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## Article

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## MANAGEMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# How career adaptability influences job embeddedness of self-initiated expatriates? The mediating role of job crafting

Mustafa AlMemari<sup>1</sup>, Khalizani Khalid<sup>1\*</sup> and Abdullah Osman<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between career adaptability, job crafting, and job embeddedness, and it was predicted that career adaptability promotes job embeddedness in self-initiated expatriates by increasing their job crafting behavior. Data were collected from 881 self-initiated expatriates from multinational companies in the United Arab Emirates, which were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The structural equation modeling results support the proposed hypotheses and suggest that career adaptability and job crafting are associated with job embeddedness. Specifically, career adaptability is effective in promoting job embeddedness through job crafting. Therefore, career adaptability is an important antecedent for self-initiated proactivity and job embeddedness in organizations.

**Subjects:** Introductory Work/Organizational Psychology; Personnel Selection, Assessment, and Human Resource Management; Business, Management and Accounting

**Keywords:** career adaptability; job crafting; job embeddedness; self-initiated expatriate; United Arab Emirates

**JEL classification:** J24; J28; M14; M54

### 1. Introduction

Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) represent an important source of talent for organizations globally seeking to meet their talent needs (Guan et al., 2019). However, SIE career resources and talent retention have received less scholarly attention in the strategic human resource management (SHRM) literature in the past (Nolan, 2023; Suarez-Bilbao et al., 2023). C. H. Wang et al. (2022) noted that the SHRM literature has increased in scope and depth to address issues related to expatriate career resources and talent retention, but comprehensive knowledge about SIEs' career resources and talent retention remains scarce. SIEs experience and overcome fundamentally different workplace challenges, and the career resources they need to support their performance in the host country context significantly shape SIEs' attitudes and behaviors toward the employing organization (Despotovic et al., 2022). However, the extent of SHRM literature indicates an apparent lack of a standard definition of SIEs (Alshahrani, 2022; Chen et al., 2022). In this study, SIE is defined as skilled/professionally qualified workers who relocates to another country at their own expense and effort to pursue a career abroad with the intention of returning to their home country (Presbitero & Quita, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).



Successful SIEs are more likely to have high career resources and be better equipped in managing their career development and advancement with employing organizations (Koveshnikov et al., 2022). At the same time, SIEs are not a homogeneous collective, as they come from different countries and with different values and skills (Al-Ghazali, 2020). SIEs in employing organizations are critical to career resources so that they can proactively change the work design process to better match job to personal needs, goals, and skills (Bakker et al., 2020). The literature suggests that employees' tendency to cope with changes and demands in the workplace predicts proactive behaviors to change job design to enhance job meaning (Bakker, 2022; Scharp et al., 2022), which in turn influences their retention strategies in the workplace (Akkermans et al., 2018; Al-Ghazali, 2020).

Only a handful of studies have researched SIEs in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Alshahrani, 2022; Hussain & Deery, 2018), and most address what makes them successful, and only to a limited extent why they stay. The highly segmented labor markets in GCC member states are due to the upward trend in mobility in high-income GCC member states such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, where the population of SIEs is much larger than that of citizen workers (Bastaki, 2021; Lari, 2022). In the oil-rich Gulf states, the UAE and Qatar have the highest percentage of SIEs relative to their populations, although Saudi Arabia has the largest number of SIEs. In the UAE, SIEs make up as much as 90% of the total expatriate population (Abraham, 2023; Burgess et al., 2013; Macháček et al., 2022). As the ratio of nationals to expatriates in the UAE is among the most disproportionate in the world, the UAE has unique labor market characteristics (Forstenlechner & Rutledge, 2011; Hussain & Deery, 2018). It is also noteworthy that nearly 90% of the UAE's private sector workforce are expatriates (Koveshnikov et al., 2022; Ryan & Silvanto, 2023). The limited studies that have focused on SIEs in GCC countries suggest that social support from host country nationals (Alshahrani, 2022), quality of life (Ridgway & Robson, 2018), and the incentive of tax-free salaries (Singh et al., 2021) contribute to SIEs' decision to stay with employing organizations. Therefore, SIE retention and contributing factors are critical. However, the literature is still largely unexplored, and this study seeks to examine and fill in the gap (B. Holtom et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2021).

In order to adequately investigate the causes of SIEs' job embeddedness in the context of GCC countries, the objective of this study is to fill this research gap by answering the following research questions:

**RQ1:** How do career adaptability and job crafting influence SIEs' decision to become embedded in the job?

**RQ2:** Does job crafting mediate the relationship between career adaptability and SIE's job embeddedness?

To answer this research question, this study focuses on Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory to understand and explain how the effects of career adaptability and job crafting influence SIE's job embeddedness and the role of job crafting in mediating the relationship between career adaptability and SIE's job embeddedness. This study can advance the theory and practice of expatriate retention strategies in two ways by answering the above research question. First, it contributes to advancing the SIE literature in general by developing a model of the antecedents (i.e., career adaptability and job crafting) of SIE job embeddedness and a mechanism for how these antecedents exert their effects. Second, this study attempts to respond to several claims in JD-R theory domain that address how the forces of career resources influence SIEs' decision to engage job embeddedness (B. Holtom et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2021). Third, the findings of this study advance the theory and practice of SHRM, particularly in the field of global talent management, by illustrating how job crafting mediates the influence of career adaptability and job embeddedness.

