
Unlocking Productive Aging through Flexible Work: The Mediating Role of Job Crafting among Senior Workers in Thailand

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships among flexible work arrangements (FWA), job crafting behaviors, and productive aging among senior workers in public and private sector organizations in Thailand. A quantitative research design was employed, underpinned by a conceptual framework integrating Age Management Theory and Social Exchange Theory. Data were collected from 400 senior workers aged 50 years and above across four major regions of Thailand using a validated self-report questionnaire. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to examine direct and indirect effects. The proposed model explained 80.6% of variance in productive aging ($R^2 = 0.806$). Job crafting behaviors demonstrated the strongest direct positive effect on productive aging ($\beta = 0.646$, $p < 0.001$). Among FWA dimensions, Schedule Flexibility ($\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$) and Process Flexibility ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.05$) significantly influenced job crafting behaviors, while Location and Task Flexibility did not. Bootstrap analysis confirmed job crafting behaviors as a significant mediator between Schedule Flexibility ($\beta = 0.288$, CI [0.141, 0.517]) and Process Flexibility ($\beta = 0.262$, CI [0.044, 0.477]) with productive aging. These findings advance understanding of age-inclusive HRM in Southeast Asian organizational contexts and provide evidence-based guidance for Thailand's rapidly aging workforce.

Keywords: flexible work arrangements, job crafting behaviors, productive aging, senior workers, aging society, Thailand

Introduction

Thailand has already become a fully aged society, with individuals aged 60 and above accounting for over 20% of the total population as of 2024 (Foundation of Thai Gerontology Research and Development Institute, 2023). This demographic shift presents significant challenges for public and private sector organizations in retaining experienced senior workers and sustaining workforce productivity. Despite growing policy interest in flexible work arrangements (FWA) as a mechanism for extending productive working lives, empirical research linking FWA to productive aging within the Thai organizational context remains limited.

Flexible work arrangements—encompassing schedule flexibility, location flexibility, task flexibility, and process flexibility (Kossek et al, 2023)—have been extensively studied in Western contexts. However, their applicability and effectiveness for senior workers in Southeast Asian settings, particularly Thailand, have received insufficient empirical attention. This study addresses this gap by investigating the mechanisms through which FWA contributes to productive aging among senior workers in Thailand, with job crafting behaviors serving as the key mediating variable.

The concept of productive aging (Gonzales et al., 2015) views older adults as valuable contributors across physical, cognitive, social, and productivity dimensions. Job crafting behaviors—comprising task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017)—present the proactive adjustments individuals make to align their work with personal strengths and needs. The link between these constructs is theoretically grounded in the proposition that organizational resources such as FWA create conditions under which senior workers can craft their roles more effectively, ultimately enhancing productive aging outcomes. Drawing on Age Management Theory (Ilmarinen, 2012) and Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), this study proposes that FWA serves as an organizational trigger that, through the mediating mechanism of job crafting, promotes productive aging.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the effects of flexible work arrangements (FWA) on job crafting behaviors and productive aging among senior workers in Thai organizations.
2. To examine the relationship between job crafting behaviors and productive aging among senior workers in Thailand.
3. To test the mediating role of job crafting behaviors in the relationship between flexible work arrangements and productive aging among senior workers in Thailand.

Literature Review

Theoretical Foundations

Age Management Theory (Ilmarinen, 2012) emphasizes creating work environments responsive to workforce aging through four key components: (1) adapting working conditions; (2) promoting health and work capacity; (3) continuous skills development; and (4) cultivating positive organizational attitudes toward older workers. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) provides the complementary framework: when organizations invest in valued resources such as FWA, employees reciprocate with positive discretionary behaviors. Together, these theories explain why FWA should activate job crafting, which in turn drives productive aging.

Flexible Work Arrangements

FWA are conceptualized across four dimensions: Schedule Flexibility (autonomy over working hours), Location Flexibility (choice of workplace), Task Flexibility (adjustment of responsibilities), and Process Flexibility (control over methods and procedures) (Kossek et al, 2023). Prior research confirms that schedule autonomy is the most impactful dimension for older workers (Pak et al., 2022), while process flexibility enables them to leverage accumulated expertise (Pak et al., 2021). Critically, flexibility over time and process directly enables senior workers to craft their tasks and cognitive orientation dimensions not equally afforded by location or task flexibility, which require additional organizational enablers such as digital infrastructure and role redesign.

