34	0.48	-0.034	0.009	-0.366**	0.127**	1			
6. Age	3.18	1.07	-0.088	0.051	-0.327**	-0.066	0.208**	1		
7. Education	1.85	0.38	-0.018	0.046	-0.002	-0.064	0.092	-0.058	1	
8. Tenure	2.85	0.42	-0.002	0.032	-0.204**	-0.002	0.138**	0.483**	-0.046	1
9. Job position	1.50	0.50	-0.008	-0.081	0.403**	-0.060	-0.407**	-0.319**	-0.094*	-0.275**

**Note(s):** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

( $\beta = 0.125, p < 0.001$ ) and work engagement increases job crafting ( $\beta = 0.147, p < 0.001$ ). The mediating role of WE between TL and JC was estimated at  $\beta = 0.032$ , (95% CI = 0.014; 0.054). The achieved results show empirical support for H2a, H2b, H2c.

To confirm H3, a regression analysis was conducted presupposing the occurrence of the moderation effect of personal values between the variables assumed in the research model. As shown in Table 3, transformational leadership  $\times$  personal values significantly predicted work engagement ( $\beta = -0.100, p < 0.05$ ). To interpret the interactional pattern better, simple slope analyses (one standard deviation above and below the mean  $-$  SD) were conducted. The results of this test show that TL  $\times$  PV was positively related to WE when PV was low ( $-1$  SD,  $\beta = 0.217, p < 0.01$ ) rather than high ( $+1$  SD,  $\beta = 0.033$ , n.s.). On this basis, it is possible to state that a low level of self-enhancement values reinforces the leader's influence on the work engagement of employees. Thus, H3 received empirical support. Finally, the moderation-mediation between TL and JC was tested. As shown in Table 3, the index of conditional moderation-mediation was significant ( $\beta = -0.015$ ; 95% CI =  $-0.029$  to  $-0.002$ ), suggesting that PV influenced the mediatory role of WE on employee' job crafting. This finding can be explained as follows: employees who have transformational leaders and low self-

Model	Structure	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Baseline model	Four-factor	1344.299	647	0.957	0.953	0.079	0.049
Model 1	Three-factor	1723.533	651	0.934	0.928	0.105	0.061
	PV + WE, JC, TL						
Model 2	Two-factor	1895.465	654	0.923	0.918	0.106	0.065
	PV + WE + JC, TL						
Model 3	One-factor	3537.992	657	0.822	0.810	0.297	0.099

**Note(s):** JC–Job Crafting; WE – Work Engagement; TL–Transformational leadership; PV– Personal values (Self-Enhancement) + variables combined

**Table 2.**  
Comparison of measurement model

	$\beta$	SE	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	SE	<i>t</i>
	Mediator variable: Work engagement			Dependent variable: Job crafting		
Constant	4.300	0.047	92.221***	2.775	0.105	26.478***
Transformational leadership	0.125	0.035	3.593***	0.059	0.019	3.438***
Personal values (Self-enhancement)	0.219	0.055	4.008***			
Work engagement				0.147	0.024	6.253***
TL $\times$ PV	-0.100	0.043	-2.349*			
WE $\times$ PV						
<i>Test of conditional TL <math>\times</math> PV interaction</i>						
-1 SD			0.217***			
0			0.125***			
+1 SD			0.033			
Indirect effect of WE				0.032	0.010	95% CI (0.014; 0.054)
Index of moderated mediation				-0.015	0.007	95% CI (-0.029; -0.002)
$R^2$			0.07			0.16
<i>F</i>			9.123 (3; 446)***			30.982 (2; 447)***

**Note(s):** JC–Job Crafting; WE – Work engagement; TL–Transformational leadership; PV– Personal values (Self-Enhancement)

**Table 3.**  
Effect moderation role of personal values on JC

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ \*\*

enhancement values show higher work engagement, which influences tendencies to job crafting.

