



Self-Leadership, Job Crafting, Work Engagement, and Adaptive Performance among Online Tutors

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Abstract

Background: Online tutors must adapt rapidly to technological and pedagogical change. However, evidence on how personal self-regulatory resources and proactive job crafting jointly support adaptive performance in distance-learning work remains mixed.

Objective: This study examined the direct and indirect associations of self-leadership and job crafting with adaptive performance, with work engagement specified as the mediating mechanism among online tutors in distance-learning institutions.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional survey was administered electronically to 106 active online tutors selected through purposive sampling. Validated five-point Likert-scale measures were analyzed using PLS-SEM with bootstrapping, HTMT assessment, and full-collinearity VIF diagnostics.

Results: Self-leadership was positively associated with job crafting, work engagement, and adaptive performance. Work engagement was positively associated with adaptive performance and mediated the self-leadership–adaptive performance relationship. Job crafting showed no significant direct association with adaptive performance.

Conclusion: In this sample, self-leadership and work engagement were the key resources associated with online tutors' adaptive performance. Job crafting may require motivational activation through work engagement to translate into adaptive outcomes in distance-learning settings.

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INTRODUCTION

Distance learning has made adaptive performance a central capability for educators because tutors must continuously adjust instructional strategies, digital platform practices, communication patterns, and learner support under conditions of autonomy and uncertainty (Baziuké et al., 2025; Gotzeva, 2025; Huda, 2024). At the peak of the COVID-19 disruption, more than 1.6 billion learners in over 190 countries were affected by education-institution closures, illustrating the global scale of technology-mediated teaching challenges (UNESCO, 2021). In this context, adaptive performance refers to educators' capacity to modify their thoughts, behaviors, and work strategies in response to changing task demands (Hauk, 2026; Pelgrim et al., 2022; van Bruggen, 2026). Research increasingly identifies adaptive performance as an important outcome of individual and organizational resources, particularly in dynamic and digitally mediated work environments (Bonini et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the antecedent mechanisms that enable online tutors to sustain adaptive performance remain insufficiently resolved.

Self-leadership is especially relevant in distance-learning settings because online tutors often perform their roles with limited direct supervision, rapidly changing technology, and diverse learner needs (Orakci et al., 2022; van Rensburg, 2025). Through self-goal setting, self-observation, constructive self-talk, and cognitive reframing, self-leadership can help tutors

regulate effort, maintain motivation, and respond constructively to instructional challenges.

Recent evidence indicates that self-leadership contributes to adaptive performance directly and indirectly through proactive work behavior and positive psychological states, such as job satisfaction (Leão et al., 2026). In addition, self-leadership has been associated with stronger human capital development and work performance because it enables individuals to take responsibility for their own learning, decisions, and performance improvement (Sitepu et al., 2025). Its broader association with innovative work behavior also suggests that self-leadership can support educators in experimenting with new instructional approaches and responding creatively to digital-learning challenges (Ratanatheeraroj, 2025).

The study integrates the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. JD-R explains how job and personal resources foster work engagement and performance, whereas COR emphasizes that individuals invest, preserve, and develop resources when work requires sustained adaptation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Hobfoll, 2001). Within this framework, self-leadership can be understood as a personal resource that enables online tutors to manage demands and mobilize their existing capabilities. Evidence from crisis-related work settings shows that daily self-leadership encourages proactive work design by helping employees remain purposeful, flexible, and engaged despite changing work conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Therefore, self-leadership is theoretically salient for online tutors because it may strengthen their capacity to manage uncertainty while maintaining instructional quality and responsiveness.

Job crafting represents another proactive mechanism through which tutors may adapt their work by modifying task, relational, and cognitive boundaries to improve person job fit. Remote-work research demonstrates that self-leadership and job crafting can jointly enhance work engagement and task significance, indicating that proactive work redesign is more effective when supported by strong self-regulatory capacity (Costantini & Weintraub, 2022). Similarly, work autonomy may facilitate adaptive performance through sequential processes involving job crafting and improved alignment between individual strengths and job demands (Lau & Aguirre Reid, 2026). However, the direct relationship between job crafting and adaptive performance remains context-dependent, particularly in online tutoring, where institutional course design, technological infrastructure, and limited interaction may constrain tutors' ability to transform proactive changes into adaptive outcomes. This study therefore examines how self-leadership, job crafting, and work engagement jointly relate to adaptive performance among online tutors in distance learning institutions.