## 2. Theoretical background and hypotheses

The JD-R theory has been extensively applied in studies aimed at understanding how job demands and resources influence important individual outcomes, such as job performance, motivation and burnout. Job demands, sometimes referred to as stressors, are the physical, social, or organizational job aspects that require physical or mental effort (Demerouti et al., 2017). They are associated with physical and psychological costs that are debilitating and activate a health impairment process, leading to negative outcomes for individuals (Demerouti et al., 2017). Job resources are aspects of the work role that enable the achievement of goals and facilitate employees' growth, activating a beneficial motivational process that leads to positive outcomes (Demerouti et al., 2017). Job resources are not only motivational in their own right but also buffer against the negative effects of job demands (Bakker et al., 2020). They can also have an additive effect on existing resources and facilitate the acquisition of new resources to strengthen the motivational process (Bakker, 2022).

Consistent with JD-R theory and recent views on job embeddedness (M. C. Lee et al., 2023), this study suggest career resources has a dual nature and can both enhance and hinder SIEs' retention decisions. This is also in accordance with B. Holtom et al. (2020) conceptualization of career resources, where SIEs exploiting career resources-related forces to shape their choices related to job embeddedness. Based on JD-R theory, this study suggests that SIEs can be an active user of career resources as a motivational process to buffer against the negative effects of job demands in the expatriation context. That is, career resources and job demand can be both detrimental and beneficial to SIEs ability to adjust to work, that, in turn decided to stay with the employing organizations (Akkermans et al., 2013; Goštautaitė et al., 2020).

Previous studies have supported the ability of JD-R theory to explain job embeddedness (e.g., Karatepe & Eslamlou, 2017; Mitchell et al., 2001; Obschonka et al., 2023). Career resources, which include knowledge and skills as well as motivational and environmental resources (Ng & Feldman, 2014), allow employees to successfully manage their careers (Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020) through career adaptivity (Maggiori et al., 2017) and job crafting (Karatepe & Eslamlou, 2017). Recent studies have shown that the career resources of adaptability and job crafting are highly relevant to job embeddedness (Guan et al., 2019; Linder, 2019). Specifically, these resources can play an important role in SIEs' motivational processes. When SIEs have higher levels of career adaptability, they are better able to manage present and impending career challenges and adjust their behaviors to changing environments (Maggiori et al., 2017). Moreover, career adaptability allows for job crafting, which indicates proactively changing one's job design to enhance job meaning (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). Thus, it is proposed that both career adaptability and job crafting are career resources linked to SIEs' job embeddedness in their host organizations. This is in line with JD-R theory (Bakker et al., 2020), which maintains that SIEs depend on career resources linked to resilience and to a sense of control over their environment, both of which help them manage their abilities.

This study applies JD-R theory in organizational contexts and expect that career adaptability and job crafting may function as career resources—a type of personal resource—that have predictive value for job embeddedness. In line with JD-R and previous research (e.g., Karatepe & Eslamlou, 2017; Linder, 2019), it is proposed that motivational processes arise from SIEs' career resources and lead to positive outcomes for employing organizations. Therefore, both career adaptability and job crafting as factors affecting the job embeddedness decisions of SIEs were tested.

### 2.1. Job embeddedness

According to job embeddedness theory, employees' decision to stay on the job will be influenced by two factors: on-the-job embeddedness (i.e., in one's organization or job) and off-the-job embeddedness (i.e., in one's community or family) (Crossley et al., 2007; Mitchell et al., 2001). Each of these forms of embeddedness has three underlying facets: fit, links, and sacrifice. Fit refers to an employee's perceived compatibility or comfort with his or her organization and environment

(Mitchell et al., 2001). Links are defined as the formal or informal connections between a person and institutions or other people, while sacrifice refers to perceived costs in terms of the material or psychological benefits that an individual expects to forfeit when leaving a job (Mitchell et al., 2001). Job embeddedness thus results from forces both within the organization and in the community. Scholars postulate that embedded individuals who have achieved work—family balance are generally more satisfied with their jobs (Linder, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2001).

