

Enhancing the Quality of Smart Services in E-Government through Job Crafting: A Comparative Study of Two Types of Services in Two Local Governments of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract:

This study examines the role of Job Crafting in enhancing the quality of smart services in e-government, focusing on two local governments in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia: Kendari City and North Konawe Regency. A qualitative research approach is used, employing a comparative case study design to explore the different practices of Job Crafting in these two regions. Data is collected through semi-structured interviews with public service officers and service recipients, providing insights into the implementation of Job Crafting and its impact on service quality. Triangulation will be conducted by cross-checking information from public service officers and service recipients, while member checking and peer debriefing will ensure data accuracy, trustworthiness, and unbiased interpretations through verification with interviewees and expert discussions. The comparative study of Kendari City and North Konawe Regency highlights the role of Job Crafting in improving smart services in e-government. While Kendari's successful implementation has resulted in more efficient, user-friendly services, North Konawe's outdated procedures reveal challenges in technological adoption. The study emphasizes that combining Job Crafting with technology, employee motivation, and collaboration can enhance service quality in local governments. This research contributes to the literature on Job Crafting and e-government by offering practical insights and recommendations for local governments to implement effective strategies to improve smart services and public service delivery.

Keywords: Job Crafting, e-government, smart services, public service quality, local government.

Introduction:

In this digital era, e-government has become an essential solution for governments in developing countries to improve the efficiency and accessibility of public services (Abubakr & Kaya, 2021). E-government refers to the application of information and communication technology (ICT) by government entities to deliver services to

citizens, improve transparency, and encourage public involvement in the decision-making process (Aleisa, 2024). Compared to manual or conventional systems, e-government offers several significant advantages, such as reduced time and costs in processing documents or permits, as well as providing easy access for the public anytime and

anywhere, without being limited by office working hours or distance (Al-Nidawi et al., 2018; OECD, 2005). Although the implementation of e-government is expanding, the quality of digital public services still varies, especially in regions with differing levels of technological development and human resource readiness (Karniawati, 2021).

Service quality in the context of digital public services refers to how well these services meet citizens' expectations, ensuring effectiveness, efficiency, and satisfaction (Fan & Yang, 2015; Kaur et al., 2023). It is often measured through several dimensions: 1) efficiency, quick and effective service delivery; 2) reliability: consistency and accuracy of the service; 3) responsiveness: ability to address user needs and issues promptly; 4) usability: user-friendly design and ease of access; 5) security: protection of personal data; 6) satisfaction: overall user experience and contentment with the service (Blut et al., 2015; Rita et al., 2019). Enhancing service quality in this context means continuously improving these dimensions to meet the needs of citizens better and ensure the ongoing success of digital public services (Taufiqurokhan et al., 2024; Wang & Teo, 2020).

One key component of e-government that can play an essential role in improving the quality of public services is smart services. Smart services leverage ICT to provide more responsive, efficient, and data-driven solutions to the public (Janošková et al., 2024). Unlike merely adopting technology, smart services focus on the system's ability to adapt to the needs of the public, personalize services, and optimize the user experience through intelligent and automated mechanisms (Carsten et al., 2018). This concept introduces a new paradigm for delivering public services that is more result-oriented and based on data-driven decision-making, contrasting with traditional approaches that prioritize procedures and regulations (Velsberg et al., 2020).

The implementation of smart services opens opportunities to significantly improve service quality, such as operational cost savings, enhanced transparency, and empowering the public with easier and faster access. Moreover, this technology supports more timely and data-based decision-making, facilitates inter-agency collaboration, and enables innovation in developing more inclusive public services (Wang & Teo, 2020). In this regard, smart services align with New Public Management

(NPM), which emphasizes efficiency, measurable outcomes, and a focus on public satisfaction (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). This approach offers an alternative to Max Weber's bureaucratic model, which is more rigid, by emphasizing procedures and hierarchical structures in public sector management (Kuipers et al., 2014; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

With the implementation of smart services, the rigid bureaucratic model can be replaced with a more flexible, responsive, and adaptive approach in line with the dynamics of today's society (Ryu et al., 2022). Smart services enable greater personalization of services, data-driven decision-making, and reduce dependence on manual procedures that limit innovation (Velsberg et al., 2020). Therefore, smart services offer a revolution in public services, shifting the paradigm from procedural certainty to a results-oriented and community-involved approach (Al-Jenaibi, 2016; Althunibat et al., 2021).