Job crafting refers to employees' self-initiated changes to task, relational, and cognitive work boundaries to improve person job fit. Prior research suggests that it can facilitate adaptability, yet evidence on its direct relationship with adaptive performance is inconsistent: some studies report positive associations, whereas other work indicates that contextual and motivational mechanisms shape whether crafting produces performance gains (Federici et al., 2021). This inconsistency is particularly relevant for online tutors, whose opportunities to craft work are constrained by digital infrastructure, institutional course design, and dispersed interaction.

H₁. Job crafting positively influences adaptive performance.

Self-leadership comprises behavioral, cognitive, and natural-reward strategies through which individuals influence their own actions. It is expected to support adaptive performance because remote instructional work requires tutors to diagnose emerging problems, regulate emotions, and revise teaching tactics without continuous face to face guidance.

H₂. Self-leadership positively influences Adaptive performance.

Work engagement (characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption) provides the motivational pathway through which personal resources can be converted into adaptive action. Self-leadership may therefore encourage both job crafting and engagement, while engagement supplies the energy required to enact flexible instructional responses.

H₃. Self-leadership positively influences job crafting.

Accordingly, this study contributes by testing a resource-based model that distinguishes the direct role of self-leadership from the indirect role of job crafting through work engagement in the underexamined context of online tutors. Rather than assuming that job crafting automatically improves adaptive performance, the model evaluates whether motivational

activation is required for proactive work redesign to become adaptive capability. The study therefore tests the proposed relationships among self-leadership, job crafting, work engagement, and adaptive performance.

H₄. Work engagement mediates the relationship between self-leadership and adaptive performance.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine associations among job crafting, self-leadership, work engagement, and adaptive performance. The study targeted active online tutors working in distance learning institutions. Respondents were recruited through purposive sampling because eligibility required current experience delivering online tutoring; 106 complete electronic questionnaires were retained for analysis. The sample exceeded the PLS-SEM ten times rule based on the maximum number of structural paths directed to an endogenous construct.

The characteristics of respondents were considered to provide a clearer understanding of the research context. The participants consisted of active online tutors who had experience in delivering distance-learning activities. Their demographic and professional backgrounds, including age, educational level, tutoring experience, and involvement in online teaching activities, represent variations in individual exposure to digital learning environments. These characteristics are important because adaptive performance in online tutoring may be influenced by differences in professional experience, familiarity with technology, and exposure to instructional challenges. Therefore, understanding respondent profiles provides additional context for interpreting the relationships among self-leadership, job crafting, work engagement, and adaptive performance.

Data were collected through an electronic questionnaire using validated multi item measures scored on a five point Likert scale. Measurement quality was assessed through outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha, average variance extracted (AVE), and HTMT; structural-model evaluation included R², path coefficients, and bootstrapped t statistics. Full collinearity VIF values of 3.3 or below were used to assess common method bias (Kock, 2020). PLS-SEM was selected because it is appropriate for estimating complex predictive models with a modest sample size.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Questionnaires were distributed electronically to eligible tutors. Data screening excluded incomplete responses; 106 complete responses were analyzed. This procedure ensured that the PLS-SEM estimates were based on usable respondent-level data.

Table 1

Internal Consistency Reliability Result

	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Adaptive Performance	0,750	Very Good
Job Crafting	0,772	Very Good
Self-leadership	0,768	Very Good
Work Engagement	0,791	Very Good

Reliability testing in this study uses the Cronbach's Alpha method to evaluate the internal consistency of each variable (Izah et al., 2023). Izah et al. (2023) stated that the ideal Cronbach's Alpha value is in the range of 0.70 to 0.90, because this value indicates high internal consistency without any indicator redundancy that can threaten content validity. The minimum acceptable value is 0.70, or 0.60 for exploratory research.