In SIE context, job embeddedness also refers to forces that deter a SIE from leaving a job; these forces would become stronger as a SIEs' career progress (Hussain & Deery, 2018; Mumtaz et al., 2020). With high levels of job embeddedness, SIEs establish deep social ties with others and attain a satisfactory match between their values and those of the organization. This would also suggest that SIEs enjoy living in their chosen community (Meuer et al., 2019). Individuals who are embedded in their jobs are likely to stay at their host location longer and demonstrate preferences for organizational stability (M. Y. Lee & Nguyen, 2019; Zaman et al., 2021). In this case, SIEs would begin to believe that the sacrifice from leaving a job or organization would be phenomenally high. When self-initiated expatriates are deeply embedded in a job and the organization, it also implies that they have satisfactory progression in their careers and perceive high levels of career success. Shao and Ariss (2020) found that lower levels of job embeddedness can lead to job search behaviors in SIEs, who might also display greater levels of turnover intention. One reasonable explanation for such behaviors is that when SIEs do not feel satisfied with their careers, their desire for greater success prompts them to search for an alternative job or organization.

SIEs becoming embedded in their organization where there is a fit between career choice, roles and social integration (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) and between themselves and the demands of their jobs (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) offered by the organization. SIEs have been found to be solely responsible for setting their career goals (Al-Ghazali, 2020). Thus, the greater the perceived compatibility between career goals and individual job skills and preferences, the more likely an individual is to feel committed to the organization (Greco & Kraimer, 2020). It has been found that the perception of successful career development in the host country is linked with positive emotions and pride (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Relationships between the employee and their colleagues can also influence the decision to stay (B. C. Holtom et al., 2008). Interpersonal relationships in the sense better adjust to social environments have been shown to be a critical source of satisfaction for self-initiated expatriates (Cao et al., 2012). Therefore, fostering job embeddedness for SIEs can be an important human resource strategy as self-initiated expatriates can boost economic performance, enhance social capital, and improve corporate reputation (Ceric & Crawford, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). Job embeddedness can enable SIEs' special talents and skills and help them flourish in their host organizations. It can also empower psychological benefits among SIEs (Linder, 2019). In fact, the ability to retain SIEs as skilled workers through strategic human resource management can be a substantial source of competitive advantage for host organizations (Furusawa & Brewster, 2019).

## **2.2. Career adaptability**

Career adaptability is a psychosocial resource that enables individuals to successfully manage career development (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) through satisfying on-the-job demands and exploiting job resources (Zhu et al., 2019). It comprises four factors: concern (e.g., about future career tasks); control (i.e., taking responsibility for career development); curiosity (i.e., exploring possible future selves and career opportunities); and confidence (i.e., the ability to solve problems and succeed) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Career adaptability is based on competencies that enable individuals to successfully manage workplace changes, such as career transitions and evolving work demands, skills, knowledge, and abilities (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Career adaptability is often conceptualized as a form of human capital (Maggiori et al., 2017). Akkermans et al. (2018) proposed that career adaptability resources usually accumulate over time as employees gain knowledge, experience, and skills. When SIEs satisfied at work because have

abundant career adaptability resources, they exert a greater effort to embed in their jobs. Self-initiated expatriates perceive their careers to be more successful when they are more attached to jobs, locations, organizations, people, and workplace issues (Arokiasamy, 2021; Presbitero & Quita, 2017). In other words, a SIEs' satisfaction at the current job will increase their sense of responsibility after carving a path to integrate themselves into the fabric of a job, firm, or community.

SIEs who are curious about exploring new opportunities may anticipate future needs and seek to refresh their competencies or learn new skills, to satisfy themselves in preparation to adapt to the changing nature of jobs or professions (Guan et al., 2019). When organizations support them in pursuing their aspirations, SIEs may experience increased job embeddedness (Linder, 2019). Al-Ghazali (2020) highlighted that individual who possess high levels of career adaptability tend to contemplate their future and constantly seek ways to develop in their careers. As such, employees with higher levels of career adaptability become more embedded in their jobs. Similarly, career adaptability positively predicted career commitment making, career identification and career exploration; determines how committed SIEs are to their job (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). In other words, SIEs feel more attached and connected to their organizations. The literature demonstrates that employees who are confident in their capabilities and believe they can successfully manage their careers are more likely to engage in constructive career planning than less confident employees (Zhu et al., 2019). Therefore, in line with JD-R theory, the following hypothesis is postulated:

**H1.** Career adaptability positively affects job embeddedness of SIEs.

### **2.3. Job crafting**

Job crafting refers to employees initiating changes to their own job demands and job resources to create more meaningful, engaging, and satisfying jobs (Demerouti et al., 2017). Job crafters use three general approaches to shape their jobs: a cognitive approach (i.e., altering how tasks are perceived); a task approach (i.e., altering the actual work); and a relational approach (i.e., altering the quality or extent of interaction with colleagues) (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Feel satisfied at job makes employees initiate efforts to fully engage in and enjoy their work through partially or completely redesigning job activities to reach desired work goals (Budhwar et al., 2022; Wrzesniewski et al., 2013).