Job Crafting can play a significant role in addressing the challenge of optimizing smart services in e-government. By providing employees with the freedom to adapt their tasks, Job Crafting encourages creativity, innovation, and engagement in improving public service quality (Luu, 2021; Siddiqi, 2015). Employees involved in Job Crafting are more likely to feel empowered and be more responsive to the needs of the public (Petrou et al., 2018). The dimensions of Job Crafting—task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting—can help employees manage their work more effectively, respond to organizational changes, and enhance inter-agency collaboration (Berg et al., 2008; Devotto & Wechsler, 2019; Tims et al., 2022; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Additionally, job crafting includes increasing job challenges and improving resources, as well as reducing job demands that hinder performance, which is in line with the ideas proposed by Tims et al. (2016) and Moreira et al. (2022). This approach helps employees perform their roles more effectively, contributes to improving service quality (Audenaert et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2018), and positively impacts the implementation of smart services in e-government (Yepes-Baldó et al., 2018).

Furthermore, broader theories suggest that Job Crafting is closely related to improved performance and service quality. For example, according to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) and

Berg et al. (2008), employees who engage in Job Crafting tend to take more responsibility for their work, directly impacting the improvement of their performance quality. Moreover, the researchers suggest that employees who engage in Job Crafting experience greater job satisfaction and also enhance both their productivity and the quality of their work, even within the realm of public services (Bakker et al., 2020; Luu, 2021; Nissinen et al., 2022). Thus, by granting employees the freedom to adjust their tasks and interactions, Job Crafting can directly contribute to enhancing the quality of smart services in e-government, focusing on more efficient, data-driven, and responsive work management in line with the public's needs.

However, despite some findings supporting the positive relationship between Job Crafting and improved smart service quality, there is still limited empirical evidence examining its widespread application in the local government sector, particularly in developing countries (Devotto & Wechsler, 2019; Liu & Jiarui, 2021). The biggest challenge in integrating Job Crafting into smart services systems is how to manage differences in human resource readiness and technological proficiency across various regions. Local governments often have characteristics that differ from other public service institutions (Godlewska & Mackiewicz, 2023), which can influence how employees adapt to new technologies and implement smart service systems. Each region has specific challenges and contextual dynamics that need to be understood more deeply to ensure the success of smart services implementation (Ongaro et al., 2021). Therefore, further research is required in order to explore the relationship between Job Crafting and smart service quality in local governments, considering the contextual factors that affect the effectiveness of its implementation.

This study aims to explore how Job Crafting can improve the quality of smart services in e-government at the local government level. The research focuses on two regions in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, namely Kendari City and North Konawe Regency, which face different contextual challenges and dynamics in implementing smart services. Kendari City, the capital of Southeast Sulawesi, has implemented the Kendari Integration Service System (E-Laika) since 2019 to facilitate various public services such as population administration, civil registration, permits, and emergency services. With better

technological infrastructure than other regions, although occasionally hindered by power outages or unscheduled system maintenance, Kendari City faces challenges in improving the quality of e-government services to meet public service standards. According to the 2023 Ombudsman assessment, Kendari received a score of 64.14, reflecting the need for improvements in e-government service quality.

On the other hand, North Konawe Regency, with significant geographical challenges due to its vast area and limited ICT infrastructure, also faces issues related to human resource readiness and public understanding of digital systems. Despite these challenges, North Konawe Regency achieved a score of 63.41 in the 2023 Ombudsman public service quality assessment, indicating that while the implementation of smart services in this area faces obstacles, there is still room for improvement compared to other regions.

The differences in contextual conditions between these two regions highlight that the success of smart service implementation depends not only on available infrastructure but also on human resource readiness and local dynamics that influence service quality. In this context, Job Crafting can play a crucial role in enhancing employee performance in both regions. In Kendari City, despite better infrastructure, Job Crafting can help employees adapt to technological changes and become more engaged in improving service quality. In North Konawe Regency, despite facing infrastructure and human resource limitations, Job Crafting can encourage employees to be more creative in utilizing available resources, collaborate more effectively, and optimize existing potential to improve public service quality.

