

# Exploring Wellbeing through Job Crafting and Meaningful Work to Promote Sustainability in the Backdrop of Indian Ancient Wisdom

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## Abstract

Today, the nature of an ever-competitive business environment has become both dynamic and an essential characteristic of globalisation. Constant shift in processes, communication and interdependence, indeed, sustainability in the functioning of any organisation has become an ever-augmenting trend. Organisations although adopt several practices to achieve sustainability, the question is do they truly, achievesustainability? Studies claim sustainability at workplaces entails in reducing company's ecological footprint, conserving natural resources and taking care of the employees. Surprisingly, in comparison to the former two, the later has been highly ignored. The modus operandi towards achieving productivity and performance may have been successful but the wellbeing of the employees in the organisations is still at stake. Many organisations around the world have implemented wellness programs for the well-being of their employees, however, whether every individual is benefitted through such programs is still a concern. One may assume that such programs do not serve any meaning specifically towards individual level development. Few studies also state that an employee's well-being is always an outcome of job crafting and as an outcome variable, well-being leads to organisational excellence. However, the current study argues that well-being acts as a mediator between job crafting and sustainability. If employees get motivated to do beyond their job roles through job crafting, a lot of meaning can be derived out of their work leading to high performance and a sustainable environment and if well-being acts as a mediator between the two constructs, achieving sustainability will be faster and more convenient. Well-being of an employee is the most sought-after construct and certain for sustainability. Also mentioned in the Equality Act 2010 any deviation in the process of attaining wellbeing is subjected to disease or disability leading to a stigmatised society. Similar ideas are also mentioned in Indian ancient wisdom. Blending, the theories from philosophy, management, law and ancient wisdom through an interdisciplinary approach, the current paper proposes a conceptual model while establishing a relation between virtues, job crafting mediated by wellbeing and moderated by meaningful work to achieve sustainability.

**Keywords:** Well Being, Meaningful Work, Job Crafting, Sustainability, Ancient Wisdom

## Introduction

Meeting the needs of human beings so as to ensure that the upcoming generations must be able to meet their basic needs as well, without the need to compromise with the availability of resources either way is sustainability. Focusing on the objectives underlined under achieving sustainability that highlights, economic growth, environmental conservation and social inclusion, it's sad but true that finding all the three objectives in linear scale is yet to happen. It is however shocking to know that although organisations around the world desire to achieve sustainability, many of them completely neglect the objective of

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sustainability that deals with human thinking, human action and human need fulfilment. There are studies that claim "the conventional economic and sustainable development frameworks have neglected the focus of human-mind or mental state" (Cloutier et al., 2022, p. 59). Employees, face numerous challenges every day at work from meeting needs of customers, to constant changes

and shifts, from adopting new technologies to learning new tools, decreasing costs to generating revenues. All these and many more under the concept of building organisational capacity to achieve sustainability, whereas the needs and requirements of the driving force behind the same is nowhere into limelight. It has come to a view that “increasing number of organisations have become interested in corporate wellbeing programs” (Burke & Richardsen, 2014, p. 5) and health programs to focus on single and multiple behavioural risk factors, well-being, stress management and many more, and reports suggest these programs have indeed been found to have benefits. However, such programs can only act as initiatives or trials and not as strategies to completely eradicate the issues from the roots. Surprisingly, the origin of sustainability is rooted deeply in the Indian ancient wisdom. One such wisdom has been depicted in the Vedas extracted from the scripture Srimad Bhagavatam Canto 9 Chapter 9. The lines are

तथेतिराज्ञाभिहितंसर्वलोकहितः शिवः  
।दधारावहितोगङ्गापादपूतजलांहरेः ॥९॥

*tatheti rājñābhīhitam sarva-loka-hitah  
śivaḥ dadhārāvahito gaṅgām pāda-pūta-jalām  
hareḥ* (Prabhupada, 2023)

The lines above state the significance of sustainability for the betterment of all beings. Every organism, every particle in the entire universe holds importance and has a contribution to sustainability and hence, it is important each organism or particle of any form ought to be preserved.

