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Daily Gain Cycles in Hybrid Work Environments: A Multilevel Study on the Reciprocal Interplay of Job Crafting, Psychological Capital, and Work Engagement

Katharina S. Apenbrink¹ · Rebekka Kuhlmann¹

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Abstract

Based on the multilevel Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, job crafting as a proactive behavior, psychological capital (PsyCap) as a personal resource, and work engagement dynamically interact in the form of a daily gain cycle, reinforced by general levels of well-being. To explore these multilevel relationships, we conducted a daily diary study over two workweeks with a sample of 192 employees and 1,433 daily observations. Given the rise of hybrid work, we analyzed employees' work location as an additional contextual factor. Multilevel analyses revealed positive and reciprocal relationships between daily levels of job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement, supporting the proposed gain cycle. However, relationships varied by job crafting type. While seeking resources and seeking challenges showed positive reciprocal links with work engagement, reducing demands showed a negative reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, only seeking resources was positively and reciprocally related to PsyCap. We also found differential effects for office and remote workdays, suggesting that job crafting behaviors and their effectiveness depend on employees' work location. While general well-being did not moderate the daily gain cycle but exerted direct effects, additional analyses revealed a moderating role of personality traits. Our findings highlight the importance of considering boundary conditions and differentiating between job crafting dimensions in future research on gain cycles. By explaining why the same proactive behaviors may be effective for some employees but not others, and on some days but not others, this study provides valuable guidance for interventions aimed at enhancing employee health and adaptability in hybrid work environments.

Keywords Multilevel job demands-resources theory · Daily gain cycles · Job crafting · Personal resources · PsyCap · Hybrid work

The focus on employee health and strategies for its enhancement has been long-standing in organizational research (Bliese et al., 2017). Among the various theories developed to explain employee health, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory has emerged as one of the leading frameworks (Bakker et al., 2023b; Demerouti et al., 2001). This theory postulates that job characteristics can be classified into job demands and job resources, which trigger distinct

health-related processes. One promising way for employees to shape their job-related demands and resources and to actively participate in designing their own work environment is through job crafting (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). As a proactive, bottom-up approach to job redesign, job crafting enables employees to optimize the fit between the job itself and their individual needs, skills, and preferences (Tims et al., 2013, 2022).

While the original JD-R theory's assumptions about causal influences of job characteristics on employee well-being have been widely supported by research, the theory has substantially evolved over the past decades (Bakker et al., 2023b). Major theoretical innovations include the role of the individual in the form of job crafting and personal resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Longitudinal JD-R research has further shown that the health-related processes operate through reciprocal pathways (Guthier

Additional supplementary materials may be found here by searching on article title <https://osf.io/collections/jbp/discover>.

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et al., 2020; Lesener et al., 2019), supporting the notion of dynamic cycles for resource gain, commonly referred to as gain cycles (Salanova et al., 2010). Building on principles from the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018), revised versions of the JD-R theory propose that employees can create their own gain cycle in which job crafting positively and reciprocally relates to job and personal resources such as psychological capital (PsyCap) and work engagement. That is, employees who proactively craft their jobs by increasing job resources and optimizing job demands generate new and strengthen existing resources, both job-related and personal. These resources increase their work engagement, which, in turn, stimulates employees to remain proactive in shaping their jobs, thereby perpetuating a gain cycle involving proactive behaviors, resource accumulation, and work engagement over time (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023b).

Importantly, job resources, related work engagement, and job crafting have been shown to fluctuate from day to day within individuals (Bakker, 2014; Bakker et al., 2014; Demerouti, 2014; Simbula, 2010; Tadić et al., 2015). For instance, employees who are generally engaged and motivated to increase their resources through job crafting may occasionally experience “off-days” during which they feel momentarily tired. These within-person variations call for more complex approaches that differentiate fluctuating states and stable traits, and further consider the multilevel relationships between short-term intraindividual variations and longer-term outcomes (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Ilies et al., 2015). In this vein, Bakker (2015) introduced the multilevel version of JD-R theory, which outlines how daily within-individual (state-level) and general between-individual (trait-level) effects may interact. Compared to the original JD-R theory, this multilevel approach suggests that the mutual reinforcement of proactive behaviors, resources, and work engagement manifests in the short term, forming a within-person gain cycle that employees can enter on a daily basis. The multilevel JD-R theory further posits that employees’ general or stable levels of well-being reinforce this daily gain cycle, aligning with COR theory’s principle that sustained resource gains can trigger a so-called gain spiral (Hobfoll, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Salanova et al., 2010). Ultimately, the daily gain cycle is proposed to enhance longer-term employee outcomes, such as job performance (Bakker, 2015). Based on this view, the gain cycle’s core mechanisms are shaped by stable manifestations and can themselves lead to longer-term outcomes.

However, although the multilevel JD-R theory (Bakker, 2015; Bakker et al., 2023b) proposes these dynamic interactions, existing research faces several shortcomings that inform the present study. First, most prior studies do not differentiate between fluctuating within- and stable between-individual effects but predominantly examine stable levels

of the gain cycle’s focal constructs (Sonnentag & Meier, 2024). For instance, Vogt et al. (2016) have shown that individuals who engage in comparatively more job crafting than others reach higher PsyCap levels over periods of three months. Other longitudinal studies found support for longer-term reciprocal relationships between job and/or personal resources and work engagement (e.g., Hakanen et al., 2008; Reis et al., 2015; Simbula et al., 2011; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Despite their initial evidence for between-person gain cycles, these studies overlook that job crafting (e.g., Petrou et al., 2012), PsyCap (e.g., Sytine et al., 2019), and work engagement (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019) can fluctuate over days and weeks within individuals. However, previous daily and weekly diary studies accounting for short-term fluctuations of job crafting and work engagement are also limited, as they have largely neglected the role of fluctuating personal resources (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Bakker et al., 2019; Kooij et al., 2020; Lopper et al., 2023; Petrou et al., 2012, 2017), thereby only covering parts of the proposed gain cycle and lacking an understanding of how its three core constructs simultaneously interact. In addition, except for Lopper et al. (2023), these studies primarily examine unidirectional relationships. Based on this, we already know that employees can use daily and weekly job crafting to build their own work engagement (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Petrou et al., 2012, 2017), but we do not know yet to what extent daily within-person variations in job crafting lead to different daily levels of PsyCap and work engagement, and vice versa. Consequently, the foundational mechanisms of the within-person gain cycle (Bakker, 2015) have yet to be fully established on a daily basis.

Second, most studies on gain cycles lack attempts to combine multiple levels in their analyses. Specifically, beyond differentiating between fluctuating states and stable traits, scholars call for multilevel approaches examining how state and trait levels of variables interact, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of employee well-being (Bakker, 2015; Bakker & Costa, 2014; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Ilies et al., 2015). Based on COR theory, the multilevel JD-R theory posits that stable traits reinforce the impact of daily fluctuations in job crafting on resources and work engagement. Individuals with high general levels of well-being may be better equipped and more likely to effectively increase their daily resources and work engagement through job crafting, which, in turn, fosters their future work engagement (Bakker, 2015). However, research to date provides only preliminary evidence for a link between state- and trait-levels of well-being (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2016; Bakker et al., 2023c). Empirical studies that distinguish these multilevel effects by simultaneously scrutinizing all three core constructs of the gain cycle, particularly at varying levels, remain scarce (Sonnentag & Meier, 2024). Yet, an empirical exploration of the proposed daily dynamics and

their interaction with stable manifestations of well-being provides the necessary theoretical foundation for investigating employee outcomes of this interplay, such as indicators for job performance (Bakker, 2015).

Third, the past decades have witnessed an ongoing transformation in the work environment (Parker et al., 2017; Wessels et al., 2019), drawing attention to additional contextual factors that may influence the proposed daily gain cycle. In particular, a shift toward hybrid work models has recently emerged, combining traditional (on-site) and alternative (off-site) forms of work (Lamovšek et al., 2025). As a result, employees may change their work location multiple times over a few days, leading to fluctuating working conditions (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Stasiła-Sieradzka et al., 2023; Toscano et al., 2025). However, there is a lack of studies examining short-term fluctuations in situational features of the work environment and their impact on employees' daily work experiences (Ilies et al., 2024a). Within the JD-R framework, it has recently been acknowledged that employees working in dynamic environments experience frequent changes in job characteristics, requiring regular adjustments in their proactive behaviors to maintain well-being and motivation at work (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Recent qualitative research indeed indicates that employees adjust their job crafting strategies to align with the specific characteristics of different work settings (Randel et al., 2024). As the effectiveness of job crafting can vary depending on the context in which it occurs (Boehnlein & Baum, 2022; Lazazzara et al., 2020), we assume that employees' daily work location is a critical contextual boundary condition that not only shapes daily crafting behaviors but also influences their proposed interplay with PsyCap and work engagement.

Against this background, our study aims to analyze the daily interplay of job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement while considering the moderating role of employees' general well-being and their daily work location in hybrid work environments.