Specifically, this study aims to analyze how employees in these two regions use Job Crafting to optimize their digital public services despite facing different contextual challenges, such as differences in infrastructure and human resource readiness. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of literature on Job Crafting in the context of e-government, particularly in the local government sector. This study expands the understanding of Job Crafting's impact on individual performance and the quality of technology-based public services. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide insights for local governments in designing Job Crafting strategies to improve their smart services,

as well as provide recommendations for policymakers to design more targeted training programs to improve the efficiency and quality of e-government-based public services in the regions.

Methods:

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing a comparative case study method. The research focuses on two regions in Southeast Sulawesi: Kendari City and North Konawe Regency, with an emphasis on understanding how Job Crafting can improve the quality of smart services in the context of e-government. The case study explores the specific challenges and opportunities in the implementation of digital public services in these areas, focusing on different types of services.

In Kendari City, the study focuses on the integrated administrative services provided at the sub-district level, specifically at the Baruga Sub-district. This location was selected due to its significant role in offering administrative services to the local population and its involvement in the broader effort to improve e-government services through the integrated system (E-Laika). The focus here is on how Job Crafting influences the quality and efficiency of the integrated administrative services at the sub-district level.

In North Konawe Regency, the study examines the administrative services related to population administration and civil registration, specifically within the Regional Office of Population and Civil Registration of North Konawe Regency. This focus is particularly relevant due to the challenges of providing such essential services in a geographically large area with limited infrastructure. By investigating this aspect, the research explores how Job Crafting can contribute to improving the delivery of public services, especially in regions with technological and infrastructure constraints.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key informants, targeting two main groups. The first group consisted of 24 Public Service Officers who were responsible for managing and delivering services at the relevant institutions, including the Baruga Sub-district office in Kendari and the Regional Office of Population and Civil Registration in North Konawe. These officers provided insights into how Job Crafting influenced their roles, the challenges they faced in service delivery, and how they adapted their work to

improve the quality of public services. The second group included 16 Service Recipients (Citizens), with interviews conducted among citizens who had directly benefited from the services in both regions. In total, there were 40 participants in this study. These interviews explored their experiences regarding the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of the services, as well as their perceptions of any improvements or challenges in digital public services.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. The study focused on understanding how public service officers implemented Job Crafting practices and how these practices contributed to improving service quality. The research specifically aimed to identify the role of Job Crafting in enhancing service delivery, fostering innovation, improving collaboration among staff, and responding to the unique challenges in each location. Thematic analysis also helped identify barriers to effective Job Crafting and smart services, such as technological limitations, organizational constraints, or human resource readiness. By comparing the experiences in Kendari City and North Konawe, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of the contextual differences and their impact on the effectiveness of Job Crafting in the context of e-government services.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the study applied data triangulation, which involved cross-checking information from different sources and perspectives (public service officers and service recipients) to ensure consistency and accuracy. Additionally, member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary findings with a few of the interviewees to verify that the data accurately reflected their experiences and perceptions. This process helped increase the trustworthiness of the findings. By combining these methods, the study provided an in-depth exploration of the role of Job Crafting in optimizing smart services in e-government, offering valuable insights for improving public service delivery at the local government level.

Results and discussion:

1. Job Crafting Practices in Kendari and North Konawe

The following table presents a comparative analysis of task crafting practices in Kendari City

and North Konawe Regency based on interviews with both public service officers and service recipients.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Task Crafting (Public Service Officers and Service Recipients)

Aspect	Kendari City	North Konawe Regency
Use of Technology	Public Service Officers: Many officers in Kendari City use E-Laika, significantly speeding up the verification and registration processes. Service Recipients: Residents notice that the verification process has become faster and more efficient since the implementation of E-Laika.	Public Service Officers: Some officers in North Konawe still rely on manual procedures with limited use of technology. Service Recipients: Many residents feel the process is slow and outdated due to the lack of technology integration.
Simplification of Procedures	Public Service Officers: Most officers in Kendari City report that administrative procedures have been simplified, making the process smoother. Service Recipients: Residents observe that procedures have become easier to follow and quicker to complete.	Public Service Officers: In North Konawe, many public service officers acknowledge that procedures remain complex and lengthy. Service Recipients: Many residents feel frustrated with the complicated and time-consuming procedures.
Challenges in Work	Public Service Officers: Several officers face challenges with managing large volumes of documents, which can slow down the overall process. Service Recipients: Residents note an overall improvement in the speed of services, even with these challenges.	Public Service Officers: Many officers express frustration with rigid procedures that limit their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Service Recipients: Residents feel that the pace of service delivery remains sluggish, with no noticeable improvements.