In order to achieve sustainability, achieving human needs is important. Among all the basic needs of food, clothes and shelter, well-being has been the most critical need of human existence. Experiencing negative emotions like sadness, disappointment, anger, grief is all a part and parcel

of life, however, making or settling down with the painful feelings and not being able to overcome from it is an interference in well-being. This interference may disrupt the lifestyle of an individual and has immense potential to compromise with innumerable opportunities that an individual may experience otherwise. In fact, the need and emergence of wellbeing has been presented in The Equality Act 2010 that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. Specifically at workplace, this Act has been further amended and discussed to render justice keeping in mind well-being and welfare of human resources at organizational set up.

Human well-being truly in real sense gets protected and nourished through human flourishing. Recent studies get ahead with the argument and mention that besides the desires of possessing material goods and successful relationships the concept of human flourishing anticipates “a hope that we can achieve and experience things that give us a sense of something greater than ourselves- the transcendent, towards an appreciation of something beyond” (Reiss & Briggs, 2021, p. 4). A state of receiving an opportunity to do a work that they truly love to do, that has passion and interest and that they get paid to do, that utilises their skills and abilities and develops their sincerity and contentment so much so that they are able to achieve transcendence, something beyond themselves. Certainly, “meaningful work is central in human flourishing” (Veltman, 2016, p.2).

Gone are those days when work was limited to job description by an employer. Today, employees are expected to go beyond the set of responsibilities that a formal job has to offer. One may cognitively add

or drop tasks, alter the nature of the tasks, change the amount of time, energy and focus related to a given task. In a nutshell, employees wholesomely change the nature of the existing task through their passion, ease, convenience, making the job more enjoyable and at the same time adding value to the growth of the organisation. In still other words, employees craft the job at hand thereby experiencing meaningfulness of their work. For example, a Masters in American Literature and a Doctorate degree holder in soft skills having passion for communication, and very sensitive and sensible with words in literal sense can craft her usual job description of teaching by using words passionately and more creatively. Hence, besides being a teacher, she is a corporate trainer, life coach, motivational speaker, writer and researcher. She incorporates her passion in diverse disciplines under communication and adds value to her identity, bringing meaning into her work and thus contributing to the recognition of the institution she is associated with. It is indeed essential that people ought to prioritize their individual sense of realization and individualism rather than settling for what is available. In fact, many arguments are of the view “that there is a crisis of meaning at work today and individuals are not content to view their jobs only in terms of attendant material benefits but want their jobs to contribute a sense of meaningfulness and purposefulness to their lives” (Das et al., 2018, p. 13).

## Literature Review

Work engages a considerable percentage of our days and offers infinite opportunities to develop and execute skills and expertise in contribution to the growth of a workplace. Since, our exposure to work is a substantial portion, situations at work can have both positive and negative impacts on well-being. They can either drain and damage or can also fill with fulfilment and happiness. Therefore, it is important to understand and critically analyse the quality, the structure and the kind of communities

that protect and nourish the wellbeing at work. Although, there is an existence and importance of wellness, health programs and other initiatives that organisations take into accountability to protect and nourish the wellbeing of the employees however, human well-being is still at stake. There may be plenty of reasons to the failure of such initiatives. At first, such programs are temporary and are conducted only during certain parts of a year. Secondly, such programs address a large mass based on the training needs and do not have one-to-one monitoring scheme on the wellbeing. Also, many other organisations conduct such programs just for documentation and /or for the purpose of marketing their brand. While these programs objectives are to attain well-being, the program outcomes exhibit the results only for that period of time and thereby completely neglecting the real potential benefits. Although there is no consensus around one particular definition of well-being, however, few studies define well-being as “the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively. The concept of feeling good incorporates not only the positive emotions of happiness and contentment, but also such emotions as interest, engagement, confidence, and affection. And the concept of functioning effectively (in a psychological sense) involves the development of one's potential, having some control over one's life, having a sense of purpose (e.g., working towards valued goals), and experiencing positive relationships” (Huppert, 2009, p.137). Some researchers from diverse disciplines studied various features of well-being that include “physical well-being, economic well-being, social well-being, development and activity, emotional well-being, psychological well-being, life satisfaction, domain specific satisfaction, engaging activities and work” (Well-being concepts, 2018) as the overall concepts of well-being. However, the influence of one's career on one's overall well-being is not much focused on. One may have immense social involvement, decent job, financial security, does a lot for physical health, however, if one doesn't like

something what one does every day, the odds of worrying, complaining, blaming and over thinking and naturally ruining each day increase rapidly. How can one be happy if a large part of the day passes by experiencing negative emotions and feels, dissatisfaction and feeling miserable. Naturally, all other aspects of wellbeing will get affected. Both sciences and professions around the globe are trying their best to secure wellbeing and sustainability, however, studies report that “even if wellbeing may seem obvious and natural to all human endeavours, it is not. Indeed, it is still more the exception than the norm” (Lepeley, 2019, p. vii).