All research variables have Cronbach's Alpha values above the 0.70 threshold, ranging from 0.750 to 0.791, which is classified as "Very Good" according to the results of the Internal Consistency Reliability test. This suggests that the tools used in this study to measure adaptive performance, job crafting, self-leadership, and work engagement have excellent internal consistency and are trustworthy (Hair et al., 2021).

Convergent Validity Result

Table 2

Convergent Validity Test

Variables	Indicator	Loading Factor	Composite Reliability	AVE
Job Crafting	JC1	0.7347	0.7752	0.8526
	JC2	0.8344		
	JC4	0.7424		
	JC5	0.7614		
Self-Leadership	SL2	0.7868	0.7605	0.8576
	SL3	0.8511		
	SL5	0.8124		
Work Engagement	WE2	0.7303	0.7626	0.8479
	WE3	0.7508		
	WE4	0.7617		
	WE5	0.8083		
Adaptive Performance	AP1	0.7830	0.7550	0.8563
	AP3	0.7899		
	AP4	0.8718		

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value exceeding 0.50 (0.8479–0.8576), Composite Reliability above 0.70 (0.7550–0.7752), and all indicator loading factors above the threshold of 0.70 (0.7303–0.8718), the measurement model evaluation results demonstrate that every construct satisfies the requirements for adequate validity and reliability (Cheah et al., 2018). This research tool has been deemed valid and reliable for use in additional hypothesis testing (Cheung et al., 2024).

Table 3

Discriminant Validity HTMT Test

Variable	1	2	3
Job Crafting			
Self-Leadership	0.6778		
Work Engagement	0.7311	0.7235	
Adaptive Performance	0.6345	0.7879	0.8513

All ratio values fall below the 0.90 criterion (range from 0.6345 to 0.8513) according to the HTMT test results, indicating that all constructs have sufficient discriminant validity. The association between Work Engagement and Adaptive Performance had the highest value (0.8513), which still satisfies the requirement of 0.90 despite being near the cautious threshold of 0.85. We can conclude that every construct in this model is distinct and statistically distinct from the others (Henseler et al., 2015; Yusoff et al., 2020).

R-Square Result

Table 4

R-Square Test

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Status*
Adaptive Performance	0,492	0,477	Moderate
Job Crafting	0,367	0,361	
Work Engagement	0,420	0,414	

The Adaptive Performance model has the greatest explanatory power (49.2%), followed by Work Engagement (42.0%) and Job Crafting (36.7%), according to the R Square value. This shows that between 36.7% and 49.2% of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained

by the independent variables, with additional factors outside the model influencing the remaining portion. In the context of social and organizational research, the moderate explanatory power displayed by all three models is deemed adequate (Shmueli et al., 2019).

Table 5*Common Methods Bias Testing*

Inner VIF Values				
Variable	Adaptive Performance	Job Crafting	Self-Leadership	Work Engagement
Adaptive Performance				
Job Crafting	1,772			
Self-Leadership	1,934			1,000
Work Engagement	1,981	1,000		

The Full Collinearity Variance Inflation Factors (FCVIFs) method was employed in the Common Method Bias (CMB) test to ensure the validity of the research findings from any bias coming from data gathering from the same source. Since the test results showed an FCVIFs value for the Adaptive Performance variable of 1.981, which is below the crucial threshold of 3.3, it was concluded that CMB did not occur in this study. By demonstrating that the PLS-SEM analysis results are free from frequent technique bias distortion, this result enhances the study's internal validity and provides a strong foundation for future theory building and decision-making in the context of management and business research (Kock, 2020, 2025).

Hypothesis Testing

Table 6*Hypothesis Testing*

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T-Test	Status
Job Crafting → Adaptive Performance	0.0785	0.1046	0.7503	Insign.
Self-Leadership → Adaptive Performance	0.3183	0.1066	29.869	Sign.
Self-Leadership → Job Crafting	0.5249	0.0761	68.954	Sign.
Self-Leadership → Work Engagement	0.5476	0.0629	87.103	Sign.
Work Engagement → Adaptive Performance	0.4290	0.0915	46.910	Sign.