Source: Interviews with public service officers and service recipients.

In Kendari City, task crafting is effectively implemented, primarily through the adoption of technology like E-Laika, which has streamlined administrative processes. Public Service Officer 1 noted, "The E-Laika system allows us to verify documents much faster compared to the old manual method," a sentiment echoed by Service Recipient 1, who said, "Since the introduction of E-Laika, the document verification process has been much quicker." Despite these advancements, public service officers still face challenges managing large volumes of documents, requiring constant adaptation of their work processes. Conversely, North Konawe Regency struggles with limited task

crafting, mainly due to the lack of technological integration. Public Service Officer 9 shared, "We don't use much technology here; the process is still largely manual," leading to slow services. Service Recipient 7 expressed frustration, saying, "The verification process takes too long, and it's not very efficient." The region also faces complex administrative procedures, with officers feeling constrained in their ability to improve or streamline the process. In summary, Kendari City's use of technology and simplified procedures has led to increased efficiency and faster services, while North Konawe's reliance on outdated methods hinders service delivery. This disparity underscores

the need for North Konawe to embrace technology and more flexible approaches to improve public service outcomes.

Subsequently, the following table provides a comparative overview of relational crafting

between Kendari City and North Konawe Regency, followed by an integrated analysis supported by interview data from public service officers and service recipients.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Relational Crafting (Public Service Officers and Service Recipients)

Aspect	Kendari City	North Konawe Regency
Staff Collaboration	Public service officers in Kendari City frequently collaborate to solve tasks, fostering teamwork and collective problem-solving.	Public service officers in North Konawe often work individually, with limited collaboration between colleagues.
Interaction with Service Recipients	Service recipients in Kendari City report positive, clear, and effective communication with public service officers.	Many service recipients in North Konawe feel that communication with public service officers is insufficient and rushed.
Empathy and Support	Public service officers in Kendari City are noted for their high levels of empathy and attentiveness, making service recipients feel heard and supported.	Service recipients in North Konawe report that public service officers often focus more on the task at hand than on offering empathetic support.
Training and Peer Support	Public service officers in Kendari City highlight the importance of ongoing training and peer support to strengthen teamwork and enhance service delivery.	Public service officers in North Konawe feel that opportunities for training and collaboration with colleagues are limited.

Source: Interviews with public service officers and service recipients.

In Kendari City, relational crafting is well implemented, with public service officers collaborating effectively to enhance task efficiency. Public Service Officer 1 stated, “We often help each other with tasks like document verification, which speeds up the process significantly.” This teamwork contributes to clear communication, making processes easier for service recipients. In contrast, North Konawe Regency struggles with relational crafting, as officers often work independently, which affects efficiency and collaboration. Public Service Officer 5 remarked, “Most of the time, we work on

our own, and there isn’t much need for teamwork.” This lack of cooperation leads to communication issues and a stressful experience for service recipients. Enhancing relational crafting in North Konawe could improve collaboration and service quality.

The following table provides a comparative overview of cognitive crafting between Kendari City and North Konawe Regency, followed by an integrated analysis supported by interview data from both public service officers and service recipients.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Cognitive Crafting (Public Service Officers and Service Recipients)

Aspect	Kendari City (Baruga Subdistrict)	North Konawe Regency
Perception of Administrative Tasks	Public service officers view their administrative tasks as essential to public welfare and community well-being.	Public service officers see their tasks primarily as routine duties without recognizing their broader societal impact.
Motivation through Technology	Public service officers feel motivated and engaged, mainly when using technology like E-Laika, which enhances work efficiency and organization.	Many officers do not fully utilize available technology, leading to slower processes and a sense of disengagement.
Learning and Personal Development	Officers embrace challenges as opportunities for growth, often seeking ways to improve their skills and approach to their work.	Officers show limited interest in developing their skills or changing their approach to their tasks.
Empathy and Service Quality	Service recipients report a noticeable improvement in service quality as officers approach their tasks with more tremendous enthusiasm and empathy.	Service recipients feel that officers are detached and impersonal, with interactions focused more on completing tasks than on providing a thoughtful service experience.