### Discussion and conclusions

Transformations related to performing work reveal the ever more active role of employees themselves. The research indicates, however, that despite the bottom-up job crafting autonomously initiated by employees, leaders may stimulate this form of organisational behaviour (Hetland *et al.*, 2018; Asfar *et al.*, 2019; Naeem *et al.*, 2021). The basis for formulating an assumption regarding the role of leadership in triggering job crafting is the fact that managers directly influence employees and stimulate their behaviours.

This research makes an important contribution to existing knowledge in the area under discussion. First, the research has allowed us to determine the complex mechanism of a leader's influence, by including the mediator and the moderator. It remains in accordance with the claim formulated by researchers stating that the relationships between leadership and followers' proactive behaviour are more dynamic than has been indicated in previous research (Asfar *et al.*, 2019), and that the effectiveness of transformational leadership is more visible in increasing employee adaptability, which indirectly fosters the expansion of job crafting (Wang *et al.*, 2017). In light of the research results obtained, an important role in strengthening the relationship between transformational leadership and job crafting is played by work engagement, which in turn reinforces job crafting behaviours.

Second, the key finding resulting from the research conducted is that the influence of leadership on significant work engagement in KIBS companies is diversified by employees' values—in this case, those of self-enhancement. These values form employees' significant individual resources, which motivate and regulate their behaviour in a workplace. In view of the fact that persons with higher psychological resources may achieve their goals and develop due to the resources gain process (Bai *et al.*, 2021), values may form an important motive for a high level of work engagement and job crafting in the case of knowledge workers, in the same way as self-efficacy (Tims *et al.*, 2013). Exploring the values of knowledge workers, I focus on the necessity to examine personal resources in view of their permanent nature. The permanence of resources, in this case, values, may explain the employees' preferences connected with undertaking both job crafting and engagement. Such a perspective forms an input to the J-DR theory, enriching the analysis of personal resources to include their formal, and not only content-related, characteristics from the point of view of permanence. This enables the understanding of the "permanence in changeability", namely the preferred, relatively constant pattern of an employee's behaviours in a dynamically changing environment (a more accurate prediction of behaviours).

Self-enhancement values, expressing a focus on oneself and one's motives for achieving success, may stimulate work engagement, even in a situation where the leader's influence on followers' activity is insufficient. The result obtained shows at the same time that knowledge workers who value self-enhancement less may require a stronger influence from the leader in order for the level of their engagement to increase. Therefore, it may be stated that transformational leadership does not influence all employees identically, and that persons with less expressive tendencies to achieve success and exercise control over people and resources have a stronger need for it. This conclusion breaks with the previous view of transformational leadership in the categories of its universal influence, showing that its effects are determined by individual factors, in this case, values, which interact with it. The role of the values may be treated in this case as a strong stimulus motivating and regulating behaviour, and we may treat them as an important individual resource, like other resources, such as self-efficacy. Their relationship with job crafting was confirmed in the meta-analyses (Rudolph *et al.*, 2017; Zhang and Parker, 2019).

One more final, significant conclusion resulting from these studies is that those persons who highly appreciate the values of self-enhancement do not react to the influence of transformational leadership. This explains the lack of such relationships in other studies. Thereby, a high level of self-enhancement values among knowledge workers may be treated as a substitute for transformational leadership, and this is similar in the case of self-efficacy (Den Hartog and Belschak, 2012). Only persons with low declared values increase their engagement manifesting more JC. Thus, personal resources (values, personality, attitudes, etc.) play an important role in the influence of leadership on employee behaviours. Moreover, values treated as beliefs related to supra-situational goals may form not only a moderator, but also a predictor of both work engagement, and job crafting, similar to self-efficacy (Tims *et al.*, 2013), or proactive personality (Bakker *et al.*, 2012). And although values are compared to personality traits, they are characterised by dynamism and a motivating aspect, as well as a sensitivity to external influences, which has special significance in the context of professional activity in knowledge-intensive companies. Some authors also indicate that other individual characteristics – such as adaptability – show higher importance for job crafting than proactive personality (Wang *et al.*, 2017).