Of the five hypothesized paths, four were statistically significant. Self-leadership was positively associated with adaptive performance, job crafting, and work engagement, and work engagement was positively associated with adaptive performance. The direct path from job crafting to adaptive performance was not significant, indicating that proactive changes to work did not independently predict adaptive performance in this sample.

Discussion

The Non-Direct Effect of Job Crafting on Adaptive Performance

Job crafting did not show a significant direct association with adaptive performance. This result suggests that, in distance-learning work, changes to tasks, relationships, or cognitive framing may not be sufficient on their own to improve adaptation. Tutors may need adequate motivational energy, role autonomy, and institutional support before crafted work practices translate into flexible teaching behavior. This interpretation is consistent with evidence that the job crafting–performance relationship is contingent on contextual and motivational conditions (Federici et al., 2021).

The insignificant relationship between job crafting and adaptive performance also indicates that proactive work behavior may require specific enabling conditions before generating

performance outcomes. In online tutoring environments, tutors may have limited authority to modify course structures, assessment systems, or technological platforms because these elements are often determined by institutional policies. Consequently, although tutors may attempt to redesign their work processes, such initiatives may not always result in observable adaptive improvements. This finding highlights that job crafting should not be considered an isolated mechanism but rather a behavior whose effectiveness depends on organizational support, autonomy, and individual psychological readiness.

Self-Leadership as the Foundational Driver

Self-leadership was positively associated with adaptive performance, job crafting, and work engagement. In remote instructional contexts, self-regulatory strategies can help tutors identify instructional gaps, set priorities, persist through technology-related disruption, and reframe setbacks. The findings therefore position self-leadership as a relevant personal resource, while the cross-sectional design does not support claims of causal primacy or superiority over all other antecedents.

These findings emphasize that self-leadership functions as an internal regulatory capacity that enables tutors to maintain effectiveness when external guidance is limited. Unlike traditional teaching environments where immediate support and supervision are readily available, online tutoring requires individuals to independently monitor their performance, adjust teaching approaches, and solve emerging problems. Therefore, developing self-leadership skills may become an important strategy for institutions seeking to strengthen tutors' ability to adapt to continuous technological and pedagogical changes.

Work Engagement as the Critical Transmission Mechanism

Work engagement functioned as the motivational mechanism linking self-leadership with adaptive performance. Vigor, dedication, and absorption may enable tutors to mobilize the sustained cognitive and emotional effort needed to respond to changing pedagogical demands. This interpretation accords with the JD-R motivational process, in which personal resources promote engagement and engagement is associated with performance outcomes.

Thus, the results suggest that in distance learning, adaptive performance depends not only on what tutors modify in their work but also on the motivational state through which those modifications are enacted.

This mediating role suggests that institutional efforts to improve adaptive performance should not only focus on increasing tutors' capabilities but also on maintaining favorable psychological conditions at work. Training programs aimed at improving self-leadership may have limited impact if tutors experience low engagement due to excessive workload, insufficient feedback, or weak organizational support. Therefore, creating an environment that encourages involvement, recognition, and professional interaction may strengthen the pathway through which personal resources contribute to adaptive performance.

Theoretical Implications

The findings are consistent with a resource-based explanation in which self-leadership and work engagement are associated with adaptive performance. They do not, however, refine or establish new boundary conditions for JD-R or COR theory because the cross-sectional, self-report design cannot determine causal ordering.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings provide additional evidence that personal resources and motivational mechanisms should be examined simultaneously when explaining adaptive performance in digitally mediated work environments. While job crafting is commonly viewed as a proactive behavior that enhances work outcomes, this study demonstrates that its contribution may depend on the availability of motivational resources that facilitate implementation. Thus, the findings encourage future research to consider conditional mechanisms when examining proactive behaviors in complex and technology-dependent workplaces.

Self-leadership should be interpreted as an upstream personal resource within the tested model, rather than as a confirmed boundary condition. Future longitudinal and multi-source research is needed to test whether it changes the strength of job crafting performance

relationships across organizational contexts. Contextual Nuance in Proactivity Literature: Job crafting's non-significant direct effect emphasizes that proactive practices are not always advantageous; their effectiveness depends on role autonomy, technical infrastructure, and psychological preparedness.