Source: Interviews with public service officers and service recipients.

In Kendari City, public service officers view their work as part of a larger mission to improve public welfare, mainly through the E-Laika system, which enhances efficiency. Public Service Officer 4 shared, "I don't just see this as administrative work but as an opportunity to help the community and improve their quality of life." This mindset has led to improved service quality. As Service Recipient 4 noted, "The officers are more enthusiastic and serious about helping." In contrast, North Konawe's public service officers tend to see their tasks as routine duties with a limited understanding of their broader impact. Public Service Officer 9 explained, "We just do the work that's given to us without thinking too much about how it affects the community." This lack of cognitive crafting has resulted in less motivated officers and lower

service quality, as seen by Service Recipient 7, who felt that the officers "don't seem to care about the speed of service." In conclusion, Kendari City benefits from cognitive crafting, enhancing both officer motivation and service quality. North Konawe could improve by fostering a similar mindset among its officers, which would enhance their job satisfaction and the service experience for residents.

2. Impact of Job Crafting on Smart Services in E-Government

Below is a table that highlights the Impact of Job Crafting on Smart Services in E-Government, focusing on efficiency, reliability, and user satisfaction for both Kendari City and North Konawe Regency.

Table 4: Impact of Job Crafting on Smart Services in E-Government

Aspect	Kendari City	North Konawe Regency
Task Crafting	<p>Efficiency: Public service officers use technology (e.g., E-Laika) to automate document verification and streamline administrative tasks, significantly speeding up service delivery.</p> <p>Reliability: Simplified procedures lead to fewer errors and more predictable service outcomes.</p> <p>User Satisfaction: Service recipients report faster processing times and more efficient services.</p>	<p>Efficiency: Public service officers rely on manual processes, resulting in slower service. Due to limited technology adoption, administrative procedures are still complex and time-consuming.</p> <p>Reliability: Service reliability is impacted by manual tasks and the complexity of procedures, leading to inconsistent service quality.</p> <p>User Satisfaction: Service recipients express dissatisfaction with slow processing times and complicated procedures.</p>
Relational Crafting	<p>Efficiency: Officers collaborate more effectively with colleagues, improving the overall workflow and reducing delays.</p> <p>Reliability: Clear communication and empathy from officers ensure that service recipients' needs are understood and met consistently.</p> <p>User Satisfaction: Service recipients feel valued and report high satisfaction with personalized and empathetic service.</p>	<p>Efficiency: Limited collaboration among officers creates silos in the workflow, leading to delays and inefficiencies in service delivery.</p> <p>Reliability: Minimal interaction with service recipients and task-focused work result in less reliable service.</p> <p>User Satisfaction: Service recipients report feeling rushed and disconnected, which decreases satisfaction with the service experience.</p>
Cognitive Crafting	<p>Efficiency: Officers view their work as meaningful, which increases their motivation to improve processes and contribute to service efficiency.</p> <p>Reliability: A motivated workforce is more likely to be committed to high-quality service delivery, leading to more consistent outcomes.</p> <p>User Satisfaction: Service recipients experience more engaged officers, which enhances their perception of the service as efficient and valuable.</p>	<p>Efficiency: Officers do not see their tasks as meaningful, resulting in lower motivation to improve processes, thus affecting overall service efficiency.</p> <p>Reliability: A lack of motivation and job satisfaction can lead to unreliable service outcomes, as officers may not feel the need to improve their work.</p> <p>User Satisfaction: Service recipients perceive the service as routine and impersonal, which leads to lower satisfaction and a sense of dissatisfaction with the service delivery.</p>

Source: Interviews with public service officers and service recipients.

In Kendari City, job crafting has significantly improved service efficiency, reliability, and user satisfaction. Public service officers have embraced technology, such as E-Laika, which has streamlined processes. Public Service Officer 2 noted, "The integration of E-Laika has really sped

up our processes...which makes everything run smoother." Service recipients report faster services and greater satisfaction. Conversely, North Konawe Regency struggles with inefficiency due to manual processes and limited collaboration. Public Service Officer 12 said, "We are still using

paper and manual processes, which take a lot of time." This results in slower, less reliable services and lower user satisfaction.