### *Practical implications*

Based on the findings of this research, it is possible to formulate several practical recommendations. The research has demonstrated that the influence of transformational leadership on job crafting occurs through work engagement. That is why the key task for a transformational leader seems to be, apart from intellectual stimulation or inspiring motivation, the stimulation of engagement in the knowledge workers, which is crucial for accumulation and the gaining of resources.

The findings of this research also indicate an important role of employees' personal resources, constituted by values, in triggering work engagement and job crafting. It turns out that personal resources play a significant role in the influence of leadership on employee behaviour and job performance (Sürücü *et al.*, 2022) while the resources themselves – for instance, self-efficacy, and a proactive personality – are connected with job crafting (Tims *et al.*, 2014) and work engagement (Tims and Akkermans, 2017).

In the context of the results achieved, the influence of the transformational leader is significant and justified with regard to those employees in whose case self-enhancement values are low within their hierarchy of values, therefore not triggering autonomous motivation for action in a natural way. Thus, leaders may mobilise employees' proactive behaviours through the goals they set, but they may also influence employees' values and attitudes. In the latter case, the goals in question denote those that stimulate undertaking challenges and creating resources. In the former situation – the reinforcement of values – the leader may use the processes of framing, cognitive crafting, and coaching.

The recommendation about reinforcing employees' self-enhancing values springs from the role of those values, confirmed in this research, for triggering work engagement and job crafting. These values may therefore be treated as an important personal resource that reflects the need for achieving success, and which plays the role of motivating and regulating behaviours in the workplace, in a similar way to self-efficacy. Referring to self-enhancement values, it is worth stressing the role of the leader in the area of creating autonomy in the workplace and participation, which will enable the employees to experience control—an important need related to job crafting.

In the context of personal resources, it is also worth mentioning the need to individualise the leader's influence on employees. This means that not all employees should be treated in the same manner with respect to their work characteristics. Naturally, many variables create the scope of individual antecedents concerning both work engagement and job crafting;

however, it should be kept in mind that the motivation and behaviours of individuals are a function of both social influence and their *self-awareness and beliefs*.

#### *Limitations and future research*

Although the research presented here contributes to new knowledge, it is not free from shortcomings. First, causal conclusions are not possible due to the cross-sectional designs implemented. Substantial variables were all measured via employee ratings with a cross-sectional design. It is recommended that the results be interpreted carefully, bearing these limitations in mind. For future research in this area, I suggest the use of a longitudinal design for reducing possible contaminating effects of common method variance (e.g. the separation of data collection across multiple time periods), as recommended by [Podsakoff et al. \(2012\)](#).

Second, the tools we employed used a self-report, which might result in doubts about the control of the “social desirability” variable. In this context, future studies should use numerous sources of knowledge on the examined variables (e.g. supervisors’ opinions—multi-source) and not restrict themselves to the opinions of the employees included in the study.

Research conducted on a homogeneous sample of knowledge workers from KIBS creates a potential for further exploration and explanation of the mechanism of leadership influence while taking into account the specificity of work in KIBS companies, especially as their market share is steadily growing. It would also be cognitively interesting, for instance, to determine the influence of other personal resources as moderators in the relationship between leadership on the one hand, and work engagement and job crafting, which may form substitutes of leadership, on the other. This is because it is possible to assume that persons who are characterised by high creativity and expert knowledge also possess other characteristics that support their performance. Perhaps the management of such persons should include leadership behaviours other than those that are covered within the framework of transformational leadership.

Examining the significance of self-enhancement values, it might also be worth including in the scope of analyses of future research other values coming from [Schwartz’s et al. \(2012\)](#) circular model. While discussing values, it might also be valid to examine the interactive influence of this variable with organisational factors that are strongly connected to them—identity, identification with the organisation, or organisational commitment.

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