By adopting a multilevel perspective that emphasizes short-term daily dynamics and their interactions with specific boundary conditions, we provide empirical evidence for JD-R theory's multilevel application and enhance our understanding of proactive job design within this framework. Specifically, employing a daily diary approach enables us to capture the day-level reciprocal relationships of the gain cycle proposed by the multilevel JD-R theory (Bakker, 2015). Additionally, the integration of general well-being as a moderating factor allows for a deeper understanding of how both stable and fluctuating elements of well-being interact and contribute to overall employee health, whereas the consideration of employees' daily work location adds to our knowledge of fluctuating boundary conditions (Ilies et al., 2015). This foundational understanding of the gain cycle's core mechanisms and boundary conditions provides

future researchers with a framework for investigating how these daily dynamics translate into employee (e.g., performance) outcomes. As we introduce hybrid work as a novel contextual factor that modulates the effectiveness of daily crafting behaviors, we further address questions on how and for whom job crafting works, explaining why the same proactive behaviors may be effective for some employees but not others, and on some days but not others. From a practical viewpoint, this study provides valuable multilevel insights into the conditions that facilitate the daily interplay of job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement, offering guidance for the development of more effective organizational interventions tailored to hybrid work environments (Demerouti, 2025).

Theoretical Background and Development of Hypotheses

The Multilevel Nature of JD-R Theory

Compared to the original JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001), the multilevel version of JD-R theory introduces three key extensions aimed at (1) differentiating between state and trait variables, (2) incorporating personality traits, and (3) integrating within- and between-person approaches by outlining interactions of state and trait variables (Bakker, 2015). Based on these extensions, the multilevel JD-R theory argues that the proposed positive and reciprocal health-related effects are exerted in the relatively short term: job crafting, personal resources, and work engagement are assumed to fluctuate within individuals and to mutually reinforce each other in a gain cycle sustained across momentary, daily, and weekly levels. The multilevel JD-R theory further differs from its original version by the proposition that stable traits (e.g., overall well-being, personality) moderate the impact of daily fluctuations in job crafting on resources and work engagement (Bakker, 2015; Bakker et al., 2023b).

The notion of positive gain cycles within this multilevel approach is partly grounded in COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018), a motivational framework asserting that the acquisition and accumulation of resources serve as a central driver that initiates and sustains employees' behaviors. According to COR theory's basic tenets, employees actively strive to maintain and accumulate (job and personal) resources they personally value in order to successfully adapt to their environment and withstand stressful events (Hobfoll, 2002). In addition, COR theory postulates that resources do not function in isolation but cluster together in so-called resource caravans (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This implies that employees with greater resources are better equipped to gain additional resources, resulting in

a positive gain process that underpins the proposed mutual reinforcement of proactive behaviors, resource accumulation, and work engagement over time (Bakker et al., 2023b). COR theory's principle that those with enduring resources are more capable of resource gain further aligns with Bakker's (2015) idea that relatively stable or chronic well-being amplifies the impact of daily job resources on work engagement and job crafting.

Daily Gain Cycles between Job Crafting, PsyCap, and Work Engagement

As a specific form of proactive behavior at work, job crafting allows employees to better align the characteristics of their jobs with individual needs and preferences, thereby improving person-job fit (Tims & Bakker, 2010). Integrated into the JD-R theory, job crafting is defined as “[...] the changes that employees may make to balance their job demands and job resources with their personal abilities and needs” (Tims et al., 2012, p. 174). Accordingly, employees can modify their own job characteristics by increasing (structural and social) job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and decreasing hindering job demands (Tims et al., 2012, 2013). A substantial body of empirical evidence already indicates that employee-initiated, bottom-up adjustments to job demands and job resources are linked to a variety of favorable health- and work-related outcomes (Rudolph et al., 2017).

With regard to resources, the early JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al., 2001) focused on the relationship between job-related resources and work engagement. Later, the concept of resources was broadened to include personal resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). A key example of personal resources is the concept of PsyCap (for a meta-analysis, see Loghman et al., 2023). Drawing from COR theory's notion of resource caravans, PsyCap refers to a higher-order construct consisting of four personal resources: “(1) having confidence (efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resilience) to attain success” (Luthans et al., 2007, p. 3). As PsyCap reflects an individual's positive psychological state of development and is known to be reciprocally related to employee health (Kuhlmann & Süß, 2024), it is increasingly recognized as a key personal resource in occupational health psychology.

The third component of the proposed gain cycle is work engagement, conceptualized as “[...] a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by

vigor, dedication, and absorption” (Schaufeli et al., 2002, p. 74). Overall, work engagement signifies a high level of energy and a strong sense of identification with one's work, representing a positive and highly activated form of employee well-being (Bakker, 2022). Building on COR theory (Hobfoll, 2002), engaged employees are motivated to stay engaged by proactively initiating their own gain cycle of resources and engagement through job crafting (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Bakker et al., 2023b).

Accounting for within-person variability, the multilevel JD-R theory posits that job crafting, personal resources such as PsyCap, and work engagement influence each other positively and reciprocally on a daily basis, each serving as both predictors and outcomes of the others (Bakker, 2015; Bakker et al., 2023b). Supporting this notion, daily diary studies on the relationship between job crafting and work engagement revealed that on days when employees craft their jobs, they can increase their own daily work engagement (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Demerouti & Peeters, 2018; Demerouti et al., 2015; Petrou et al., 2012). Similarly, Bakker et al. (2019) found a daily positive relationship between strengths use as a proactive behavior, positive affect, and work engagement. Regarding the reversed effect, a weekly diary study by Lopper et al. (2023) indicates that job crafting, work engagement, and performance are reciprocally related from week to week. Longitudinal studies examining mainly between-person differences have furthermore provided support for the notion that job crafting and work engagement (e.g., Harju et al., 2016; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019) as well as personal resources and work engagement (e.g., Reis et al., 2015; Simbula et al., 2011; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009) mutually reinforce each other. Although this previous research provides some evidence for positive cycles, to date, no studies have simultaneously examined the day-level reciprocal relationships of job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement while distinguishing their short-term intraindividual variations from between-person differences. Building on COR theory's tenet regarding the development of cycles for resource gain (Hobfoll, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018) and based on the assumption of daily gain cycles as proposed by the multilevel JD-R theory (Bakker, 2015), we derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Daily job crafting and daily PsyCap are positively and reciprocally related.

Hypothesis 1b: Daily job crafting and daily work engagement are positively and reciprocally related.

Hypothesis 1c: Daily PsyCap and daily work engagement are positively and reciprocally related.

Meta-analytic evidence from mainly between-person studies indicates that distinct job crafting dimensions have different antecedents and outcomes, depending on their promotion- or prevention-focus (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach,

2019). While promotion-focused job crafting (i.e., increasing job resources and challenges) generally shows positive relationships with work outcomes, prevention-focused job crafting (i.e., decreasing job demands) tends to show more complex and sometimes mixed relationships (Rudolph et al., 2017). In daily diary research, job crafting is typically categorized into “seeking resources,” “seeking challenges,” and “reducing demands” (Petrou et al., 2012), which have also been shown to exert differential effects. Demerouti et al. (2015) identified daily seeking resources as the most beneficial dimension, whereas daily reducing demands was found to have detrimental effects on job performance. Similarly, Petrou et al. (2012) found a negative relationship between daily levels of reducing demands and work engagement. Complementing this, Bakker and Oerlemans (2019) showed that daily job crafting can have both positive and negative implications for daily work engagement depending on the specific crafting dimension. Taken together, the strategies of daily seeking resources and challenges typically enhance work outcomes. However, the role of reducing job demands within gain cycles is less clear. Most studies found negative effects on work outcomes (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Demerouti et al., 2015; Frederick & VanderWeele, 2020; Petrou et al., 2012), some found no relationship (Demerouti & Peeters, 2018; Tims et al., 2013), and some exceptions even found positive relationships under certain circumstances (Demerouti et al., 2017). Conceptually, on the one hand, reducing job demands could preserve resources and prevent resource depletion (Hobfoll et al., 2018), potentially maintaining energy for work engagement (Demerouti et al., 2017). On the other hand, continuously reducing demands might reflect avoidance behavior that prevents personal growth and resource acquisition (Petrou et al., 2012), possibly undermining engagement and the development of personal resources like PsyCap (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019). Given these mixed findings and the novel context of examining job crafting behaviors within daily gain cycles involving PsyCap, an exploratory approach is warranted. Against this background, we formulate an open research question:

Research Question 1: Are the distinct job crafting dimensions differently related to PsyCap and work engagement?

The Moderating Role of General Well-Being

We postulate that general levels of employees’ well-being influence the short-term daily dynamics between job crafting behaviors, PsyCap, and work engagement. This is based on the multilevel JD-R theory’s proposition that individuals differ in their capacity to deal with job demands and job resources depending on their relatively stable or chronic well- or ill-being (Bakker, 2015) and on

COR theory’s corollary that those with more stable key resources are more capable of resource gain, triggering a “gain spiral” (Hobfoll, 2002; Hobfoll et al., 2018). According to COR theory, a greater initial reservoir of resources enables employees to acquire and accumulate additional resources, which tend to form resource caravans over time (Hobfoll, 2002). In other words, the repeated acquisition of resources expands the enduring resource pool, which, in turn, increases the likelihood of subsequent resource gain. In this vein, it is proposed that when employees’ general well-being is higher, the impact of daily job resources on work engagement and job crafting is more strongly positive (Bakker, 2015; Bakker et al., 2023b). Referring to allostatic load effects described by Ilies et al. (2015), Bakker (2015) further argues that repeated exposure to daily job resources may result in high levels of aggregated daily engagement, which, in turn, feeds back to general work engagement (see also Bakker & Costa, 2014).