3. Implications for Enhancing Smart Services in E-Government:

Kendari City demonstrates effective job crafting through the integration of technology, such as E-Laika, which has streamlined administrative tasks and improved service efficiency. Public service officers in Kendari perceive their roles as meaningful, boosting motivation and collaboration. Public Service Officer 4 shared, "The team dynamic in our office has changed for the better. We communicate more openly, and it makes our work smoother and more effective." This approach enhances the quality and reliability of services, making Kendari a model for other regions. Other areas can adopt similar practices by investing in technology, fostering team collaboration, and emphasizing the importance of service roles.

North Konawe faces significant challenges due to limited infrastructure and underdeveloped job crafting practices. To address these issues, North Konawe could take several steps. First, investing in technology, such as upgrading systems like E-Laika, would speed up services, improve accuracy, and reduce the manual workload. Additionally, focusing on training and capacity building for public service officers, particularly in job crafting, technology integration, and task simplification, would enhance both motivation and service quality. Promoting relational crafting by encouraging stronger collaboration and empathy between public service officers and recipients could improve communication and overall service delivery. Public Service Officer 12 shared, "I start to see the importance of speeding up services, and it motivates me to work more efficiently." Finally, simplifying administrative procedures would reduce confusion and increase satisfaction among service recipients. By adopting these strategies, North Konawe could enhance job satisfaction among officers and improve service quality, ultimately leading to more effective e-government services.

The following section presents a discussion that examines the key findings of this study, linking them to relevant theoretical and empirical literature to provide a deeper understanding of the role of Job Crafting in enhancing the quality of e-government-based public services at the local government level.

In the context of enhancing smart services within e-government systems, Job Crafting presents a valuable mechanism for improving the quality of public service delivery. As noted in previous literature, e-government utilizes ICT to provide services that are more efficient, accessible, and transparent (Al-Nidawi et al., 2018). The transition from manual to digital processes brings significant benefits, such as reduced time and costs for processing documents, as well as the ability to access services anytime and anywhere. However, service quality remains variable across different regions, primarily due to disparities in infrastructure, human resource readiness, and technological adoption (Karniawati, 2021). This study, focusing on Kendari City and North Konawe Regency in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, provides insights into how Job Crafting practices can play a role in addressing these challenges and improving the quality of smart services in local government contexts.

In line with the literature on e-government, which emphasizes the role of technology in enhancing efficiency (Wang & Teo, 2020), the implementation of E-Laika in Kendari City has led to significant improvements in service delivery. The use of technology to automate document verification and simplify procedures aligns with the goals of smart services, which prioritize efficient, data-driven solutions (Janošková et al., 2024). Job Crafting in this context, mainly through task crafting, is crucial in enabling public service officers to adapt their tasks in response to the demands of technology. As noted by public service officers in Kendari, the adoption of E-Laika has sped up document processing, thus contributing to higher efficiency (Siddiqi, 2015).

Conversely, North Konawe Regency's reliance on manual procedures highlights the negative impact of limited task crafting. Public service officers in North Konawe struggle with outdated systems and are constrained by complex administrative processes, which directly affect service efficiency and reliability. The theoretical underpinnings of Job Crafting suggest that when employees are empowered to modify their tasks, they can find innovative ways to streamline operations, thereby improving the overall efficiency of service delivery (Tims et al., 2022).

The importance of relational crafting, which involves enhancing interactions with colleagues and service recipients, is supported by the findings