Job crafting is often associated with proactive behavior (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). H. J. Wang et al. (2020) pointed out that job crafting behavior may increase from time to time in the course of an individual's satisfaction and career progression. When SIEs positively evaluate their career satisfaction and prospects, they may be more motivated to identify the right career track in their current organization (Despotovic et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020). Concurrently, as SIEs engage in more job crafting, they may expend more effort to embed in their jobs. In other words, SIEs recognize that favorable career progression is more likely if they are meaningfully connected to their jobs, organizations, people, and workplace issues (Demerouti et al., 2017).

Career adaptability allows employees to fulfil their current needs and feel satisfied at work as well as may even motivate them to perform beyond their contractual obligations (H. J. Wang et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2022). The latter aspect could help SIEs further explore opportunities for job crafting and be better prepared for future career tasks and changes. SIEs with high levels of career adaptability may address their concerns about their jobs themselves and proactively alter their current job activities to meet their needs. SIEs rely on career resources to enable them to adapt to occupational changes and solve work-related problems (Maggiore et al., 2017). Satisfaction at job strive SIEs to acquire an optimal level of career resources to be prepared to deal with changing circumstances. In addition, JD-R theory contends that interpersonal relationships within the social environment of host organizations predict job crafting (Karatepe & Eslamlou, 2017; Obschonka et al., 2023).

In sum, career adaptability increases SIEs' level of job crafting (H. J. Wang et al., 2017), and job crafting behavior is positively related to job embeddedness (Li et al., 2020). Therefore, SIEs with higher levels of career adaptability will lead to increases in job embeddedness. SIEs with high levels of concern, control, curiosity, and confidence (i.e., a high level of career adaptability) feel more attached and connected to their organizations. They benefit from career resources, satisfaction, autonomy, and fearlessness, and they demonstrate the courage to stay at their present jobs and organizations (Sekiguchi et al., 2017; Zientara et al., 2023). Moreover, they seek to acquire the competencies necessary for engaging in career transitions, which further enhance their self-confidence and career preparation and planning (Meuer et al., 2019). Within the strategic human resource management perspective emphasizing job embeddedness, SIEs strive to cultivate adaptability in their careers; they accept responsibility and seek opportunities to redesign jobs to further their advancement, particularly within their host organizations (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Presbitero & Quita, 2017). Career development is an individual's process of continuous professional adaptation through the proactive shaping of his or her job and social environment. Its aim is to achieve the optimal person—job and person—environment fit and integration (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). Job crafting is highly relevant to the career adaptability—job embeddedness relationship, as SIEs deeply attach to a host organization using their career resources. Therefore, the following hypotheses were hypothesized:

**H2.** Career adaptability positively affects job crafting of SIEs.

**H3.** Job crafting positively affects job embeddedness of SIEs.

**H4.** Job crafting mediates the relationship between career adaptability and job embeddedness of SIEs.

### 3. Material and methods

#### 3.1. Participants and procedures

A descriptive cross-sectional design study was used to examine the relationship between career adaptability, job crafting, and job embeddedness among SIEs in the UAE. Full-time employees from multinational companies in the UAE were randomly invited to participate in the survey via social media (i.e., LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter). All participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that responses would be kept anonymous and only used for research purposes. Data were collected from May 2019 to May 2020. 1131 completed questionnaires were received from participants, representing a 57% response rate. Out of total response, 881 participants were the SIEs from India, the Philippines, the USA, and the UK. Among the participants, 57.5% were male, and the mean age was 30.7 years ( $SD = 0.938$ ). Regarding education levels, 42.8% of the participants had at least a bachelor's degree. Furthermore, 48% were Asian, and the average tenure in the current organization was five years ( $SD = 1.79$ ). Most participants were in management and professional positions (74.8%), mainly in the construction, (39.6%), hotel (28.4%), and manufacturing (25.5%) sectors.

#### 3.2. Measures

All measures for responses ranged from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) and administered in English.

Career adaptability was measured using Savickas and Porfeli's (2012) Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) with 24-item each of which contained six items for career concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. Items included "preparing for the future" (concern); "sticking up for my beliefs" (control); "investigating options before making a choice" (curiosity); and "overcoming obstacles" (confidence). The results of a second-order factor model ( $\chi^2 [248] = 936.05$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.96;

TLI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.05) indicated that the four dimensions could be aggregated into the higher-order factor of career adaptability. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.88.

The Job Crafting Questionnaire (JCQ) was measured using a nine-item scale by Sekiguchi et al. (2017) based on the original conceptualization by (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Each dimension had three items: task, relational, and cognitive crafting. Items included "change the content and/or procedure of my job to be more desirable" (task crafting); "actively interact with people through my job" (relational crafting); and "reframe my job as significant and meaningful" (cognitive crafting). The results of a second-order factor model ( $\chi^2$  [24] = 86.22,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; RMSEA = 0.05) indicated that the three dimensions could be aggregated into the higher-order factor of job crafting. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.86.

A seven-item job embeddedness scale was adapted from the Global Job Embeddedness Scale of Crossley et al. (2007). A sample item was "I feel attached to this organization." The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.79.