Empirical research provides preliminary support for these assumptions. For instance, Bakker and Oerlemans (2016) demonstrated that enduring burnout and work engagement interact with the effect of everyday work activities on momentary needs satisfaction and happiness. Further, Griep et al. (2021) found that the relationship between fluctuations in emotions and daily job crafting is moderated by stable personal growth initiatives. A related result was obtained by Bakker et al. (2019), showing that daily strengths use correlates more strongly with daily positive affect and daily work engagement when extraversion is high and neuroticism is low. Moreover, a recent weekly diary study by Bakker et al. (2023c) indicates a moderating role of chronic burnout on the within-person loss cycle of weekly job demands, maladaptive behaviors, and burnout symptoms. Specifically, their results showed that the impact of weekly job demands on self-undermining behaviors and burnout symptoms was stronger for individuals who were already relatively high (versus low) on chronic burnout. Building on these research findings, which combine stable traits with fluctuating states, and drawing from COR theory (Hobfoll et al., 2018) and Bakker’s (2015) multilevel JD-R theory, we hypothesize that general well-being moderates the daily gain cycle between job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement:

Hypothesis 2a: The positive and reciprocal relationship between daily job crafting and daily PsyCap is stronger when employees’ general well-being is higher.

Hypothesis 2b: The positive and reciprocal relationship between daily job crafting and daily work engagement is stronger when employees’ general well-being is higher.

Hypothesis 2c: The positive and reciprocal relationship between daily PsyCap and daily work engagement is stronger when employees’ general well-being is higher.

The Moderating Role of Hybrid Work

With hybrid work arrangements, the combination of working on-site and working off-site (e.g., from home or remotely at another location outside the conventional office by using information and communication technology) is increasingly taking hold (Lamovšek et al., 2025; Naqshbandi et al., 2024; Toscano et al., 2025). A growing number of employees switch between different workplaces multiple times within one workweek, leading to dynamic working conditions and changing job characteristics (Stasiła-Sieradzka et al., 2023). While off-site work has been associated with increased job resources such as autonomy and work-life balance (Allen et al., 2021; Biron et al., 2023), it also introduces heightened job demands such as social isolation and work-home interference (J. Wang, 2021). Within the JD-R framework, remote work represents a demanding context that confronts employees with challenges (e.g., lack of social resources) and increases the importance of certain job resources (e.g., social support) as well as employees' proactive attempts to optimize their work environment (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Based on COR theory, recent research further suggests that job crafting enables employees to build a resourceful work environment and helps them cope with remote work challenges (Goel et al., 2023; Ingusci et al., 2021; L. Liu et al., 2021; J. Wang, 2021).

To date, there is limited understanding of how different work locations influence the core constructs and mechanisms of the proposed within-person gain cycle (Bakker, 2015). Yet, it is known that especially job crafting and its effectiveness are highly context-dependent (Lazazzara et al., 2020). In this regard, a recent qualitative study by Randel et al. (2024) demonstrated how employees adapt their individual crafting strategies to align with the specific characteristics of open office versus virtual work configurations, thereby enhancing perceived performance in both work settings. Regarding the effectiveness of proactive behaviors in dealing with demanding remote work situations, daily diary research (Bakker et al., 2023a) further indicates that employees working from home perform better on days they use more playful work design, conceptualized as proactively creating conditions within work activities that foster fun and competition (Bakker & van Wingerden, 2021; Scharp et al., 2021). In a similar vein, Mäkikangas et al. (2022) identified employees' proactive job crafting behaviors and self-efficacy as crucial facilitators of work engagement in remote working situations.

While it appears plausible that the office provides a more supportive work environment with greater perceived opportunities to craft one's job (Lazazzara et al., 2020), job crafting may be more challenging when working remotely due to a lack of perceived crafting opportunities. Accordingly, employees might tend to engage in less job crafting on days

working remotely than in the office. However, the present study primarily focuses on the effectiveness of job crafting behaviors depending on (fluctuating) contextual boundary conditions, i.e., the moderating influence of employees' work location on the daily interplay of job crafting with PsyCap and work engagement. In this respect, we argue that job crafting in response to demanding remote work situations represents an effective strategy for maintaining motivation and well-being (Demerouti, 2023; Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Therefore, it should have a stronger impact on PsyCap and work engagement when employees work remotely compared to working in the office. Similarly, given that PsyCap as a key personal resource mainly works under high demands (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), we propose a stronger effect of PsyCap on job crafting behaviors and work engagement on remote workdays, when employees may be more likely to face both resource scarcity and heightened demands (Demerouti & Bakker, 2023). Taken together, we hypothesize that employees' daily work location is an additional contextual boundary condition moderating the daily gain cycle between job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement:

Hypothesis 3a: The positive and reciprocal relationship between daily job crafting and daily PsyCap is stronger while working remotely than in the office.

Hypothesis 3b: The positive and reciprocal relationship between daily job crafting and daily work engagement is stronger while working remotely than in the office.

Hypothesis 3c: The positive and reciprocal relationship between daily PsyCap and daily work engagement is stronger while working remotely than in the office.

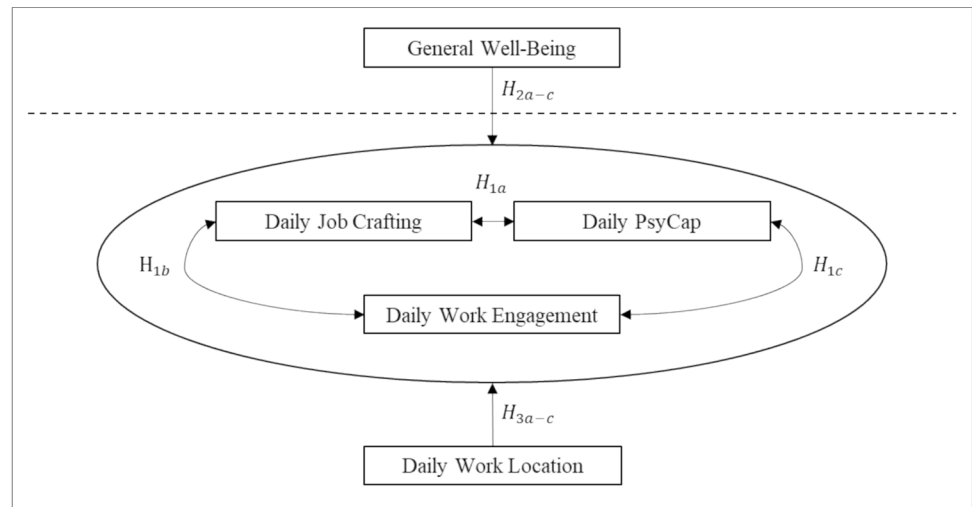
Figure 1 illustrates our conceptual model. The study hypotheses were preregistered on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/jzkps>).

Method

Procedure and Sample

We conducted a diary study with one daily measurement over the course of ten consecutive working days in April 2024. In line with other experience sampling studies (e.g., Rivkin et al., 2025; Schweitzer et al., 2023), our sample was recruited via Prolific Academic, an online panel provider offering access to high-quality data. Participants recruited through Prolific Academic tend to be more diverse and generate higher-quality data compared to those recruited from other platforms such as Mechanical Turk and Crowd Flower (Palan & Schitter, 2018; Peer et al., 2017). The suitability of Prolific Academic for repeated measures data collection in psychometric research has also been demonstrated in a

Fig. 1 *Conceptual Model Note.* H = Hypothesis; PsyCap = Psychological Capital.



Note. H = Hypothesis; PsyCap = Psychological Capital.

multisample study (Stanton et al., 2022). To ensure high-quality data collection, we incorporated best practice recommendations for web-based research (Aguinis et al., 2021; Porter et al., 2019).

Participants were screened to be at least 18 years old, work full-time in a hybrid setting (i.e., a combination of on-site and off-site work), have at least one colleague and supervisor, reside in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland, be native German speakers, and have a Prolific approval rate of at least 90%. After giving their informed consent, eligible participants first completed a general pre-survey capturing stable variables (e.g., general well-being and personality traits), sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, educational level, professional experience, tenure, managerial responsibility, experience with remote work), and information about their current work situation (e.g., fixed rules for core workdays). Starting on the following Monday, participants received daily surveys at the end of ten consecutive working days (two workweeks) at 5 p.m. We first asked if participants had worked on that day and, if yes, assessed daily levels of job crafting behaviors, PsyCap, and work engagement as well as their work location. We then collected further information about their working day (e.g., changes in the work location throughout the day, number of working hours, time spent in virtual meetings, physical presence of supervisors and/or colleagues, potential stressful work-related and/or private incidents). If participants did not respond within the first three hours after receiving the daily survey link, we sent them a reminder through Prolific's mailing system. To reduce recall bias, the link to each daily questionnaire was valid only until 3 a.m. the following day. Furthermore, to ensure attentiveness, participants had to pass several attention checks. The compensation for completing the general pre-survey was £1.25. For each

completed daily survey, participants received £0.55. Following Gabriel et al.'s (2019) recommendations to increase response rates, we offered a conditional monetary incentive of £0.30 for completing all daily surveys on at least 8 out of 10 days. With this bonus payment, participants could receive a maximum compensation of up to £7.05.

Initially, 200 participants completed the pre-survey, of which we excluded 8 because of failing attention checks or being too fast. As recommended by Nezlek (2011), we only included data from participants who filled out at least two consecutive workdays of the daily diary. Since that was the case for all remaining participants, our final sample consisted of 192 employees (person-level response rate: 96%) who provided data on 1,433 workdays (day-level response rate: 74.6%). This sample size is in line with recommendations for experience sampling studies provided by Gabriel et al. (2019) and meets the criteria outlined by Ohly et al. (2010) for drawing meaningful conclusions in diary study designs. Further, the obtained response rates correspond with average person- and day-level response rates reported in previous research (Fisher & To, 2012) and are comparable with previously published daily diary studies (e.g., W. Liu et al., 2023; Scharp et al., 2022; Schweitzer et al., 2023).