from both regions. In Kendari City, public service officers' collaborative efforts have led to better communication and empathy in service delivery, improving both service efficiency and user satisfaction (Berg et al., 2008). This reflects a key aspect of smart services, where the focus is on adaptive and personalized service delivery (Velsberg et al., 2020). As observed in Kendari, the collaborative and empathetic approach not only facilitates smoother workflows but also enhances the overall customer experience (Petrou et al., 2018). In contrast, the limited collaboration and lack of empathy in North Konawe's public service offices have resulted in inefficiencies and poor service quality. Service recipients in North Konawe expressed frustration with the lack of communication and impersonal service. This finding further emphasizes the need for relational crafting to foster better teamwork and improve user interactions (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Cognitive crafting, which involves employees' perception of their work and the meaning they attach to it, is another critical dimension that influences the quality of services in e-government. In Kendari, public service officers perceive their work as contributing to the public good, which enhances their motivation to improve service quality. This finding is consistent with the literature on Job Crafting, which suggests that employees who view their tasks as meaningful are more likely to be engaged and motivated (Bakker et al., 2020). The positive impact of cognitive crafting in Kendari is evident in the enthusiasm and dedication that public service officers display when interacting with residents, which contributes to higher levels of user satisfaction (Fan & Yang, 2015). On the other hand, in North Konawe, officers perceive their tasks primarily as routine, leading to disengagement and lower motivation, which detracts from service quality (Devotto & Wechsler, 2019). This lack of cognitive crafting is detrimental to both officer satisfaction and the quality of public services, as it prevents the kind of proactive problem-solving that is needed in the digital era of smart services.

Job Crafting is identified as a critical factor in optimizing smart services by enhancing task flexibility, promoting collaboration, and fostering a sense of purpose among employees (Tims et al., 2016). The integration of Job Crafting into public service work can be particularly impactful in developing regions, where human resource

challenges and technological limitations are more pronounced (Liu & Jiarui, 2021). In the case of Kendari, the effective use of Job Crafting, primarily through task crafting and relational crafting, has contributed to improved service delivery, reflecting a more flexible, adaptive, and user-centred approach to governance (Janošková et al., 2024). North Konawe, however, faces significant barriers to implementing Job Crafting due to a lack of technological integration and limited collaboration among public service officers, which undermines the potential for improving service quality through Job Crafting (Ongaro et al., 2021).

In light of these findings, the study supports the argument that regions with limited technological infrastructure, such as North Konawe, would benefit significantly from adopting Job Crafting practices. This argument would include introducing more flexible work processes, enhancing collaboration among officers, and fostering a mindset that views public service as an opportunity to contribute to societal well-being. As suggested by Tims et al. (2022), providing employees with the autonomy to craft their jobs in ways that align with organizational goals and public needs can lead to better service outcomes, especially in e-government contexts where adaptability and responsiveness are key.

This study has several limitations that should be taken into account. First, the research is concentrated on two regions in Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, which may restrict the applicability of the findings to other areas with varying levels of technological development, human resource readiness, or cultural contexts. The specific challenges and opportunities in these regions may not fully represent the experiences of other local governments, especially in areas with more advanced technology. Second, the study is based on qualitative data, which can be prone to interpretation biases and may not capture wider trends. Future studies could incorporate a larger sample and mixed methods to gain a deeper understanding of Job Crafting's impact in e-government.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of literature on Job Crafting in the context of e-government, particularly in the local government sector. This study expands the understanding of Job Crafting's impact on individual performance and the quality of

technology-based public services, offering insights into how different dimensions of Job Crafting, such as task, relational, and cognitive crafting, can enhance the delivery of smart services. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide insights for local governments in designing job-crafting strategies to improve their smart services. By empowering employees to adapt their work roles, local governments can foster a more innovative, responsive, and service-oriented workforce. Furthermore, the study provides recommendations for policymakers to design more targeted training programs that address both the technological and human resource challenges faced by public sector employees. These training programs can enhance the efficiency and quality of e-government-based public services, ensuring that local governments are better equipped to meet the evolving needs of the public in the digital era.

Conclusion:

The comparative study of Kendari City and North Konawe Regency highlights the significant role of Job Crafting in improving the quality of smart services in e-government. Kendari has successfully implemented Job Crafting practices, resulting in more efficient, reliable, and user-friendly services, while North Konawe faces challenges due to outdated procedures and limited technological adoption. Integrating Job Crafting in local government can be a powerful tool for enhancing service quality, especially when combined with technology adoption, employee motivation, and collaboration. This study contributes to the literature on Job Crafting and e-government by showcasing its practical application in improving smart services. However, a limitation of the study is its focus on two regions in Southeast Sulawesi, which may not be generalizable to areas with different technological developments or cultural contexts. Additionally, the reliance on qualitative data may introduce interpretation biases and limit the ability to capture broader trends. Future research should explore job crafting in diverse regions with larger samples and mixed methods to gain a deeper understanding of its impact on public service delivery in the digital era.

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