In line with earlier research (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Bakker et al., 2020), this study introduced control variables into the analyses to ensure rigor and minimize the potential effect of exogenous variables: gender (1 = male, 2 = female); age (years); education (1 = high school certificate, 2 = Bachelor's degree, 3 = postgraduate degree); and organizational tenure (years). Considering its effect on career adaptability and job crafting, job satisfaction was also included as a control variable (H. J. Wang et al., 2020; Hussain & Deery, 2018). We assessed it using a five-item scale developed by Andrews and Withey (1976). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.87.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Measurement properties

A Harman's single-factor test was conducted because the responses were collected using self-reported measures. The result confirmed that common method bias was non-existent in the findings ( $\chi^2$  [740] = 7865.57,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.77; TLI = 0.76; RMSEA = 0.10). Table 1 shows the measurement scales of all items, which all factor loadings were above 0.50, all Cronbach's alpha and CR values were above 0.70, and all AVE values were above 0.50. These results confirmed adequate convergent validity for this study. Career adaptability ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and job crafting ( $r = 0.63$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) were positively correlated with job embeddedness. Career adaptability was also positively correlated with job crafting ( $r = 0.82$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The correlation coefficients of the research constructs were below 0.85, without any sign of multicollinearity. The AVEs were higher than the  $r^2$ , indicating that the research model had good discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 lists the means, standard deviations and correlations of all constructs. The CFA indicated that the proposed three-factor measurement model had a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2$  [730] = 2230.62,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.04), providing evidence for the hypothesized factor structure of the study variables.

### 4.2. Structural equation modeling

Structural model was performed using AMOS 24.0 (Arbuckle, 2016) to test the proposed hypotheses (Figure 1). The overall model showed a good fit to the data ( $\chi^2$  [74] = 375.28,  $p < 0.001$ ; CFI = 0.97; TLI = 0.96; RMSEA = 0.05). The result in the baseline model demonstrated a significant positive path coefficient from career adaptability to job embeddedness ( $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), career adaptability to job crafting ( $\beta = 0.91$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and job crafting to job embeddedness ( $\beta = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The squared multiple correlations of the model showed that 68% of the variance in job crafting and 43% of the variance in job embeddedness were explained by the model. Therefore, H1, H2, and H3 were supported.

After controlling for gender, age, education, organizational tenure, and job satisfaction, career adaptability ( $\beta = 0.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and job crafting ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) were found to be significantly

<b>Table 1. Measurement scales</b>		
<b>Construct reliability and validity</b>		<b>Factor loadings</b>
Job embeddedness ( $\alpha = 0.79$ , AVE = 0.62, CR = 0.92)		
1.	I feel attached to this organization.	0.70
2.	It would be difficult for me to leave this organization.	0.78
3.	I'm too caught up in this organization to leave.	0.78
4.	I feel tied to this organization.	0.79
5.	I simply could not leave the organization that I work for.	0.80
6.	It would be easy for me to leave this organization. *	0.90
7.	I am tightly connected to this organization.	0.77
Career adaptability ( $\alpha = 0.88$ , AVE = 0.78, CR = 0.94)		
Concern ( $\alpha = 0.89$ , AVE = 0.79, CR = 0.96)		
1.	Thinking about what my future will be like.	0.89
2.	Realizing that today's choices shape my future.	0.88
3.	Preparing for the future.	0.89
4.	Becoming aware of the educational and career choices that I must make.	0.90
5.	Planning how to achieve my goals.	0.90
6.	Concerned about my career.	0.87
Control ( $\alpha = 0.88$ , AVE = 0.77, CR = 0.95)		
1.	Keeping optimistic.	0.84
2.	Making decisions by myself.	0.86
3.	Taking responsibility for my actions.	0.89
4.	Sticking up for my beliefs.	0.90
5.	Counting on myself.	0.90
6.	Doing what's right for me.	0.88
Curiosity ( $\alpha = 0.88$ , AVE = 0.78, CR = 0.95)		
1.	Exploring my surroundings.	0.89
2.	Looking for opportunities to grow as a person.	0.90
3.	Investigating options before making a choice.	0.89
4.	Observing different ways of doing things.	0.87
5.	Searching deeply into questions I have.	0.87
6.	Becoming curious about new opportunities.	0.88
Confidence ( $\alpha = 0.89$ , AVE = 0.79, CR = 0.96)		
1.	Performing tasks efficiently.	0.90
2.	Taking care to do things well.	0.89
3.	Learning new skills.	0.88

(Continued)