The sample comprised 68 women (35.42%), 122 men (63.54%), and two participants of diverse gender (1.04%), with a mean age of 32.85 years ($SD = 7.35$), ranging from 21 to 65 years. The majority of participants held a university degree (73.96%). The mean tenure was 4.45 years ($SD = 4.48$), and 33.85% of the sample had managerial responsibility. On average, participants worked 39.59 hours per week ($SD = 7.34$), with an average of 21.77 hours spent working in the office ($SD = 10.83$). 28.13% of participants reported fixed attendance rules specifying when they had to work on-site. Most days, participants worked in the office

(740 times), followed by working from home (596 times). Working somewhere else, i.e., from locations other than the office or home, was reported 97 times. These locations included client offices, construction sites, craft businesses at different locations, external service locations, and various training and seminar centers, illustrating a wide variety of work locations beyond traditional office settings. Ethical approval for the study's design and methodology was granted by the German Association for Experimental Economic Research e.V.

Measures

All constructs were assessed in German, with items taken from validated scales. If necessary, items of the daily survey were adapted to the day level.

General well-being. To measure employees' general well-being, we used the German version (Janke & Glöckner-Rist, 2012) of the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), which assesses affective and cognitive-evaluative components of well-being with five items (e.g., "In most ways my life is close to my ideal."). Each item was rated on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Personality. According to Bakker's (2015) multilevel JD-R theory, personality is a trait-like variable that is stable over time and differs between individuals, whereas job characteristics and work engagement can fluctuate from day to day, thus differing within individuals. Building on this notion, the person $\times$ situation approach (Bakker et al., 2023b) incorporates the stability of the person and the variability of the situation in one overall model, proposing that personality traits moderate the daily interplay of fluctuating job crafting behaviors, resources, and work engagement. Although we did not explicitly formulate a hypothesis in this regard, we included personality measures in the pre-survey questionnaire to address this proposition through additional analyses. We measured the Big Five personality factors (conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience) with ten items using the Big Five Inventory by Rammstedt and John (2007). A sample item is "I get nervous and insecure easily." Answers were provided on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*does not apply to me*) to 5 (*fully applies to me*).

Daily job crafting. To assess day-level job crafting, we used the Daily Job Crafting Scale developed by Petrou et al. (2012). The original 10 items were translated into German using the translation-back-translation method (Brislin, 1970), ensuring reliability and validity of the administered scale. Seeking (structural and social) job resources was measured with four items (e.g., "I have asked colleagues for advice."), whereas seeking challenges (e.g., "I have asked for more responsibilities.") and reducing demands (e.g., "I have made sure that my work is mentally less intense.") were

measured with three items each. Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale from 1 (*did not apply to me today*) to 5 (*fully applied to me today*).

Daily PsyCap. We assessed day-level PsyCap using two items for each of its four components, taken from validated scales and adapted to the daily context, as was the case in previous daily diary studies (e.g., Kuonath et al., 2021; Martinez-Corts et al., 2015; Merolla et al., 2021; Xanthopoulou et al., 2012). For self-efficacy, we used two items from Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) German General Self-Efficacy Scale. Optimism was measured using two items from the German version (Glaesmer et al., 2008) of the Life Orientation Test-Revised (Scheier et al., 1994). Hope was assessed with two items from the German version (Reschke et al., 2005) of the Hope Scale by Snyder et al. (1997). Resilience was measured using two items from the German version (Schumacher et al., 2005) of the Resilience Scale by Wagnild and Young (1993). All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Daily work engagement. Day-level work engagement was measured using the German version of the 3-item short-form Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Lincke et al., 2021; Schaufeli et al., 2006), adapted to a daily basis (e.g., "Today, I was enthusiastic about my job."). Answers were provided on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Adapting the trait version of the UWES for day-specific assessment has also been done in prior daily diary studies (e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Breevaart et al., 2012; Gerpott et al., 2022).

Daily work location. Lastly, as part of the daily surveys, participants were asked about their work location ("Where did you mainly work today?"). They responded by selecting one of three options: in the office, from home, or remotely at another location outside the conventional office, which had to be specified in an open response field.

Analytical Procedure

Given the employed daily diary design, our data followed a multilevel structure with daily observations ($n = 1,433$) nested within persons ($N = 192$). To account for this hierarchical dependence of the data (i.e., day-level measurements – level 1 – nested within individuals – level 2), we tested our hypotheses with multilevel structural equation modeling (MLSEM, Preacher et al., 2010) using Mplus 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017).

Before conducting the main analyses, we calculated intra-class correlations (ICCs) for our daily variables, showing the amount of variance attributed to within-person (i.e., day-level) versus between-person (i.e., trait-level) variation. Subsequently, we person-mean-centered all level-1 predictors to account for within-person effects (Ohly et al., 2010). An

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics, Intraclass Correlations, Reliabilities, and Correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ICC	ω_w	ω_b	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Daily Job Crafting (SR)	2.66	0.96	.42	.61	.79	-	.69***	.076	.27**	.60***	.14	-.19*	.22*
2. Daily Job Crafting (SC)	1.94	1.01	.51	.84	.92	.30***	-	.21*	.11	.48***	.10	-.15*	.17*
3. Daily Job Crafting (RD)	2.78	1.03	.53	.72	.77	-.15***	-.04	-	.00	.00	.04	-.11	-.07
4. Daily PsyCap	4.24	0.86	.51	.93	.78	.24***	.17***	-.07	-	.49***	.00	.08	.40***
5. Daily Work Engagement	2.83	0.95	.49	.82	.91	.28***	.22***	-.13**	.57***	-	-.04	.02	.37***
6. WFH (vs. WITO)	0.42	0.49	.30	-	-	-.20***	-.10**	.12**	-.06*	-.13***	-	-.30***	-.05
7. WSE (vs. WITO)	0.07	0.25	.61	-	-	-.02	-.05**	-.06	.03	.10**	-.19***	-	-.03
8. General Well-Being	4.51	1.16	-	-	.89	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Correlations below the diagonal refer to the within-person level ($n = 1,433$); correlations above the diagonal refer to the between-person level ($N = 192$). *ICC* Intraclass Correlation Coefficient; ω_w Within-Person Reliability; ω_b Between-Person Reliability; *SR* Seeking Resources; *SC* Seeking Challenges; *RD* Reducing Demands; *PsyCap* Psychological Capital; *WFH* Working from Home; *WITO* Working in the Office; *WSE* Working somewhere else

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

exception was employees' daily work location, which we dummy-coded with working in the office as the reference category, resulting in two variables (one for the comparison of working from home versus working in the office and one for the comparison of working somewhere else versus working in the office). The level-2 moderator (i.e., general well-being) was centered at the grand mean. Further, we performed multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (MCFA) to test for construct validity and conducted reliability analyses for both levels of analysis, following the recommendations of van Alphen et al. (2022).

We conducted our analyses using robust maximum likelihood estimation and applied Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference tests based on the loglikelihood values and scaling correction factors to compare models (Satorra & Bentler, 2001, 2010). To avoid overly complex modeling, we used observed variables in place of latent variables (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Sadikaj et al., 2021). We ran two sets of analyses. First, we specified main-effects-only models with fixed effects. Second, we specified models in which we included the interaction terms of the same-level moderator (i.e., work location) and the cross-level moderator (i.e., general well-being). In the second model, we specified the slopes of the proposed direct effects at the within-person level as random and then regressed them on general well-being at the between-person level (Sadikaj et al., 2021).

Results

Variance Composition and Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics, ICCs, reliabilities, and correlations at the day level and person level are presented in Table 1. The ICCs ranged between .30 and .61, indicating substantial

within-person variation and justifying the application of subsequent multilevel modeling. To examine the data's factor structure, we conducted MCFA. A five-factor model consisting of three factors for daily job crafting (seeking resources, seeking challenges, reducing demands), a second-order factor for daily PsyCap loading on its four dimensions, one for daily work engagement, and one for general well-being demonstrated acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 1022.00$ (454), scaling correction factor = 1.15, CFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .03, SRMR-within = .04, SRMR-between = .10). This model fit the data significantly better than a model with one job crafting factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 170.25$ (12), $p < .001$) and one with a first-order PsyCap factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 83.78$ (24), $p < .001$). As the MCFA indicated that modeling job crafting as three distinct factors provided the best fit to the data, we proceeded with hypothesis testing for each job crafting dimension individually. The data and analysis code are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Hypotheses Testing

Table 2 displays the fit statistics of the baseline path models, while the corresponding coefficients are reported in Table 3. Regarding Hypothesis 1a (relationship between job crafting and PsyCap), we found partial support: The results showed a positive reciprocal relationship between daily seeking resources and PsyCap. However, the other job crafting dimensions (seeking challenges and reducing demands) showed no significant relationships with PsyCap. Hypothesis 1b (relationship between job crafting and work engagement) was largely supported: Both daily seeking resources and seeking challenges showed positive reciprocal relationships with daily work engagement. In contrast, reducing demands exhibited a negative reciprocal relationship with work engagement. Hypothesis 1c (relationship between PsyCap and work engagement) was fully