Similar ideas on the importance of well-being are also mentioned in Garuda Purana as stated in the lines below.

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।  
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिद्दुःखभाग्भवेत् ।  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu  
Niraamayaah |  
Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu Maa Kashcid-  
Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet |  
Om Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih || (Garuda  
Purana, 35.51).*

In the form of prayer, the lines depict that it is an ultimate desire that all beings in this world ought to be happy, healthy and full of bliss and free from pain.

Hence, it can be understood that well-being is the eventual and definite core need of every human being. It can thus be understood, that until the basic needs of human are not completely achieved, achieving sustainability will remain a distant dream.

Myths around finding meaning at work convey that finding happiness at work is finding meaning.

However, as per the survey reports on levels of happiness conducted by University of North Carolina presented that “a whopping 75% of subject participants scored high on levels of happiness, but low on levels of meaning” (Amortegui, 2014). This suggests that employees may be happy of coming to work and being engaged and getting paid for it, however, they may not be able to retrieve any meaning or purpose from what they are doing. Studies conducted on self-perceived employability and meaningful life showed that there are “direct effects of employability and meaningful work on the indicators of quality of life (life satisfaction and flourishing); moreover, indirect effects of employability and meaningful work on the quality of life were found to be caused by the mediation of courage” (Magnano et al., 2019, p. 764).

Many researchers alert, advocate and makes us aware towards the pursuit of superfluous happiness of working and getting paid, in close and deep difference in the pursuit of happiness through deriving meaning at work. This also calls for a special mention of one of the quotes that Steve Jobs mentioned on the same concept during the Commencement Day address at Stanford University. Steve Jobs said “you work is going to fill a large part of your life and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking, don't settle”. Setting one's mind and attempting to discover one's purpose or meaning in what one is doing is essentially a feeling of happiness and fulfilment. This may sound spiritual however, it is in fact fine to believe that one may not achieve purpose instantly, since, attaining happiness through meaningful work involves a process, a journey. Furthermore, “since spirituality concentrates its attention on methods of self-awakening” (Mukherjee, 2022, p. 23) attaining happiness through meaningful work is also a method of self-awakening. And the entire beauty of the journey of

self-awakening is in finding a calling and in that it evolves as one truly finds the meaningfulness of work. “It adapts with each stage of life and leads to ultimate fulfilment and inner peace” (Tucker, 2021, p. 15). Hence, meaningful work or deriving meaning from work indeed has positive impact on the well-being of the employees.

There is a reference in Arthava Veda extracted from Suryopanishat or Suraya Upanishad that highlights *purushārtha siddhyarthe jape viniyogah* || The orientation of *Purusartha* signifies the four ends of man considers *dharma* or righteousness, *artha* or meaning, *kama* or pleasure and finally the combination of all the three to attain *moksha* or salvation or eternal happiness. Overall, *Purushartha* means accumulating meaning to human life where *Artha* “signifies the means of life, activities and resources that enables one to be in a state one wants to be in. The proper pursuit of *Artha* is considered an important aim of human life in Hinduism” (Puruṣārtha, 2022). Being righteous in doing a work, deriving meaning from doing that work and enjoying while doing that work ultimately leads to happiness and well-being.

Studies also observe that subjective meaningfulness at work could be achieved through an approach known as job design that focusses on how to design or reshape a job through “skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback” (Moore, 2019, p. 92). The basic principles of job design comprise of the various kinds of skills and abilities used by the employees in order to attain the identity in a given work by pushing one's limits. Further principles talk about the outcome of the given work by providing them accountability for determining their own working systems that would thereby influence positive feedback and maintain good interpersonal relationships. Further empirical studies also found that “when employees perceive adequate workload and have a set deadline for the completion of tasks assigned to them, they carry out the tasks with

greater efficacy, in turn, leading them to find greater meaning, purpose and engagement in life. Overall, when millennial managers focus on such associations, they can help enhance productivity and constitute happier workplaces” (Ruparel et al., 2022, p. 599).