Productive Aging and Job Crafting Behaviors

Productive aging encompasses four interrelated dimensions: physical (maintaining health and physical capacity), cognitive (preserving and applying intellectual capabilities), social (sustaining meaningful workplace relationships), and productivity (contributing to organizational value) (Gonzales et al., 2015). This framing aligns with global health policy guidance positioning healthy and productive aging as an interconnected, lifelong process rather than a fixed endpoint (World Health Organization, 2021). Job crafting behaviors—task crafting (adjusting the scope of work), relational crafting (shaping workplace interactions), and cognitive crafting (reframing the meaning of work)—have been demonstrated to positively influence these dimensions (Rudolph et al., 2017; Kooij et al., 2022). The mechanism linking FWA to productive aging through job crafting is grounded in resource exchange: schedule and process flexibility provide senior workers with the autonomy and energy necessary to engage in proactive role shaping, which in turn sustains

physical, cognitive, social, and productive functioning. In mediation terms, job crafting is conceptualized here as the indirect, or intervening, pathway through which FWA demonstrates its influence on productive aging: rather than acting directly on outcomes, FWA first shapes the proactive behaviors captured by job crafting, which then carry that influence forward to productive aging. This distinction between a direct effect (FWA on productive aging) and an indirect effect (FWA on productive aging through job crafting) is central to the hypotheses tested below. Evidence for this pathway remains concentrated in Western and East Asian samples (Wong & Tetrick, 2017; Kooij et al., 2015; Kooij et al., 2022); comparable evidence from Southeast Asian and ASEAN organizational contexts is still limited, which constrains the regional generalizability of the mediating mechanism and motivates the present focus on Thailand. Wong & Tetrick (2017) and Kooij et al. (2015) confirmed this mediating pathway in Western contexts; the present study examines whether it holds in the Thai organizational environment.

Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical integration and literature synthesis, this study proposes four hypotheses.

H1: FWA positively influences job crafting behaviors.

H2: FWA positively influences productive aging through job crafting as a mediating mechanism.

H3: Job crafting behaviors positively influence productive aging.

H4: Job crafting behaviors significantly mediate the relationship between FWA and productive aging.

Note that H2 and H4 are conceptually related: H2 specifies the existence of an indirect effect, while H4 tests the significance and specificity of job crafting as its carrier.

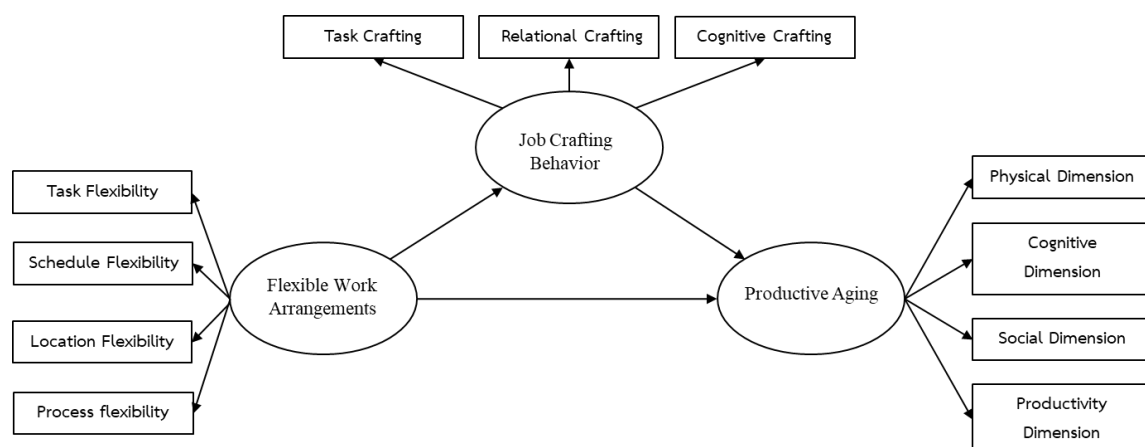


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework by Author

Research Methodology

Research Instrument

Quantitative research design was employed. A self-report questionnaire was adapted from validated scales: FWA from Kossek et al. (2023, 16 items); job crafting behaviors from Rudolph et al. (2023, 12 items); and productive aging from Gonzales et al. (2015) and Rodriguez-Sanchez et al. (2023, 12 items). All items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument underwent forward-backward translation, expert review (IOC ≥ 0.50), and pilot testing ($n = 30$) with Cronbach's alpha ≥ 0.70 .