Table 2 Fit Statistics for Baseline Models

Dependent Variable	χ^2/df	Scaling Correction Factor	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR _w	AIC
Job Crafting Dimensions	22.21/8**	0.92	.98	.93	.04	.02	16,806.15
PsyCap	17.04/6**	1.11	.99	.93	.04	.02	15,781.87
Work Engagement	15.62/6*	1.13	.99	.94	.03	.02	15,773.61

Note. *CFI* Comparative Fit Index; *TLI* Tucker–Lewis Index; *RMSEA* Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; *SRMR_w* Standardized Root Mean Square Residual Within; *AIC* Akaike Information Criterion; *PsyCap* Psychological Capital

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 3 Estimated Path Coefficients of the Direct Effects

Predictor	Job Crafting SR		Job Crafting SC		Job Crafting RD		PsyCap		Work Engagement	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Direct Effects										
Job Crafting SR							0.08**	0.03	0.10**	0.03
Job Crafting SC							0.03	0.03	0.09**	0.03
Job Crafting RD							0.02	0.03	−0.07**	0.03
PsyCap	0.15**	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.02	0.05			0.58***	0.03
Work Engagement	0.21***	0.04	0.18***	0.05	−0.13**	0.05	0.48***	0.03		
WFH (vs. WITO)	−0.30***	0.05	−0.15**	0.05	0.15**	0.06	0.04	0.03	−0.08	0.04
WSE (vs. WITO)	−0.42***	0.10	−0.40***	0.08	−0.16	0.12	0.01	0.08	0.29*	0.13
General Well-Being	0.11	0.06	0.10	0.05	−0.05	0.06	0.21***	0.05	0.21***	0.05

Note. *SR* Seeking Resources; *SC* Seeking Challenges; *RD* Reducing Demands; *PsyCap* Psychological Capital; *WFH* Working from Home; *WITO* Working in the Office; *WSE* Working somewhere else

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

supported: The results showed a strong positive reciprocal relationship between daily PsyCap and daily work engagement. With regard to our research question, these findings indicate that the daily gain cycle depends on the specific job crafting dimensions.

We also found direct effects of general well-being and the daily work location (see lower section of Table 3). General well-being positively predicted PsyCap and work engagement. Working from home versus in the office negatively predicted daily seeking resources and challenges but positively predicted daily reducing demands. Working somewhere else versus in the office negatively predicted daily seeking resources and challenges but positively predicted work engagement.

Adding random slopes and interaction terms improved the fit for models predicting daily levels of job crafting dimensions ($\Delta\chi^2 = 159.50$ (24), $p < .001$), PsyCap ($\Delta\chi^2 = 52.39$ (16), $p < .001$), and work engagement

($\Delta\chi^2 = 54.92$ (16), $p < .001$). However, the general well-being interactions were non-significant, therefore rejecting Hypothesis 2 (see Table 4).

The proposed moderation of the daily work location (Hypothesis 3) was mainly unsupported (see Table 5). Only the positive effect of PsyCap on seeking resources was stronger when working from home compared to working in the office (see Fig. 2), whereas the positive effect of work engagement on seeking resources and the reversed positive effect of seeking resources on work engagement were stronger when working in the office compared to working from home (see Figs. 3 and 4).

Additional Analyses

The supplemental material provides detailed results of the additional analyses. First, we tested whether common

Table 4 Estimated Path Coefficients of the Interaction with General Well-Being

Predictor	Job Crafting SR		Job Crafting SC		Job Crafting RD		PsyCap		Work Engagement	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Interactions with General Well-Being										
Job Crafting SR *General Well-Being							−0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02
Job Crafting SC *General Well-Being							0.02	0.03	0.01	0.02
Job Crafting RD *General Well-Being							0.00	0.02	0.02	0.02
PsyCap *General Well-Being	0.01	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.00	0.04			0.00	0.03
Work Engagement*General Well-Being	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	−0.01	0.02		

Note. *SR* Seeking Resources; *SC* Seeking Challenges; *RD* Reducing Demands; *PsyCap* Psychological Capital

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 5 Estimated Path Coefficients of the Interaction with Work Location

Predictor	Job Crafting SR		Job Crafting SC		Job Crafting RD		PsyCap		Work Engagement	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Interactions with Work Location										
Job Crafting SR *WFH (vs. WITO)							0.09	0.05	−0.10*	0.05
Job Crafting SR *WSE (vs. WITO)							0.01	0.12	0.04	0.10
Job Crafting SC *WFH (vs. WITO)							−0.07	0.05	−0.03	0.05
Job Crafting SC *WSE (vs. WITO)							−0.03	0.13	−0.07	0.11
Job Crafting RD *WFH (vs. WITO)							−0.07	0.06	0.02	0.06
Job Crafting RD *WSE (vs. WITO)							−0.04	0.11	0.01	0.13
PsyCap *WFH (vs. WITO)	0.22*	0.10	0.02	0.10	−0.13	0.09			−0.02	0.07
PsyCap *WSE (vs. WITO)	−0.02	0.29	−0.05	0.20	0.03	0.17				
Work Engagement *WFH (vs. WITO)	−0.16*	0.08	0.02	0.08	0.01	0.08	−0.06	0.05		
Work Engagement *WSE (vs. WITO)	0.06	0.16	−0.11	0.11	−0.08	0.18	−0.04	0.11		

Note. *SR* Seeking Resources; *SC* Seeking Challenges; *RD* Reducing Demands; *PsyCap* Psychological Capital; *WFH* Working from Home; *WITO* Working in the Office; *WSE* Working somewhere else

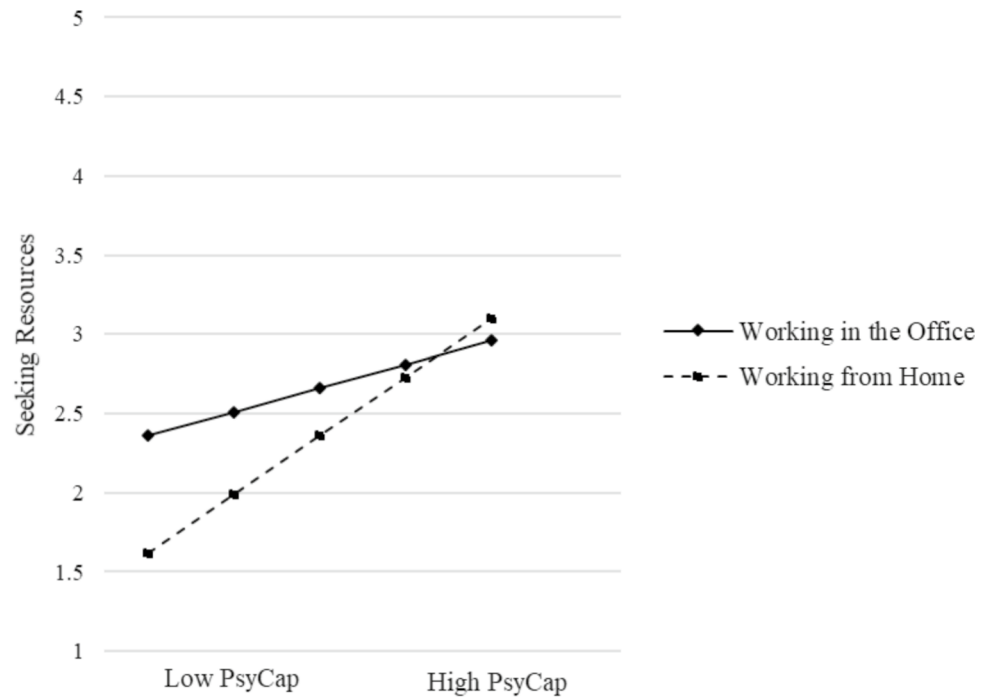
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

method bias affected our data by including a CFA marker variable. The correlations between the marker variable and our study variables were small and non-significant, ranging from $-.05$ to $.11$ (all $ps > .05$), suggesting that common method bias is not a substantial concern in our data.

Second, although not the main purpose of our paper, we tested the gain cycle regarding next-day (rather than same-day) relationships. To do so, we used random intercept

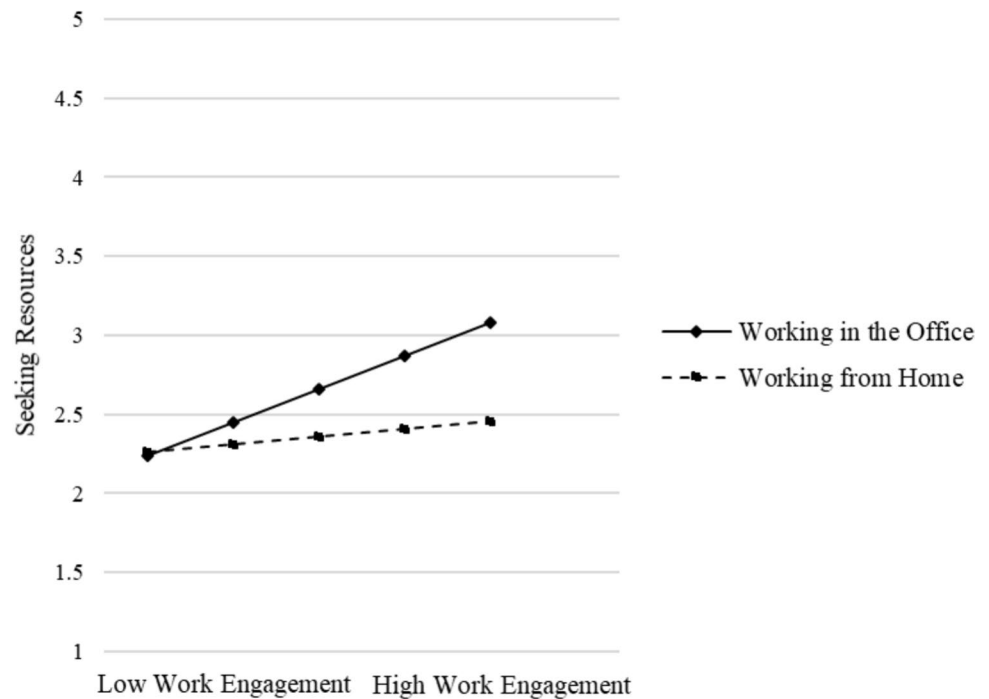
cross-lagged panel models (RI-CLPM) with reciprocal relationships, in which we were able to analyze autoregressive and cross-lagged effects from one day to the next. We conducted three RI-CLPM to examine the reciprocal links between each job crafting dimension (i.e., seeking resources, seeking challenges, and reducing demands) and both work engagement and PsyCap (Lopper et al., 2023). As expected from the previous analyses, the within-day correlations

Fig. 2 Plot of the Interaction Effect of PsyCap with the Work Location on Seeking Resources



Note. PsyCap = Psychological Capital.