Construct reliability and validity		Factor loadings
4	Working up to my ability.	0.90
5.	Overcoming obstacles.	0.90
6.	Solving problems.	0.88
Job crafting ( $\alpha = 0.86$ , AVE = 0.73, CR = 0.96)		
1.	I think about how my job gives my life purpose.	0.88
2.	I think about the role of my job on my overall well-being.	0.90
3.	I think about the ways in which my work positively impacts my life.	0.81
4	I make an effort to get to know people well at work.	0.82
5.	I attend work related social functions to interact with people at work.	0.87
6.	I make friends with people at work.	0.87
7.	I change the scope or types of tasks that I complete at work.	0.87
8.	I introduce new work tasks that I think better suit my skills or interests.	0.87
9.	I give preference to work tasks that suit my skills or interests.	0.81
Job satisfaction ( $\alpha = 0.87$ , AVE = 0.75, CR = 0.94)		
1.	How do you feel about your job?	0.84
2.	How do you feel about the people you work with-your co-workers?	0.90
3.	How do you feel about the work you do on your job-the work itself?	0.85
4.	What is it like where your work-the physical surroundings, the hours, the amount of work you are asked to do?	0.86
5.	How do you feel about what you have available for doing your job (e.g., equipment, information, good supervision, etc)	0.88

Note: \* Item was reverse-scored

related to job embeddedness. The direct effect ( $\beta = 0.33$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and total effect ( $\beta = 0.66$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) of career adaptability on job embeddedness were also found to be significant. The squared multiple correlations of the model showed that 81% of the variance in job crafting and 49% of the variance in job embeddedness were explained by the model (Figure 2). Following earlier studies (e.g., Al-Ghazali, 2020; H. J. Wang et al., 2020), we tested the mediating effects using Hayes (2013) bias-corrected bootstrapping to examine the indirect effects of career adaptability on job embeddedness through job crafting. The analysis showed that the mediation via job crafting was significant (IE = 0.33;  $p < 0.001$ ; SE = 0.05; 95% CI [0.24; 0.43]), providing evidence that the effect of career adaptability on job embeddedness was partially mediated by job crafting because direct relationship between career adaptability on job embeddedness was also found significant. Therefore, H4 was supported. Table 3 displays the results of regression analysis.

**Table 2. Correlation matrix and descriptive statistics of measures**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1							
2. Age	0.067	1						
3. Education	0.016	0.007	1					
4. Organizational tenure	0.024	0.034	0.010	1				
5. Job satisfaction	0.002	0.014	0.025	0.006	1			
6. Job embeddedness	0.004	0.017	0.054	0.028	0.017	1		
7. Career adaptability	0.006	0.044	0.038	0.037	0.034	0.616**	1	
8. Job crafting	0.013	0.025	0.010	0.000	0.034	0.629**	0.821**	1
Mean	1.12	2.26	2.02	1.79	5.43	5.06	5.40	5.19
Standard deviation	0.495	0.938	0.828	1.059	0.967	1.233	1.151	1.216

Notes: N = 881, \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

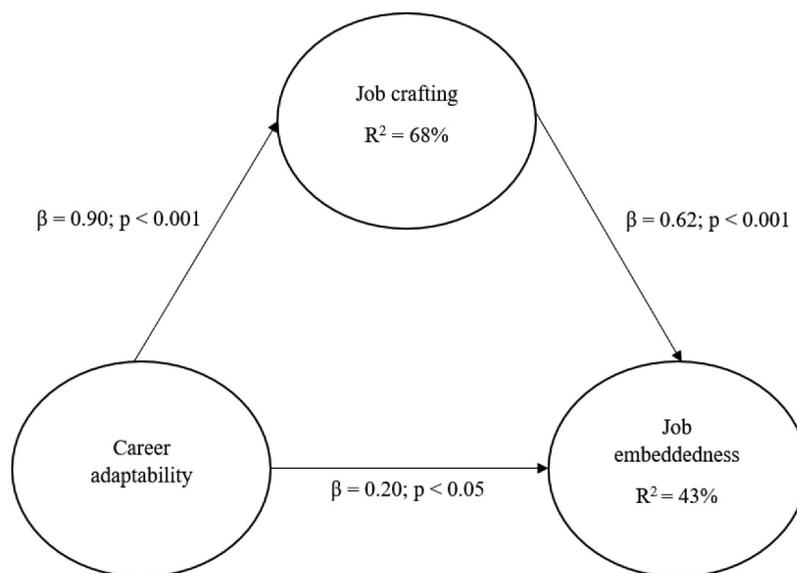
The present study examined how career adaptability motivated SIEs' job embeddedness via job crafting. The results showed that career adaptability had a direct effect on job embeddedness and job crafting, job crafting had a direct influence on job embeddedness, and job crafting partially mediated the relationship between career adaptability and job embeddedness. These findings suggest that SIEs' career adaptability indirectly fosters job embeddedness through job crafting behavior. In other words, career adaptability encourages SIEs to be more proactive concerning job characteristics by increasing job resources and job demands. This is consistent with research suggesting that career adaptability has a direct effect on job embeddedness (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Porfeli & Savickas, 2012), and job embeddedness transcends job satisfaction and organizational commitment (B. Holtom et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2021). These findings support previous studies that found SIEs tend to experience high levels of trust (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Meuer et al., 2019), and autonomy (Greco & Kraimer, 2020; Li et al., 2020), which led to SIEs' intention to embed themselves in their organizations (B. Holtom et al., 2020; Ismail & Nisar, 2015).