Similar concept of job crafting in order to achieve meaningfulness in work has been in the lines below.

यस्त्विन्द्रियाणिमनसानियम्यारभतेऽर्जुन  
कर्मैन्द्रियैःकर्मयोगमसक्तःसविशिष्यते॥ ५॥

*yas tvindriyāṇi manasā niyamyārabhate 'rjuna karmendriyaiḥ karma-yogam asaktaḥ sa viśhiṣyate*(Chapter, 3 Verse 7, Srimad Bhagavad Gita)

In the above lines Lord Krishna elucidates Arjun that one should be in work deeply and still not be attached to the consequences. One ought to do a work in such a manner that one achieves the ultimate goal of life and not do work because one expects material benefits out of it.

Existing literature talks about the significance of sustainability, wellbeing, meaningful work through job crafting. Blending all the given constructs, this paper studies how job crafting leads to sustainability mediated by well-being and moderated through meaningful work.

Hereafter, this paper navigates through theoretical support based on ancient Indian wisdom and propositions followed by conceptual model (Refer Figure 1) and critical discussions.

## Theoretical Support and Propositions

### *Job Crafting and Sustainability*

At times, the most effective way to stay strong during times of uncertainty and contingencies is not to make a job or career switch rather to become

flexible and adapt to the rapidly changing environment. And to become flexible or to stay motivated comes from the virtues an employee that build the essential character of an employee. Virtuous employees are self-driven and they are sensible to utilize their sense of virtues to do justice to their job roles that also add value to the development at workplace. It is exactly at this disposition that job crafting originates stemming “from the personal desires and not because it is imposed by the external pressures” (Laasch et al., 202, p. 591). Personal desires like honesty, commitment, sincerity, passion is internally imbibed and if incorporated at workplaces and practised naturally, effortlessly, there will have alchemical effects at workplace. A comprehensive exploration of job crafting can extensively influence and bring in strategies to implement for sustainable development. Simply orienting towards job crafting can have tremendous impact on happiness and wellbeing. Further, whether it is organisational citizenship behaviour, a calling work, harmony among the employees, work engagement, reducing negativity, every aspect makes it progressive towards achieving sustainability. Job crafting determines the dynamics that employees can bring in their job role in day-to-day practice. The authors argue that if sustainability comprises the wellbeing of humans, then job crafting and meaningful work lead to well-being and happiness thus achieving sustainability. In the light of this, similar concepts are represented in Chapter 14, verse 6 of Srimad Bhagavad Gita that mentions three *gunas* or modes of goodness that are considered as the purest form of illuminating a well-being. The lines are as under:

तत्रसत्त्वंनिर्मलत्वात्प्रकाशकमनामयम्।  
सुखसङ्गेनबद्धातिज्ञानसङ्गेनचानघ॥ १॥

*tatra sattvaṁ nirmalatvāt prakāśhakam  
anāmayam  
sukha-saṅgena badhnāti jñāna-saṅgena  
chānagha* (Chapter 14, Verse 6, Srimad

Bhagavad Gita).

A *sattvic* person has a deeper understanding of things, is more aware and conscious, attuned with the reality of the world. A *sattvic* person is sensible and exactly knows how to act in a given situation. This quality is always priceless since, this *guna* can be “characterized by an experiential realization of interconnected and unity within the world” (Mishra & Kalagnanam, 2022, p.79). Contemporarily, virtuous employees happen to adopt job crafting at a deep experiential level in order to find unity with their given roles and beyond thereby working towards sustainability. Hence, based on the philosophy mentioned in Chapter 14, Verse 6, the authors propose a link between job crafting and sustainability through the theory of *sattva guna* prescribed in Bhagavad Gita.

Proposition1: Job Crafting is positively related to Sustainability

*Well-being, Job Crafting and Sustainability*

While job crafting essentially includes making changes in the tasks and job roles that proactively changes the work context in order to achieve sustainability. Definitely there is a positive relationship between job crafting and sustainability. Existing literature suggests that “employees with the highest well-being did the most job crafting” (Slemp et al., 2015, p. 47). This clearly suggests that well-being is an outcome of job crafting and as an outcome variable, well-being leads to job satisfaction, organisational citizenship behaviour, low turnover intentions, effective engagements high performance etc. Organisations attempt to consider well-being as a holistic development of employees however, the authors propose that well-being if lawfully guided and practiced according to the Equality Act at workplaces, then achieving sustainability will be easier and more convenient. Anti-discriminatory provisions in law are prescribed especially in our constitution but still

there is a huge gap in implementation procedure due to lack of specificity and stringent procedure. These concepts of wellbeing had already been taken into consideration by passing of Equality bills 2010 amended later. Well-being is an antecedent to sustainability. Similar concepts are revealed in Chapter 17, Verse 8 of Srimad Bhagavad Gita that mentions about well-being. The lines are as under:

आयुःसत्त्वबलारोग्यसुखप्रीतिविवर्धना :|  
रस्या :स्निग्धा :स्थिराहृद्याआहारा :सात्त्विकप्रिया :|| ^||

*āyuh-sattva-balārogya-sukha-prīti-vivardhanāḥ  
rasyāḥ snigdhaḥ sthiraḥ hrīdyā āhārāḥ sāttvika-  
priyāḥ*(Chapter 17, Verse 8, Srimad Bhagavad  
Gita)

Although the lines above convey about the kind of food that directly affects the well-being of an individual, however, the authors consider morals and virtues of employees as food to achieve wellbeing at workplaces. The authors recommend that employees must practice goodness of purity, illumination and serenity. The authors are of the view that if employees implement virtues and abstain themselves in unethical practices, they can focus on their purpose better. It is of pivotal significance that they practice virtues that would keep their inner being satisfied and at peace and thereby they can craft their job better thereby achieving sustainability. Based on the philosophy mentioned in Chapter 17, Verse 8, in the current paper, the authors propose job crafting as the antecedent and if well-being acts as a mediation the chances of attaining sustainability rises high.

Proposition 2: Well-being acts as a mediation between job crafting and sustainability.

*Meaningful work as a Moderator between Job  
Crafting and Sustainability*

Meaningful work is more meaning making in a

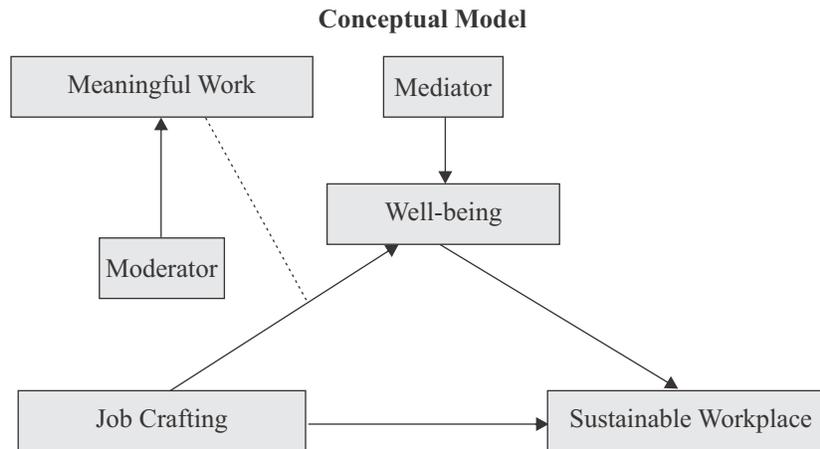
work. It makes moral commitments inclusive in an individual since it makes realisation of meaning essential to sustain and transcendence beyond job. And since job crafting is a deliberate act and “transcendental experiences go beyond what is considered as ordinary perception and experience”, (Gabrielsson, 2011, p. 159) employees desire to craft their job to attain this transcendence, to find meaning in their work. Meaningful work is thus a consequence of job crafting. Well-being includes social, physical, psychological, emotional overall a holistic development. Meaningful work is an antecedent to wellbeing. Meaningful work as a moderator is the consequence of independent variable and antecedent to mediator and antecedent to dependant variable. The concept of meaningful work is clearly prescribed in Chapter 4, Verse 20 of Srimada Bhagavad Gita. The lines are as under:

त्यक्त्वाकर्मफलासङ्गंनित्यतृप्तोनिराश्रय :|  
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपिनैवकिञ्चित्करोतिस :|| २०||

*tyaktvā karma-phalāsaṅgam nitya-tripto  
nirāśhrayaḥ  
karmanyabhipravṛitto 'pi naiva kiñchit karoti  
sah*(Chapter 4, Verse 20, Srimad Bhagavad Gita)

The lines theorise the act of giving up attachment to the fruits of one's action and remain satisfied internally in a way that an action does not seem like an action or not being done. This is exactly what job crafting determines; the state of doing a work and achieve meaning and still seeming of not doing any work. Job crafters do not merely wait for salary as an outcome when they do their work. Since they love what they do and are immensely engrossed into what they do, it does not occur to them that they are doing any work while still being in the state of action. Hence, based on the philosophy mentioned in Chapter 4, Verse 20, the authors propose that meaningful work acts as a moderator between job crafting and sustainability intervened by well-being.