Practical Implications

Distance learning institutions should: 1) Prioritize Self-Leadership Development: To give teachers internal regulatory tools, implement training in self-goal formulation, constructive self-talk, and autonomous problem-solving. 2) Foster Work Engagement Systematically: To maintain vitality and commitment, lessen administrative costs, offer insightful educational feedback, and establish communities of practice. 3) Reframe Job Crafting Initiatives: Institutions should connect crafting opportunities with engagement boosting support mechanisms and match them with institutional learning objectives instead of promoting unguided job redesign. Monitor Psychological Well-being: Frequent engagement evaluations can act as early warning signs of a reduction in adaptive capacity, allowing for prompt interventions.

In addition, institutions should recognize that adaptive performance among online tutors is influenced by both individual and organizational factors. Providing opportunities for professional development, peer learning communities, and continuous technological support may help tutors transform personal resources into effective adaptive behaviors. Therefore, institutional strategies should combine individual capacity building with supportive work environments to achieve sustainable improvement in online teaching performance.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships among self-leadership, job crafting, work engagement, and adaptive performance. Future studies may employ longitudinal approaches to examine how these relationships develop over time. Second, the data were collected through self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce potential perceptual bias despite the statistical assessment of common method bias. Future research may integrate supervisor evaluations, objective performance indicators, or multi-source data to obtain more comprehensive evidence. Third, this study focused on online tutors within distance-learning institutions; therefore, future research may expand the sample to different educational institutions, professional groups, or organizational contexts to examine whether the proposed model remains consistent across settings.

CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence regarding the relationships among self-leadership, job crafting, work engagement, and adaptive performance among online tutors in distance-learning institutions. The findings demonstrate that self-leadership represents an important personal resource associated with adaptive performance, job crafting, and work engagement. Online tutors who possess stronger self-regulatory capabilities are more likely to manage instructional challenges, respond effectively to technological changes, and maintain productive engagement in their teaching responsibilities. Furthermore, work engagement was found to play a significant mediating role, indicating that personal resources contribute to adaptive performance through motivational processes involving energy, dedication, and psychological involvement in work activities.

The study also revealed that job crafting did not have a significant direct association with adaptive performance. This finding suggests that proactive modification of work tasks, relationships, and cognitive perspectives may not automatically lead to better adaptation when individuals lack sufficient motivational support or operate within organizational constraints. In the context of online tutoring, adaptive performance appears to depend not only on the ability to redesign work but also on the internal motivation required to implement adaptive behaviors effectively.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by extending the application of the Job Demands–Resources model and Conservation of Resources theory within digital education settings. The findings highlight that personal resources and motivational mechanisms should be

considered together when explaining adaptive performance in technology-mediated work environments. Practically, distance-learning institutions should develop programs that strengthen tutors' self-leadership capabilities, maintain work engagement, provide supportive digital infrastructure, and create opportunities for meaningful professional interaction.

Future research is encouraged to examine these relationships using longitudinal approaches, larger and more diverse samples, and multi-source performance measurements. Such approaches may provide deeper insights into how personal and organizational resources interact to support sustainable adaptive performance among educators facing continuous technological and pedagogical changes.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Deni Surapto was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, development of the research framework, formulation of research objectives, methodology design, data collection process, statistical analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation of the initial manuscript draft. Deni Surapto also contributed to reviewing the theoretical foundation, ensuring consistency between research objectives and analytical procedures, and revising the manuscript based on academic feedback.

Nadya Kariza contributed to the refinement of the research design, validation of methodological procedures, interpretation and discussion of research findings, manuscript review, and editorial improvement. Nadya Kariza also contributed to ensuring the accuracy of the manuscript presentation, strengthening theoretical discussions, and improving the overall academic quality of the article.

Both authors actively participated in the final review process, approved the submitted version of the manuscript, and accept responsibility for the integrity, accuracy, and accountability of all aspects of the research work.

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