Sample and Data Collection

The target population comprised senior workers aged 50 years and above with at least 15 years of work experience in Thai public and private-sector organizations. Using quota sampling, 400 participants were recruited equally from public ($n = 200$) and private ($n = 200$) sector organizations across four regions: Bangkok and vicinity, Northern, Southern, and Northeastern Thailand. This sample size meets the 20:1 observed-variable-to-sample ratio criterion (Hair et al., 2019) and exceeds the minimum of 200 observations for SEM (Marsh et al., 1988).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS. The measurement model was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), examining factor loadings (≥ 0.50), composite reliability (CR ≥ 0.70), and average variance extracted (AVE > 0.50). Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the square root of each construct's AVE against its correlations with other constructs. The structural model examined path coefficients and R^2 values, with bootstrap analysis (5,000 resamples) used to assess both direct and indirect effects and their 95% confidence intervals. Statistical assumptions—multicollinearity (VIF 1.213–2.847), normality (skewness $\leq \pm 2$, kurtosis $\leq \pm 7$), and linearity—were all satisfied before SEM estimation.

Research Results

Sample Characteristics

The sample comprised 54.5% male and 45.5% female participants. Age distribution: 38.0% aged 50–54 years, 42.0% aged 55–59 years, and 20.0% aged 60 years and above. Most held bachelor's degrees (54.5%), with 27.0% holding postgraduate qualifications. By work experience, 40.5% had 21–25 years and

27.5% had over 25 years, reflecting a highly experienced workforce. The sector was evenly distributed by design (50% public, 50% private).

Descriptive Statistics and Construct Correlations

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and inter-construct correlations for the six SEM constructs. Sector (public vs. private) was recorded as a sample descriptor but was not included as a variable in the structural model, as the study's focus is on within-individual mechanisms rather than sector-level differences. All construct means were in the 'high' range ($M = 3.58\text{--}3.88$), with cognitive crafting scoring highest ($M = 3.88$) and location flexibility scoring lowest ($M = 3.58$). Inter-construct correlations ranged from moderate to strong ($r = 0.265\text{--}0.712$). The square root of each construct's AVE (shown on the diagonal) exceeded all off-diagonal correlations, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Inter-Construct Correlations

Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Schedule Flexibility (TF)	3.72	0.81	(0.855)					
2. Location Flexibility (SF)	3.58	0.86	0.412	(0.823)				
3. Task Flexibility (LF)	3.65	0.78	0.389	0.445	(0.869)			
4. Process Flexibility (PF)	3.79	0.77	0.453	0.398	0.421	(0.899)		
5. Job Crafting (JC)	3.82	0.75	0.548	0.312	0.298	0.512	(0.932)	
6. Productive Aging (PA)	3.72	0.78	0.476	0.287	0.265	0.468	0.712	(0.898)

Note. Diagonal values in parentheses = square root of AVE; all exceed off-diagonal correlations, confirming discriminant validity. TF = Schedule Flexibility; SF = Location Flexibility; LF = Task Flexibility; PF = Process Flexibility; JC = Job Crafting; PA = Productive Aging. All correlations $p < 0.05$.

Measurement Model Results

Table 2 presents the measurement model results. All factor loadings exceeded 0.686 ($p < 0.001$). CR values ranged from 0.893 to 0.964, and AVE values from 0.677 to 0.869; all meetings established thresholds and confirmed satisfactory convergent validity and composite reliability across all six constructs.

Table 2. Measurement Model: Factor Loadings, Composite Reliability, and AVE

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE	R ²
Schedule Flexibility (TF)	TF1 — I can arrange my work schedule flexibly	0.686	0.932	0.731	—
	TF2 — I can adjust my work schedule when necessary	0.911			
	TF3 — I can choose when to start and end my work	0.902			
	TF4 — I can control the hours I work each day	0.900			
Location Flexibility (SF)	SF1 — I can work from various locations as appropriate	0.858	0.893	0.677	—
	SF2 — I have the freedom to choose where I complete my work	0.889			
	SF3 — I can work remotely when the situation requires it	0.723			
	SF4 — I can select my work location based on task demands	0.769			
Task Flexibility (LF)	LF1 — I can choose how I accomplish my tasks	0.817	0.916	0.756	—

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE	R ²
	LF2 — I have freedom in selecting my methods of work	0.906			
	LF3 — I can adjust my approach to work as needed	0.731			
	LF4 — I have autonomy in carrying out my duties	0.916			
Process Flexibility (PF)	PF1 — I can adapt work processes to suit my needs	0.931	0.945	0.809	—
	PF2 — I participate in defining how work is carried out	0.863			
	PF3 — I have freedom to modify my work processes	0.935			
	PF4 — I can adjust work procedures when necessary	0.864			
Job Crafting (JC)	JCC — I focus on the meaningful aspects of my work (Cognitive)	0.954	0.964	0.869	0.742
	JRC — I build supportive relationships at work (Relational)	0.944			
	JTC — I adjust my tasks to match my strengths (Task)	0.912			
Productive Aging (PA)	PCD1 — I maintain sharp focus and learn new work knowledge	0.827	0.951	0.806	0.806