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

This study has several implications for the literature. First, this study has contributed to existing JD-R theory by identifying career adaptability and job crafting as significant predictors of job embeddedness. JD-R theory has complemented job embeddedness theory by including psychosocial and career resources in the bundle of retention strategies to keep SIEs on the job, rather than just psychological factors that have largely been the focus of the job embeddedness literature. This study shows that career adaptability has a positive impact on SIEs' job embeddedness. Interestingly, despite the indirect effect of job crafting, the direct relationship between career adaptability and job embeddedness remains significant. This could be because SIEs with high levels of career adaptability may be more likely to feel connected and committed to their jobs, regardless of whether they engage in job crafting behaviors. Similarly, SIEs with high levels of career adaptability may have developed a stronger sense of identity and purpose in their work, which may have resulted in a stronger sense of job embeddedness. Additionally, individuals who are more adaptable to career may also be better equipped to deal with job stressors and challenges, which may contribute to their sense of job embeddedness. These notions are consistent with previous research that found a direct relationship between career adaptability and job embeddedness (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Porfeli & Savickas, 2012). Therefore, this study advances the knowledge of job embeddedness theory.

Second, this study proposed an adaptive resource perspective to manage SIEs' job crafting behaviors, contributing to the development of the job crafting literature. This research also extends

Figure 1. Baseline model.



the literature by uncovering the role of SIE job crafting in linking career adaptability and job embeddedness, responding to the call to link career adaptability with SIE job crafting (Goštautaitė et al., 2020; Haenggli & Hirschi, 2020; Linder, 2019). Consistent with the literature (e.g., B. Holtom et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2001; Zhang et al., 2021), the study findings suggest that the effect of career adaptability on job crafting goes beyond the effect of job satisfaction. Adaptable SIEs believe in the ability to overcome challenges and obstacles they encounter in the pursuit of their personal goals (Maggiori et al., 2017), which helps in their decision to stay with their employing organization. It appears that SIEs with high adaptability have less urgency to reduce job demands, which is consistent with Demerouti et al. (2017), who found that engaging in job crafting is positively related to job performance or may even yield positive outcomes for employees and organizations.

Third, an observation in the current body of knowledge shows that understanding about the antecedents and consequences of job crafting in the context of SIE is limited and scanty (Bakker et al., 2020; H. J. Wang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). The significant association between career adaptability as an antecedent and job embeddedness as consequence to job crafting indicates that the findings of this study support the notion that interpersonal relationships in the social environment of the host organization predict job crafting (Karatepe & Eslamlou, 2017) and that career resources encourage SIEs to stay in their current jobs and organizations (Sekiguchi et al., 2017).

Fourth, although there are a number of studies on job embeddedness, the factors that influence SIEs' job embeddedness demand further examination (Al-Ghazali, 2020; B. Holtom et al., 2020). This study was the first to integrate the elements of psychosocial and career literature. This study found showed that career adaptability and job crafting have a positive and significant impact on SIEs' job embeddedness, and that job crafting mediates the relationship between career adaptability and SIEs' job embeddedness. Although previous studies reported a direct relationship between career adaptability and job embeddedness (Al-Ghazali, 2020; Porfeli & Savickas, 2012), this study exhibited that a partial indirect path also existed in the relationship. The findings suggest that SIEs with high career adaptability are satisfied and committed with their careers not only because they are intrinsically motivated to succeed in their careers, but also because they are eager to redesign their jobs in order to construct their careers (Meuer et al., 2019; Zientara et al., 2023). These results are consistent with the career construction theory (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) which states that individuals with adaptability resources construct

Figure 2. Final model.