Proposition 3: Meaningful work acts a moderator between job crafting and sustainability.



**Figure I: Conceptual Model (Author's Own)**

### Critical Discussion

Well-being and sustainability are complementary processes to actualize attaining a sustainable future. However, recent studies clarify that “there is no a one-size-fits-all approach to employee well-being, and strategies should be targeted to the organisation and the needs of the workforce, across job role, levels of experience, cultures and communities” (Balke & Stacey, 2023, p. 163). The success of well-being and sustainability strategies is critically contingent on the principles, values, and practices that form as a skeletal reference for every member in an organisation. Chiefly and clearly, it is the organisational culture that supports well-being, a culture where the employees are more themselves. If virtues like honesty, commitment, sincerity, and passion are internally imbibed and incorporated at workplaces and practised naturally, there will have alchemical effects ultimately making workplaces sustainable. The current paper discusses both theoretical and practical contributions. Discussing theoretically, the paper contributes to all the constructs like job crafting, meaningful work, well-being and sustainable workplace. Further, the conceptual model that the paper offers is a novel one. The paper embeds all the constructs formed from Indian ancient wisdom proposes a clear-cut solution to the

contemporary issues of the sustainability in the real world. Achieving sustainability through job crafting is a less studied area. The paper reflects that job crafting and sustainability is real by providing the ontology and epistemology from the ancient wisdom of Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

Discussing the practical contribution, the paper serves as a guidance to employees to craft their jobs through their skills. The paper suggests that if employees are guided by their internal motivation to craft the boundaries of a job they would derive meaning from their work. For example, some years ago professions like doctors, engineers, lawyers, teachers were caught in the job-web of rules and policies. They derived their strengths through the prescribed job roles and responsibilities by the organisations. Today due to job crafting, career options are many. Employees can go beyond their normal job-web and follow work through which they can derive meaning. Some examples are photography, cooking, travelling and writing blogs that can help them sustain. Further, at workplaces, through job crafting there is a cascading effect that would inspire others to follow that will positively impact the entire organisation. All they require is the facilitation of their passion through authority or superior support. The power to craft lies within employees but encouraging and promoting the

power comes from the authority. If the authority supports job crafting, there is well-being of him too. Hence job crafting gives well-being not only in one level but in multiple levels of an organisation. We are looking for sustainable workplaces through job crafting intertwined with wellbeing. Like rolling stones gather no moss, similarly if employees are given this opportunity, freedom and support to utilise their skills sets achieving sustainability would not be a distant dream.

## Conclusion

The paper explored a relationship between constructs like job-crafting, meaningful work and sustainability and found it desirable to keep the constructs co-related in back drop of Indian ancient wisdom. It is astonishing to find how the ancient wisdom voluminously contribute to the contemporary workplace. Achieving sustainability is adopting a value wholly, in its fullest form and with an infinite time horizon since, achieving sustainability is achieving an everlasting development. Discussing on how to achieve sustainability wholly, in its fullest form indeed requires some infinite horizon. Job crafting is one such infinite horizon providing infinite possibilities where not only meaningful work but every objective of economy, environment and human needs can be met. Engaging in meaningful work can promote well-being and sustainability. The paper also recommended well-being as a mediation between job crafting and achieving sustainability. Indeed, well-being of the employees is based not only on the performance of an employee but also getting identified. Supervisory support is an important factor that can contribute to employees' ability to job crafting leading to sustainability. And since Equality Act 2010 is aimed to redress well-being of the employees, well-being definitely serves as a mediation between the two important constructs. The paper proposed that meaningful work have the potential to moderate the entire framework of achieving sustainability through job

crafting. In summary, job crafting, meaningful work, well-being and sustainability are interconnected concepts that can have a profound impact on employees and organizations. By considering these interrelationships, organizations can create environments that support the well-being and development of their employees and contribute to a more sustainable future.

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