Construct	Indicator	Loading	CR	AVE	R ²
	PPD1 — I manage physical demands and maintain my energy	0.901			
	PPROD — I sustain work quality and achieve my goals	0.924			
	PSD1 — I maintain positive relationships and collaborate	0.898			

Note. All factor loadings significant at $p < 0.001$. CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted. Thresholds: factor loading ≥ 0.50 , CR ≥ 0.70 , AVE > 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). R² reported for endogenous latent constructs only.

Structural Model and Path Analysis

Table 3 presents the full path analysis results with bootstrap confidence intervals for both direct and indirect effects. In brief, two of the four FWA dimensions—Schedule Flexibility and Process Flexibility—emerged as the key drivers of job crafting and, through it, of productive aging; Location and Task Flexibility showed no significant effect. The proposed model explained 80.6% of variance in productive aging ($R^2 = 0.806$), reflecting strong predictive capacity. Job crafting behaviors demonstrated the strongest direct positive effect on productive aging ($\beta = 0.646$, $p < 0.001$). Among FWA dimensions, Schedule Flexibility ($\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$) and Process Flexibility ($\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.05$) significantly influenced job crafting behaviors; Location Flexibility ($\beta = 0.100$, n.s.) and Task Flexibility ($\beta = -0.020$, n.s.) did not. Bootstrap analysis confirmed significant indirect effects for Schedule Flexibility ($\beta = 0.288$, CI [0.141, 0.517]) and Process Flexibility ($\beta = 0.262$, CI [0.044, 0.477]) through job crafting—supporting H2 and H4 for these two dimensions. Table 4 summarizes hypothesis testing outcomes.

Table 3. Direct and Indirect Effects with Bootstrap Confidence Intervals

Path	Relationship	β	t	p	95% CI	Decision
Direct Effects						
TF → JC	Schedule Flex. → Job Crafting	0.446	8.12	***	[0.312, 0.574]	Supported
PF → JC	Process Flex. → Job Crafting	0.407	5.23	*	[0.248, 0.562]	Supported
SF → JC	Location Flex. → Job Crafting	0.100	0.69	n.s.	[-0.051, 0.254]	Not Supported
LF → JC	Task Flex. → Job Crafting	-0.020	0.16	n.s.	[-0.198, 0.161]	Not Supported
JC → PA	Job Crafting → Productive Aging	0.646	14.54	***	[0.558, 0.731]	Supported
Indirect Effects via Job Crafting (H4)						
TF→JC→PA	Schedule Flex. → PA (via JC)	0.288	4.21	**	[0.141, 0.517]	Supported
PF→JC→PA	Process Flex. → PA (via JC)	0.262	3.15	*	[0.044, 0.477]	Supported
SF→JC→PA	Location Flex. → PA (via JC)	0.064	1.12	n.s.	[-0.088, 0.350]	Not Supported
LF→JC→PA	Task Flex. → PA (via JC)	-0.013	0.22	n.s.	[-0.184, 0.161]	Not Supported

Note. Bootstrap resamples = 5,000. All 95% CIs estimated via percentile bootstrap. ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05; n.s. = not significant. TF = Schedule Flexibility; PF = Process Flexibility; SF = Location Flexibility; LF = Task Flexibility; JC = Job Crafting; PA = Productive Aging.

Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Description	Key Statistic	Support
H1	FWA positively influences job crafting behaviors	TF: $\beta=0.446^{***}$; PF: $\beta=0.407^*$ SF & LF: n.s.	Partially Supported
H2	FWA positively influences productive aging (indirect path via job crafting)	TF: $\beta=0.288^{**}$; PF: $\beta=0.262^*$ SF & LF: n.s.	Partially Supported
H3	Job crafting positively influences productive aging	$\beta=0.646^{***}$; $R^2=0.806$	Fully Supported
H4	Job crafting mediates FWA $\rightarrow$ productive aging	TF & PF indirect paths significant SF & LF: n.s.	Partially Supported

Note. H2 tests the indirect effect of FWA on productive aging via job crafting; H4 tests the significance of job crafting as the specific mediating mechanism. $^{***}p < 0.001$; $^{**}p < 0.01$; $^*p < 0.05$; n.s. = not significant.