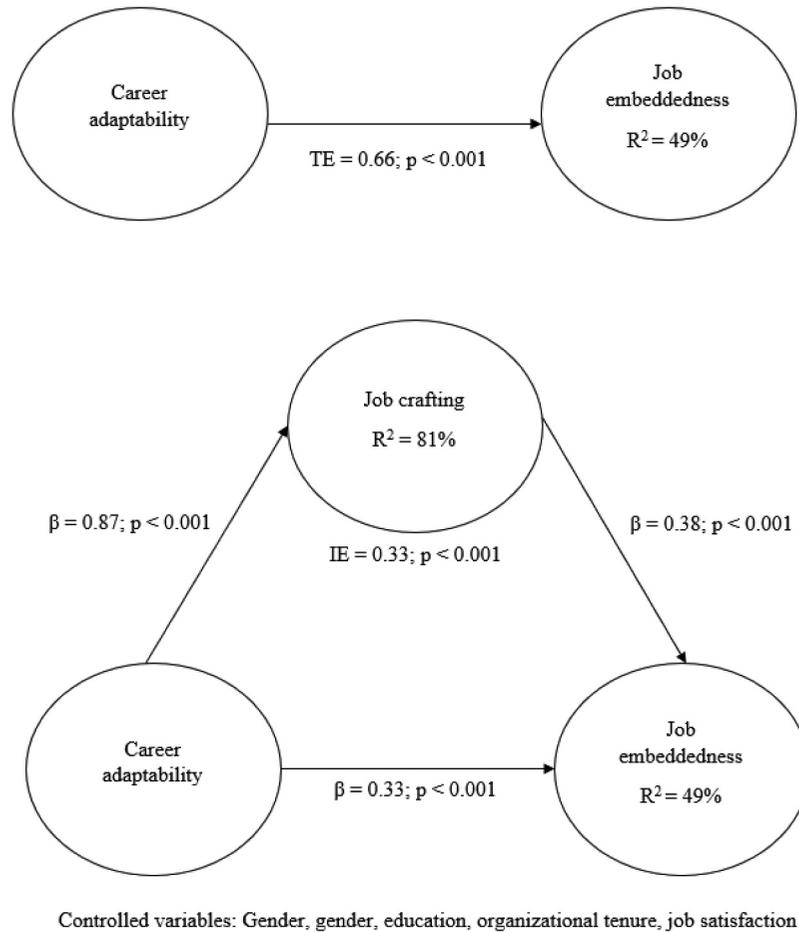


Table 3. Results of regression models

Regression paths	Coefficient (β)	p-value	Results
<i>Direct effects</i>			
Career adaptability → Job embeddedness	0.20	p < 0.05	Supported
Career adaptability → Job crafting	0.90	p < 0.001	Supported
Job crafting → Job embeddedness	0.62	p < 0.001	Supported
<i>Mediation effect</i>			
Career adaptability → Job crafting → Job embeddedness	IE, CI [LL, UL])	p-value	Result
	0.33, 95% [0.24; 0.43]	p < 0.001	Supported

their careers by engaging in self-initiated behaviors as a strategy to improve person—environment fit (Zhang et al., 2021). This study on job crafting is also an important addition to understanding what type of self-initiated behaviors SIEs engage in at work. Therefore, the results provide new insights into these important areas.

### 5.2. Practical implications

This study has several practical implications. To increase SIEs' attachment to organizations and enhance their retention, improving their job embeddedness is crucial. Thus, it is important to

identify ways organizations can sustainably support the job embeddedness of SIEs. One of the most effective ways to do this is to emphasize career adaptability. For example, host organizations could signal that they are willing to help SIEs adapt to change, thereby cultivating a more supportive climate (Al-Ghazali, 2020; M. Y. Lee & Nguyen, 2019; Zaman et al., 2021). In response, SIEs might be more willing to experiment with change or even welcome it, as they would better understand how to take advantage of new opportunities. The findings regarding the mediation effect suggest that an effective way for organizations to increase job embeddedness is to allow for job crafting. Therefore, host organizations could consider supporting SIEs' job crafting to promote their job embeddedness. In sum, organizations could provide individualized support, cultivate trusting and open climates, and welcome job crafting (Bakker et al., 2020; Demerouti et al., 2017; H. J. Wang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020; Sekiguchi et al., 2017).

### 5.3. Limitations and future directions

The limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the data collection was cross-sectional, which did not allow us to draw strong inferences about causality. Because career adaptability is relatively stable over time (Urbanaviciute et al., 2019), it is unlikely to be influenced by job crafting. Although JD-R theory supports the proposed causal direction and findings of the research model, future studies should use a longitudinal research design to clarify and strengthen causality. Second, as the sample of this study was drawn from SIEs working in the UAE, its generalizability is a concern. Although the results were consistent with theory-based predictions in the current study, it would be interesting for future studies to replicate the current work in a different geographic and economic context because SIEs' life experiences are greatly influenced by their cultural backgrounds, immigration policies of the host countries and, in some cases, the type of jobs they perform and occupational sectors. Therefore, there is potential to investigate the effects of cultural characteristics, host country immigration policies, and work settings in different sectors that are bounded by social and institutional contexts as proposed by Alshahrani (2022) and Savickas and Porfeli (2012) on the relationships between career adaptability, job crafting and job embeddedness. Third, data were collected from the same source—from SIEs' ratings—and relationships between variables measured from the same source may be inflated by common method variance. This issue was tested using Harman's single-factor test, which proved that common factor variance was not a major issue in this study. Nonetheless, future studies should be aware of potential problems like common method variance. Finally, in this study, job satisfaction was controlled to demonstrate individual differences on career adaptability, job crafting and job embeddedness relationship. Future research should consider controlling for other career factors (e.g., decent work) to determine whether career adaptability still has a unique effect on job embeddedness and under what decent work criteria can adaptability encourage embeddedness.

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