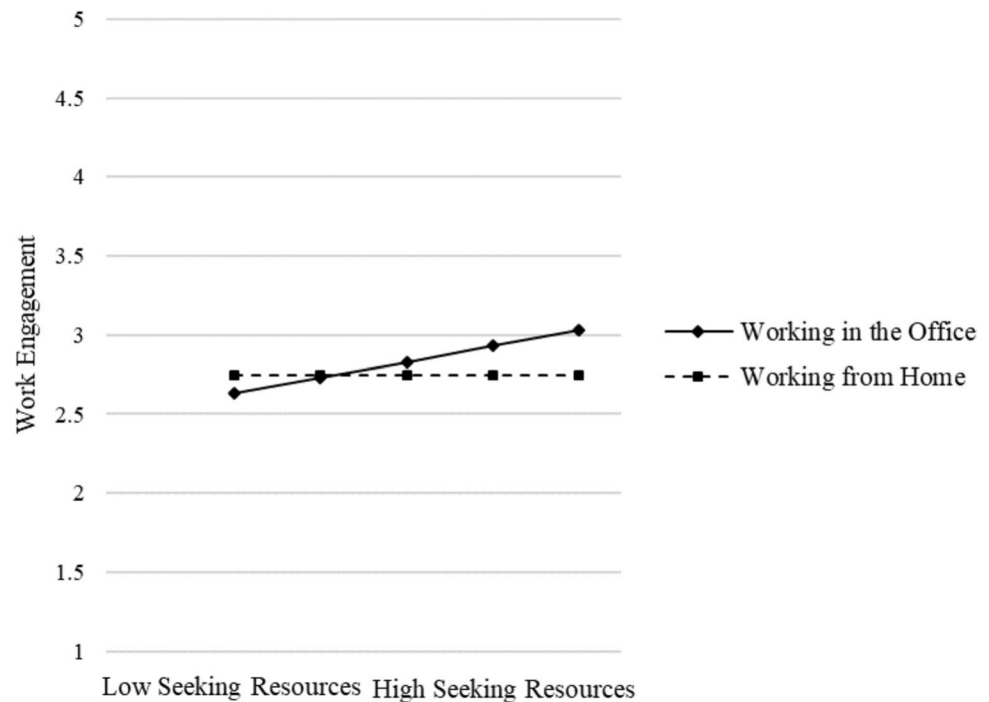
Fig. 3 Plot of the Interaction Effect of Work Engagement with the Work Location on Seeking Resources



between the job crafting dimensions, PsyCap, and work engagement were positive. However, except for one negative significant cross-lagged relationship from work engagement to seeking resources, there were no significant cross-lagged

relationships, indicating that employees' proactive behaviors, personal resources, and work experiences are tightly coupled within each workday but relatively independent across days.

Fig. 4 Plot of the Interaction Effect of Seeking Resources with the Work Location on Work Engagement



Third, following the person $\times$ situation approach of the multilevel JD-R theory, we additionally tested whether personality traits moderate the daily interplay between (fluctuating) job crafting behaviors, PsyCap, and work engagement. The results suggest that the strength and direction of the daily gain cycle may depend on an individual's personality profile, with extraversion and openness to experiences strengthening the cycle, and neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness having mixed effects.

Extraversion positively moderated the effect of daily work engagement on daily seeking resources ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .002$) and the reciprocal effect ($b = 0.08$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .008$). Moreover, extraversion had positive main effects on daily levels of seeking resources ($b = 0.19$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .001$), seeking challenges ($b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .008$), PsyCap ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .007$), and work engagement ($b = 0.22$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .001$). Openness to experience positively moderated the effect of daily PsyCap on daily seeking resources ($b = 0.13$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .023$).

In contrast, neuroticism negatively moderated the effect of daily PsyCap on daily seeking resources ($b = -0.17$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .032$) but positively moderated the effect of daily seeking resources on daily work engagement ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .004$) and the effect of daily work engagement on daily PsyCap ($b = 0.09$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = .025$). Neuroticism also had a direct negative effect on daily PsyCap ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .001$). Agreeableness negatively moderated the effect of daily PsyCap on daily seeking challenges ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .009$) and the reciprocal effect ($b = -0.13$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .007$) but positively

moderated the effect of daily work engagement on daily seeking challenges ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .037$) and vice versa ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = .016$). Furthermore, agreeableness had a direct positive effect on daily seeking resources ($b = 0.16$, $SE = 0.06$, $p = .006$). Conscientiousness positively moderated the effect of daily work engagement on daily reducing demands ($b = 0.17$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .036$) and directly negatively affected daily reducing demands ($b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.07$, $p = .002$).

Discussion

This study investigated the daily interplay of job crafting as a proactive work behavior, PsyCap as a personal resource, and work engagement within the framework of the multilevel JD-R theory. Multilevel analyses demonstrated that job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement influence each other reciprocally on a daily basis. Following research question 1, our results revealed that these reciprocal relationships differ depending on the type of daily job crafting, with seeking resources having positive effects, seeking challenges having mixed effects, and reducing demands having detrimental effects. This supports our first hypothesis regarding seeking resources but not regarding seeking challenges and reducing demands. Concerning our second hypothesis, stable manifestations of well-being directly strengthened daily PsyCap and daily work engagement, while personality traits exerted both direct and moderating effects on the daily gain cycle. Additionally, this study revealed employees' work location

as a critical contextual factor. Contrary to our third hypothesis, the daily work location exerted mainly direct effects, such that promotion-focused job crafting behaviors were more pronounced on days working in the office compared to days working remotely, whereas prevention-focused job crafting behaviors were more pronounced on days working from home than on days working in the office. The few significant interactions observed suggested that the positive reciprocal relationship between seeking resources and work engagement was stronger on office workdays, whereas PsyCap's impact on seeking resources was stronger on days working from home.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to JD-R theory's multilevel application and our understanding of proactive work behaviors in several ways. Providing the first empirical evidence for the proposed day-level relationships between job crafting as a proactive behavior, PsyCap as a personal resource, and work engagement, we extend research on single relationships within this gain cycle (see e.g., Alessandri et al., 2018; Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Vogt et al., 2016). However, our findings propose theoretical refinements in three key areas beyond mere empirical validation. Specifically, we demonstrate the need to (1) incorporate both within- and between-person levels in theorizing gain cycles, (2) differentiate between gain cycle-strengthening promotion-focused and gain cycle-weakening prevention-focused forms of job crafting, and (3) specify boundary conditions that elevate and strengthen certain gain cycle relationships.

First, we advance both JD-R theory and COR theory by investigating the time frame and level of gain cycles. While traditional research grounded in these theories has primarily focused on static between-person effects, our study contributes to a more recent strand of literature examining dynamic within-person relationships at shorter intervals (see e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Lopper et al., 2023; Pap et al., 2023). By incorporating a daily within-person perspective, we shift the focus from a static to a dynamic theoretical understanding of the interplay between job crafting, personal resources, and work engagement, thereby answering calls for a more nuanced differentiation of within- and between-person effects when analyzing gain cycles (Bakker, 2015; Bakker et al., 2023b; Sonnentag & Meier, 2024). Specifically, by establishing intraindividual gain cycles happening within days, we provide empirical evidence supporting the notion that job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement are malleable variables fluctuating within individuals across days. While job crafting, work engagement, and their respective relationships have already been investigated at short-term time frames (see e.g., Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019; Lopper et al., 2023; Pap et al., 2023; Petrou et al., 2012, 2017),

work-related PsyCap has not been analyzed on a daily basis yet (for an exception analyzing daily PsyCap of university students, see Sytine et al., 2019).