Research Discussion

The finding that job crafting behaviors demonstrated the strongest direct effect on productive aging ($\beta = 0.646$, $R^2 = 0.806$) represents a significant empirical contribution for the Thai context, surpassing the R^2 values of 0.45–0.65 reported in Western studies (Koreshi & Alpass, 2023; Wong & Tetrick, 2017). This elevated predictive power is consistent with calls for age-inclusive HRM research extending beyond Western samples (Rudolph et al., 2021). One possible explanation is that Thai organizational culture—collectivism, respect for seniority, and knowledge-sharing norms—strengthens this FWA–job crafting–productive aging mechanism. However, since these cultural dimensions were not directly measured, this remains speculative and should be tested in future research. Regarding the hypothesis structure, H2 and H4 are conceptually complementary rather than redundant: H2 establishes that FWA influences productive aging via an indirect path, while H4 identifies job crafting as the specific mediating mechanism carrying that effect.

The differential effectiveness of FWA dimensions reveals important contextual nuances. Schedule Flexibility's strongest direct effect on job crafting ($\beta = 0.446$) reflects the particular importance of time autonomy for senior workers managing health needs, family obligations, and energy recovery (Piszczek & Pimputkar, 2021). Process Flexibility's significant effect ($\beta = 0.407$) enables senior workers to leverage

accumulated expertise, consistent with Pak et al. (2021), and is particularly meaningful in Thai organizations that value experiential wisdom. Both dimensions directly enable task and cognitive crafting by granting workers the autonomy to shape how and when they perform their roles.

The non-significant effects of Location and Task Flexibility contrast with Western findings where remote work shows stronger effects (Vanajan et al., 2020). This divergence likely reflects Thailand's predominantly face-to-face organizational culture, particularly in public-sector organizations, and the need for structured digital literacy support before location flexibility becomes effective for senior workers—a theoretically novel finding for Southeast Asian HRM research.

Through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, when organizations provide valued FWA resources, senior workers reciprocate by engaging in proactive job crafting, thereby generating productive aging outcomes. The particularly high cognitive crafting mean ($M = 3.88$) suggests Thai senior workers actively find meaning and purpose in their work—consistent with intrinsic work motivation research in collectivist cultural settings (Wong & Tetrick, 2017).

Research Conclusion

This study provides three novel empirical contributions: (1) the first Thai empirical validation that job crafting behaviors mediate the FWA–productive aging relationship, with an exceptionally high $R^2 = 0.806$; (2) the identification of Schedule and Process Flexibility as the most effective FWA dimensions for Thai senior workers, while Location and Task Flexibility require additional organizational enablers to be effective; and (3) validation of the four-dimensional productive aging framework (Gonzales et al., 2015) with excellent measurement properties in a Thai organizational context.

This study has limitations: a cross-sectional design precludes causal inference, and quota sampling may limit generalizability. Because all constructs were collected from a single self-report instrument at one point in time, common method bias cannot be ruled out, although Harman's single-factor test and the discriminant validity results reported above provide partial reassurance. The non-significant effects of Location and Task Flexibility on job crafting (H1) should also be interpreted with caution: these may reflect a genuine absence of effect among Thai senior workers, or may stem from insufficient organizational digital infrastructure and limited variance in remote-work practice within the sampled organizations, which would suppress observable effects regardless of their true underlying relationship. Quota rather than random sampling further limits the ability to generalize these non-significant findings to the broader population of

Thai senior workers. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, examine moderating variables such as organizational culture and leadership style, and conduct cross-cultural comparisons within ASEAN nations facing similar demographic transitions.

Recommendations

For Organizations and HR Practitioners

For HR practitioners, four prioritized actions are recommended. First, implement schedule flexibility as an immediate priority: introducing flextime systems, compressed workweeks, and part-time or job-sharing arrangements targeted specifically at workers aged 50 and above. Second, redesign performance management around output rather than processes, giving senior workers autonomy over how they accomplish their roles and enabling them to draw on accumulated expertise. Third, before deploying task or location flexibility, invest in structured digital upskilling programs co-designed with senior workers, with peer-learning cohorts and dedicated technical support. Fourth, build formal job crafting development into annual performance conversations and team design processes, cultivating all three crafting dimensions—task, relational, and cognitive—through coaching, mentoring, and purpose-aligned role design.

For Policymakers

For policymakers, two actions are recommended. First, strengthen tax incentive frameworks (such as Thailand's Royal Decree on Tax Exemption No. 639, B.E. 2560) to reward organizations demonstrating measurable age-inclusive HRM practices beyond simple employment quotas. Second, mandate age-disaggregated workforce reporting in public-sector organizations to create accountability structures for productive aging outcomes.

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