Our findings highlight that the corollaries and propositions of both COR and JD-R theory should distinguish between within- and between-person levels. While those individuals with greater resources may be better positioned for gains than others with fewer resources (as emphasized in COR theory's first corollary), the same individual can also experience varying resource gain capabilities depending on their daily resource states (Bakker, 2015). However, our additional analyses revealed that these relationships do not manifest as reciprocal gain cycles across days. This indicates that the proposed gain cycles operate primarily within days rather than across days. One potential explanation for the lack of day-to-day relationships draws on needs satisfaction perspectives of job crafting (de Bloom et al., 2020; Slemp & Vella-Brodrick, 2014). These suggest that successful job crafting may satisfy employees' needs within the same day, temporarily reducing the motivation for subsequent proactive behaviors on the next day, thus not increasing resources and work engagement on the next day (Lopper et al., 2023). Similarly, high work engagement may lead to intense resource and physiological depletion (Baethge et al., 2021), leaving fewer resources available for job crafting on the next day. This aligns with research showing that engagement can increase job demands over time (Sonnentag et al., 2010). Additionally, the relationships between our study variables may be more complex than linear, possibly following curvilinear patterns that are not captured by traditional cross-lagged analyses (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013; Reis et al., 2016). For instance, moderate levels of job crafting might be most beneficial for next-day resources and engagement, while very high or low levels could have diminishing returns or even negative effects.

Second, we advance theoretical understanding by demonstrating that gain cycles operate differently depending on the specific job crafting dimension involved. Early job crafting conceptualizations treated both promotion- and prevention-oriented forms of job crafting as beneficial for motivation, health, and performance (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). However, studies revealed that promotion- and prevention-focused types of job crafting can have differential impacts on employee outcomes (Bindl et al., 2019; Demerouti et al., 2015; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019; Rudolph et al., 2017). In line with and further adding to these research findings, our study provides evidence that promotion-focused crafting strategies, i.e., daily seeking resources and challenges, contribute to positive gain cycles, whereas prevention-focused crafting strategies, i.e., daily reducing demands, do not support resource accumulation and can even impede work engagement.

Specifically, our results suggest that seeking resources is part of a positive gain cycle involving both daily PsyCap and daily work engagement. In contrast, seeking challenges fostered a daily gain cycle with work engagement only, showing no significant relationship with PsyCap. While there is some functional alignment between PsyCap and seeking resources, as both are inherently resource-oriented (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017; Teng et al., 2020), the act of seeking a challenge may primarily represent a resource investment rather than an immediate resource gain (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Increases in PsyCap are thus more likely to emerge after the challenge has been successfully navigated. On the day a new challenge is sought, this proactive behavior could even be perceived as temporarily taxing (Parker et al., 2019), potentially creating a neutral or ambiguous immediate effect on an individual's PsyCap. Additionally, individuals with high PsyCap may be more strategic and selective in their behavior, recognizing that challenge-seeking could lead to overload (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). Next to this, they may already operate at an optimal challenge level.

Furthermore, as evidenced by the negative reciprocal relationship found in this study, the prevention-focused strategy of daily reducing demands initiates a loss cycle with work engagement. This effect resembles that of self-undermining behaviors, which can also lead to disengagement (Bakker & Wang, 2020; Bakker et al., 2023c). The non-significant relationship with PsyCap further suggests that reducing demands may function as a coping strategy (Demerouti, 2014) which prevents resource loss but simultaneously fails to contribute to the resource growth necessary to build PsyCap. Additionally, individuals with higher PsyCap feel capable of handling existing demands (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017) and may thus be less inclined to use this strategy. Accordingly, while all job crafting dimensions influence the motivational state of work engagement, we found that only seeking resources contributes to the development of personal resources, underscoring its central role in gain cycles involving PsyCap. Contributing to our understanding of job crafting, these findings indicate that JD-R theory's gain cycle propositions need a clearer distinction between energy-generating, promotion-focused crafting strategies and energy-depleting, prevention-focused crafting strategies (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2019), with different temporal dynamics and resource mechanisms operating even within promotion-focused job crafting.

Third, we contribute to a deeper understanding of contextual factors and boundary conditions at the within- and between-person level of gain cycles, showing that some relationships within gain cycles are more context-dependent, while others remain stable across different settings. In particular, our results suggest that certain proactive behaviors and their effectiveness are highly dependent upon the work context: Participants engaged in less promotion-focused

job crafting on remote workdays compared to days working in the office, regardless of whether this remote work was carried out from home or another location outside the conventional office. On the contrary, prevention-focused job crafting was more pronounced on days working from home than on office workdays. Moreover, while the relationships between PsyCap, work engagement, seeking challenges, and reducing demands appear relatively context-independent, the relationships involving seeking resources tend to be more context-dependent, varying notably across different work settings (Lazazzara et al., 2020). For the JD-R theory, this implies that context-dependency does not apply universally to all relationships within the daily gain cycle but rather depends on the specific relationship in question: Whereas the relationship between PsyCap and work engagement develops relatively independently, the antecedents and effects of seeking resources are dependent upon the work location, with the positive effect of PsyCap on seeking resources being stronger when working from home compared to working in the office, and the positive reciprocal relationship between work engagement and seeking resources being stronger when working in the office compared to working from home.

Furthermore, beyond this day-level (fluctuating) boundary condition, we contribute to the literature on person-level (stable) boundary conditions that help explain why employees experience good versus bad days at work (Sonnentag et al., 2025). Specifically, our findings reveal that while employees' general well-being affects the baseline level of gain cycles by positively predicting PsyCap and work engagement, personality traits influence both baseline levels and the strength of gain effects, with extraversion and openness to experiences strengthening the cycle, and neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness having mixed effects. Concerning the multilevel JD-R theory (Bakker, 2015), this suggests that personality traits are more influential in determining the effectiveness of the daily gain cycle, while general well-being primarily serves to elevate the baseline levels of the daily gain cycle's core constructs. This aligns with previous studies on the moderating impact of stable personality traits on daily health processes (Bakker et al., 2019; Ilies et al., 2024b; Op den Kamp et al., 2018; Scharp et al., 2019) but warrants further investigation in future research, as other studies have also found moderating effects of general well-being (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2016; Bakker et al., 2023c). In sum, the theoretical advances that can be derived from this study provide a more nuanced understanding of when, how, and at what level employees successfully accumulate (personal) resources through proactive behaviors while accounting for both situational constraints and individual differences.

Beyond enhancing resource theories, our study contributes to the emerging literature on hybrid work arrangements. As non-traditional, alternative work arrangements

such as remote and hybrid work become increasingly prevalent (Lamovšek et al., 2025), understanding their impact on organizational behaviors and specifically on proactive approaches to job redesign is crucial (J. Wang, 2021). While initial research has examined the relationship between employees' (daily) place of work and (daily) job performance (Naqshbandi et al., 2024; Toscano et al., 2025), we offer a fine-grained perspective on how hybrid work designs affect employees' daily proactive behaviors and resource management strategies. This aligns with qualitative job crafting research emphasizing the context-dependent nature of job crafting behaviors (Lazazzara et al., 2020). In this vein, different work settings, such as open office and virtual office configurations, have recently been found to shape an individual's job crafting strategies (Randel et al., 2024). Expanding this knowledge, our findings uncover systematic differences in employees' behavioral patterns depending on their daily work location in hybrid work environments: Promotion-focused crafting behaviors were more prevalent in office work settings compared to remote work settings (whether working from home or somewhere else), whereas prevention-focused crafting behaviors dominated in working from home settings. One explanation for this may lie in the perceived controllability of the work environment. At home, employees can structure their workday flexibly, enabling them to actively reduce demands (e.g., managing interruptions by colleagues, creating ergonomic comfort, or adjusting their work schedule to personal needs). In contrast, working from somewhere else could involve less control over one's working conditions (e.g., fixed to client schedules, unfamiliar environments), which may limit the feasibility of actively reducing job demands. Additionally, when working from home, blurred boundaries between work and home domains may be particularly salient. This might increase the tendency to reduce job demands in order to be more active or responsive in the home domain (e.g., attending to household responsibilities or caregiving duties), referring to compensatory processes between crafting behaviors at work and home (Demerouti et al., 2020; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Conversely, working from somewhere else may foster a stronger work-related mindset due to less work-home interference and enhance engagement by offering a more stimulating or socially rich work environment (Bakker, 2022). It is important to note, however, that such effects likely depend on the specific "somewhere else" location. In our sample, these settings varied widely and included client offices, construction sites, external service locations, and training or seminar venues.

However, working somewhere else was associated with higher daily work engagement, suggesting that certain non-office locations may offer unique opportunities for

engagement despite reduced job crafting behaviors. By providing a change of scenery and offering stimulating or novel conditions, these locations may enhance work engagement in ways that differ from both home and office environments. For instance, working in cafés or at client sites may expose employees to new stimuli or facilitate spontaneous social interactions, thereby creating a socially dynamic work atmosphere that can boost energy and motivation (Bakker, 2022). Similarly, working in co-working spaces and being surrounded by other working individuals may promote focus and motivational states by reducing non-work distractions and counteracting feelings of social isolation sometimes associated with working from home (L. Liu et al., 2021).

In sum, these findings provide deeper insights into the differential influences of on-site versus remote workdays (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016; Stasiła-Sieradzka et al., 2023), thereby adding to recent research on the effectiveness of individual proactive (job crafting) strategies in remote work (Demerouti, 2023). Moreover, based on the results of our study, it is plausible to assume that different job crafting strategies may be easier or harder to apply depending on the work location. For example, requesting feedback, advice, or additional challenging tasks may be easier when colleagues are physically nearby in the office (Y. Liu et al., 2022), whereas employees working from home may experience less social pressure and more autonomy (Allen et al., 2021), facilitating the reduction of job demands. Furthermore, the moderating influence of work location found in the present study might be less significant for employees scoring high on extraversion, as they find it less challenging to engage in job crafting while working from home. Alternatively, the effect could be the opposite, with extraverted employees thriving even more on days with greater availability of job resources (Bakker et al., 2023b). Yet, research on the differential impact of hybrid work locations on proactive behaviors and health-related outcomes is only beginning to emerge, and the present study offers valuable foundations for future research.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite the strengths of our study, its results have to be interpreted in light of several limitations. A key limitation is that we measured all variables at the same time point at the end of each workday and analyzed these relationships within days, limiting causal inference. While the multilevel JD-R theory proposes that gain cycles operate at multiple temporal levels, including daily fluctuations (Bakker, 2015), our design cannot definitively establish the mutual causality implied by true reciprocal relationships. However, we chose this approach because these daily cycles are theoretically distinct from longer-term reciprocal relationships, as they

capture the immediate interplay between proactive behaviors, resources, and engagement occurring within the natural cycle of a single workday. This design also enabled us to analyze our daily moderator (work location). Our supplementary cross-lagged analyses of day-to-day relationships revealed mostly non-significant associations, supporting our focus on within-day dynamics. The diary approach further allowed us to examine these within-day relationships with greater ecological validity and reduced recall bias compared to longer-term longitudinal studies.

While conducting same-time measurements raises the possibility of common method bias, results from our confirmatory factor analyses and the marker variable analysis suggest that this is not a substantial concern in our data. Nevertheless, although our findings indicate that job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement tend to rise and fall together within days in theoretically predicted ways, causal interpretations require caution. Future research could strengthen causal inference by incorporating multiple measurement points within days (e.g., morning, afternoon, and evening assessments) to better trace the temporal sequence of effects. Additionally, combining daily measurements with longer-term assessments could reveal how daily gain cycles accumulate to produce more enduring changes in employee well-being and behavior over time. Such multi-wave designs are particularly valuable for testing whether bidirectional relationships reflect true reciprocal causation and for analyzing change processes using latent change score models (McArdle, 2009; Sonnentag & Meier, 2024). Furthermore, future studies could examine whether variability in employees' daily work location affects the gain cycle, i.e., if the effects depend on how frequently employees change their work location within a given workweek.

Another limitation is that we did not include further outcome variables in our study. While examining these outcomes would have provided insights into the downstream effects of daily gain cycles, we deliberately focused on establishing the cycle's existence and boundary conditions first. This decision reflected both theoretical and practical considerations: Theoretically, understanding the core mechanisms is a crucial step before examining the effects on distal outcomes. Practically, given the novel perspective of our study and the complexity of capturing daily fluctuations across multiple variables, adding performance measures would have increased participant burden and potentially compromised response quality in our intensive design (Fritz et al., 2024). The focus on general well-being and hybrid work as contextual boundary conditions has already added considerable complexity to the research design.

However, having established evidence for these daily gain cycles, future research could extend our findings. Specifically, JD-R theory postulates that the short-term positive and reciprocal relationships between proactive behaviors,

job and personal resources, and work engagement result in increased job performance (Bakker et al., 2023b). Based on our findings regarding the different job crafting dimensions and incorporating insights from Demerouti et al. (2015), these performance benefits primarily emerge from promotion-focused dimensions of job crafting, whereas the prevention-focused dimension of reducing demands may be part of a loss cycle that diminishes daily performance. Successful performance, in turn, is likely to reinforce the gain cycle itself: Task completion provides feelings of competence and mastery that strengthen personal resources (PsyCap), while positive performance experiences motivate further job crafting behaviors and fuel work engagement (Alessandri et al., 2018; Lopper et al., 2023). Over time, these beneficial effects could accumulate to predict improvements in longer-term performance (Shockley et al., 2012). Recent findings by Toscano et al. (2025) further suggest that these performance effects may manifest differently depending on the work location. On remote workdays, performance and health benefits primarily stem from enhanced concentration and reduced interruptions, while on office workdays, they might emerge through increased access to social resources and reduced isolation (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016). Thus, the cycle's effectiveness may depend on how well employees adapt their job crafting strategies to each location's advantages while minimizing its drawbacks.

Third, we did not consider and analyze the possibility of a gain spiral (Bakker et al., 2023b). Yet, it is plausible to assume that positive effects accumulate over time, such that initial gains in proactive behaviors, resources, and work engagement create a virtuous cycle where each increment leads to further improvements in these variables. Despite methodological challenges, longitudinal studies tracking changes in job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement over longer periods would be well-suited to investigate such self-reinforcing feedback loops involving reciprocal causal relationships and increases in the absolute levels of variables (Bakker & Demerouti, 2024). By examining how initial improvements of certain variables influence subsequent behaviors and outcomes, researchers can enhance their understanding of the potential long-term benefits and sustained positive effects. However, it would also be interesting to challenge the prevailing assumption that more proactive behaviors, resources, and engagement are always better, and explore whether there is an optimal level of these variables beyond which no further benefits are gained, or worse, negative effects might occur (Pierce & Aguinis, 2013). Addressing this issue in future research would also contribute to a deeper understanding of the shape of (daily) gain cycles (Sonnentag & Meier, 2024).

In addition, building on the JD-R theory's proposition regarding interconnected demands and resources from various life domains (Bakker et al., 2023b; Demerouti & Bakker,

2023), it might be interesting for future research to incorporate resources from home and personal domains into the (daily) gain cycle. Against the backdrop of blurring boundaries in hybrid work settings, the reciprocal interplay of work and non-work demands and resources as well as job and home crafting behaviors (e.g., Haun et al., 2023) may draw a more realistic picture of the prevailing working life and thus better explain the boundary conditions of employees' proactive approaches to job redesign.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several important practical implications. First, our results demonstrate that job crafting, PsyCap, and work engagement perpetuate each other on a daily basis, suggesting that employees can initiate their own “daily gain cycle”. Given the reciprocal nature of this interplay, organizations and supervisors have multiple entry points for promoting such cycles among their employees. To support daily job crafting, they should create a resourceful and stimulating work environment that encourages employees to tailor their jobs, particularly by increasing access to social and structural resources. This may help employees not only balance job-related demands and resources but also build personal resources such as PsyCap (by seeking resources) and enhance work engagement (by seeking resources and challenges). As all three components of the daily gain cycle function as both predictors and outcomes of one another, with no clear starting point, human resource departments could also fuel the gain cycle by offering workshops that target employees' daily PsyCap and/or daily work engagement. Previous research has already demonstrated the effectiveness of interventions aimed at increasing job crafting (Oprea et al., 2019), personal resources (Bakker & van Wingerden, 2021), and work engagement (Knight et al., 2017). However, based on the insights of the present study, the distinct effects of different job crafting strategies should be carefully considered in organizational practice. Specifically, the development of personal resources appears to be most effectively supported by encouraging employees to engage in seeking resources, whereas work engagement can be fostered through both seeking resources and challenges. In contrast, the strategy of reducing demands should be approached with caution, as it may have adverse effects on employees' engagement.

A second key finding of this study, which is particularly relevant given the increasing prevalence of hybrid work, is that employees' job crafting behaviors fluctuate from day to day depending on their work location. To improve hybrid work designs and foster favorable outcomes for both employees and organizations, supervisors should create supportive conditions that encourage promotion-focused job crafting

across all work locations, especially on days spent working outside the office. For instance, this could involve offering additional job resources (e.g., social support and feedback) on remote workdays, when employees often perceive fewer opportunities to engage in promotion-focused job crafting behaviors and are more likely to reduce demands. As supervisors play a key role in supporting employees' use of technology (B. Wang et al., 2020; B. Wang et al., 2021), they could structure virtual communication channels to provide easy access to social job resources. This might include establishing regular virtual “open door” hours for quick consultations or initiating digital platforms for informal peer-to-peer interactions. In addition, organizations might designate certain office days for team projects and collaborative challenges while structuring remote workdays to support focused individual development activities. Creating virtual communities of practice could further help employees to share expertise and exchange best practices.

Third, our results revealed direct influences of general well-being and a moderating role of personality, suggesting that interventions should be tailored to employees' stable aspects. This implies that organizations should focus on generally promoting employee well-being as a foundation for higher baseline levels of gain cycles and should also consider the personality profiles of their employees. For instance, since extraversion strengthens the reciprocal relationship between work engagement and seeking resources, organizations could provide additional structure and opportunities for less extraverted employees to engage in resource-seeking behaviors, such as establishing clear protocols for requesting feedback or creating low-threshold opportunities for connecting with colleagues. Similarly, employees lower in openness to experience and higher in neuroticism showed weaker effects of PsyCap on seeking resources and may benefit from more guided approaches to job crafting. Providing concrete examples and step-by-step support could help these employees feel more confident and comfortable in seeking social and structural resources (Bakker et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This study outlines that job crafting as a proactive behavior, PsyCap as a personal resource, and work engagement dynamically interact in the form of a daily gain cycle. Focusing on within-person variability, this dynamic interplay differs depending on the type of daily job crafting behavior, with promotion-focused crafting having beneficial effects but prevention-focused crafting having detrimental effects. While stable manifestations of well-being do not significantly moderate the relationships of the gain cycle and rather exert direct influences, we provide evidence for a moderating

influence of personality traits. Additionally, this study reveals employees' daily work location as a critical contextual factor of the gain cycle, such that promotion-focused job crafting is more pronounced on office workdays than on remote workdays, whereas prevention-focused job crafting dominates in remote work settings. Overall, the result patterns highlight the need to consider, on the one hand, the daily interplay of different job crafting strategies, PsyCap, and work engagement, and, on the other hand, the moderating role of contextual factors and boundary conditions in fostering proactive job design and enhancing employee health in hybrid work environments.

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